



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #30 — DEC. 2, 2011**

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

This Is the Way They Go Down, Lying Every Step of the Way

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 2, 2011)

By Herman Cain's own admissions: First, he didn't know anything about a sexual abuse allegation, and he was being smeared by Perry. Then he knew about one allegation, but no settlements, and not two allegations, and he was being smeared by some other guy. He claimed that, "I never did anything inappropriate with anyone." Then he admitted, finally, that there were two settlements, but he didn't do anything wrong. Then he didn't know about the allegations of a third and a fourth woman. Then a mistress of thirteen years was not a mistress, he merely helped her financially now and then, for thirteen years and neglected to ever tell his wife about the woman, who has dates and times and all together. The evidence is mounting when there are five.. Something is amiss.

In this one, I'll side with Nancy Grace and the five (at least) women. I don't think Herman Cain is the considerate respecter and lover of women that his wife thinks he is. He's some other kind of lover of women, and a dishonest one at that. Even if you say adultery and sexual harassment are Herman's private business, and I would tend to agree (though for a Presidential candidate?), it's the public lying and hypocrisy that are my problem.

Beside knowing nothing about even the concept of being President, maybe all this finally disqualifies Herman Cain and banishes him back to the nether land of the business world, where, apparently, behavior and morals and hypocrisy such as Herman Cain's are more appreciated than they are here in the public arena.

Yet here he is on the attack... [below]

My prediction: Herman Cain will be proven to be the hypocritical liar that he is. Then we will finally be rid of him and his preposterous idea that, to run, and hopefully change, one of the most complicated governments and economies in the world, you don't have to know anything about government. Or about the world. Or Libya. Or apparently how to behave with respect to women. I can just see him with Angela Merkel. The whole diplomatic mission would be praying they don't hear her scream when the pizza dude tries to feel her up under the table.

If this guy is your buddy or your hero, then I'm sorry. But Herman Cain owes you, his wife and family, the Republican Party, and America a big apology, that I predict he will not be big enough to deliver.

Remember these words of Herman Cain: "**I never did anything inappropriate with anyone.**"

Let's see, Herman. You had a girl "friend" for thirteen years, gave her money often, took her to Las Vegas, but never told your wife about her? I know that if I did that, my wife would consider it very inappropriate, pizza dude, even with no sex (LOL!). Even if nothing more comes to light, you are a cad. Hold the anchovies!

The latest quotes from CNN and Politico, this morning:

1. "Cain acknowledged his wife was hurt that she hadn't known he had been financially helping Ginger White, whose existence she also wasn't aware of in her husband's life until the affair claims broke this week."
2. Ginger White: "And nor did I tell him that I loved him. It wasn't a love affair. It was a sexual affair, as hard as that is for me to say and as hard as it is for people to hear it. You know, it pretty much is what it is. And that's what it was."
3. "Somebody, somewhere is paying them off to try and smear my character in order to slow me down," Cain said, adding he and his lawyer are trying to restore his reputation. [Now, I'm no court, bet me think about this one. As far as I can remember, this would be the first time such a "prank" ever happened at this level, in all American history. Most unlikely! Especially since the Koch brothers are on Cain's side. Maybe we can just say the guy is lying and leave it at that? –SteveB]

"Cain Blasts Critics for 'Character Assassination'" by CNN

Nov. 30, 2011, (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/30/politics/cain-accusation-affair/index.html>)

(CNN) — A defiant Herman Cain tried to turn the tables on his growing legion of critics and accusers Wednesday, blasting them for allegedly engaging in gutter politics and giving no indication of any immediate intent to abandon his embattled presidential campaign.

"They have been trying to do a character assassination on me," Cain told an enthusiastic crowd in West Chester, Ohio. "They are attacking my character, my reputation and my name in order to try and bring me down."

"I don't believe that America is going to let that happen," he declared.

His fund-raising took a hit, Cain acknowledged later Wednesday, after a woman said Monday she had engaged in a long-term affair with the former Godfather's Pizza CEO.

"The day that this latest one (allegation) hit, fund-raising went way down," Cain said. "But here's the good news. As the week has gone on and this woman who has made these accusations is basically starting to contradict herself, our fundraising is going back up. It's not to the level where it was but a lot of people are saying — you know what? They don't believe it."

Cain, who is dropping in Republican presidential polls, urged his audience to "know the facts" and "stay informed because ... stupid people are running America."

Cain's unorthodox campaign has been under siege in the wake of a string of accusations relating to alleged sexual harassment. On Monday, it took a new hit with allegations from Ginger White.

"This was not a consistent love affair," White told ABC's "Good Morning America." It was "on and off" for about 13 years.

Cain has denied the affair and called his relationship with White "very casual."

Regardless, the candidate told his staff Tuesday that he was "reassessing" his campaign in the wake of White's allegation.

On his official Twitter feed, Cain wrote, "The definition of reassess is: To consider again, esp. while paying attention to new factors. Doesn't sound like dropping out..."

Cain told reporters in New Hampshire on Wednesday night that he does not make decisions "based on a knee-jerk reaction." He said he also will look at his support, which he described as "overwhelming."

He said he would meet with his family Friday.

Cain told CNN's Jim Acosta after his remarks in Ohio that a final decision on the fate of the campaign would come within "the next few days."

In a fundraising letter Tuesday night, Cain wrote that "a troubled Atlanta business woman used national media outlets to promulgate a fabricated, unsubstantiated story about a 13 year affair with me. I am writing you today to assure you that this woman's story is completely false.

"I do know Ms. White. I have helped her financially at times over the past few years, just as I have helped many friends and acquaintances throughout the years. I thought Ms. White was a friend in need of a supportive hand to better her life. Ms. White has made it apparent that she was abusing the friendship."

He added, "Let me assure you, I am not deterred."

On Wednesday morning, White responded, "It's very disappointing that he would call me troubled."

"I'm only here to state the truth and what's happened in the past," she said.

She acknowledged that Cain has given her money. "I've received gifts and money for the last 2 1/2 years consistently," she said, adding that he did not ask for anything in return.

She and Cain were in touch until last week, when there were leaks about the relationship and members of the media began to call her cell phone and family members, White said.

White said she came forward to share her side of the story.

"I can't imagine waking up one morning and deciding to come out with this if this was not true," she told ABC. "This has been a very difficult situation for myself, for my family and it's nothing that I am proud of."

"So far I have been absolutely humiliated, embarrassed," she said.

White said she had not saved receipts and notes throughout the affair because she never planned to make the relationship public.

But, she said, Cain took her on several trips, including to a boxing match in Las Vegas.

"I can't make this stuff up," she said.

Asked whether his recent texts to her included requests that she not come forward, she replied, "Absolutely not. The funny thing about Herman Cain is, never in a million years did he probably think that I would speak out on this. And honestly speaking, I never wanted to."

White said she had seen reports of several women accusing Cain of sexual harassment. For his part, Cain has repeatedly denied all of the allegations.

