



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #24 — NOV. 24, 2011

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Best Guitarist Ever!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 24, 2011)

HAPPY THANKSGIVING, EVERYONE! I hope you all get to spend special times with your families and friends.

May you be as blessed as I have been lucky to be, and may all of us be grateful for what we have been given, for what we have earned is so much less.

Now, let's listen to some music, have a drink, and eat a little of that delicious-smelling food!

Salud!

"Rolling Stone Names Hendrix Best Guitarist Ever" by Piya Sinha-Roy, Reuters

Nov. 23, 2011, (<http://93rockon.com/news/articles/2011/nov/23/rolling-stone-names-hendrix-best-guitarist-ever/>)



Legendary musician Jimi Hendrix was named the greatest guitar player in history on Wednesday by Rolling Stone magazine in a list compiled by a panel of music experts and top guitar players.

"Jimi Hendrix exploded our idea of what rock music could be: He manipulated the guitar, the whammy bar, the studio and the stage," said Grammy-winning guitarist Tom Morello in the magazine, citing Hendrix's "Purple Haze" and "The Star-Spangled Banner" as key tracks.

Hendrix is joined by the likes of Eric Clapton, B.B. King, Keith Richards, Jimmy Page and Pete Townshend among the top 10, in a list laden with rock 'n' roll icons spanning decades.

The panel of experts recruited to vote for their favorite guitar players included musicians such as Lenny Kravitz, Eddie Van Halen (who was voted No. 8), Brian May and Dan Auerbach from The Black Keys, along with a selection of Rolling Stone's senior writers and editors.

The experts also weighed in on their favorites, with Pearl Jam's Mike McCready calling Eddie Van Halen "a master of riffs" and Joe Perry praising Jimmy Page's "vision of how to transcend the stereotypes of what the guitar can do."

The full list will be featured in a special issue with four special covers of Van Halen, Clapton, Hendrix and Page, and will be on newsstands and online at www.rollingstone.com on Friday. Rolling Stone's top 10 greatest guitarists follow:

1. Jimi Hendrix [I've missed you for a long time, Jimi. What a tragedy! –SteveB]
2. Eric Clapton [My personal favorite. "Eric Clapton is God!" –SteveB]
3. Jimmy Page [A good choice here, so influential. –SteveB]
4. Keith Richards [Musician—yes; guitarist—not so sure. –SteveB]
5. Jeff Beck [Then why not Carlos Santana or Jerry Garcia?]
6. B.B. King [OK, great. But not Robert Johnson? –SteveB]
7. Chuck Berry
8. Eddie Van Halen [What about Mark Knopfler? I like him soooo much better. –SteveB]
9. Duane Allman
10. Pete Townshend [I love him, but maybe barely doesn't deserve this spot. –SteveB]

FotM NEWSLETTER #24 (Nov. 24, 2011)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

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20111123-01	09:47	Pam	Re: "Five Ways That Financial Elites Are Destroying Democracy" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #23)
20111123-02	09:56	Pam	Re: "Where Does Occupy Wall Street Go from Here? ...a Proposal from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #23)
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20111123-08	13:47	SteveG	"Egyptian Military Using Nerve Gas on Protesters"

20111123-01	09:47	Pam	Re: "Five Ways That Financial Elites Are Destroying Democracy" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #23)
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What a nice reminder that our needs are simple. When they are met, we should be grateful. This is a thoughtful Thanksgiving message. Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

20111123-02	09:56	Pam	Re: "Where Does Occupy Wall Street Go from Here? ...a Proposal from Michael Moore" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #23)
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Michael Moore sort of annoys me, the way he's always in the middle of everything. But he's right. I like Ralph Nader's style better, but Moore's proposals seem just right to me. What is there to argue with?

20111123-07	12:12	SteveG	Re: "Where Does Occupy Wall Street Go from Here? ...a Proposal from Michael Moore" (reply to Pam, above)
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Ralph had trouble getting traction. He had trouble getting on the polls and if you can't get on the polls, you can't get in the debates, if you can't get in the debates, you can't get on the ballots. The same is happening to the ex-governor of New Mexico Gary Johnson – first name could be wrong.

