



# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #16 — NOV. 14, 2011

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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## **Republican Debates**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 14, 2011)

I can't tell if the race for the Republican nomination is heating up or cooling down, but it always has some fascinating twists and turns. As Pam says, it's a lot like watching a Shakespearean drama unfolding live, in front of us. Enjoy!

"The Date-Night Debate (Nov. 12, 2011)" by Fred Kaplan, Slate

Nov. 13, 2011,

([http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/war\\_stories/2011/11/does\\_michele\\_bachmann\\_want\\_the\\_us\\_to\\_be\\_more\\_like\\_china\\_single.html#pagebreak\\_anchor\\_2](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2011/11/does_michele_bachmann_want_the_us_to_be_more_like_china_single.html#pagebreak_anchor_2))

(If you like watching something scary, you would have liked Saturday's Republican presidential debate about foreign policy.)

My favorite remark in Saturday night's "commander in chief" debate, in which the Republican presidential candidates answered questions about national security in one-minute sound bites, came from Michele Bachmann. "If you look at China, they don't have food stamps," she said. "They don't have the modern welfare state, and China's growing," she exclaimed, adding: "And so what I would do is look at the programs that LBJ gave us with the Great Society and they'd be gone."

The rest of the debate wasn't quite that eye-popping. It could even be said that Jon Huntsman came off as pretty intelligent (I assume he's still in the race in hopes of becoming the next secretary of state), Ron Paul was principled at least (in an isolationist sort of way), and—the night's biggest surprise—Rick Santorum made one (though just one) reasonable comment (that we have to seek good relations with Pakistan because it has nukes).

Otherwise, God help us if any of these jokers makes it into the White House.

It started off with Iran. Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, Herman Cain, and Santorum all said that, if sanctions and covert ops failed, they would stop the Iranian nuclear program through military action. (Paul said he wouldn't; Bachman and Huntsman didn't get the question.)

As for the other hot-button issue, whether we should resume torturing suspected terrorists, Cain pulled out this gem: "I do not agree with torture, period. However, I will trust the judgment of our military leaders [as to] what is torture."

Moderator: Is waterboarding torture or an "enhanced interrogation technique"?

Cain: I agree that it is an "enhanced interrogation technique."

Moderator: So you support it?

Cain: Yes.

Perry said he too would defend such "techniques" to his death, adding, "This is war. This is what happens in war." (John McCain, call Rick Perry.)

Bachmann leapt in to say she's fine with waterboarding, too, and complained that, under President Obama, "the ACLU is running the CIA." (Quick, somebody, tell David Petraeus!) She also made the astonishing claim that when our troops capture terrorists on the battlefield, there are no jails to lock them up in. (Somebody, tell the Army to set up detention centers!)

Only Paul and Huntsman spoke up for the Geneva Conventions and the U.S. Army Field Manual on interrogation. Huntsman noted with a grave expression: "This country has values. I've lived overseas four times.... We diminish our standing in the world when we engage in torture. Waterboarding is torture."

Gingrich wasn't asked the torture question, but he did say that the nation needs to throw out all the CIA reforms that the Church Committee passed in the 1970s.

Romney wasn't asked the question (too bad), but, on a related matter, he said that he would never negotiate with the Taliban because he doesn't believe in negotiating with terrorists. Someone should ask him, next time out, how he plans to win, end hostilities, reach a settlement, or do something besides keep fighting forever in Afghanistan.

On Afghanistan, most of the candidates said Obama made a big mistake in setting a date for withdrawal. Romney sort of agreed, but also said that Obama's 2014 pullout date seemed "the right timetable." Huntsman said the troops should come home now (except for some special ops, trainers, and tactical intelligence) and give up on nation-building, except at home.

Cain was remarkably honest about how little he knows, about anything. Is Pakistan a friend or foe? "We don't know." Would you send American ground forces to clear out the sanctuaries in Pakistan? "That is a discussion that I would make after consulting with commanders on the ground" (and with the Afghans and Pakistanis too). How would you know when to overrule your military commanders? I'm afraid I dropped my pen in astonishment, so didn't get an exact quote, but Cain said that he would surround himself with "the right people ... multiple groups of people offering different ideas," then choose the ideas that "make sense." (So that's how it's done.)

There are a few things Cain was certain about. Obama made a bad decision in backing the Arab Spring, which is "getting totally out of hand" because a "majority" of those people are Muslim Brotherhood. He also wants to keep Gitmo going full-time and forget about trying detainees in civilian courts "because they're terrorists."

A few more amusements:

Perry's proof that he has experience in this realm: "For 10 years, I've been commander-in-chief of 20,000 National Guard in Texas. ... I'm dealing with generals, I know individuals in the Department of Defense at the highest level who will help me." This is half-nonsense, half-puzzling. The nonsense: As was made very clear when Sarah Palin made a similar argument, governors have no control whatsoever over the National Guard units in their states, except to deploy them for local disaster-relief, that sort of thing. The puzzle: Who are these generals and high-level DoD people who will help Perry if he's president? The same ones who are currently helping Obama?

Perry said he would reduce all foreign aid to zero, then have advocates for each individual country come in and make a case for getting "one penny" of taxpayer money, much less billions of dollars. (His staff back-pedaled on this after the debate, noting that an exception would be made, of course, for Israel.)

Romney, asked about the prospect of a trade war with China, said, "A trade war is already going on" and promised to take China to the World Trade Organization on charges of currency manipulation. Huntsman, who was Obama's ambassador to China, retorted, "The reality is different, as it usually is when you're on the ground." First, he noted, China can't be taken to the WTO on currency charges. Second, a trade war would hurt the United States quite badly. Third, we should reach out to China's rising young computer generation. Again, he seemed reasonable. (No wonder he doesn't have a chance, and, after his diss of Romney, his prospects for becoming secretary of state, on the chance of a GOP victory in 2012, don't look too good, either.)

Finally, the dumbest remark of the night ... well, the second-dumbest, after Bachmann's head-turner on China's admirable free-market economy: Gingrich, saying that every candidate up on the stage would be "superior to the current administration." If he's serious, he's not nearly as smart as he thinks he is. Or maybe he was assuming that if one of the other Republicans wins, he (or, really God help us, she) would surely hire Newt Gingrich to run the nation's foreign policy.

Speaking of seriousness: CBS News, which co-sponsored this debate with the National Journal, aired the first hour of the 90-minute session on its national broadcast, but let local affiliates decide whether they wanted to air the remaining half hour or resume normal programming. (In New York, WCBS went for NCIS, as I suspect most others did. The climax could be watched on the network's website, which had buffering problems.) The network's producers, I suspect, made the right move. They know how important national-security issues are likely to be in this election—not very—and they seem to have guessed well how seriously the candidates in this debate should be taken in any case—even less.

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<a href="#">20111111-01</a>	00:31	Dale	Libertarians
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I keep reading your self-reinforcing posts that claim (all) Republicans think (all) government is evil. I suppose if you all just keep telling each other this is the case, in time you will believe it must be true.