While her experience with him does not compare, White said, "I feel their pain."

Two women — Sharon Bialek and Karen Kraushaar — accused Cain this month of sexually harassing them in the 1990s while he was head of the National Restaurant Association. Two other women also have said Cain sexually harassed them while they worked at the association, but they have declined to be identified.

White acknowledged she is being sued for libel by a former business partner. "There were disputes and disagreements" with the partner and the experience became emotional, she said, acknowledging that she made mistakes. White said she thought the situation had been resolved.

Asked whether she believes Cain should end his campaign, White responded, "That's something he has to decide for himself."

"Last night I slept very well," she said, "telling the truth."

A top campaign source told CNN Tuesday he expects Cain to make a decision shortly about the future of his presidential bid, based on whether fundraising dries up.

Another source familiar with internal campaign deliberations told CNN the question now is "money and support." The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the already small campaign operation would likely have to lay off some staffers.

"We just staffed up some, but at a minimum it looks like (there is) no choice but to staff down," the source said. "We are in the period of the campaign where we need to spend to perform."

The question is, the source said, whether donors and Republicans believe Cain or his newest accuser.

The story broke Monday night when Atlanta television station WAGA aired an interview with White, who said the affair began after she and Cain met in the late 1990s in Louisville, Kentucky, where Cain was giving a talk as head of the restaurant association.

"I was aware that he was married, and I was also aware that I was involved in a very inappropriate situation — relationship," she said.

White told CNN affiliate WSB that the relationship was sexual in nature.

White told WAGA the affair ended early this year as Cain prepared to announce his presidential bid. But she pointed to mobile phone records she said prove Cain was calling her as late as September, including one call at 4:26 a.m.

White showed WAGA some cell phone records that included 61 phone calls or text messages from a phone number she identified as Cain's private cell phone. The station texted the number and Cain called them back.

© 2011 Cable News Network. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.

FotM NEWSLETTER #30 (Dec. 2, 2011)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20111202-00		SteveB	This Is the Way They Go Down, Lying Every Step of the Way by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Cain Blasts Critics for 'Character Assassination'")
20111201-01	07:00	SteveB	Thanks!
20111201-02	11:35	Art	Re: Simple Economics & Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #29)
20111201-03	11:57	DaveY	Re: Simple Economics & Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #29)
20111201-06	12:45	Pam	Re: Simple Economics & Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #29)
20111201-32	21:47	Larry	Re: Simple Economics & Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #29)
20111201-04	12:13	Art	"Friendship and the GOP's Touched Reality"
20111201-05	12:27	Pam	'A Society That Is Fair & Safe'
20111201-07	12:45	Art	Re: 'A Society That Is Fair & Safe' (reply to Pam, above)
20111201-08	13:34	Art	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: End Bush Tax Cuts for the Rich!
20111201-09	14:32	Phil	Fw: Donald Trump Explains Dumbocare

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20111201-10	14:46	Dennis	Re: "7 Ways to Support the Real Job Creator: Main Street" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #29) & "Bailed Out Banks" & "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'"
20111201-24	20:26	Pam	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Dennis, above)
20111201-25	20:29	Art	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Pam, above)
20111201-26	20:33	Pam	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Art, above)
20111201-27	20:35	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Pam & Art, above)
20111201-28	20:37	Dennis	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Pam, above)
20111201-30	20:46	Pam	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Dennis, above)
20111201-31	21:43	SteveB	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection (reply to all, above)
20111201-33	23:43	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection (reply to SteveB, above)
20111201-15	17:49	Jim	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to all, above)
20111201-16	18:55	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)
20111201-17	18:59	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)
20111201-18	19:02	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)
20111201-19	19:14	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)
20111201-20	19:17	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)
20111201-21	19:18	Ben	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim & SteveG, above)
20111201-22	19:46	Ben	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim & SteveG, above)
20111201-23	20:15	Art	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to all, above)
20111201-34	23:55	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to all, above)
20111201-11	15:02	SteveB	"End Welfare for the Wealthy"
20111201-12	15:37	Pam	Re: "End Welfare for the Wealthy" (reply to SteveB, above)
20111201-13	16:30	Art	Fw: MoveOn Action: Spread Our Video on Marriage Equality!
20111201-14	17:25	SteveG	Fw: The Other 98% Action: Tell Clarence Thomas to Recuse Himself!
20111201-29	20:44	SteveB	Fw: From Sen. Jon Tester (Montana)
20111201-01	07:00	SteveB	Thanks!

Thanks, all of you who sent words of encouragement yesterday. I try to leave most of the personal stuff out of the group and FotM Newsletter, yet keep things real and honest. Sometimes it's a difficult balance, since we are [here](#), immersed together in this "real world" of friends, family, acquaintances, people we know, and more and more people we don't know, but will have the pleasure of getting to know. To me, it's all something unique, a new adventure with unknown possibilities. "Friends of the Middle" seems like a better and better name to me so far.

Again, thank you, my too-kind friends. You mean a lot to me, and are the reason I shall persevere with this "high school newsletter quality trash," and be proud of it!

[20111201-02](#) 11:35 Art Re: Simple Economics & Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #29)

My personal opinion is this stuff creates lots of emotion. For Republicans who think, and I believe many do, the current situation has to be embarrassing. The position and quality of most of the republican candidates and the tea baggers is not only laughable but just indefensible. So people like Dale, who do think, are left trying to shore up positions they know make no sense. I am sure it is frustrating.

Don't feel bad. I just got called an arrogant !%\$*##* by an old GHS classmate. Of course, this guy is a racist bigot but still.

[20111201-03](#) 11:57 DaveY Re: Simple Economics & Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #29)

Don't worry, SteveB, the only thing relevant to this political newsletter is whether or not you are a socialist or communist, not any alleged use of drugs. If no one got upset over your writings, then they are either not reading them or are apathetic to everything.

[20111201-06](#) 12:45 Pam Re: Simple Economics & Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #29)

Having love in your heart doesn't mean you have to agree about everything. Sometimes I get so mad at a politician I feel an overwhelming urge to call him/her an idiot, a moron, a scumbag, a nincompoop, or a complete and total disaster. But I wouldn't say that to a friend (or an enemy to his face). It's like raising kids. You don't say, You're so stupid because you failed your spelling test. You say, I'm sad you failed your spelling test, but I still love you. Condemn the act, not the person. Of course, sometimes you have to do both. :-)

[20111201-32](#) 21:47 Larry Re: Simple Economics & Taxes (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #29)

I don't tell you often enough, but my (our) friendship with you begins with a kid in a high chair, a kid that had a most unique way of reading magazines. I told your mother, "Hey he's tearing the pages out of the magazine". She said, "That is how he reads". Now maybe you convinced your mother that you really could read. If so you were a genius.