It amazes me the platform that Michael gets by the movies/documentaries he has done compared with the work and platforms afford the above two individuals.

20111123-03	10:08	DaveY	Executive Orders
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I noticed Obama recently bypassed Congress and issued an Executive Order to implement some new law. Not being politically astute, do you know under what circumstances a U.S. president can issue an executive order?

Seems like this would be good way to bypass an uncooperative Congress

20111123-04	10:35	SteveB	Re: Executive Orders (reply to DaveY, above)
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I didn't know much either, DaveY, and you ask a very good question, pertinent to the current problems. The only thing I could remember is that the Emancipation Proclamation issued by Lincoln was an executive order. So I guess they can be very sweeping and effective, although, as you remember, for the sake of permanence, the 13th Amendment was later passed.

"Executive Order" from Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Executive_order)

An executive order in the United States is an order issued by the President, the head of the executive branch of the federal government. In other countries, similar edicts may be known as decrees, or orders in council. Executive orders may also be issued at the state level by a state's governor or at the local level by the city's mayor. U.S. Presidents have issued executive orders since 1789, usually to help officers and agencies of the Executive branch manage the operations within the federal government itself. Executive orders have the full force of law, since issuances are typically made in pursuance of certain Acts of Congress, some of which specifically delegate to the President some degree of discretionary power (delegated legislation), or are believed to take authority from a power granted directly to the Executive by the Constitution. However, these perceived justifications cited by Presidents when authoring Executive Orders have come under criticism for exceeding Executive authority; at various times throughout U.S. history, challenges to the legal validity or justification for an order have resulted in legal proceedings.

U.S. Presidents have issued executive orders since 1789. Although there is no Constitutional provision or statute that explicitly permits executive orders, there is a vague grant of "executive power" given in Article II, Section 1, Clause 1 of the Constitution, and furthered by the declaration "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed" made in Article II, Section 3, Clause 4. At the minimum, most Executive Orders use these Constitutional reasonings as the authorization allowing for their issuance to be justified as part of the President's sworn duties, the intent being to help direct officers of the US Executive carry out their delegated duties as well as the normal operations of the Federal Government - the consequence of failing to comply possibly being the removal from office.

Other types of orders issued by 'the Executive' are generally classified simply as administrative orders rather than Executive Orders. These are typically:

- Presidential Determination
- (Presidential) Memorandum
- (Presidential) Notice

Presidential directives are considered a form of executive order issued by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of a major agency or department found within the Executive branch of government. Some types of Directives are:

- National Security Directives
- Homeland Security Presidential Directives (presidential decision directives)

Until the early 1900s, executive orders went mostly unannounced and undocumented, seen only by the agencies to which they were directed. However, the Department of State instituted a numbering scheme for executive orders in 1907, starting retroactively with an order issued on October 20, 1862, by President Abraham Lincoln. The documents that later came to be known as "Executive Orders" probably gained their name from this document, captioned "Executive Order Establishing a Provisional Court in Louisiana."

Until the 1950s, there were no rules or guidelines outlining what the president could or could not do through an executive order. However, the Supreme Court ruled in *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer*, 343 US 579 (1952) that Executive Order 10340 from President Harry S. Truman placing all steel mills in the country under federal control was invalid because it attempted to make law, rather than clarify or act to further a law put forth by the Congress or the Constitution. Presidents since this decision have generally been careful to cite which specific laws they are acting under when issuing new executive orders.

Wars have been fought upon executive order, including the 1999 Kosovo War during Bill Clinton's second term in office. However, all such wars have had authorizing resolutions from Congress. The extent to which the president may exercise military power independently of Congress and the scope of the War Powers Resolution remain unresolved constitutional issues, although all presidents since its passage have complied with the terms of the Resolution while maintaining that they are not constitutionally required to do so.

Critics have accused presidents of abusing executive orders, of using them to make laws without Congressional approval, and of moving existing laws away from their original mandates. Large policy changes with wide-ranging effects have been effected through executive order, including the integration of the armed forces under Harry Truman and the desegregation of public schools under Dwight D. Eisenhower.