[Actually, this is just what we are told by many Republicans. –SteveB]

I found these comments clipped from another blog group I read to be worth posting here:

[Source unknown. –SteveB]

Mainstream Libertarians do not believe government is "evil" as you have characterized. Rather they tend to believe that government is necessary but should be limited in its scope in order to minimize unintended consequences. They trust the collective behaviors of self-interested individuals over the behavior of concentrated power. To the extent that the government that is necessary in its desired limited form does take away some personal liberties that may be viewed as a "necessary evil" as any loss of personal liberty and freedom is viewed as distasteful. Maintain correct calibration – they are not saying that government by its very existence is "evil". Government must however derive its authorities with the consent of the governed and should be limited in its scope of functions to those things that are so large as that private solutions are not possible. This again is a different thing from "small" government. "Limited" government can be quite large. It is the intended functions and areas of assumed governmental responsibility that are "limited".

There are always extremists. Ron Paul and Michael Moore are both extreme. They are interesting and perhaps informative but neither will ever win an election nor be able to effectively govern. Ron Paul is to the right of even most conservative Republicans on economic matters and to the left of Nancy Pelosi on foreign policy. Michael Moore is an extreme leftist on everything.

In fact the OWS people are exhibiting some Libertarian attributes. They wish to be free of governmental interference in their protesting. They are objecting to laws that interfere with their interests. There seems an intellectual similarity between the OWS concern about the influence of money in politics and the Libertarian concerns about overbearing governments serving interests other than those of the people.

I'm explaining this to make clear that it is far too easy to attach to an overly simplistic categorization to any of these. You may not have considered Ron Paul to be far left. But on foreign policy matters he is totally anti-war and would disengage from most foreign entanglements. That's consistent with his "live and let live" libertarianism. It also is in the current common characterizations of American politics generally aligned with the left.

20111111-04 11:04 Pam Re: Libertarians (reply to Dale, above)

Gotta respond. Perhaps this is a quibble, but here goes. How can you lump all liberals together, as you do, when you complain about our doing the same thing? The pot and the kettle are both black. As I said in an earlier post, we have to generalize or we'd get so bogged down in exceptions we'd never get anywhere. Limited govt., small govt. If there's a difference, I'd like to have it spelled out. If we remove all labels and just focus on the issues, here's what this liberal thinks: (You can put me in whatever categories you want. I embrace the epithets "liberal" and/or "progressive.")

Government should stay out of people's private business, ie., abortion rights, gender equality (which includes same-sex marriage), legalization of marijuana, separation of church and state. These are the issues most under attack. Am I leaving anything out?

Taxes should be progressive with the aim of reducing the income gap and preserving a broad middle class.

Religion should be taken out of politics. I include that in overall campaign reform.

Undo *Citizens United*.

Bring some compassion and common sense into the reform of immigration policy. No one should be asked for ID simply because he/she looks "foreign."

Adequately fund education, infrastructure, health care, social services. Leave Social Security and Medicare untouched. Move to a single-payer health care system that would rationalize care and eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic nonsense. I see this as one of those things that falls under your category of "those things that are so large that private solutions are not possible," Dale.

Hold onto govt. agencies that protect the public interest, such as the EPA, FCC, FDA, Dept. of Energy, Dept. of Education (I'd look into this one with a laser), Consumer Protection, and so on.

Throw a bone to those most severely impacted by the Recession: students with huge debt, underwater mortgage holders, the unemployed. Wall Street got the whole cow, after all.

Eliminate wasteful spending.

Allow more transparency when matters of immediate public interest are concerned. This is very broad. I would exclude only those things that truly need to be kept secret for the safety of the nation.

I'll probably think of more things, but the above pretty well indicates my position. I may be self-reinforcing, but, pardon me for saying so, Dale, so are you. I like this group because I am learning so much and it's NOT monolithic. We all disagree about some things, but we're working through them in an intelligent way.

I think people are probably born liberal or conservative. I suppose nurture has a lot to do with it, but I think one's gut feeling is something that can't be imposed. I was a liberal when I was three years old, long before I knew there was a thing called politics. My gut feeling is that people should be left alone, so long as their actions don't hurt others, that society should ease the suffering of those in need as well as create opportunity for all, that compassion for individuals should trump moneyed interests. Freedom and fairness. It all boils down to that.

[20111111-07](#) 14:48 Art Re: Libertarians (reply to Dale, above)

Had to rescue a doggie this morning but back to the fray.

Fundamentally I liked Dale's piece. While I may not agree with all of it and I think Pam (in her clear moments) outlined the other side very well, it is the extremism that I see in the republican party today that I object to strongly. There is just so much hate and agitation coming from the tea party and, by inference the republican party, with no explainable or articulated substance to back it up. It is that simple. From what I read and hear I see nothing but negative comments concerning the socialist scum in office but no realistic appraisal of what the republicans will do if they win, except enact a bunch of social re-engineering laws. Perry can't even remember what offices he would dismantle, but the Department of Education??? Come on now.

[20111111-09](#) 15:02 Pam Re: Libertarians (reply to Art & Dale, above)

I agree, for what it's worth, with Art that the invective from the Right makes the Left (can't we find a better term?) look like pussycats. OWS is going to great lengths to keep their protest peaceful. The attacks on the Right that I see (like the "Daily Show" and Stephen Colbert) use humor rather than vilification. If I understand you, Dale, you feel a need to defend a conservative outlook. I respect that. But you have to admit that Art's comments are pretty accurate.

As for Education, I see plenty wrong with the whole enterprise, and though I generally support unions, I think the teachers' union is often way out of line. I know I'm probably the only one among us who is deeply interested in the whole topic of education, but if anyone ever wants to get into a discussion about it, I'm game.

Now. I'm going to shut up. :-)

[20111111-02](#) 10:32 Pam Re: "How the GOP Became the Party of the Rich" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #15)

This is outstanding. Infuriating, but an outstanding summary of our recent history.

[20111111-03](#) 10:49 SteveB SHOCKER: Who exactly WAS Herman Cain's & the Koch Brothers' father????

What I'm sayin' is...ain't this how the right operates, as Art says? At least that's the way it goes in my inbox, especially when it comes to Mr. Obama or that famous, dreaded, evil duo, Pelosi & Reid.

[20111111-06](#) 14:33 Art Re: SHOCKER: Who exactly WAS Herman Cain's & the Koch Brothers' father???? (reply to SteveB, above)

While I really like this, I think the problem will be, and I know some will just hate this, but there is just too much intelligence on the left side of the aisle to buy into this stuff. If you think about the birthers and their rabid philosophy, can you really think of anyone you know, or would want to associate with, that would buy into that cr\*p?

<a href="#">20111111-11</a>	15:52	SteveB	Re: SHOCKER: Who exactly WAS Herman Cain's & the Koch Brothers' father???? (reply to Art, above)
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I'm pretty sure Obama was born in Africa and Herman Cain's father knocked-up the Koch Brothers' mother—at least twice! (I looked it up on Wikipedia, they aren't twins!) This makes perfect sense to me because they're all...former pizza executives, aren't they?

And you don't think this is something really, really big just because the left is too intelligent?

Damn! I wish I didn't agree with you!