If she was just being a terrific mother, then you didn't need to be a genius. A kid or man who has such devotion from a mother will always rise to the top in anything he does, he cannot fail and he too will be devoted to all that he does. Can he get a bit discouraged once in a while? Yes, but he will again find himself at the top in some way that will fulfill himself and the will of God.

I can assure you that you will always have our deep friendship.

[20111201-04](#) 12:13 Art "Friendship and the GOP's Touched Reality"

"Friendship and the GOP's Touched Reality" by Gene Lyons, *The National Memo*

Nov. 30, 2011, (<http://nationalmemo.com/content/friendship-and-gops-touched-reality>)

Like sex, politics makes almost everybody stupid. With a presidential election in the offing, Americans are increasingly inclined to divide into rival tribes contemptuous of the "other." It often seems that the higher the stakes, the more foolish the national dialogue.

Sometimes it feels as if we're living in Jonathan Swift's Lilliput, with Big-Endians perennially at war with Little-Endians over the proper way to open a soft-boiled egg. Of course, Swift himself engaged in furious political and religious controversy all his life. He could also laugh at himself.

But hold that thought.

Recently, I wrote a column in praise of rusticity and the values of my rural Arkansas neighbors. A surprising number of readers saw it as what one called "reverse elitism" — an attack on Yankees and city people generally, although no comparison was stated or intended. Yes, white country folks mostly lean Republican, although readers couldn't have known my neighbor's race, and I have no idea how he votes. Therefore, to a tribalized sensibility, he must be a bad person, and I an apostate.

Lighten up, y'all: If I praise my wife, it's not an attack on gay marriage.

Soon afterward, I received a communication from a friend in the city. He linked to a news item about scientists at HRL Laboratories in Malibu discovering a new super-light material.

"In search of profits," he wrote, "'Big Business' routinely does that which our bloated federal government could never conceive of doing — inventing. This single accomplishment has more potential for improving lives and the economy than any Super Committee. Our response? 'OCCUPY THE RICH — down with the 1%!!'"

Clearly, my friend styles himself a conservative. I responded that I was pretty sure that the Pentagon invented pepper spray, along with the Internet over which our brilliant repartee was being transmitted. As he's a physician, I also mentioned the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which conducts or funds most basic medical research in the United States.

As for HRL Laboratories, it's a subsidiary of General Motors and Boeing, neither corporation innocent of government largesse.

No big government, no big science.

A born straight-shooter, my friend admitted using hyperbole and joked that "right-leaners" like him normally "exclude the military from the federal government. Also NASA."

He'd been blowing off steam. No harm, no foul.

Hippies, after all, can be very annoying. My friend felt besieged by sentimental leftists in college. He once dubbed me an honorary conservative because during a campus crusade against "lookism," I remarked upon the irony of exclaiming over a beautiful poem or a magnificent sunset, but being expected to pretend that I didn't notice a beautiful woman.

It's of such moments that friendships are made.

Speaking of hippies, George Orwell once complained that "the mere words 'socialism' and 'communism,' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex maniac, Quaker, 'nature cure' quack, pacifist and feminist in England."

Feminist, mind you.

Orwell soon volunteered to fight in a Trotskyite brigade during the Spanish Civil War. Yet it annoyed the hell out of him that to "an ordinary man, a crank meant a socialist, and a socialist meant a crank."

Orwell also once apologized to the (gay) poet Stephen Spender for coarse insults about "so-called artists who spend on sodomy what they have gained by sponging." Having met and liked Spender, he explained that "when you meet

anybody in the flesh you realize immediately that he is a human being and not a sort of caricature embodying certain ideas."

He thought it unfair to treat friends with the kind of "intellectual brutality" for which he later became famous — caricaturing the Russians as pigs, their followers as bleating sheep, and furious that no publisher would print "Animal Farm" until World War II was over and Stalin no longer Churchill's ally.

Thankfully, we don't live in a terrifying era like Orwell's. Nevertheless, it seems to be crucial for progressives in a functioning democracy to keep that distinction between human being and caricature always in mind.

In his *New York* magazine essay "When Did the GOP Lose Touch With Reality?," former George W. Bush speechwriter David Frum basically says Republicans have made the terrible political error of believing their own propaganda: portraying a mild-mannered centrist like President Obama as a hardcore revolutionary.

"The business model of the conservative media," he writes, "is built on two elements: provoking the audience into a fever of indignation (to keep them watching) and fomenting mistrust of all other information sources (so that they never change the channel)."

Trapped in a world of "pseudo-facts and pretend information," even "Republican billionaires are not acting cynically. They watch Fox News too, and they're gripped by the same apocalyptic fears as the Republican base."

Should dogma force them into nominating a satirist's daydream like Newt Gingrich, the winning side in 2012 could be the one that kept its sense of humor.

(*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* columnist Gene Lyons is a National Magazine Award winner and co-author of *The Hunting of the President* (St. Martin's Press, 2000).)

20111201-05	12:27	Pam	'A Society That Is Fair & Safe'
-------------	-------	-----	---------------------------------

I find this amusing: the GOP claims that regulating and taxing big money (banks, corporations, etc.) would cut jobs and slow growth, when in fact deregulation (in part by underfunding enforcement agencies) and the lowest corporate tax rate in decades have done what? That's right, cut jobs and slowed growth.

The GOP claims that small business is where it's at. Guess what? Democrats believe that too.

Elizabeth Warren, former Republican turned Democrat and former bankruptcy lawyer, is running for the Senate in Massachusetts. Here are some of the things she wants: "spending on infrastructure, education, and renewable energy. [Stronger] labor unions and...reregulation of the big banks, while easing regulations that make it difficult for small businesses and community banks to compete with giants." (*New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 20, 2011) She was muscled aside in her efforts to get a Consumer Protection Agency up and running, an agency that would have made credit card contracts easier to read, among other sensible things. I know there is some uneasiness about labor unions among you, but think where the workers in the U.S. were before they had them. Everything else is a no-brainer. But here's what really gets me—from someone who knows her well: "As a friend of hers, I worry about whether it's the highest or best use of an extraordinary person's capabilities to be in the United States Senate." (Rob Johnson, former economist for the Senate Banking Committee) This speaks volumes about the abyss Congress has fallen (been pushed) into. The Senate is no place for our best and brightest?!

This same article points out the fact that the Right is mobilized, organized, and full of energy. I would say the Left (oh, how I wish that weren't a dirty word) lost momentum once the Civil Rights Bill was passed, the Viet Nam war ended, and women began to be taken seriously. The big battles seemed won; no wonder Democrats thought they could coast. But times have changed; the beast is slouching toward Bethlehem again (W. B. Yeats—look it up), and we must bestir ourselves. The Occupy movement is, I hope, the beginning of a transformation of our society from a rich man's playground to a neighborhood where everyone can play. What does the Left want? Fairness, transparency, personal autonomy, a large and prosperous middle class, investment in businesses that produce

goods and services people really need rather than figments of a speculator's imagination. What does the Right want? Tax breaks for the top 1% and the elimination of the EPA.

