



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #41 — DEC. 23, 2011

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to All!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 23, 2011)



This is our new Nativity we're so proud of. It's a one-of-a-kind ceramic sculpture by a local Indian artist named Tiburcio. (For scale, it's about 15" wide and 9" tall.) My photo doesn't really do it justice. We love its innocence, sweetness, and life. This is what the world was like before Republicans got to it. **JUST KIDDING!** Let's have peace on Earth, at least this time of year. May blessings rain down on all, just as the tropical showers renew life in Amazonia.

The Friends of the Middle Newsletter will continue on Jan. 2, 2012, stronger than ever, with more than 150 subscribers. Thank you all for your contributions and for caring. See you next year! Have a happy...

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20111222-01	07:33	SteveG	"Mitt Romney Flip-Flops on Iraq: GOP Candidate Says 'We Would Not Have Gone In' If We Knew There Were No Weapons of Mass Destruction" (to SteveM)
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It looks to me like even Republicans now know there were no WMD's and that the war was a waste and a huge mistake. Even the generals seem to think so now. George W is destined for the lowest trash bin of history. He bankrupted the country for nothing. He made us less safe. He made us broke. He made us a laughing stock. Things are better now. Wonder why?

Or, maybe I could be wrong this time around? Who's your candidate? I like Ron Paul.

"Mitt Romney Flip-Flops on Iraq: GOP Candidate Says 'We Would Not Have Gone In' If We Knew There Were No Weapons of Mass Destruction" (w/video), by Huffington Post

Dec. 22, 2011, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/22/mitt-romney-iraq-war-position_n_1164384.html)

Mitt Romney, speaking on Wednesday to NBC News' Chuck Todd, seemed to shift positions on the Iraq War.

As highlighted by *New York Magazine's* Jonathan Chait, Romney explained to Todd, "If we knew at the time of our entry into Iraq that there were no weapons of mass destruction, if somehow we had been given that information, obviously we would not have gone in."

The former Massachusetts governor then gave a more detailed response:

Todd: "You don't think we would have gone in?"

Romney: "Well of course not. The president went in based upon intelligence that they had weapons of mass destruction. Had he known that that was not the case, the U.N. would not have put forward resolutions authorizing this type of action. The president would not have been pursuing that course. But we did not know that. Based upon what we knew at the time, we were very much under the impression as a nation, our president was under the impression, that they had weapons of mass destruction, that Saddam Hussein was intent on potentially using those weapons, and so he took action based upon what he knew. But to go back and say, well knowing what we know now would we have gone in. Well, knowing what we know now, they did not have weapons of mass destruction, there would have been no effort on the part of our president or others to take military action."

Chait points out that Romney previously took a much different position on the conflict. Per *The New York Times*, moderator Tim Russert asked Romney during a 2008 presidential debate if the Iraq War was "a good idea worth the cost in blood and treasure we have spent." Romney answered, "It was the right decision to go into Iraq. I supported it at the time; I support it now." As Chait explains, Romney's debate answer came at a time when it was already clear that Iraq possessed no weapons of mass destruction.

Romney's latest comments come only a few days after the U.S. marked the end of the nearly nine year conflict. The Republican contender has not been shy in his criticism of President Obama's handling of the troop withdrawal. This past Sunday, BBC News reported that Romney said, "I think we're going to find that this president, by not putting in place a status-of-forces agreement with the Iraqi leadership, has pulled our troops out in a precipitous way and we should have left 10-, 20-, 30,000 personnel there to help transition to the Iraqis' own military capabilities."

[20111222-02](#) 07:44 SteveB Video: Cat Soothes Crying Baby

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/20/cat-soothes-crying-baby-video_n_1160759.html?ref=mostpopular

[20111222-03](#) 10:36 Larry Re: Video: Cat Soothes Crying Baby (reply to SteveB, above)

Neat cat! Thanks.

[20111222-04](#) 10:48 Beth Re: "I Cannot Eat Your Prayers'..." (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #40)

Thanks for your story, Pam. It is very powerful.

[20111222-06](#) 12:59 SteveG Quote: About Senator John Boehner

Best quote I have heard lately: "Negotiating with Boner is like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall."

[20111222-05](#) 11:43 SteveB Fw: The Battle to Stop Internet Censorship (from MoveOn)

from MoveOn:

I just had a meeting with Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon, our champion fighting against Internet censorship. He asked me to thank you for all the hard work you've done to help stop Internet censorship.