<a href="#">20111111-05</a>	11:11	Pam	Re: Guidelines for Understanding the 'Hoosier Culture' (reply to Ann, FotM Newsletter #15)
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I don't know whether this list of Hoosier qualities makes me homesick or glad I got away. :-)

<a href="#">20111111-12</a>	15:59	Art	Re: Guidelines for Understanding the 'Hoosier Culture' (reply to Ann, FotM Newsletter #15)
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Good stuff. Liked the Indiana piece especially. I actually did play Euchre for years. Need to add shucking walnuts and seining for minnows.

<a href="#">20111111-13</a>	16:31	SteveB	Re: Guidelines for Understanding the 'Hoosier Culture' (reply to Art, above)
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"...the Indiana piece especially."? Well, maybe I should just do a jokes Newsletter, not a serious political one! haha

I grew up playing euchre!

Years later, in Crown Point we had a euchre club with, let's see, 8 couples. We had a card playing party at a different house every month, switching partners all the evening, but playing with spouses as couples for points. We put money in a "pot" and the night's winners got that. For the losers, well, I had produced a lawn sculpture one summer. It was a big multicolor sun of steel and wood. I thought it was really cool. But it was awarded to the couple who finished last, and they had to display it in their front yard all month. It was their "punishment".

Sometimes ya' just can't get any respect...

But we really had a lot of fun playing euchre.

<a href="#">20111111-14</a>	16:34	Art	Re: Guidelines for Understanding the 'Hoosier Culture' (reply to SteveB, above)
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You know what I meant!!!!

<a href="#">20111112-01</a>	00:15	Jim	Hoosiers
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[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

YOU REALLY HAVE TO BE FROM INDIANA TO UNDERSTAND THIS.

The year is 2016 and the United States has just elected the first woman, as President of the United States . A few days after the election the president-elect called her father in Indiana and asked, 'So, Dad, I assume you will be coming to my inauguration?'

'I don't think so. It's a long drive, your mother isn't as young as she used to be, and my arthritis is acting up again.'

'Don't worry about it Dad, I'll send Air Force One or another support aircraft to pick you up and take you home, and a limousine will pick you up at your door.'

'I don't know. Everybody will be so fancy. What would your mother wear?'

'Oh Dad,' she replied, 'I'll make sure she has a wonderful gown custom-made by one of the best designers in New York .'

'Honey,' Dad complained, 'you know I can't eat those rich foods you and your friends like to eat.'

The President-elected responded, 'Don't worry Dad. The entire affair is going to be handled by the best caterer in New York and I'll ensure your meals are salt free. Dad, I really want you to come.'

So Dad reluctantly agreed and on January 20, 2017, arrived to see his daughter sworn in as President of the United States .

In the front row sits the new president's Dad and Mom. Dad noticing the senator sitting next to him leans over and whispered, 'You see that woman over there with her hand on the Bible, becoming President of the United States.'

The Senator whispered in reply, 'Yes I do.'

Dad says proudly, 'Her brother played basketball at Indiana University.'

<a href="#">20111111-08</a>	14:49	Pam	Politics
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I just got a message from a Facebook friend asking me not to post any more articles from NationofChange, my preferred choice. I don't know how to not send stuff to her and still post to Facebook. If anybody knows how I can do that, please let me know. I admit I feel a bit chagrined. This person said she gets her news from TV and the internet and that's quite enough. Apparently my posts upset her. Since I hate upsetting anybody, I feel bad about this. It also makes me extra grateful to have this group to share ideas with. I feel I can say what I really think without being condemned, even if you don't agree with me.

Another thing that bothers me is people who don't want to even think about politics, the economy, or the world, who just throw up their hands and walk away. The easy path is to look the other way; just ask Penn State. I hate argument, but I also hate cowardice. I'm not going to go sleep in a tent any time soon (ever!), so my contribution to the public discourse will have to be in writing—and posting on Facebook. I think I will just shut up for a while.

<a href="#">20111111-10</a>	15:07	Pam	"Trigger Happy: Why Deficit Cuts Should Be Triggered Only When Unemployment Reaches 5 Percent"
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"Trigger Happy: Why Deficit Cuts Should Be Triggered Only When Unemployment Reaches 5 Percent" by Robert Reich, NationofChange



Nov. 11, 2011, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/trigger-happy-why-deficit-cuts-should-be-triggered-only-when-unemployment-reaches-5-percent-13210225>)

On planet Washington, where reducing the federal budget deficit continues to be more important than creating jobs, everyone is talking about “triggers” that automatically go into effect if certain other things don’t happen.

Yet no one is talking about the most obvious trigger of all — no budget cuts until the official level of unemployment falls to 5 percent, its level before the Great Recession.

The biggest trigger on the minds of Washington insiders is \$1.2 trillion across-the-board cuts that will automatically occur if Congress’s supercommittee doesn’t come up with at least \$1.2 trillion of cuts on its own that Congress agrees to by December 23.

That automatic trigger seems likelier by the day because at this point the odds of an agreement are roughly zero.

Here’s the truly insane thing: The triggered cuts start in 2013, a little over a year from now.

Yet no one in their right mind believes unemployment will be lower than 8 percent by then.

The cuts will come on top of the expiration of extended unemployment benefits, the end of a payroll tax cut, and continuing reductions in state and local budgets — all when American consumers (whose spending is 70 percent of the economy) will still be reeling from declining jobs and wages and plunging home prices. Even if Europe’s debt crisis doesn’t by then threaten a global financial meltdown, this rush toward austerity couldn’t come at a worse time.

In other words, what will really be triggered is a deeper recession and higher unemployment.

Democrats on the supercommittee are acting as if they haven’t met an unemployed person. They’re proposing \$2.3 trillion in deficit reductions — half from spending cuts (including \$350 billion from Medicare), half from tax increases. To make the tax increases palatable to Republicans, Democrats want to give Congress a chance to find the new revenues by overhauling the tax code. If that effort fails, automatic tax increases would be triggered. The top tax rate won’t rise (another bow to Republicans) but top earners’ itemized deductions will be limited.

Oh, and by the way, under the Democrats’ proposal, spending cuts and tax increases, triggered or not, would start in 2013.

The President (remember him?) is still hawking his \$450 billion jobs bill, but he’s having a hard time being heard above the deficit-reduction din — in large part because he himself is simultaneously calling for deficit reduction, and most people outside Washington can’t make sense of how we do both.

The public is confused because they don’t get it’s a matter of sequencing. We need to do more spending now in order to bring back jobs and growth, then do less spending in the future — after the economy is once again generating jobs and growth.

That’s why it make more sense for Democrats to propose a deficit reduction plan that goes into effect only when jobs are back. The trigger should be the rate of unemployment — and a 5 percent rate would signal we’re back on track.

True, the unemployment rate is an imperfect measure of how bad things are (it doesn’t include everyone who’s working part-time but needs a full-time job, and those too discouraged to look for work), but at least it’s a useful way of comparing how much worse or better we are than we’ve been. And it can’t be fiddled with (the Bureau of Labor Statistics guards the calculation like gold in Fort Knox).