One extreme example of an executive order is Executive Order 9066, where Franklin D. Roosevelt delegated military authority to remove any or all people (used to target specifically Japanese Americans and German Americans) in a military zone. The authority delegated to General John L. DeWitt subsequently paved the way for all Japanese-Americans on the West Coast to be sent to internment camps for the duration of World War II.

Executive Order 13233, which restricted public access to the papers of Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush, was more recently criticized by the Society of American Archivists and other groups, stating that it "violates both the spirit and letter of existing US law on access to presidential papers as clearly laid down in 44 USC. 2201-07," and adding that the order "potentially threatens to undermine one of the very foundations of our nation." Executive Order 13233 was later revoked by President Obama.

It is quite common for U.S. Presidents to issue executive orders that instruct federal agencies to promulgate administrative regulations in order to circumvent the legislative process in the US Congress altogether, though, as alluded to above, this can violate the US Constitution in a number of ways. US Presidents are quite aware that US congressional politics can defeat or otherwise prevent the passage of legislation presidents deem politically important. In this regard, US Presidents have issued executive orders calling upon federal agencies, such as the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Department of Energy (DOE), to amend administrative regulations where the political process of adopting new congressional legislation necessary to implement multilateral environmental regulatory treaty obligations a president wishes for the US to assume would prevent US ratification of/accession to that treaty.

To date, U.S. courts have overturned only two executive orders: the aforementioned Truman order, and a 1995 order issued by President Clinton that attempted to prevent the U.S. government from contracting with organizations that had strike-breakers on the payroll. Congress was able to overturn an executive order by passing legislation in conflict with it during the period of 1939 to 1983 until the Supreme Court ruled in *Immigration and Naturalization Service v. Chadha* that the "legislative veto" represented "the exercise of legislative power" without "bicameral passage followed by presentment to the President." The loss of the legislative veto has caused Congress to look for alternative measures to override executive orders, such as refusing to approve funding necessary to carry out certain policy measures contained with the order or to legitimize policy mechanisms. In the former, the president retains the power to veto such a decision; however, the Congress may override a veto with a two-thirds majority to end an executive order. It has been argued that a Congressional override of an executive order is a nearly impossible event due to the supermajority vote required and the fact that such a vote leaves individual lawmakers very vulnerable to political criticism.

Executive orders as issued by the governors of the states are not laws, but do have the same binding nature. Executive orders are usually based on existing constitutional or statutory powers of the Governor and do not require any action by the state legislature to take effect.

Executive orders may, for example, demand budget cuts from state government when the state legislature is not in session, and economic conditions take a downturn, thereby decreasing tax revenue below what was forecast when the budget was approved. Depending on the state constitution, a governor may specify by what percentage each government agency must reduce by, and may exempt those that are already particularly underfunded, or cannot put long-term expenses (such as capital expenditures) off until a later fiscal year. The governor may also call the legislature into special session.

There are also other uses for gubernatorial executive orders. In 2007 for example, the governor of Georgia made an executive order for all of its state agencies to reduce water use during a major drought. This was also demanded of its counties' water systems, however it is unclear whether this would have the force of law.

A presidential proclamation "states a condition, declares a law and requires obedience, recognizes an event or triggers the implementation of a law (by recognizing that the circumstances in law have been realized)." Presidents "define" situations or conditions on situations that become legal or economic truth. These orders carry the same force of law as executive orders – the difference between the two is that executive orders are aimed at those inside government while proclamations are aimed at those outside government. The administrative weight of these proclamations is upheld because they are often specifically authorized by congressional statute, making them "delegated unilateral powers." Presidential proclamations are often dismissed as a practical presidential tool for policy making because of the perception of proclamations as largely ceremonial or symbolic in nature. However, the legal weight of presidential proclamations suggests their importance to presidential governance.