We can be thankful this holiday season that the Internet as we know it is safe. We stopped lobbyists from big record and movie companies and the Chamber of Commerce from giving themselves the ability to demand that the government shut down websites they're uncomfortable with without due process.

But this fight is not over. The big corporations that want this legislation rammed through are still going to push hard for it in early 2012.

MoveOn members, along with other progressive organizations, entrepreneurs, tech companies, and free speech advocates, created tremendous public pressure to block this legislation. The House version of the Internet Censorship Act stalled during its House Judiciary Committee hearing last week.¹ The Senate version has been punted to next year, and Sen. Wyden has reaffirmed his promise to filibuster the legislation.²

We've got to stay committed to protecting the Internet. In early January we'll need to go to bat for this again to stop Internet censorship with more action and energy. In the meantime, enjoy the Internet, and thanks for all you do.

–Garlin, Daniel, Elena, Stefanie, and the rest of the team

1. "Stop Online Piracy Act Vote Delayed," *Wired*, December 16, 2011,
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=268935&id=34084-20195165- mIWWtx&t=1>.

2. "Wyden Delivers Floor Speech on the Motion to Proceed to Protect IP," Senator Ron Wyden, December 17, 2011,
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=268936&id=&id=34084-20195165- mIWWtx&t=2>.

20111222-07	17:29	SteveG	Fw: DCCC Petition: Tell Sen. Boehner to Stop the Payroll Tax Hike!
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[Flash! The House passed the two-month extension at the last minute. –SteveB]

from DCCC:

Thanks to tremendous grassroots support, we are aggressively holding Tea Party Republicans accountable for blocking a payroll tax cut for the middle class and leaving for their holiday vacation.

As Republicans try to walk away from the American people, we've just launched:

<http://www.dccc.org/page/m/1d63c853/1b4e9c00/396b807e/4e0ce1d8/970424926/VEsH/>.

HowTheGOPStoleChristmas.com, so you and your friends can send a message to Speaker Boehner telling him to stop the middle class tax increase before it's too late.

After you send your message, forward this email to 3 friends and share the site on Facebook and Twitter:

<http://www.dccc.org/page/m/1d63c853/1b4e9c00/396b807e/4e0ce1da/970424926/VEsC/>.

<http://www.dccc.org/page/m/1d63c853/1b4e9c00/396b807e/4e0ce1d8/970424926/VEsD/>.

Your pressure on House Republicans is paying off. Take a look at some of the headlines across the country blasting Republicans for irresponsibly leaving Washington and forcing a \$1,000 tax hike on 160 million middle income Americans on January 1st.

- CBS News: House GOP Takes a Political Beating in Payroll Tax Fight [12/21/11]
- ABC: House Republicans Under Attack in Payroll Tax Standoff [12/21/11]
- *LA Times*: House GOP hearing it from all sides over payroll tax cut [12/21/11]
- *Washington Post*: Dems Go On Offense Over GOP Payroll Tax Cut Opposition [12/19/11]
- *The Hill*: DCCC Unleashing Carville on House GOP [12/19/11]

Even some of their own party are calling out House Republicans on their recklessness. More than 235,000 individuals have signed our petition telling House Republicans to stand with the middle class, not the Tea Party, and support the payroll tax cut compromise before it's too late. Let's keep the pressure on Republicans. If you haven't already, sign our petition:

<http://www.dccc.org/page/m/1d63c853/1b4e9c00/396b807e/4e0ce1d8/970424926/VEsA/>.

Thank you, Robby Mook, DCCC Executive Director

20111222-09	19:16	Cândida	Fw: Petition Site: Stop the Abuse of Homeless Pets in Russia
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<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/24/stop-the-mass-killing-and-poisoning-of-homeless-pets-in-russia/>

from Alan Grayson:

WHAT THE EUROPEAN BANKS GOT FOR CHRISTMAS:

<http://grayson.salsalabs.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=8ocQsHYnGwZshtRsn%2FI0Bvnelx37cf0s>.

Yesterday, the European Central Bank (ECB) announced that it will hand out \$645,000,000,000 in three-year loans to European banks. Which the ECB printed out of thin air, like Monopoly money! The interest rate will be one percent per year.

The ECB will not be lending this money to the Government of Greece, even though that government is running a budget deficit of just under 10% of GDP – and the Greek GDP dropped by 5% this year. The Government of Greece is now paying 37% per year on its ten-year bonds, when it can borrow anything at all.