Deficit hawks in both parties fear if we put off the spending cuts we’ll never do them. But if we cut now, the ratio of deficit to the total economy just gets worse — because the economy stagnates and the swelling ranks of unemployed don’t pay taxes.

So the best of all worlds is to have a big jobs plan now, and also commit to automatic cuts triggered when unemployment falls to 5 percent.

The hawks should find this acceptable. Reasonable Republicans (if any are left) will, too. Democrats, if they still care about jobs, should lead the way.

[20111111-15](#) 17:12 SteveB Re: "Trigger Happy: Why Deficit Cuts Should Be Triggered Only When Unemployment Reaches 5 Percent" (reply to Pam, above)

Hey, finally, one of these came through so I could tell your intentions.

Whether Reich is right or wrong doesn't matter so much to me, though I tend to believe him.

All he is saying is:

**HEY, WAKE UP, LET'S BE CAUTIOUS (CONSERVATIVE? Now that's a wild thought!) AND BE PRACTICAL! WHATEVER THAT ENTAILS OR MANDATES. LET'S NOT PLACE BLIND IDEOLOGY AND DOGMA AHEAD OF WHAT WORKS OR MUST BE MADE TO WORK. LIVES ARE AT STAKE. THIS ISN'T A GAME!**

In time of crisis or the brink of crisis, this sounds wise to me. I recall many times in my life that I have heard Republicans give the same advice. Why not now, I wonder? How did they become so, well, so not conservative (in the sense it was originally intended and in which I use it, above)? How can they be so willing to drastically transform society or, for that matter, so willing to continue the grand, failed experiment that brought us the policies of the 2000's, and now the problems of the 2010's?

[20111111-16](#) 17:19 Pam Re: "Trigger Happy: Why Deficit Cuts Should Be Triggered Only When Unemployment Reaches 5 Percent" (reply to SteveB, above)

Reich's recommendation makes sense and is simple. A heck of a lot better than 9-9-9.

[20111111-17](#) 17:57 SteveG 12 Days Until Super-Committee Announcement

12 days till the wisdom of the SUPER COMMITTEE is upon us.

[20111111-18](#) 18:11 SteveB Rick Perry (to all FotM Texans)

I've been meaning to ask you. I didn't know Perry until he started running for President. But you guys there in Texas must have realized he was dumb as a stump before he was foisted off onto the nation.

Did somehow his handlers, the powers that be, the Republican big-wigs, his wife—at some point in time—think that this guy was not dumb as a stump?

If so, how could that happen?

"Come-in, Houston! The system is broken."

[20111111-19](#) 19:05 Ben Re: Rick Perry (reply to SteveB, above)

I warned you about him before he declared *mea non culpa*. (Did I get that right? I was a German minor with Latin by way of a biology major.)

Perry was an idiot as governor, and remains an idiot. I will leave it to you as to how he managed to get the governorship in Texas, but as I recall, it has to do with GWB leaving his office earlier, to be an idiot of broader scope. Were he to become president, I can guarantee that cronyism, nepotism, graft and corruption would reach a new high.

[20111113-05](#) 14:00 Pam Re: Rick Perry (reply to SteveB & Ben, above)

I'm not going to denigrate anyone's religion publicly, but all this holier-than-thou posturing by the Republican candidates is ridiculous. The religious right has for years tried to hi-jack America and turn it into a Christian country. Our Founders were sons of the Enlightenment; they were humanist rationalists. They didn't attack religion, but they tried to make sure it wouldn't infect our politics. The separation of church and state is not heresy.

[20111112-02](#) 12:35 Pam Quotes: Ideological Differences, Education

From the Dec., 2011 *Atlantic* magazine:

..."ideological differences stem more from differences in people's beliefs about how the world works than from differences in their basic values."

"Education has very little impact on responses [which]....strongly suggests that the classroom is no great corrective for myside bias."

Name of article: "I Was Wrong, and So Are You."—Daniel Klein (economist)

[20111113-01](#) 00:07 SteveG "Cain Says God Persuaded Him to Run for President"

Didn't Perry say God told him to run for President too?

"Cain Says God Persuaded Him to Run for President" by AP, *USA Today*

Nov. 12, 2011, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2011-11-12/herman-cain-god/51179242/1>)

(ATLANTA) Republican Herman Cain said God convinced him to enter the race for president, comparing himself to Moses: "You've got the wrong man, Lord. Are you sure?"

The Georgia business executive played up his faith Saturday after battling sexual harassment allegations for two weeks, trying to shift the conversation to religion, an issue vital to conservative Republicans, especially in the South.

In a speech Saturday to a national meeting of young Republicans, Cain said the Lord persuaded him after much prayer.

"That's when I prayed and prayed and prayed. I'm a man of faith — I had to do a lot of praying for this one, more praying than I've ever done before in my life," Cain said. "And when I finally realized that it was God saying that this is what I needed to do, I was like Moses. 'You've got the wrong man, Lord. Are you sure?'"

Once he made the decision, Cain said, he did not look back.

Four women have now accused Cain of sexually harassing them when he led the National Restaurant Association more than a decade ago. Cain, who has denied wrongdoing, was silent about the allegations and did not take reporters' questions.

Cain isn't the first to say God prodded him toward a campaign. Texas Gov. Rick Perry's wife, Anita, has said she felt God was speaking to her about the race, adding that her husband needed to see a "burning bush," a Biblical reference to God's first appearance to Moses.

During his speech, Cain also criticized President Barack Obama for canceling the space shuttle program — a decision actually made by President George W. Bush — as NASA shifts its focus on travel farther from Earth's orbit.

"I can tell you that as president of the United States, we are not going to bum a ride to outer space with Russia," Cain said to loud applause. "We're going to regain our rightful place in terms of technology, space technology."

Cain was talking about U.S. plans, now that the space shuttle is retired, to use Russian rockets to send astronauts to the International Space Station. In the meantime, NASA is focused on explorations deeper in space.

It was Bush who decided in 2004 to retire the space shuttle program. The Republican president still supported sending astronauts to the moon and Mars.

Obama, once in office, dropped the goal of a moon mission. Instead, NASA has plans to build a giant rocket capable of sending astronauts to an asteroid and eventually Mars. It wants to outsource to private companies the task of ferrying astronauts and cargo to the space station — a job previously performed by the space shuttle.

Until private companies are ready, NASA will keep buying seats on Russian Soyuz capsules to get astronauts to the space station. The cost per person to fly on a Soyuz is expected to rise from \$56 million to \$63 million, which is still cheaper than flying on the shuttle.

Cain spoke in advance of a Republican debate Saturday in South Carolina focused on foreign policy.

<a href="#">20111113-02</a>	13:29	Art	Univ. of Portland Class of 2009 Commencement Address
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Here's an interesting one. I think it is reportedly a college graduation guest speaker. [See source, below. –SteveB] Note the tone of the speech. A few years ago it was all "you have a great future ahead of you", "the sky is the limit" etc. etc. Not so much anymore. As I think about it, my circle of close friends are much like me. We are all well educated, self made achievers who have economically done pretty well and, if I understand the rules correctly, would have to count ourselves in the 1%. While my wife and I do not have children, most of the others do, and I think without exception none of them have any confidence their children are going to do anywhere nearly as well as they have done. In fact just the opposite. Funny, huh?