2011 Executive Orders Disposition Tables, Barack Obama, 2011 (<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/obama.html>) (<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/2011.html>)

Executive Order 13563

Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review

Signed: January 18, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 3821, January 21, 2011

See: EO 12866, September 30, 1993; EO 13579, July 11, 2011

Executive Order 13564

Establishment of the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness

Signed: January 31, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 6309, February 3, 2011

Revokes: EO 13501, February 6, 2009

Executive Order 13565

Establishment of the Intellectual Property Enforcement Advisory Committees

Signed: February 8, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 7681, February 11, 2011

Executive Order 13566

Blocking Property and Prohibiting Certain Transactions Related to Libya

Signed: February 25, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 11315, March 2, 2011

Executive Order 13567

Periodic Review of Individuals Detained at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station Pursuant to the Authorization for Use of Military Force

Signed: March 7, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 13277, March 10, 2011

See: EO 13491, January 22, 2009; EO 13492, January 22, 2009

Executive Order 13568

Extending Provisions of the International Organizations Immunities Act to the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the International Civilian Office in Kosovo

Signed: March 8, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 13497, March 11, 2011

Executive Order 13569

Amendments to Executive Orders 12824, 12835, 12859, and 13532, Reestablishment Pursuant to Executive Order 13498, and Revocation of Executive Order 13507

Signed: April 5, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 19891, April 8, 2011

Amends: EO 12824, December 7, 1992; EO 12835, January 25, 1993; EO 12859, August 16, 1993; EO 13532, February 26, 2010

Revokes: EO 13507, April 8, 2009

See: EO 13498, February 5, 2009

Executive Order 13570

Prohibiting Certain Transactions With Respect to North Korea

Signed: April 18, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 22291, April 20, 2011

See: EO 13466, June 26, 2008; EO 13551, August 30, 2010

Executive Order 13571

Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service

Signed: April 27, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 24339, May 2, 2011

See: EO 12862, September 11, 1993; Memoranda of March 22, 1995, and March 3, 1998

Executive Order 13572

Blocking Property of Certain Persons With Respect to Human Rights Abuses in Syria

Signed: April 29, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 24787, May 3, 2011

See: EO 13338, May 11, 2004; EO 13399, April 25, 2006; EO 13460, February 13, 2008; EO 13573, May 18, 2011; EO 13582, August 17, 2011

Executive Order 13573

Blocking Property of Senior Officials of the Government of Syria

Signed: May 18, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 29143, May 20, 2011

See: EO 13338, May 11, 2004; EO 13399, April 25, 2006; EO 13460, February 13, 2008; EO 13572, April 29, 2011; EO 13582, August 17, 2011

Executive Order 13574

Authorizing the Implementation of Certain Sanctions Set Forth in the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996, as Amended

Signed: May 23, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 30505, May 25, 2011

See: EO 12957, March 15, 1995

Executive Order 13575

Establishment of the White House Rural Council

Signed: June 9, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 34841, June 14, 2011

Executive Order 13576

Delivering an Efficient, Effective, and Accountable Government

Signed: June 13, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 35297, June 16, 2011

Executive Order 13577

Establishment of the SelectUSA Initiative

Signed: June 15, 2011

Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 35715, June 20, 2011

Executive Order 13578

Coordinating Policies on Automotive Communities and Workers

Signed: July 6, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 40591, July 11, 2011
Revokes: EO 13509, June 23, 2009

Executive Order 13579

Regulation and Independent Regulatory Agencies

Signed: July 11, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 41587, July 14, 2011
See: EO 12866, September 30, 1993; EO 13563, January 18, 2011

Executive Order 13580

Interagency Working Group on Coordination of Domestic Energy Development and Permitting in Alaska

Signed: July 12, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 41989, July 15, 2011
See: EO 13547, June 19, 2010

Executive Order 13581

Blocking Property of Transnational Criminal Organizations

Signed: July 24, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 44757, July 27, 2011

Executive Order 13582

Blocking Property of the Government of Syria and Prohibiting Certain Transactions With Respect To Syria

Signed: August 17, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 52209, August 22, 2011
See: EO 13338, May 11, 2004; EO 13399, April 25, 2006; EO 13460, February 13, 2008; EO 13572, April 29, 2011; and EO 13573, May 18, 2011