The ECB will not be lending this money to the people of Spain, even though official unemployment in Spain is now at 23%. Spain's Economy Minister said recently that "Spain faces its deepest recession in half a century." Tough luck; their Christmas tree has nothing under it.

And when the European banks get this \$645 billion, to whom will the banks be lending? Anybody, or nobody. No strings attached. They can borrow from the ECB at 1%, lend it back to the German Government at 2%, lock in that profit, and take the next three years off.

I just have one question. Why?

The world continues to face the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression. Unemployment throughout Europe is over ten percent. Entire national governments are on the verge of going broke. Why would anyone think that THE THING THAT WE HAVE TO DO RIGHT NOW is to hand out \$645 billion in more funny money to the banks? In Europe or anywhere else?

The ECB is a public institution. How can it possibly justify yet another bailout for selfish private interests, while the public is sent straight to hell?

If a Martian were to land in Paris today, and just read the headlines of the newspapers today, he could reach only one conclusion. That there has been a coup in Europe, the banks are now in charge, and they're grabbing everything that they can get their hands on.

Mark my words: at some point, people are just not going to take it anymore.

Courage, Alan Grayson

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Teaching Math in Britain

1. **Teaching Math in 1970:** A logger sells a truckload of timber for £100. His cost of production is $\frac{4}{5}$ of the price. What is his profit?

2. **Teaching Math in 1980:** A logger sells a truckload of timber for £100. His cost of production is 80% of the price. What is his profit?

3. **Teaching Math in 1990:** A logger sells a truckload of timber for £100. His cost of production is £80. How much was his profit?

4. **Teaching Math in 2000:** A logger sells a truckload of timber for £100. His cost of production is £80 and his profit is £20. Your assignment: Underline the number 20.

5. **Teaching Math in 2005:** A logger cuts down a beautiful forest because he is selfish and inconsiderate and cares nothing for the habit of animals or the preservation of our woodlands. Your assignment: Discuss how the birds and squirrels might feel as the logger cut down their homes just for a measly profit of £20.

6. **Teaching Math in 2009:** A logger is arrested for trying to cut down a tree in case it may be offensive to Muslims or other religious groups not consulted in the felling licence. He is also fined a £100 as his chainsaw is in breach of Health and Safety legislation as it deemed too dangerous and could cut something.. He has used the chainsaw for over 20 years without incident however he does not have the correct certificate of competence and is therefore considered to be a recidivist and habitual criminal. His DNA is sampled and his details circulated throughout all government agencies. He protests and is taken to court and fined another £100 because he is such an easy target. When he is released he returns to find Gypsies have cut down half his wood to build a camp on his land. He tries to throw them off but is arrested, prosecuted for harassing an ethnic minority, imprisoned and fined a further £100. While he is in jail again the Gypsies cut down the rest of his wood and sell it on the black market for £100 cash. They also have a departure BBQ of squirrel and pheasant and leave behind several tons of rubbish and asbestos sheeting. The forester on release is warned that failure to clear the fly tipped rubbish immediately at his own cost is an offence. He complains and is arrested for environmental pollution, breach of the peace and invoiced £12,000 plus VAT for safe disposal costs by a regulated government contractor. Your assignment: How many times is the logger going to have to be arrested and fined before he realizes that he is never going to make £20 profit by hard work, give up, sign onto the dole and live off the state for the rest of his life?

7. **Teaching Math in 2010:** A logger doesn't sell a lorry load of timber because he can't get a loan to buy a new lorry because his bank has spent all his and their money on a derivative of securitised debt related to sub- prime mortgages in Alabama and lost the lot with only some government money left to pay a few million pound bonuses to their senior directors and the traders who made the biggest losses. The logger struggles to pay the £1,200 road tax on his old lorry however, as it was built in the 1970s it no longer meets the emissions regulations and he is forced to scrap it. Some Bulgarian loggers buy the lorry from the scrap merchant and put it back on the road. They undercut everyone on price for haulage and send their cash back home, while claiming unemployment for themselves and their relatives. If questioned they speak no English and it is easier to deport them at the governments expense. Following their holiday back home they return to the ****UK**** with different names and fresh girls and start again. The logger protests, is accused of being a bigoted racist and as his name is on the side of his old lorry he is forced to pay £1,500 registration fees as a gang master. The Government borrows more money to pay more to the bankers as bonus's are not cheap. The parliamentarians feel they are missing out and claim the difference on expenses and allowances. You do the math.

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

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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.

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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.

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