[Commencement Address by Paul Hawken to the Class of 2009, University of Portland, May 3, 2009](#)

[\(http://computingforsustainability.wordpress.com/2009/05/25/hawkin-the-earth-needs-a-new-operating-system-you-are-the-programmers/\)](http://computingforsustainability.wordpress.com/2009/05/25/hawkin-the-earth-needs-a-new-operating-system-you-are-the-programmers/)

[http://www.paulhawken.com/paulhawken\\_frameset.html](http://www.paulhawken.com/paulhawken_frameset.html)

You are brilliant, and the earth is hiring

When I was invited to give this speech, I was asked if I could give a simple short talk that was "direct, naked, taut, honest, passionate, lean, shivering, startling, and graceful." Boy, no pressure there.

But let's begin with the startling part. Hey, Class of 2009: you are going to have to figure out what it means to be a human being on earth at a time when every living system is declining, and the rate of decline is accelerating. Kind

of a mind-boggling situation... but not one peer-reviewed paper published in the last thirty years can refute that statement. Basically, the earth needs a new operating system, you are the programmers, and we need it within a few decades.

This planet came with a set of operating instructions, but we seem to have misplaced them. Important rules like don't poison the water, soil, or air, and don't let the earth get overcrowded, and don't touch the thermostat have been broken. Buckminster Fuller said that spaceship earth was so ingeniously designed that no one has a clue that we are on one, flying through the universe at a million miles per hour, with no need for seatbelts, lots of room in coach, and really good food, but all that is changing.

There is invisible writing on the back of the diploma you will receive, and in case you didn't bring lemon juice to decode it, I can tell you what it says: YOU ARE BRILLIANT, AND THE EARTH IS HIRING. The earth couldn't afford to send any recruiters or limos to your school. It sent you rain, sunsets, ripe cherries, night blooming jasmine, and that unbelievably cute person you are dating. Take the hint. And here's the deal: Forget that this task of planet-saving is not possible in the time required. Don't be put off by people who know what is not possible. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was impossible only after you are done.

When asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse. What I see everywhere in the world are ordinary people willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world. The poet Adrienne Rich wrote, "So much has been destroyed I have cast my lot with those who, age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world." There could be no better description. Humanity is coalescing. It is reconstituting the world, and the action is taking place in schoolrooms, farms, jungles, villages, campuses, companies, refugee camps, deserts, fisheries, and slums.

You join a multitude of caring people. No one knows how many groups and organizations are working on the most salient issues of our day: climate change, poverty, deforestation, peace, water, hunger, conservation, human rights, and more. This is the largest movement the world has ever seen. Rather than control, it seeks connection. Rather than dominance, it strives to disperse concentrations of power. Like Mercy Corps, it works behind the scenes and gets the job done. Large as it is, no one knows the true size of this movement. It provides hope, support, and meaning to billions of people in the world. Its clout resides in idea, not in force. It is made up of teachers, children, peasants, businesspeople, rappers, organic farmers, nuns, artists, government workers, fisherfolk, engineers, students, incorrigible writers, weeping Muslims, concerned mothers, poets, doctors without borders, grieving Christians, street musicians, the President of the United States of America, and as the writer David James Duncan would say, the Creator, the One who loves us all in such a huge way.

There is a rabbinical teaching that says if the world is ending and the Messiah arrives, first plant a tree, and then see if the story is true. Inspiration is not garnered from the litanies of what may befall us; it resides in humanity's willingness to restore, redress, reform, rebuild, recover, reimagine, and reconsider. "One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice," is Mary Oliver's description of moving away from the profane toward a deep sense of connectedness to the living world.

Millions of people are working on behalf of strangers, even if the evening news is usually about the death of strangers. This kindness of strangers has religious, even mythic origins, and very specific eighteenth-century roots. Abolitionists were the first people to create a national and global movement to defend the rights of those they did not know. Until that time, no group had filed a grievance except on behalf of itself. The founders of this movement were largely unknown Granville Clark, Thomas Clarkson, Josiah Wedgwood and their goal was ridiculous on the face of it: at that time three out of four people in the world were enslaved. Enslaving each other was what human beings had done for ages. And the abolitionist movement was greeted with incredulity.

Conservative spokesmen ridiculed the abolitionists as liberals, progressives, do-gooders, meddlers, and activists. They were told they would ruin the economy and drive England into poverty. But for the first time in history a group of people organized themselves to help people they would never know, from whom they would never receive direct or indirect benefit.. And today tens of millions of people do this every day. It is called the world of non-profits, civil

society, schools, social entrepreneurship, and non-governmental organizations, of companies who place social and environmental justice at the top of their strategic goals. The scope and scale of this effort is unparalleled in history.

The living world is not "out there" somewhere, but in your heart. What do we know about life? In the words of biologist Janine Benyus, life creates the conditions that are conducive to life. I can think of no better motto for a future economy. We have tens of thousands of abandoned homes without people and tens of thousands of abandoned people without homes. We have failed bankers advising failed regulators on how to save failed assets.

Think about this: we are the only species on this planet without full employment. Brilliant. We have an economy that tells us that it is cheaper to destroy earth in real time than to renew, restore, and sustain it. You can print money to bail out a bank but you can't print life to bail out a planet. At present we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it gross domestic product. We can just as easily have an economy that is based on healing the future instead of stealing it. We can either create assets for the future or take the assets of the future. One is called restoration and the other exploitation.

And whenever we exploit the earth we exploit people and cause untold suffering. Working for the earth is not a way to get rich, it is a way to be rich.

The first living cell came into being nearly 40 million centuries ago, and its direct descendants are in all of our bloodstreams. Literally you are breathing molecules this very second that were inhaled by Moses, Mother Teresa, and Bono. We are vastly interconnected. Our fates are inseparable. We are here because the dream of every cell is to become two cells. In each of you are one quadrillion cells, 90 percent of which are not human cells. Your body is a community, and without those other microorganisms you would perish in hours. Each human cell has 400 billion molecules conducting millions of processes between trillions of atoms. The total cellular activity in one human body is staggering: one septillion actions at any one moment, a one with twenty-four zeros after it. In a millisecond, our body has undergone ten times more processes than there are stars in the universe exactly what Charles Darwin foretold when he said science would discover that each living creature was a "little universe, formed of a host of self-propagating organisms, inconceivably minute and as numerous as the stars of heaven."

So I have two questions for you all: First, can you feel your body? Stop for a moment. Feel your body. One septillion activities going on simultaneously, and your body does this so well you are free to ignore it, and wonder instead when this speech will end. Second question: who is in charge of your body? Who is managing those molecules? Hopefully not a political party. Life is creating the conditions that are conducive to life inside you, just as in all of nature. What I want you to imagine is that collectively humanity is evincing a deep innate wisdom in coming together to heal the wounds and insults of the past.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once asked what we would do if the stars only came out once every thousand years. No one would sleep that night, of course. The world would become religious overnight. We would be ecstatic, delirious, made rapturous by the glory of God. Instead the stars come out every night, and we watch television.