I heard Newt say just recently that Obama is bad because his worldview is "European, secular, and weird." Better health care for all, a more secure safety net, religious tolerance (this has become more vexed with recent Muslim immigration), less crime, fewer prisoners—and Newt objects to this "worldview."?! Why do we have to be better than everyone else? Why are we so exceptional? Why can't we love our country without arrogance and condescension? Everything that is wrong with our country is on full view in Washington, D.C. It's embarrassing and shameful. And when a candidate for our highest office (take your pick) blathers on about how we're the greatest nation on the face of God's earth, always have been, always will be—well, it's just stupid.

Our society is not just divided between the Right and the Left; it is divided between the informed and fair-minded and the selfish and ignorant. There, I said it. Smart Republicans know what I'm talking about. Our deepest divide is not gun control, abortion, or even gay marriage (the issue du jour, as the other two have been done to death); our crucial difference is that some of us believe the few with money and power deserve to set policy, and many more of us want these two defining resources to be shared by all the people. Most of us want a society that is fair and safe. What we have right now is neither.

[20111201-07](#) 12:45 Art Re: 'A Society That Is Fair & Safe' (reply to Pam, above)

Excellent!!!!

[20111201-08](#) 13:34 Art Fw: CREDO Action Petition: End Bush Tax Cuts for the Rich!

I am beginning to think these petitions are the way to express ourselves. Look what has happened to the proposed bill that will at least impede Congress from insider stock trading. It went from nothing to at least having a chance at passage, although I am sure many of our elected friends will figure a way to wiggle out of it.

If you think corporate heads making \$20M to \$30M annually need more help with those corporate jet tax breaks, ignore this. Otherwise worth a look.

From CREDO Action:

It's outrageous. The average tax break from the Bush tax cuts enjoyed by the top 1 percent of Americans is larger than the average income of the rest of the 99 percent. And after a decade of giving money to those who literally didn't need it, the deficit caused in large part by the Bush tax cuts is being used as an excuse to take away the social safety net that protects the most vulnerable members of society. I told my member of Congress and my senators to end the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy. And you should too. You can sign the petition at the link below:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/bush_tax_cuts_2011/?r_by=-4806715-XAFDrXx&rc=mailto2.

[20111201-09](#) 14:32 Phil Fw: Donald Trump Explains Dumbocare

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Trump Explains Dumbocare

No one can sum it up better than Trump:

Let me get this straight... We're going to be "gifted" with a health care plan we are forced to purchase and fined if we don't, which purportedly covers at least ten million more people, without adding a single new doctor, but provides for 16,000 new IRS agents, written by a committee whose chairman says he doesn't

understand it, passed by a Congress that didn't read it but exempted themselves from it, and signed by a Dumbo President who smokes, with funding administered by a treasury chief who didn't pay his taxes, for which we'll be taxed for four years before any benefits take effect, by a government which has already bankrupted Social Security and Medicare, all to be overseen by a surgeon general who is obese, and financed by a country that's broke!!!!!!

What the hell could possibly go wrong?

20111201-10	14:46	Dennis	Re: "7 Ways to Support the Real Job Creator: Main Street" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #29) & "Bailed Out Banks" & "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

SteveG: Were the bailouts started under Bush?

"Bailed Out Banks": <http://money.cnn.com/news/specials/storysupplement/bankbailout/>.

Here's more, revealing how, by saving the sinister bankers of Wall Street, the American people were snookered.

"6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" by Les Leopold, AlterNet

Posted on November 30, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/153274/>)

We now have concrete evidence that Wall Street and Washington are running a secret government far removed from the democratic process. Through a freedom of information request by Bloomberg News, the public now has access to over 29,000 pages of Fed documents and 21,000 additional Fed transactions that were deliberately hidden, and for good reason. (See [here](#) and [here](#).)

These documents show how top government officials willfully concealed from Congress and the public the true extent of the 2008-'09 bailouts that enriched the few and enhanced the interests of giant Wall Street firms. Here's what we now know:

- The secret Wall Street bailouts totaled \$7.77 trillion, 10 times more than the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) passed by Congress in 2008.
- Knowledge of the secret bailout funds was not shared with Congress even while it was drafting and debating legislation to break up the big banks.
- The secret funding, provided at below-market rates, gave Wall Street banks an additional \$13 billion in profits. (That's enough money to hire more than 325,000 entry level teachers.)
- The secret loans financed bank mergers so that the largest banks could grow even larger. The money also allowed banks to step up their lobbying efforts.
- While Henry Paulson (Bush's Secretary of the Treasury) was informing Congress and the public that only minor reforms were needed to protect Fannie and Freddie from collapse, he met secretly with leading Wall Street hedge fund managers — among them his former colleagues at Goldman Sachs — to alert them that he was about to nationalize the giant mortgage companies — a move that would eradicate nearly all the stock value of the companies. This information was enormously valuable because it allowed these hedge funds to short Fannie and Freddie and thereby make a fortune.
- While Timothy Geithner was head of the NY Federal Reserve, he argued against legislative efforts by Senator Ted Kaufman, D-Delaware, to limit the size of banks because the issue was "too complex for Congress and that people who know the markets should handle these decisions," Kaufman recalls. Meanwhile, Geithner was fully aware of the enormous secret loans while Senator Kaufman was kept in the

dark. Barney Frank, who was authoring key bank reform legislation was also not informed of the secret loans. No one in Congress was told.

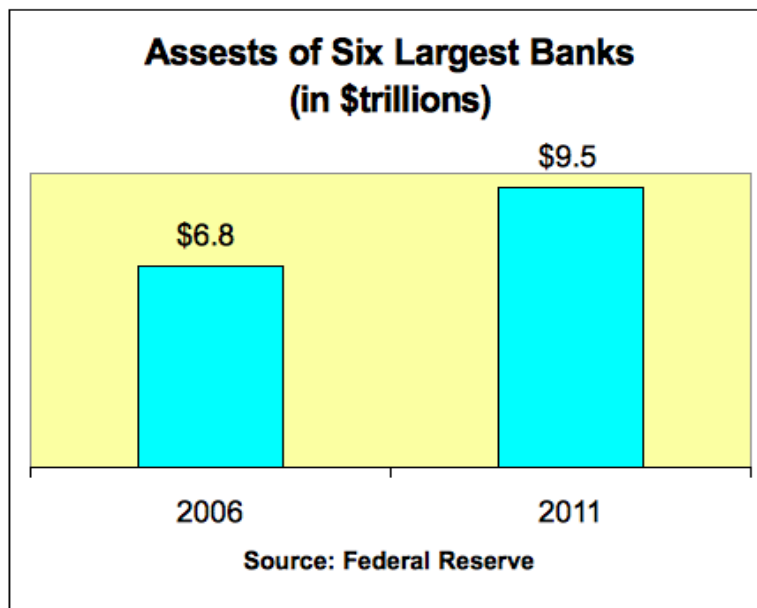
So what does this all mean?