Executive Order 13583

Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce

Signed: August 18, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 52847, August 23, 2011
See: EO 13078, March 13, 1998; EO 13163, July 26, 2000; EO 13171, October 12, 2000; EO 13518, November 9, 2009; and EO 13548, July 26, 2010

Executive Order 13584

Developing an Integrated Strategic Counterterrorism Communications Initiative and Establishing a Temporary Organization To Support Certain Government-wide Communications Activities Directed Abroad

Signed: September 9, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 56945, September 15, 2011

Executive Order 13585

Continuance of Certain Federal Advisory Committees

Signed: September 30, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 62281, October 7, 2011
See: EO 11145, March 7, 1964; EO 11183, October 3, 1964; EO 11287, June 28, 1966; EO 11612, July 26, 1971; EO 12131, May 4, 1979; EO 12216, June 18, 1980; EO 12367, June 15, 1982; EO 12382, September 13, 1982; EO 12829, January 6, 1993; EO 12905, March 25, 1994; EO 12994, March 21, 1996; EO 13231, October 16, 2001; EO 13265, June 6, 2002; EO 13270, July 3, 2002; EO 13515, October 14, 2009
Supersedes: EO 13511, September 29, 2009
Amends: EO 13515, October 14, 2009

Executive Order 13586

Establishing an Emergency Board to Investigate Disputes Between Certain Railroads Represented by the National Carriers' Conference Committee of the National Railway Labor Conference and Their Employees Represented by Certain Labor Organizations

Signed: October 6, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 63533, October 12, 2011

Executive Order 13587

Structural Reforms To Improve the Security of Classified Networks and the Responsible Sharing and Safeguarding of Classified Information

Signed: October 7, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 63811, October 13, 2011

Executive Order 13588

Reducing Prescription Drug Shortages

Signed: October 31, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 68295, November 3, 2011

Executive Order 13589

Promoting Efficient Spending

Signed: November 9, 2011
Federal Register page and date: 76 FR 70863, November 15, 2011
See: EO 13576, June 13, 2011; Memorandum of May 24, 2011

20111123-05	11:25	Art	Newt Gingrich & Republican Candidates
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You know one thing that strikes me is that, Newt, slimy though he may be, is really too intelligent for the teabag Republican base. When you think how they flit from Bachmann to Perry to Cain etc, each vying to prove he/she is stupider than the other, how could anyone with any smarts have a meaningful dialogue with these people? Must be tough on Newt.

20111123-09	14:24	SteveB	Re: Newt Gingrich & Republican Candidates (reply to Art, above) & "Is Newt as Smart as He Thinks?"
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I loved this other article at Politico (below), but didn't have space for it today. It's hilarious in parts. Sounds right-on to me.

The basic premise: "The intellectual level of debate in the Senate and the House is very low, and it's in that context that Gingrich comes off as more profound than he really is," Siegel said. "He is the tallest building in Wichita."

Up next to the other Republican candidates, with the possible exception of over-the-edge Ron Paul, it's like comparing Einstein to a mosquito. Not that brains or even sense would ever impress those primary voters from the base of the base.

Thanks for the Thanksgiving message, Art. My best to you and your family and all those who serve! (See the special Thanksgiving issue of the Newsletter tomorrow,)

P.S. I was just looking at the 13th Amendment, because the Republicans at one time wanted to pass the "original" 13th Amendment in order to be able to impeach President Obama for winning the Nobel Peace Prize. No kidding. Anyway, the "real" 13th Amendment abolished slavery, right? Do you know that it actually didn't? It's just that, now, it takes a court to make you a slave. With Clarence Thomas around, somehow I don't feel so safe.