This extraordinary time when we are globally aware of each other and the multiple dangers that threaten civilization has never happened, not in a thousand years, not in ten thousand years. Each of us is as complex and beautiful as all the stars in the universe. We have done great things and we have gone way off course in terms of honoring creation. You are graduating to the most amazing and stupefying challenge ever bequeathed to any generation.

The generations before you failed. They didn't stay up all night. They got distracted and lost sight of the fact that life is a miracle every moment of your existence. Nature beckons you to be on her side. You couldn't ask for a better boss. The most unrealistic person in the world is the cynic, not the dreamer. Hopefulness only makes sense when it doesn't make sense to be hopeful. This is your century. Take it and run as if your life depends on it.

[20111113-03](#)

13:35

SteveB

Re: Univ. of Portland Class of 2009 Commencement Address (reply to Art, above)

I love it!

[20111113-04](#) 13:55 Pam Re: Univ. of Portland Class of 2009 Commencement Address (reply to Art, above)

Again, another thoughtful post from Art. It's one of those things I wish I had written. Yesterday on NPR I heard a 20-something interviewed about her job-prospects now that she had graduated from college. Her hope was to get a job, any job, but she expected to find her sources of happiness elsewhere. This may be realistic, but I find it sad that the youngest adult generation (millennials?) has so little hope of doing what they love. I always told my students, do what you love and it won't seem like work. My dad loved his job and said he'd never worked a day in his life. I used to say I'd pay the university to let me teach. Our lucky stars seem to have dimmed.

That said, I do find reason to hope in this speech. Americans have been overly optimistic forever; it's time we grew up.

[20111113-07](#) 14:28 SteveG Re: Univ. of Portland Class of 2009 Commencement Address (reply to Art, above)

A nephew is in the first quarter of his senior year. Last week he got a job offer for \$60,000 doing what he loves when he graduates.

[20111113-06](#) 14:26 Pam "More Government, Please"

There's a terrific article in the December, 2011 *Harper's* magazine called "More Government, Please" by Thomas Frank. I will try to post a link to it as soon as it becomes available online. November is the latest issue in their archives. If you have access to a Harper's, I urge you to read it. Art, you will like it, because your pal Bonehead comes in for some trenchant comment. Frank calls for a federal works program, like the ones in the '30s. It makes SO much sense. Pleeeeeeeeeeeze read it.

I'll get a link to you when I can. [Only available to *Harper's* subscribers:  
<http://harpers.org/archive/2011/12/0083702>. -SteveB]

[20111113-08](#) 17:10 Pam "More Government, Please" (continued)

Taken from the Dec., 2011, issue of *Harper's*:

Percentage decrease in the median U.S. household income during the 'Great Recession':

3.2%.

During the subsequent 'recovery':

6.7%.

Percentage by which the average contracted project costs the government more than the equivalent government-run project:

83%.

Date on which Gov. Rick Scott said that Florida doesn't need 'more anthropologists':

10/10/2011.

Date on which Scott's daughter received her anthropology degree:

1/11/2008.

Percentage of Americans who say news organizations 'hurt democracy':

42.

Number of codes in the current nationwide system for describing medical services on insurance bills:

17,849.

Number in the new federally mandated system;

141,058.

Number of Afghan army battalions currently able to fight without coalition support:

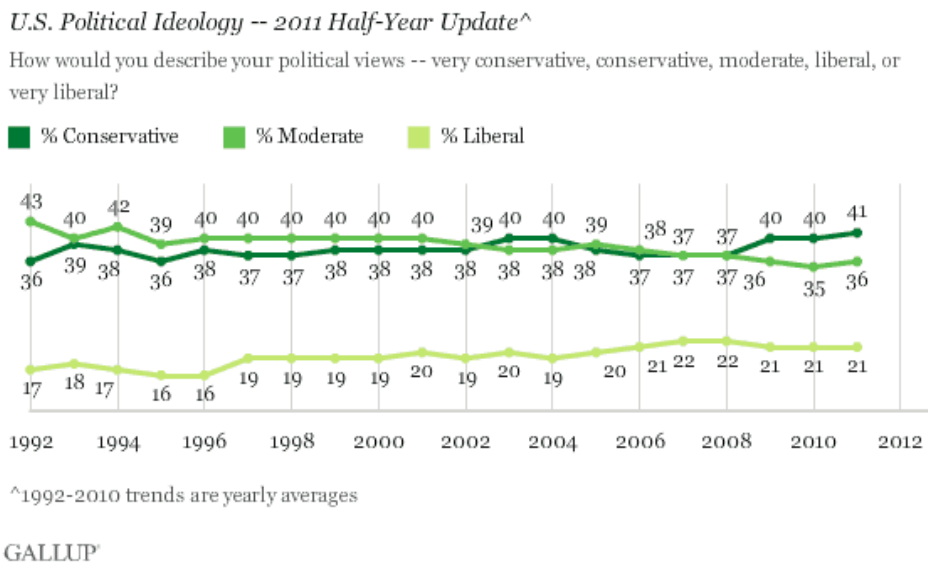
0.

Number of 'major threats' the Transportation Security Administration has detected in the decade since its creation:

0.

<a href="#">20111113-09</a>	17:19	Dale	A Dose of Reality
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Because Art generally writes so well, I was ready to attribute to him the lengthy article which very aptly summarized the Liberal Progressive case and a scenario which could lead to a rise in popularity. Unfortunately, there were many assumptions, posed as facts, similar to what I see in other posts in this forum. For those hoping it will come true and the tide is turning, that America is seeing the light (as defined by Liberals) and that the Conservatives are a fringe group of lunatics, please read what is really happening in America as describe by Gallup in this voter trends data (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/148745/political-ideology-stable-conservatives-leading.aspx>):



The chart above is only a small portion of the report and like all statistics, can be tortured to give up some hopeful elements for almost any position. If you have the time to read it all, I suggest you do so.

The fluke in recent politics is that the 20% minority — Liberals — managed to get control of the Senate and Congress for a short 2 year period and jam through damaging legislation like Obamacare. The percent



Conservative has grown for the past three years and is approximately twice as large as Liberal. Now I suppose one could chalk that up to "Everyone else is an idiot. Only I know what is right for the country" and that is pretty much what read in left leaning press.

Pam and others, Conservatives, including me, don't believe that all government is bad and should be eliminated. The founders believed State and Local government is necessary and useful, especially since it is closest to the people being affected and most likely to be responsive to their interests/needs. They also believed certain aspects require Federal oversight and management, but they knew (better than some today seem to recognize) that large government units get out of hand and the larger they get, the harder they are to contain.

Statistics on Greece are hard to pin down, partly because of the huge underground, non-taxpaying economy, but their example is worth considering:

Forty percent of Greece's gross domestic product comes from the public sector. Nearly a million people, or one out of four working Greeks, are employed by the state. More than 80 percent of public expenditure goes toward the wages, salaries and pensions of these public-sector workers. It's a country unable to pay government employees and is embroiled in a catastrophic pension debacle.