1. The big banks and hedge funds were in much more trouble than we were led to believe.

As many of us suspected, all the big banks were on their knees begging for help – secretly – while telling their investors, the public and Congress that all was well. They had gambled and lost. Under the rules of ideal capitalism, they should have suffered some “creative destruction,” and seen their shareholder value eliminated through bankruptcy, and their managers replaced. The entire banking system should have been reorganized from top to bottom as well. Instead, these colossal failures were secretly rewarded.

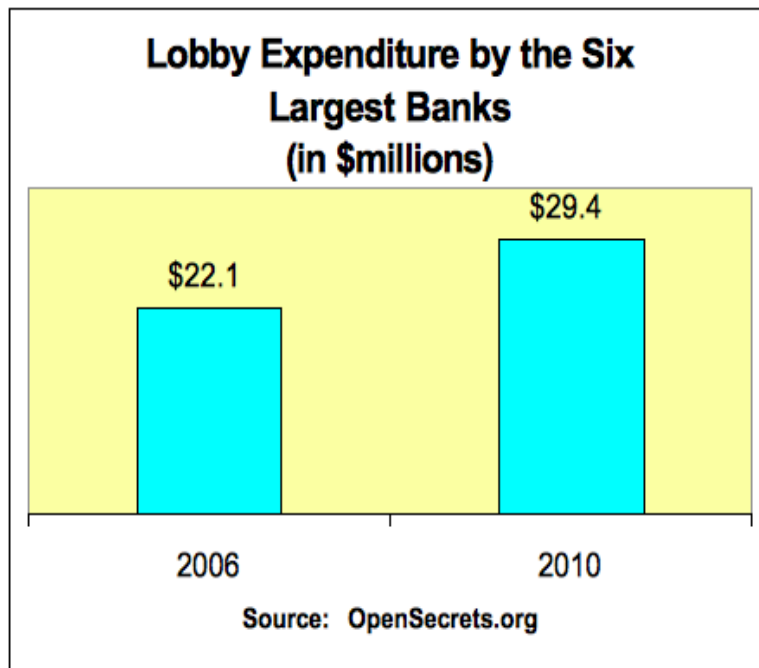
2. Wall Street’s secret government made sure the largest banks would grow even larger, aided by the secret funding.

While Congress was debating legislation to break up the large banks and reinstitute Glass Steagall (to separate risky investment banking from insured commercial banking,) the secret government was using public funds to grow even larger through mergers and acquisitions. Because Congress and the public were unaware of the secret funding and ill-health of all the banks, the legislation was easily defeated. As the chart below makes painfully clear, too-big-to-fail banks grew even bigger.



3. The bigger Wall Street becomes, the more government it can buy.

This part isn't secret. As the top six banks grew larger, they spent more funds lobbying to make sure that they wouldn't suffer any unprofitable impacts from banking reform legislation. So after the biggest banks received hundreds of billions in secret loans, they upped their lobbying funds to maintain their size and power. Read 'em and weep:



4. Wall Street's secret government protects its own.

At first, it's not easy to understand how Treasury Secretary Paulson, the former head of Goldman Sachs, could risk attending a secret meeting with giant hedge fund managers, many of whom used to work at Goldman Sachs. How could the nation's highest ranking financial official dare to tip off these hedge fund elites about the imminent government takeover of Fannie and Freddie before Congress and the public were informed? Well, one answer is that Paulson felt obliged to warn his old comrades of the impending nationalization. Maybe, he wanted to get them out of harm's way just in case they were heavily involved in those markets. Or maybe he also wanted to give them a very valuable tip to profit by. But the deeper explanation, I believe, is that Wall Street's key government officials – Paulson, Summers, Geithner, Orszag (the former Obama OMB chief who now makes millions working for CitiGroup), etc. truly believe the following:

- Wall Street banks are the best in the world and are the cutting-edge of the American economy. They are our future.
- Wall Street bankers and hedge fund managers are enormously smarter and sharper than the rest of us. They deserve our admiration.
- Helping Wall Street to grow and prosper is precisely the same thing as helping all Americans and the entire economy. They deserve our support.
- Secret meetings to provide insider information are normal on Wall Street. There's nothing wrong with warning your friends about upcoming policy decisions that might impact their profits.
- There's also absolutely nothing wrong with providing trillions of dollars of secret loans to the best and the brightest and not telling Congress about it.

It's all a closed loop of self-justification and self-deception: Wall Street is brilliant. What Wall Street does is for the good of the country. Helping Wall Street profit is good for the country. Hiding the truth from democratically elected leaders is also for the good of the country because Wall Street is brilliant and knows better.

And all this is deeply believed by Wall Street and its secret government, even though Wall Street, and Wall Street alone, took down the economy and killed 8 million jobs in a matter of months. Simply brilliant!

5. Wall Street is a clear and present danger to democracy.

Usually, I am not an alarmist. In fact, I often argue against facile conspiracy theories. I want to believe that our democracy still has promise. But, the Wall Street-induced crash and the government's response to it has me very worried. The Bloomberg News revelations suggest that Wall Street's secret government has enormous disdain for what remains of our democracy. The financial elites obviously believe that Congress cannot be trusted to do the right thing even when it is bought and paid for by the very banks it supposedly regulates. As for the rest of us? We're just a financially illiterate mass to be manipulated through the mass media. Our minds too can be bought and sold through careful marketing.

This financial arrogance and corruption is enormously corrosive to our democratic values. Already, many Americans, and for good reason, no longer trust their government. Already, many Americans, and for good reason, no longer vote. Already, many Americans, and for good reason, believe that democracy as we know it is a sham. Wall Street couldn't have written a better script to maintain its domination.

6. Occupy Wall Street is fundamentally correct, but we need more.

The occupiers dramatically attacked Wall Street elites and captured the country's imagination with their 1 percent, 99 percent framework. And the idea is sticking and spreading. But that's only the start. To reclaim our country from Wall Street's secret government we will need to develop an enormous movement among the 99 percent. Although we hope it just happens spontaneously through Twitter and Facebook, we all know it will require hardcore organizing involving millions of us.

At the moment, no one knows what form it will take. But we do know this: great concentrations of power and wealth do not give up their power and wealth without an enormous fight. Wall Street's secret government is more than ready to protect itself, even if it means subverting democracy. Our occupiers have shown great courage in helping us reclaim our democratic rights. Let's hope it spreads...and soon.

Les Leopold is the executive director of the Labor Institute and Public Health Institute in New York, and author of [The Looting of America: How Wall Street's Game of Fantasy Finance Destroyed Our Jobs, Pensions, and Prosperity—and What We Can Do About It](#) (Chelsea Green, 2009).

© 2011 Independent Media Institute.