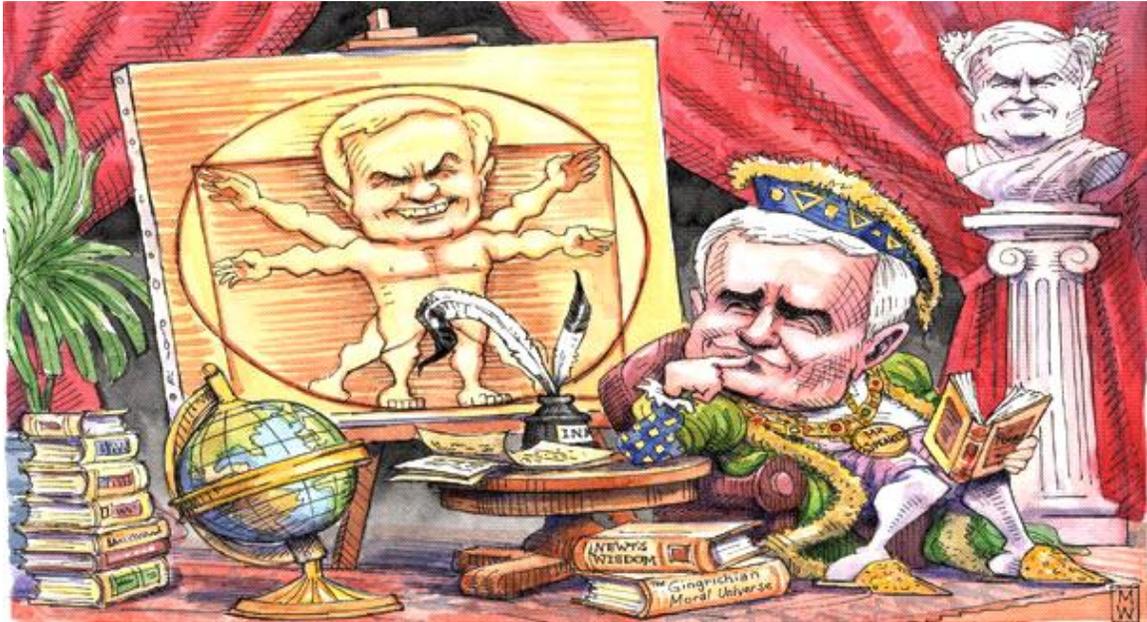
"Is Newt as Smart as He Thinks?" by Edward-Isaac Doveve, Politico

Nov. 22, 2011, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1111/68990.html>)

Newt Gingrich is always on message about one thing: He's not just smart, he's a deep-thinking intellectual with the big ideas to set the country right.

Leading conservative intellectuals who spend their days discussing big ideas aren't as convinced.

They don't doubt he's smart. They just doubt he's as smart as he thinks he is.



Gingrich is interested in ideas and at his best has been highly skilled marketer of them — as when he distilled decades of conservative thought into the "Contract with America" in 1994. But as he surges in the 2012 polls on the strength of professorial debate performances, some skeptics on the academic and think tank right say that the former speaker's showy intellectualism and endless reservoir of obscure historical trivia are not the same as being an original or rigorous thinker.

To the Cato Institute's David Boaz, Gingrich doesn't merit that description: The former House speaker doesn't meet Boaz's definition because he doesn't drill down on ideas, integrate them into a larger philosophy or bat them around with peers.

"He strikes me as a guy who thinks of lots of ideas and never runs them through a sanity test before spilling them on a stage," Boaz said. "I think he has had a tendency to just have idle thoughts occur to him as he's reading the newspaper and then announce them without even running it by a colleague."

That's a common view in the conservative academy: Gingrich is more idea impresario than idea generator, a bright and savvy politician who uses a facade of deep intellectualism effectively — but not authentically.

"Nobody thinks of Gingrich as a wonky type. Nobody thinks of him as someone who has serious positions, white papers, policies on a wide array of issues coming from deep knowledge and experience," said Roderick Hills Jr., a constitutional law professor at New York University who's active in the conservative Federalist Society. "I don't think of him that way, and I don't know of any professor who thinks of him that way."

Lee Edwards, distinguished fellow in conservative thought at The Heritage Foundation, argues that's the wrong standard to apply. Gingrich may not be the kind of intellectual who comes up with many of his own original ideas, but he plays an important role in drawing from and promoting them.

"He may not be as deep a thinker as Russell Kirk or an F.A. Hayek or Richard Weaver, but certainly I'd say he's as intelligent and as thoughtful as any politician who comes along," Edwards said. "I haven't read one of his more recent books, but I think he pays proper attention to and gives credit to all the right people in the conservative movement."

Of course, Gingrich doesn't have much competition on that front, said Fred Siegel, a scholar at the conservative Manhattan Institute, who scoffed at the idea that the former House speaker has much substance.

"The intellectual level of debate in the Senate and the House is very low, and it's in that context that Gingrich comes off as more profound than he really is," Siegel said. "He is the tallest building in Wichita."

Siegel sees the gap between that reality and Gingrich's impression of his own talents as a large reason for why he's had trouble in both the political and government arenas over the years: Convinced of the ingenuity of his ideas, he'll overlook details, contradictory evidence and practical reality.

"He has the sense of himself of being so smart he often doesn't see what's 2 feet in front of him," Siegel said.

In a year in which Republican presidential candidates have been dismissing the need for deep policy knowledge and appealing to the anti-intellectual strain of their party base, Gingrich stands out. If elected, he'd be only the second president in history with a Ph.D. He wrote a dissertation on the Belgian education system in the colonial Congo and was teaching at West Georgia College before his focus on his first two failed congressional runs in the 1970s got him denied tenure, and he quit.

Elected to the House in 1978, Gingrich's political career has been marked by attempts to meld big ideas with the political process in ways that have gotten him tagged as both pompous and profound. He is author or co-author of 21 books that include fanciful policy explorations, alternate-history novels, a self-help book and an environmental treatise he co-authored with the former director of the Atlanta Zoo.

That's a staggering total for a professional author, let alone someone with a day job. And though Gingrich has engaged in his share of intellectual meanderings in the books, he's also used them as an engine for building up both the ideas he finds appealing and the momentum to get them wider support. He's linked these with efforts like the Conservative Opportunity Society, the group of emboldened young congressmen he founded in the early 1980s to start talking welfare reform —13 years before Bill Clinton signed many of those changes into law.

And he's always distinguished with his insight into the future of technology, long before he realized that his presence on Facebook and Twitter could be as powerful in the 2012 campaign as the heavier early state travel schedule he's avoided.

As Weekly Standard editor Andrew Ferguson wrote in the New York Times after reading through the whole Gingrich library over the summer, "Gingrich has called some and missed some. In 1984, he saw more clearly than most that computers would touch every aspect of commercial and private life, but nobody any longer wants to build 'a large array of mirrors [that] could affect the earth's climate,' warming it up so farmers could extend the growing season."

But for all that success, rarely have any of Gingrich's books or ideas been discussed as intellectual works outside their political context.

Gingrich's intellect "can be good in that it makes you a serious person — he can talk about all the problems we face and put them in context, down into the weeds," said Dr. Yuval Levin, a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center who was executive director of George W. Bush's bioethics council and worked briefly for Gingrich during his time as speaker in the 1990s. "It can be bad just in that there are times for a politician when knowing too much leads you to say too much."

"He's a guy who thinks in paragraphs, and when you only have time to say one sentence, you don't always pick the right sentence," Levin added.

And their perception of the level of Gingrich's depth has many conservative intellectuals concerned with how he'd perform as president.

"There's a difference between intelligence and wisdom. And you're looking for a president to have wisdom," said Marvin Olasky, the World Magazine editor in chief who collaborated with Gingrich in the '90s. "Wisdom is knowing

the difference between good and bad ideas. Newt is very intelligent; he has lots of ideas. But I'm not sure he always distinguishes between good and bad."

Just look at history, Olasky said: Many men who might not have been able to match Gingrich's Mensa score succeeded in the White House in ways that stymied smarter presidents.

"Woodrow Wilson was probably much smarter than Harry Truman, but I think Harry Truman was a better president," Olasky said, comparing the most recent commander in chief with a doctorate to the most recent one who never made it much past high school.

Gingrich may be trying to make the 2012 election about who can think deepest, but those who do it for a living suggest that's the wrong way to choose a president.

Charles Murray, the libertarian scholar behind "The Bell Curve" and a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, said that, for his tastes, Ronald Reagan and Dwight Eisenhower possessed what he called "the right degree of intelligence" for the White House.