(<http://www.investментu.com/2011/July/united-state-is-not-greece.html>)

The source of the quote above describes 4 reasons why the US is not like Greece. Greece is an extreme example of lots of bad economic behavior, but one of the elements sinking it now is a Government employment and public pension situation grown out of hand. There are one after another example of countries where growing governments lead to growing corruption, growing waste and inefficiency and stagnating economies. That doesn't mean ALL government should be eliminated.

In part, The TEA Party formed because a lot of people were concerned that this is the direction the US has been headed. (The TEA Party also has social issues they support, but it was the economic concerns that coalesced the organization.) The TEA Party also formed because of the very reasons voiced by most of us...the corruption of the political system and the erosion of personal freedoms. To claim they are a hate-filled, venomous, evil organization or that the people who support their interests are that way is an unfair and incorrect generalization. To claim that left-leaning authors and speakers are brighter, more courageous or any other generalization is equally mistaken. Just because you read a bunch of stuff you believe in, doesn't mean it is filled with insight.

I have more to say about the Republican primary "race" for President, but it will have to be in a different post. Remember the 20% statistic, however.

20111113-10	18:12	Pam	Re: A Dose of Reality (reply to Dale, above)
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Well, so much for staying quiet....

Rather than argue about big-govt. vs. small-govt., I put it to you that our main crisis in America is the high rate of un- and under-employment. What we need right now are more jobs. The article in Harper's that I mentioned and hope you'll read when I can get you the link includes this little insight: ..."the CWA simply hired unemployed people and put them to work. It was organized virtually overnight, and it did not wait for grand projects to be fleshed out....The program's administrator, Roosevelt confidant Harry Hopkins...found jobs for 4 million people in two months."

The Right is so wedded to the idea that government jobs mean socialism it's risible. I like Robert Reich's idea of government providing jobs until the unemployment rate is 5%. I've also see that figure put at 6%. Fine. Such a plan would not turn the U.S. govt. into Big Daddy, and it would be a hell of a lot more effective more quickly than arguing about regulation and how to keep the money flowing to the top. Our leaders, from the super-committee on down, are failing us. Banks and corporations are failing us. If there's a class war going on, it's the rich coming down on the rest, not the other way around. Even David Stockman, who invented "trickle-down economics," has disavowed it.

Yes, one of Greece's big problems is that no one pays their taxes. That is a matter of public honesty, not govt. malfeasance. I'm not defending the Greek govt., but when workers complain because their retirement age is being raised from 55 to 60 or whatever, the govt. isn't the only entity to blame.

Also, I'd like to know more about why Obamacare is so pernicious. Nothing I have seen about it, and I mean nothing, has indicated to me anything but progress, and precious little of that in my view. Obama is an incrementalist, and Obamacare is probably the best he could do in this political climate. I don't defend it absolutely; it's only a start. The hysteria surrounding this plan continues to amaze me. It's as if you had a huge chunk ripped out of your arm, someone offered to bind up your wound, and you preferred to keep on bleeding.

It means nothing to me that your charts indicate a plethora of conservatives. History is replete with majorities that worked toward evil ends. It's always up to those "few good men" that Edmund Burke talks about to act for the good, not just the popular. John Stuart Mill, one of my favorite Victorians, warned about "the tyranny of the majority." We would do well to heed his advice.

[20111113-11](#) 20:14 SteveG Re: A Dose of Reality (reply to Dale & Pam, above)

From SteveG (8:14 pm) – ref: Dose of Reality

Back in the days of the CWA we as a country were not afraid to do something for the good of the country. We are still living with the results of CWA projects that have not been updated since. As an example I give you the storm/waste water system, an all in one system, constructed by the CWA in downtown Crawfordsville. When it rains heavy all of the rain/raw sewage backs up in the basements of downtown businesses – not a good deal. Similar problems exist all over the country.

[20111113-16](#) 23:36 Dale Re: A Dose of Reality (reply to SteveG, above)

Hundreds of millions of dollars were voted by Congress for "shovel-ready" projects in an earlier stimulus bill. It was a lie. There were no "shovel-ready" projects and we were all misled by the Obama administration.

Let's suppose target projects have been identified now, although I question that. What has changed at the Federal level to manage the programs? Are there different people? Are there different procedures in place to select and manage the planning, the distribution of money and the monitoring of progress/success/failure? I try to avoid cheap shots, but the Solyndra example of Government selecting where to put money is not a very positive example.

The CWA example, in the glow of revisionist history writing, seems to have been a success. I'm not saying it wasn't actually a success. That doesn't mean the Obama administration, which hasn't really demonstrated success at almost anything, will get this one right. This time.

There are also lots of examples of locally funded and managed public works which typically get much closer scrutiny and involve less bureaucracy. Why not find ways to support these, especially with interest rates as low as they are now? I have a lot more confidence that local communities will pick the most useful projects, if they have the responsibility for managing and financing them, albeit with tax assistance.

This whole concept of the government creating jobs, for public works or whatever, is a short term fix at best. The money for these government projects comes out our pockets. You get that right? It comes out our discretionary income, at least for those who pay taxes. You want a new sewer system? Cool, get ready to pay for it. What? You want someone else to pay for it? Well, as long as someone else is paying for it, I want a new car and a new house and... No, that's being personally greedy. I want free general health care and unlimited unemployment benefits and...

There is no FREE. Someone pays.

I agree – when the CWA happened the US and the world were totally different than they are now. We will never return to those times, but we need to find a way to get out of the hole and ruts we are in.

Along those lines, I have read that 37% of every dollar the US government spends is borrowed – if true, how can we cut spending by 37% or more out of the federal budget? Do not see a logical way to cut our way to a balanced budget – increase of revenue and cuts make sense.

Someone always pays, unless you are a bank, and then you get bailed out and if you are in upper management you get a bonus while you cut 30,000 jobs.

Or if you are a big manufacturer you can move your research & development to Brazil, keep your profits in Switzerland, pay zero US taxes, and receive billions in US tax credits.

Or if you are a pharmaceutical you can take a non FDA approved drug, spend a few million on tests, get it FDA approved, and then charge what you want for the drug – even 5,000 times what it originally cost.

Someone always pays.

You want details. You got details.

Many of you have expressed support for Obamacare, except for how it "doesn't go far enough." Further, you've questioned why there isn't more support. If you have the courage and persistence to dig into the details, which Congress didn't even have a chance to do, because of the way it was presented, read the attachment. Someone DID read all 1000+ pages and here is their analysis, including page references, if you want to contest their conclusions. This piece was written shortly after passage; however, as far as the bill goes, it is as accurate now as when it was written.

Since this doesn't exactly jibe with all the vague rhetoric on liberal websites and in the media, this will probably conflict with your previous perceptions. Here is what I would suggest you keep in mind, the details describe changes and affects that go far beyond mere health insurance legislation. Businesses, mostly small businesses are the unlucky recipients of the burden. Try to place yourself in the position of an owner, or a lender for that matter, who must attempt to swim in these waters.

You may not believe in "trickle down benefits," but there will most assuredly be "trickle down pain" if this law is allowed to remain in effect. its costs will be borne by employees and customers, via price increases. None of us can ignore we are part of a world economy and the eventual result of burdensome, wasteful laws are reduced competitiveness

I agree our current health care system is FUBAR. Republicans agree it is not right. Conservatives agree it is not right. TEA Party members agree it is not right. (Did I cover all the 'bad guys' yet?)

: - )

There are some ideas most parties agree on. There are solutions that different constituencies are in favor of, but not their counterparts. Nobody is evil, nobody wants to inflict pain and suffering on anyone. There are just good faith differences of opinion on how the problems should be solved.

Unlike those who think the differences are so great and the structural problems (read greed, corruption, etc.) that no solution will or can be found (I am not in that camp), I believe small steps in areas with commonality will lead to improvements in law and practice and eventually a solution with enough public approval will develop that it is put

into place. Folks with far liberal and far conservative positions will try to influence the discussion, but in the end, a moderate solution will be enacted. I have hope and faith and optimism.

20111113-13 22:29 SteveG Re: Obamacare Exposed (reply to Dale, above)

It took 60 years or so to get to this point. To scrap it and start over for another 60 years won't get it. It may not be a perfect piece of legislation by anyone's imagination, but what piece of legislation is?

People say they are against mandated medical insurance. We already have mandated medical insurance that all working people pay for: Medicaid and Medicare. Medicaid assists people with disabilities and poor. Medicare covers the elderly. Both are mandated medical insurance.

I spent 40 years working with/for people with disabilities in Indiana - Medicaid was used to pay for services for people with developmental disabilities to live in their own apartment/home with the assistance they needed rather than residing in state operated facilities/hospitals. The assistance they needed was in the form of staffing/food/rent/etc. to either live in their home, apartment, or group home. Medicaid made this possible and one could argue that it was a stimulus package – creating jobs, providing purchasing power into communities.

20111113-14 22:42 Dale "Congressional Trading on Advance Info Not Illegal: SEC"

For people like me who believe all Federal Legislators and staff should live under the same laws and benefits rules/restrictions as the rest of the population, the STOCK law introduced by two Democratic representatives should be a no-brainer.....but in Washington, it isn't. Everyone should be outraged by this information.

Congressmen and Senators are elected by the public. We are responsible for what we get. I want changes and am willing to speak up and vote for changes in bad political behavior. I believe I am a victim, only if I allow myself to become a victim.

By the way, Congressional favoritism like this is one more reason there should be an Occupy Washington movement, not so much a OWS movement. I believe many/most of our current problems come from Washington DC generated policies, laws and enforcement (or lack of enforcement). Greed, fear and jealousy are universal, not just within the province of "Wall Street" although, a relatively small number of senior bank and investment manipulators have had a free pass resulting in huge damage for the rest of us.

"Congressional Trading on Advance Info Not Illegal: SEC" by Eamon Javers, CNBC

June 20, 2011, ([http://www.cnbc.com/id/43471561/Congressional\\_Trading\\_on\\_Advance\\_Info\\_Not\\_Illegal\\_SEC](http://www.cnbc.com/id/43471561/Congressional_Trading_on_Advance_Info_Not_Illegal_SEC))

When you buy and sell stocks based on secrets you learned at the office, it could be insider trading.

But when a United States Senator does it, it's probably perfectly legal.

That's because the SEC has largely determined that trading stocks based on advance knowledge of action in Congress is not insider trading.

If anything, it's "outsider" trading — buying and selling shares based on knowledge of an outside force that's about to hit a company's share value.

Think of it like a trader who sees a satellite image of a hurricane bearing down on an oil rig — and shorts the oil company's stock in expectation of the damage.

Except in the case of Capitol Hill, the members of Congress can be both the trader and the hurricane — buying and selling shares in expectation of the effect that their own action has on the company's stock price.

Some critics say that's probably going on a lot on Capitol Hill — although they don't have any direct proof.

"It's really quite outrageous," said Craig Holman, the legislative representative for Public Citizen. "If you just take a look at the statistics, members of Congress are either geniuses when it comes to stock trading or they are in fact trading off of some of this insider information."

A pair of recent academic studies found that House members beat the market in their personal stock trading by about 6 percent, and Senators beat the market by about 10 percent.

In the 2011 study "Abnormal Returns From the Common Stock Investments of Members of the U.S. House of Representatives," four university professors found that a portfolio that mimics the purchases of House Members beats the market by 55 basis points per month, or approximately 6 percent annually. That study looked at 16,000 common stock transactions made by approximately 300 House delegates from 1985 to 2001.

"Overall we find that the common stocks purchased by Members of the U.S. House of Representatives earn statistically significant positive abnormal returns. Our results indicate that Representatives, like Senators, also trade with a substantial information advantage," wrote the study's authors, Alan J. Ziobrowski of Georgia State University, James W. Boyd, of Lindenwood University, Ping Cheng of Florida Atlantic University and Brigitte J. Ziobrowski of Augusta State University.

The group also noted that stocks purchased by Democrats outperform stocks purchased by Republicans.

The SEC generally does not view trading on the basis of advance knowledge of Congressional action to be insider trading. Both House and Senate ethics manuals say that members of Congress are not supposed to make any personal profit from confidential knowledge, although no member of Congress has ever been publicly sanctioned for such trading.

Critics of the loose rules say they can't prove that members of Congress or their staffs are actually trading and profiting from their positions, but they still believe that's the only explanation for the returns members of Congress generate over time.

"It just boggles the imagination to think that members of Congress are so much smarter than we are and other traders that they just for some reason enjoy a much higher rate of return on their stock investments than the rest of us," said Holman. "I just don't believe that."

And once again this year, two Democrats have introduced legislation called the STOCK Act — or Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act — that would prohibit such political speculation.

Under the measure, sponsored by Reps Louise Slaughter, D-N.Y., and Tim Walz, D-Minn., members of Congress, their staffs, and others in Washington would face a new set of legal prohibitions.

The proposal:

- Prohibits Members and employees of Congress from buying or selling securities, swaps, security based swaps, or commodity futures based on nonpublic information they obtain because of their status.
- Prohibits Executive Branch employees from buying or selling securities, swaps, security based swaps, or commodity futures based on nonpublic information they obtain because of their status.
- Prohibits those outside Congress from buying or selling securities, swaps, security based swaps, or commodity futures based on nonpublic information obtained from within Congress or the Executive Branch.
- Prohibits Members and employees of Congress from disclosing any non-public information about any pending or prospective legislative action for investment purposes.

The bill has been proposed several times since it was first introduced in 2006, but it has never gotten as far as a floor vote in the House of Representatives. Supporters don't hold out much hope this year, either.

Not everyone is convinced that Congressional trading is as rampant as the STOCK Act supporters think it is.

"There ought to be empirical research done to determine whether or not there's actual trading going on," said Jan Baran, a partner at the law firm of Wiley Rein LLP who specializes in government ethics rules. "All we're doing now is speculating."

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<a href="#">20111113-15</a>	23:20	SteveG	Re: "Congressional Trading on Advance Info Not Illegal: SEC" (reply to Dale, above)
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You are absolutely right – there should not be a question about the passing of the Stock Act!!!!

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—Friends of the Middle,  
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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