20111201-24	20:26	Pam	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I do find these 6 revelations shocking, if not surprising. I think by now we all agree that corruption and greed have infected our government at even the highest level. The first step in solving a problem is to identify it. We have done that. What concerns me is how far this will go. I resist contemplating violent confrontation in our streets, but will big money hold on so tightly to their power and privilege that it will defend itself with bullets? The next election is so important. If voters make it clear that this pillaging of America has got to stop, will we see a sweep of reform and a return to sanity, or are all our politicians so controlled by lobbyists and special interests that resistance is futile? Government already has access to everything there is to know about us. I know, I sound paranoid, but just think about it. Our cell phones track our every movement, our phone records are accessible, as is our financial information. Even our home computers have cameras that could be used to spy on us. I tried to read the House Bill, but I couldn't make heads or tails of it. Has John McCain really come out for preventive detention? I cannot believe that America could ever become the kind of repressive state we've always feared and despised, but I can't help wondering where we are headed. I hope one of you will tell me my fears are unjustified and help me believe it. It just can't be as bad as it seems, can it?

20111201-25	20:29	Art	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Pam, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Remember in 1930 Germans thought of themselves as one of the most civilized people in the world.

[20111201-26](#) 20:33 Pam Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Art, above)

That's what I keep thinking. A lot of well-educated, assimilated, well-to-do Jews simply could not believe that what was happening was in fact happening—until it was too late. I know the Occupy movement doesn't want violence, but how far is Wall Street willing to go? God, I feel like a Cassandra. But then, she was right.

[20111201-27](#) 20:35 SteveG Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Pam & Art, above)

If Senate Bill 1867 is as Jim says and what is written on some internet sites, we are not too far from 1930. And all I have is a single shot .22 built in the 1930's.

[20111201-28](#) 20:37 Dennis Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Pam, above)

Pam: I hope one of you will tell me my fears are unjustified and help me believe it. It just can't be as bad as it seems, can it?

It's probably worse. We just don't know all the details yet.

As for the next election, it's more likely to be a distraction than a way to correct the problem.

[20111201-30](#) 20:46 Pam Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" (reply to Dennis, above)

Thanks a lot, Dennis. I'll sleep well tonight. (irony)

Sometimes I think the whole political circus is just a huge side show to keep our eyes off the main event.

[20111201-31](#) 21:43 SteveB Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection (reply to all, above)

I think I forgot to warn all of you that you can always count on Dennis for solid evidence that things are much worse than you ever thought possible.

I agree with Pam. Thanks a lot. :-)

SteveG, you have to upgrade your armaments, but at least you're armed.

Art, are you sure about the Army? Did you take into account all my points. Please tell me your reasoning. Think about Libya and tell me how the battle scenario and strategy might unfold. You too, Tom.

[20111201-33](#) 23:43 SteveG Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection (reply to SteveB, above)

Not really armed — it is in Florida.

20111201-15	17:49	Jim	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to all, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

In regard to comments made about the American military vs. U.S. citizens, there is a new Senate Bill (S.1867) from John McCain that declares that America is now a battleground and gives the military the right to arrest and hold U.S. citizens in America without trial.

This seems unconstitutional on so many grounds that I find it hard to believe, but it apparently has had secret committee hearings and is being sent to the full Senate.

20111201-16	18:55	SteveG	Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

[I'm confused here. I thought the Constitution forbids use of the military against citizens? No? –SteveB]

[Print](#) [Subscribe](#) [Share/Save](#)

S.1867

Latest Title: National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012

Sponsor: [Sen Levin, Carl](#) [MI] (introduced 11/15/2011), Cosponsors (None)

Related Bills: [H.R.1540](#)

Latest Major Action: 11/30/2011 Senate floor actions. Status: Cloture on the measure invoked in Senate by Yeay-Nay Vote. 88 - 12. Record Vote Number: 212.

SUMMARY AS OF: 11/15/2011—Introduced.

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 - Authorizes appropriations for the Department of Defense (DOD) for FY2012.

Authorizes appropriations to DOD for: (1) procurement, including aircraft, missiles, weapons and tracked combat vehicles, ammunition, shipbuilding and conversion, and other procurement; (2) research, development, test, and evaluation; (3) operation and maintenance; (4) active and reserve military personnel; (5) Working Capital Funds; (6) the National Defense Sealift Fund; (7) the Defense Health Program; (8) chemical agents and munitions destruction; (9) drug interdiction and counter-drug activities; (10) the Defense Inspector General; (11) the Armed Forces Retirement Home; (12) overseas contingency operations; (13) the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Security Investment Program; (14) Guard and reserve forces facilities; (15) base closure and realignment activities; and (16) the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

Sets forth provisions or requirements concerning: (1) military personnel policy, including education and training, military justice, and sexual assault prevention and response; (2) military pay and allowances; (3) military health care; (4) acquisition policy and management, including major defense acquisition programs; (5) DOD organization and management, including space, intelligence, and cyber-security matters; (6) financial matters, including counter-drug activities and detainee matters; (7) civilian personnel matters; (8) matters relating to foreign nations, including assistance and training; (9) cooperative threat reduction; and (10) matters relating to military construction and military family housing.

Revises and adds new offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) relating to rape, sexual assault, and other sexual misconduct. Provides procedures for the judicial review of decisions concerning the correction of military personnel records. Consolidates and revises DOD travel and transportation authorities. Establishes: (1) the Joint Urgent Operational Needs Fund, and (2) the Global Security Contingency Fund. Requires a DOD plan to acquire capabilities to detect previously unknown cyber attacks. Military Construction Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 - Authorizes appropriations for FY2012 for military construction for the Armed Forces and defense agencies. Authorizes appropriations to the Department of Energy (DOE) for DOE national security programs. Authorizes the obligation and expenditure of amounts specified in funding tables for a DOD project, program, or activity authorized under this Act.

[20111201-17](#) 18:59 SteveG Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)

The amendments are longer than the summary of the bill.

Surprising, huh? Sarcasm.

[http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/L?d112:./temp/~bdaSgKT:1\[1-380\]%28Amendments_For_S.1867%29&./temp/~bdZdq](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/L?d112:./temp/~bdaSgKT:1[1-380]%28Amendments_For_S.1867%29&./temp/~bdZdq)

[20111201-18](#) 19:02 SteveG Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)

PDF of Congressional Budget Office cost estimate of senate Bill 1867:

<http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/125xx/doc12575/s1867.pdf>.

[20111201-19](#) 19:14 SteveG Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)

From the Library of Congress:

<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c112:S.1867>.