Citing Gingrich's tendency "to have eight ideas a day, though only one of them will be good," Murray said he's reminded of the line from the ancient Greek poet, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing."

"And I say that with a certain amount of admiration, because Clinton too was really quick and fast off the mark. But in terms of being president, I think there's a benefit to being a hedgehog," Murray said.

Gingrich had a different take when asked after a speech at Harvard last week what role he thought his intelligence plays in his candidacy.

"Well, it's nice to have a president who knows that there aren't 57 states. It would be good to have a president who knows that Hawaii is in the Pacific and not in Asia," Gingrich said. "I don't think it hurts to have a president who is reasonably smart."

He referred to articles using "various phrases about smartest guy in the room" to describe his debate performances. Whether he agreed with that assessment, though, Gingrich said, "I'll let you decide that. I was simply quoting the news media."

Charles Fried, a respected conservative Harvard law professor who served as solicitor general under Reagan, has already decided.

Is Gingrich as deep and smart as he thinks he is?

"I don't think anybody can be that smart," Fried said.

(Reid J. Epstein contributed to this report.)

20111123-06	11:53	Art	Thanksgiving, Our Troops, Truth
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Thanksgiving greeting to all. Hope this finds everyone at home or with family as we enjoy the day that probably most symbolizes what we would all like the United States to reflect. Would ask everyone to spend a few moments wishing well all our troops overseas in not so nice settings, who risk their lives for us all every day.

It is also a time of significant crisis for our country as we definitely seem to have one of the wheels falling off our governmental process. I think what may have been missing a lot lately in much of the dialogue is the truth. Recently I read a study that researched over 100 email creations that circulated widely about our current President over the past few months, yet less than 10% were true. Why is this? Surly this is not the people we want to be.

That does not address the even more numerous vicious hate mails seemingly saturating the internet these days. Is this really what we are?

Something to think about as we give thanks.

20111123-08 13:47 SteveG "Egyptian Military Using Nerve Gas on Protesters"
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Reportedly the tear gas being used in Egypt is manufactured in the USA – haven't heard about the nerve gas below.

"Egyptian Military Using Nerve Gas on Protesters" by Newsmax

Nov. 23, 2011, (<http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/egyptian-military-nerve-gas/2011/11/23/id/418927>)

The Egyptian military has been using a banned chemical agent to deal with hundreds of thousands of protesters, according to several news sources.

At least 23 Egyptians have died and more than 1,700 have succumbed to a lethal gas military forces have been using during the past three days in clashes in and around Cairo's Tahrir Square.

The International Business Times reports that demonstrators have been struck with "dangerous levels of CR gas over the past two days of protests" and Australia's The Age said Wednesday that the canisters are marked "Made in the USA."

CR gas is an intense and lethal version of CS gas, called "tear gas," widely used by police for crowd control.

Wikipedia notes that CR gas has effects that are "are approximately 6 to 10 times more powerful than those of CS gas." CR causes intense skin pain and irritation, and can lead to blindness and death by asphyxiation.

CR gas was widely used by South African police during the height of Apartheid in the 1980s and its use was widely condemned by international bodies.

Former IAEA official Mohammed ElBaradei has confirmed in Twitter that Egyptian forces have used "tear gas with [a] nerve agent."

The Arabist, an Egyptian blog covering the protests Tuesday, quoted an Egyptian neurology expert as saying this "is not the regular tear gas used in January [during protests]" and was causing "extra-pyramidal symptoms — involuntary jerks in extremities and trunk mimicking a convulsive seizure."

"It is some kind of neuro-toxic nerve gas," doctor Mohamed Aden, who usually works at the Cairo University hospitals, told Australia's The Age. "We are seeing people whose upper respiratory tract is in convulsion - we have to give them diazepam to relax the muscles to allow them to begin to breathe again."

The Australian paper continued: "A young man was rushed into the clinic, unconscious and fitting, as the doctor spoke. For at least five minutes it was touch and go as medics administered treatment. Finally he drew breath and the team moved to one of the four patients who had just been carried in, a man with gunshot wound to a leg."

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

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