[20111201-20](#) 19:17 SteveG Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim, above)

[XML](#) U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 112th Congress - 1st Session as compiled through Senate LIS by the Senate Bill Clerk under the direction of the Secretary of the Senate Vote Summary

Question: On the Cloture Motion (Motion to Invoke Cloture on S. 1867)

Vote Number: 212 **Vote Date:** November 30, 2011, 11:15 AM

Required For Majority: 3/5 **Vote Result:** Cloture Motion Agreed to

Measure Number: [S. 1867](#) (National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012)

Measure Description: An original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2012 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Vote Counts: YEAs 88

NAYs 12

Vote Summary

Akaka (D-HI), **Yea**
Alexander (R-TN), **Yea**
Ayotte (R-NH), **Yea**
Barrasso (R-WY), **Yea**

Gillibrand (D-NY), **Yea**
Graham (R-SC), **Yea**
Grassley (R-IA), **Nay**
Hagan (D-NC), **Yea**

Moran (R-KS), **Yea**
Murkowski (R-AK), **Yea**
Murray (D-WA), **Yea**
Nelson (D-FL), **Yea**

Baucus (D-MT), **Yea**
Begich (D-AK), **Yea**
Bennet (D-CO), **Yea**
Bingaman (D-NM), **Yea**
Blumenthal (D-CT), **Yea**
Blunt (R-MO), **Yea**
Boozman (R-AR), **Yea**
Boxer (D-CA), **Yea**
Brown (D-OH), **Yea**
Brown (R-MA), **Yea**
Burr (R-NC), **Nay**
Cantwell (D-WA), **Yea**
Cardin (D-MD), **Yea**
Carper (D-DE), **Yea**
Casey (D-PA), **Yea**
Chambliss (R-GA), **Yea**
Coats (R-IN), **Yea**
Coburn (R-OK), **Nay**
Cochran (R-MS), **Yea**
Collins (R-ME), **Yea**
Conrad (D-ND), **Yea**
Coons (D-DE), **Yea**
Corker (R-TN), **Yea**
Cornyn (R-TX), **Nay**
Crapo (R-ID), **Nay**
DeMint (R-SC), **Nay**
Durbin (D-IL), **Yea**
Enzi (R-WY), **Yea**
Feinstein (D-CA), **Yea**
Franken (D-MN), **Yea**

Harkin (D-IA), **Yea**
Hatch (R-UT), **Yea**
Heller (R-NV), **Yea**
Hoeven (R-ND), **Yea**
Hutchison (R-TX), **Yea**
Inhofe (R-OK), **Yea**
Inouye (D-HI), **Yea**
Isakson (R-GA), **Yea**
Johanns (R-NE), **Yea**
Johnson (D-SD), **Yea**
Johnson (R-WI), **Yea**
Kerry (D-MA), **Yea**
Kirk (R-IL), **Yea**
Klobuchar (D-MN), **Yea**
Kohl (D-WI), **Yea**
Kyl (R-AZ), **Yea**
Landrieu (D-LA), **Yea**
Lautenberg (D-NJ), **Yea**
Leahy (D-VT), **Yea**
Lee (R-UT), **Nay**
Levin (D-MI), **Yea**
Lieberman (ID-CT), **Yea**
Lugar (R-IN), **Yea**
Manchin (D-WV), **Yea**
McCain (R-AZ), **Yea**
McCaskill (D-MO), **Yea**
McConnell (R-KY), **Yea**
Menendez (D-NJ), **Yea**
Merkley (D-OR), **Nay**
Mikulski (D-MD), **Yea**

Nelson (D-NE), **Yea**
Paul (R-KY), **Nay**
Portman (R-OH), **Yea**
Pryor (D-AR), **Yea**
Reed (D-RI), **Yea**
Reid (D-NV), **Yea**
Risch (R-ID), **Nay**
Roberts (R-KS), **Yea**
Rockefeller (D-WV), **Yea**
Rubio (R-FL), **Nay**
Sanders (I-VT), **Yea**
Schumer (D-NY), **Yea**
Sessions (R-AL), **Yea**
Shaheen (D-NH), **Yea**
Shelby (R-AL), **Yea**
Snowe (R-ME), **Yea**
Stabenow (D-MI), **Yea**
Tester (D-MT), **Yea**
Thune (R-SD), **Yea**
Toomey (R-PA), **Yea**
Udall (D-CO), **Yea**
Udall (D-NM), **Yea**
Vitter (R-LA), **Yea**
Warner (D-VA), **Yea**
Webb (D-VA), **Yea**
Whitehouse (D-RI), **Yea**
Wicker (R-MS), **Yea**
Wyden (D-OR)

[20111201-21](#) 19:18 Ben

Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim & SteveG, above)

<http://www.snopes.com> is watching this, and currently considers its truth to be "undetermined". I mention snopes, because commentary is typically erudite and well documented:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/military/ndaa.asp>.

[20111201-22](#) 19:46 Ben

Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to Jim & SteveG, above)

This is almost certainly a trap for Obama. Unless he disavows his Constitutional Law Professor background, he will find himself vetoing the military appropriations bill. And, of course, explanations as to why will be too complicated for most voters to comprehend, even if they look for those explanations.

Ugh. It's a great reason for "one issue, one bill, one law" and NO riders, earmarks, or nose bleeds.

If it has merit, invoke it on its merit alone! Let the deal making be TRANSPARENT.

[20111201-23](#) 20:15 Art

Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to all, above)

Hmmmm. Big mistake if correct. Last thing we need is the military involved in domestic politics. And no SteveB, the NRA gun nuts wouldn't stand a chance.

[20111201-34](#) 23:55 SteveG Re: "6 Shocking Revelations About Wall Street's 'Secret Government'" & Insurrection & S.1867 (reply to all, above)

Just read the article on Yahoo about senate bill 1867. The return of McCarthy cannot be far behind.

[20111201-11](#) 15:02 SteveB "End Welfare for the Wealthy"

"End Welfare for the Wealthy" by Tom Coburn, CNN

updated 9:13 AM EST, Thu December 1, 2011 (<http://www.cnn.com/2011/12/01/opinion/coburn-welfare-to-wealthy/index.html>)



Sen. Tom Coburn says it's hard to defend mortgage interest deductions on luxury yachts, such as these lined up in Miami.

(Editor's note: Tom A. Coburn is a Republican senator from Oklahoma.)

The debate in Congress this week about whether to pay for extending the payroll tax cut by imposing a new tax on millionaires will have nothing to do with solving our nation's economic challenges and everything to do with election-year politics. Senate Democratic leaders have already signaled they will use the debate as a purely partisan exercise designed to embarrass Republicans into opposing tax cuts for the poor while defending tax cuts for the rich.

I intend to offer an alternative. Instead of punishing the rich with higher taxes, I will give Congress the option of helping pay for extending the payroll tax cut by ending welfare to the wealthy.

[Read Sen. Coburn's report, "Subsidies of the Rich and Famous"](#)

Every year, politicians on both sides engage in a process of reverse Robin Hood in which they steal \$30 billion from low- and middle-income Americans and provide handouts to the rich and famous.

Millionaires receive tax earmarks and deductions crafted by both parties that allow them to write off billions each year. These write-offs include mortgage interest deductions on second homes and luxury yachts, gambling losses, business expenses, electric vehicle credits and even child care tax credits.

Meanwhile, direct handouts for millionaires have included \$74 million in unemployment checks, \$316 million in farm subsidies, \$89 million for preservation of ranches and estates, \$9 billion in retirement checks and \$7.5 million to compensate for damages caused by emergencies to property that should have been insured. Millionaires have even borrowed \$16 million in government-backed education loans to attend college since 2007.

The goal of highlighting these excesses is not to demonize those who are successful. Instead, by highlighting the sheer stupidity of pampering the wealthy with lavish benefits through our safety net and tax code, I hope to make a moral and economic argument for real entitlement and tax reform.

The most troubling gap in America today is not an income gap. It is an integrity gap — and even intelligence gap — between Washington and the rest of the country.

Families are struggling to make ends meet and are making painful economic choices as politicians in Washington borrow billions to provide welfare to the wealthy. Politicians on both sides refuse to fix big problems and defend stupid policies because changing those policies would involve upending a comfortable political status quo.

It's important for taxpayers to understand that these distortions are not accidental loopholes in the law. To the contrary, these provisions are intentional efforts to get all Americans to buy into a system where everyone appears to benefit while the poor and middle class are being robbed.

In the case of entitlements such as Social Security, progressives have argued for decades that a program for poor people will be a poor program. Yet, Warren Buffett hardly needs the same retirement check as his secretary. Ending welfare handouts to millionaires will strengthen, not undermine, the safety net for people who need it most.

Even Canada has adopted means testing in its retirement program by limiting benefits for high-earners. That fact is we can't afford the system we have today. Only by adopting common-sense reforms can we sustain a safety net for those who truly need assistance.

On the tax side, both parties have been reluctant to alter tax earmarks and deductions, such as the mortgage interest deduction. These are considered sacrosanct.

Yet, it's hard to understand how limiting the mortgage interest deductions for yachts will hurt working families. Defending spending in the tax code is not conservative.

Providing tax earmarks and deductions to millionaires is a tax increase on everyone who doesn't receive the benefit. The only way we will enact real tax reform, and grow the economy, is by lowering tax rates and broadening the base by scaling back these egregious handouts. This is precisely what President Ronald Reagan did in 1986.

Even though the super committee failed to reach an agreement on broad deficit reduction, there is no reason why the other super committee — Congress — should drag its feet. Change in Washington tends to start with small steps. There is no better place to start than scaling back ludicrous handouts to millionaires that expose an entitlement system and tax code that desperately need to be reformed.

20111201-12	15:37	Pam	Re: "End Welfare for the Wealthy" (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Bravo! When a Republican speaks sense, I listen.

20111201-13	16:30	Art	Fw: MoveOn Action: Spread Our Video on Marriage Equality!
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I know some of you hold strong religious objections to this, but tell me what is wrong here please.

from MoveOn.org:

This video is the most viral thing that we've ever seen—it got over 600,000 Facebook shares, Likes, and comments in less than 24 hours. That's off the charts.

Plus, it's incredibly moving. If everyone in the country saw it, it could open countless hearts and maybe even change the national conversation on marriage equality.

It's that good. Can you take a look and share it with your friends and family right now?

Video: "Two Lesbians Raised a Baby and This Is What They Got" (<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=268463&id=33426-19347378-8dCP5bx&t=2>)

Countless research studies have shown that seeing people speak like Zach Wahls in this video is one of the best ways to change people's opinions about LGBT equality. That's why it's so important that we help this video reach as many people as possible today.

Thanks for all you do. –Julia, Milan, Elena, Eli, and the rest of the team

20111201-14 17:25 SteveG Fw: The Other 98% Action: Tell Clarence Thomas to Recuse Himself!
--

Sorry about sending the Clinton survey, didn't realize it was a funding request. Will do better in the future.

from The Other 98%:

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is about to rule on President Obama's healthcare reform - even though he has an enormous financial stake in its failure.

That's just plain wrong.

It's time for Clarence Thomas to recuse himself - join our letter to Associate Justice Thomas today:

<http://other98.com/time-for-clarence-thomas-to-recuse-himself/>.

How blatant is Justice Thomas' conflict of interest? 74 members of Congress urged him to recuse himself from any decision regarding Obama's Affordable Care Act – more than six months before it even reached the Supreme Court. Justice Thomas only *just* revealed that his wife Ginni Thomas' lobbying against the ACA brought their household hundreds of thousands of dollars because of his legal obligation to do so. Even worse, there is the promise of future gigs if she can defeat the piece of legislation before the bulk of it goes into effect.

Thank you for all you do to make this movement real.

Sincerely, John Sellers, The Other 98%

20111201-29 20:44 SteveB Fw: From Sen. Jon Tester (Montana)

from Sen. Jon Tester:

This week the Senate will vote on two different proposals dealing with the Social Security payroll tax. Neither proposal is expected to pass.

I want to tell you exactly why I'm going to vote against both proposals. I believe they are designed more for political posturing rather than what Congress really ought to be doing: working together to create jobs on a long-term basis, to create long-term certainty for Montana's businesses, and to cut spending and cut our deficit.

One proposal, sponsored by Senator Casey (D-PA), is the same plan included in the President's American Jobs Act, which I voted against several weeks ago. My reasons for voting against that proposal haven't changed. It would temporarily extend the Social Security payroll tax holiday through 2012 and expand it to businesses big and small — paid for by raising taxes on the wealthy.

Although I support making sure millionaires and corporations pay their fair share in taxes, I do not believe this particular proposal will create jobs or give our economy the boost it needs right now. A small, one-year, temporary tax cut will not give Main Street businesses the long-term certainty they need to grow and hire.

The other proposal, sponsored by Senator Heller (R-NV), also temporarily extends the payroll tax holiday, but only by cutting Medicare benefits, cutting jobs and extending the current pay freeze for folks in public service.

Neither of these proposals is right for Montana, and neither will earn my vote.

Since coming to the U.S. Senate just a few years ago, I have supported nearly \$1.4 trillion in tax cuts for small businesses and middle-class Americans. And I do not want to see working folks get hit with a payroll tax increase next year. But this week, the Senate will vote on bills that are written with 30-second political attack ads in mind. That's the wrong approach to solving a serious problem.

In November, Congress unanimously passed my veterans' jobs bill, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act. The President already signed it into law. I believe Congress has a responsibility to spend more time passing legislation like that — real solutions that create real jobs in Montana and across this country. Not political theater. And I know we can do it. It was appropriate for us to work together for veterans. It is also appropriate for us to work together to create jobs for all Americans.

As always, I am interested in your feedback. Please don't hesitate to give me call or drop me a note:
http://tester.eneews.senate.gov/mail/util.cfm?mailaction=clickthru&gpiv=2100080891.113814.169&gen=1&mailing_inkid=42602

—Jon Tester [Senator from Montana]

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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved