



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #48 — JAN. 10, 2012

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Ron Paul

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Jan. 10, 2012)

“You have to ask a question: **Is capitalism really about the ability of a handful of rich people to manipulate the lives of thousands of other people and walk off with the money?**”—Newt Gingrich
(<http://us.cnn.com/2012/01/09/politics/gop-nh-main/index.html>)

Today’s New Hampshire Primary is considered to be a shoo-in for Mitt Romney. The cranky old codger, Ron Paul, could finish as high as second, with the downhill run of southern conservative states ahead. Romney seems unable to increase his national level of support past about 25% of Republicans—hardly a winning formula for the upcoming election against a slick opponent. He comes off as artificial and robotic and, lately, seems to share a proficiency at gaffes with several of his current and former opponents.

With his reputation firmly tied to Bain Capital Management, which he led, and whether he was a job creator or job destroyer (a key question this campaign cycle), Mitt had this to say yesterday:

I like being able to fire people who provide services to me. If someone doesn't give me the good service I need, I want to say I am going to get somebody else to provide that service to me.

Hardly the stuff to craft victory from. And the weaker and more unacceptable Mitt seems to the Base, the more the thoughts and hearts of conservative Republicans (as they did all last year) seek to find an alternative. Maybe soon it will be Dr. Strange’s turn in the sun.

“Paul's 1,000 Points of Darkness” by James Hohmann and Charles Mahtesian, Politico

Jan. 9, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0112/71249.html>)

MEREDITH, N.H. — It’s a nation that permits the assassination of private citizens, a place where the military can arrest you at will. The unemployment rate is higher than officials let on. The economy is careening toward crisis. Violent street demonstrations are on the horizon. The government edges toward tyranny and dictatorship.

Welcome to Ron Paul’s America.

There's no gauzy, uplifting imagery in the Texas congressman's stump speech, no city on a hill. It's a grim, thousand-points-of-darkness jeremiad that makes the rest of the GOP field's somber depiction of Obama-era America seem sunny.

But in a moment when voters' own optimism has faded, Paul's message is clearly resonating. After finishing a close third in Iowa, the most recent New Hampshire poll has him in second place behind Mitt Romney, and he's got crowds showing up at event after event to hear his gloomy scenario of a nation "where our personal liberties are under attack" and an economy that could "go over a cliff and suddenly sink rather rapidly."

"In an economic crisis, which I anticipate will come, if we don't clean up our act the economy is going to get much worse, the conclusion of the destruction of currency can have a lot of violent repercussions [and] a lot of demonstrations in the street, if not violence," Paul said Friday night at a town hall in the student union at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. "So they have all these laws against this. Who knows? If you happen to belong to a group that happens to be considered anti-war, ... you can't tell what they might do."

Paul's an opponent of federal spending, but rather than focusing his attention on the standard conservative targets his GOP rivals attack at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Education, Paul also complains about the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense. The rest of the field worries about an America threatened by the creeping hand of socialism. Paul warns about a tightening fist of fascism.

"Most of the world is run by tyrants and dictators," he told a crowd in Atlantic, Iowa, recently, "and we're drifting that way."

In Durham, he cautioned: "We shouldn't be so intimidated and frightened that we allow our presidents to assume this power to assassinate an American citizen with no charges."

The dark tone adopted by Paul represents a dramatic departure from the traditional presidential campaign speech — it's dusk in his America, not morning. His rhetoric is also distinctly different from what his rivals are saying, even as they criticize President Barack Obama's stewardship. Where they see waste, fraud and ineptitude in federal government and Congress, Paul sees lying, scheming and conspiracy.

"When you count the way they did during the Depression ... unemployment is probably closer to 20 percent. That's why there's a disconnect. People feel worse than the government tells you you're supposed to feel," Paul said. "The unemployment rate is much bigger, the inflation rate is much worse."

Town halls held in New Hampshire on Sunday by Paul and Jon Huntsman measured the chasm between Paul and his competitors. Here in Meredith, Paul accused the federal government of "propping up the statistics" to hide the true state of the economy, noting that "Europe is collapsing right now" and warned of a pending American debt crisis.

Huntsman, meanwhile, painted a more hopeful vision. Speaking in Keene, the former Utah governor said the nation is more divided and saddled with debt than generations before, but also asserted that "we are on the cusp of a manufacturing renaissance in this country" before musing about "the magic of America."

Paul's supporters say they appreciate the Texas congressman's bleak stump speech, noting that he's been proven right on the issues before and insisting that they welcome the refreshing candor of his Cassandra-like message.

"That's the harsh reality of it. It is a grim situation," said Chris Fleming of Manchester, who attended a Nashua event last week. "The whole media blackout plays a role; they don't like having that message put out. Why would we want to walk around like horses with blinders on?"

Ed Aichinger, a Bedford resident who attended the Meredith town hall with his wife and daughter, hosted Paul at their home in 2011. He wasn't a big Paul supporter four years ago but, like many other Paul backers interviewed for this story, now welcomes the warnings.

"Everybody's just in a daze and clueless about what's going on," Aichinger said. "The lights are going to go out pretty soon. I want to keep 'em on a little longer. ... I'm an adult. I don't need sugarcoating."

Paul's campaign chief Jesse Benton said the congressman is simply being honest about the serious problems confronting the nation — which puts him at odds with his foes, who aren't upfront.

"He's telling the truth," Benton said. "That's just who he is. He's running out of deep concern. He has very little personal desire to be president. ... He feels so strongly about trying to help and solve these problems that he's running for president."

Benton also makes the point that Paul offers more than just doom and gloom.

"Ron is always, always very careful to end on a positive note — and that is that he believes in liberty. He believes liberty is the best system and he sees our country waking up — particularly young people — waking up to these issues. And that's inherently a positive thing. But we face a lot more challenges than the establishment candidates want to admit."

In any case, for all his sky-is-falling rhetoric, at one recent event Paul pointed out that there is a reason for hope: his campaign.

"There's no reason to be despondent about how this country is going right now if we do the right thing," he said.

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20120109-01	05:35	SteveG	"Why the Capitol Clamor? Money"
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The Republican battle against unions continues, one state after another:

"Why the Capitol Clamor? Money" by Heather Gillers, *Indianapolis Star*

Jan 9, 2012, (<http://www.indystar.com/article/20120109/NEWS05/201090320/Money-heart-Indiana-General-Assembly-fight-over-right-work-some-say?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|IndyStar.com>)

(Labor-union campaign cash at heart of 'right to work' battle, experts say.)

20120109-02	10:50	SteveB	"Warm South Carolina Welcome for Perry"
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Oops! Darn! It's that pesky 'ol truth again!

"Warm South Carolina Welcome for Perry" by Alexander Burns, Politico

Jan. 9, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/burns-haberman/> -- temporary)

As if Rick Perry didn't have enough problems. The Texas governor was greeted at a restaurant in Anderson, S.C., by a young woman who posed for a photo with the Texas governor while saying it is "**good to see someone as homophobic and racist as you.**" He smiled, took the photo and moved on.

[20120109-03](#) 13:16 Pam Reminiscences

Math and I came to a final parting of the ways in Mr. Irwin's 8th-grade math class. I existed in a state of terror the whole time and felt numbers were in some way out to get me. I still sort of feel that way. I did read a book that made me feel better: *Here's Looking at Euclid*. It's ALL about math, and I found it fascinating. I didn't have to do any problems, but I learned a lot about the majesty of math. It might even be interesting to the math whizzes among you.

[20120109-04](#) 15:12 Dennis "Paul Krugman is Dead Wrong: Debt Matters"

I have to agree that Paul Krugman is wrong on this one. Seems to me he makes the same mistake about economics that the right continually makes. That is, that economic development can be determined (commanded) by political ideology. This also is the mistake made by Mao Zedong with his *Politics in Command* theory during China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Look how well that one turned out.

"Paul Krugman is Dead Wrong: Debt Matters" by Shah Gilani, Money Morning

Jan. 9, 2012, (<http://moneymorning.com/2012/01/09/paul-krugman-is-dead-wrong-debt-matters/>)

[20120109-05](#) 16:13 SteveB Re: "Paul Krugman is Dead Wrong: Debt Matters" (reply to Dennis, above) & "Mitt Romney & the Bain Bomb"

Yet, in many places in the world today, China included, governmental policy (call it political ideology, if you want) is successfully commanding economic development. India and Brazil are also examples. Canada is a great example, though they have us to help out. In fact, the article points out the amazing accomplishment of the Federal Reserve in keeping interest rates and inflation low in a time of massive public borrowing—something that economists always thought was impossible.

This is what America used to be good at. This is what good governments do. This is what we have to get back to—structuring taxes and trade to improve our economic circumstances as a nation, not dismantle the whole edifice.

Republicans tell us government is not the solution to our problems. They are right. But they are wrong, also, when they say that business is the solution to our problems. Only a partnership between the two, working for the betterment of all, can drive the economy to where it needs to be.

As even Mitt Romney knows, "In the business world, we understand that things are not static, they are dynamic and by incentives you can make behaviors change."

"Mitt Romney & the Bain Bomb" by Reid J. Epstein and Jim Vandehei, Politico

Jan. 9, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0112/71231.html>)

[20120109-06](#) 17:13 Dennis Re: "Paul Krugman is Dead Wrong: Debt Matters" (reply to SteveB, above)

No, SteveB, I don't want to call political ideology governmental policy. When ideology narrowly dictates policy, then it distorts economic forces. I think what you are outlining is a pragmatic approach of a collaboration of government and business.

20120109-08	17:17	SteveB	Re: "Paul Krugman is Dead Wrong: Debt Matters" (reply to Dennis, above)
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Yep!

20120109-07	17:14	SteveG	Fw: (from Alan Grayson) Rick Santorum Tried to Ban Weather Forecasts
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from Alan Grayson:

It's getting really hard to be topical. In the issue of *New Yorker* magazine dated January 9, 2012 – that's today -- the lead article is about the rise of Newt Gingrich.

Newt who? Newt Gingrich? Is he the guy who thought that if he stuck four fingers between the buttons in his shirt, he actually became Napoleon?

(By the way, America, Newt Gingrich is very disappointed in you. I just thought you should know that.)

But this note is not about Newt Gingrich; it's about Rick Santorum. Who remains topical until 8 p.m. tomorrow, when the polls close in New Hampshire. Because New Hampshire Republicans are finding it difficult to square a Santorum state ban on contraception with the motto "Live Free or Die."

But this note is not about contraception; it's about weather forecasts. Which are always topical.

Rick Santorum tried to ban weather forecasts. Actually, not all weather forecasts. Just government weather forecasts.

I realize that you could possibly be a little skeptical about that, so here is the bill, at the official Senate website (<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c109:s786>:). Sections 2(b) and 2(d) of the National Weather Services [sic] Duties Act of 2005, S. 786, 109th Cong., 1st Sess.

By the way, Santorum introduced this bill a few months after four different hurricanes hit Central Florida, where I live. In one of those hurricanes, a big chunk of my roof collapsed, right into the living room. So weather forecasts are sort of important in my community. A matter of life and death, you might say.

Now you must be thinking, "Wow, that guy Santorum is a REAL conservative." Santorum recognizes that government weather forecasts are meteorological socialism; they are a serious infringement on your constitutional right not to know whether it will rain tomorrow. Santorum sees that weather forecasts are a government takeover of the skies. In fact, Santorum is such an astute and profound conservative thinker that he probably realizes that traffic lights are a government takeover of the roads.

But this note is not about traffic lights. It's about Rick Santorum and government weather forecasts. And why Rick Santorum tried to ban them.

Here's why. It's because AccuWeather is a commercial weather forecasting company, and AccuWeather employees gave Santorum more than \$5,000 in campaign contributions. Then he introduced the bill. Which subsequently and consequently led to Santorum being named as one of Congress's "most corrupt politicians." Which is saying a lot.

I can picture the conversation:

AccuWeather lobbyist: "Here is \$5000 in bundled contributions from AccuWeather. Now introduce a bill to ban government weather forecasts."

Santorum: "OK. Sure. Why not? Whatever. I love this cheesecake."

And that is what I've seen over and over again. This thing called "conservative ideology" has degenerated to the point where it exists simply to spew out rationalizations for something else entirely: whatever the corporate lobbyists want.

A topic that will remain topical, I'm sure, well after the polls close in New Hampshire tomorrow night.

Courage, Alan Grayson

20120109-12	18:58	Art	Re: (from Alan Grayson) Rick Santorum Tried to Ban Weather Forecasts (reply to SteveG, above)
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Probably the most bought off candidate running today for anything, and that's saying a lot.

20120109-09	18:01	SteveG	"Western Oil Firms Remain as U.S. Exits Iraq"
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"Western Oil Firms Remain as U.S. Exits Iraq" by: Dahr Jamail , *Al Jazeera*

Jan. 7, 2012, (<http://www.truth-out.org/western-oil-firms-remain-us-exits-iraq/1326134840>)

(The end of the U.S. military occupation does not mean Iraqis have full control of their oil.)

On November 27, 38 months after Royal Dutch Shell announced its pursuit of a massive gas deal in southern Iraq, the oil giant had its contract signed for a \$17bn flared gas deal.

Three days later, the U.S.-based energy firm Emerson submitted a bid for a contract to operate at Iraq's giant Zubair oil field, which reportedly holds some eight million barrels of oil.

Earlier this year, Emerson was awarded a contract to provide crude oil metering systems and other technology for a new oil terminal in Basra, currently under construction in the Persian Gulf, and the company is installing control systems in the power stations in Hilla and Kerbala.

Iraq's supergiant Rumaila oil field is already being developed by BP, and the other supergiant reserve, Majnoon oil field, is being developed by Royal Dutch Shell. Both fields are in southern Iraq.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Iraq's oil reserves of 112 billion barrels ranks second in the world, only behind Saudi Arabia. The EIA also estimates that up to 90 per cent of the country remains unexplored, due to decades of U.S.-led wars and economic sanctions.

"Prior to the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, US and other western oil companies were all but completely shut out of Iraq's oil market," oil industry analyst Antonia Juhasz told Al Jazeera. "But thanks to the invasion and occupation, the companies are now back inside Iraq and producing oil there for the first time since being forced out of the country in 1973."

Juhasz, author of the books *The Tyranny of Oil* and *The Bush Agenda*, said that while U.S. and other western oil companies have not yet received all they had hoped the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq would bring them, "They've certainly done quite well for themselves, landing production contracts for some of the world's largest remaining oil fields under some of the world's most lucrative terms."

Dr Abdulhay Yahya Zalloum, an international oil consultant and economist who has spent nearly 50 years in the oil business in the US, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, agrees that western oil companies have "obtained concessions in Iraq's major [oil] fields", despite "there being a lack of transparency and clarity of vision regarding the legal issues".

Dr Zalloum added that he believes western oil companies have successfully acquired the lions' share of Iraq's oil, "but they gave a little piece of the cake for China and some of the other countries and companies to keep them silent".

In a speech at Fort Bragg in the wake of the U.S. military withdrawal, US President Barack Obama said the U.S. was leaving behind "a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq, with a representative government that was elected by its people".

Of this prospect, Dr Zalloum was blunt:

The last thing the U.S. cares about in the Middle East is democracy. It is about oil, full stop.

A strong partnership?

A White House press release dated November 30 titled, "Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq Higher Coordinating Committee", said this about "energy co-operation" between the two countries:

The United States is committed to supporting the Republic of Iraq in its efforts to develop the energy sector. Together, we are exploring ways to help boost Iraq's oil production, including through better protection for critical infrastructure.

Iraq is one of the largest oil exporters to the U.S., and has plans to raise its overall crude oil exports to 3.3m barrels per day (bpd) next year, compared with their target of 3m bpd this year, according to Assim Jihad, spokesman for Iraq's ministry of oil.

Jihad told Al Jazeera that Iraq has a goal of raising its oil production capacity to 12m bpd by 2017, which would place it in the top echelon of global producers.

According to Jihad, Iraq's 2013 production goal is 4.5m bpd, and in 2014 it is 5m bpd. The 2017 goal is ambitious, given that Iraq did not meet its 2011 goal, and many officials say 8m bpd capacity is more realistic for 2017.

Unexplored regions of Iraq could yield an additional 100bn barrels, and Iraq's production costs are among the lowest in the world.

To date, only about 2,000 wells have been drilled in Iraq, compared with roughly one million wells in Texas alone.

[My God, Texas must look like Swiss cheese in places. –SteveB]

Globally, current oil usage is approximately 88m bpd. By 2030, global petroleum demand will grow by 27m bpd, and many energy experts see Iraq as being a key player in meeting this demand.

It is widely understood that Iraq will require at least \$200bn in physical and human investments to bring its production capacity up to 12m bpd, from its current production levels.

Juhasz explained that ExxonMobil, BP and Shell were among the oil companies that "played the most aggressive roles in lobbying their governments to ensure that the invasion would result in an Iraq open to foreign oil companies".

"They succeeded," she added. "They are all back in. BP and CNPC [China National Petroleum Corporation] finalised the first new oil contract issued by Baghdad for the largest oil field in the country, the 17 billion barrel super giant

Rumaila field. ExxonMobil, with junior partner Royal Dutch Shell, won a bidding war against Russia's Lukoil (and junior partner ConocoPhillips) for the 8.7 billion barrel West Qurna Phase 1 project. Italy's Eni SpA, with California's Occidental Petroleum and the Korea Gas Corp, was awarded Iraq's Zubair oil field with estimated reserves of 4.4 billion barrels. Shell was the lead partner with Malaysia's Petroliaam Nasional Bhd., or Petronas, winning a contract for the super-giant Majnoon field, one of the largest in the world, with estimated reserves of up to 25 billion."

Zalloum says there is a two-fold interest for the western oil companies.

"There is development of the existing fields, but also for the explored but not-yet-produced fields," he said. "For the old fields, there are two types of development. One is to renovate the infrastructure, since for most of the past 25 years it has depreciated due to the sanctions and turmoil. Also, some of these fields have different stratum, so once they use innovative techniques like horizontal drilling, there is a huge potential in the fields they have explored."

But there are complicating factors. As a spasm of violence wracked Baghdad in the wake of the US military withdrawal and political rifts widen, Iraq's instability is evident.

"Iraq has lots of cheap-to-get oil, but it also has a multitude of problems - political, ethnic, tribal, religious etc - that have prevented them from exploiting it as well or as quickly as the Saudis," says Tom Whipple, an energy scholar who was a CIA analyst for 30 years. "Someday it may turn out that Iraq has more oil underground than Saudi Arabia. The big question is how stable it will be after the US leaves? So far it is not looking all that good."

Jihad, Iraq's ministry of oil spokesman, however, said attacks against Iraq's oil pipelines have minimal effect on production capabilities, and claimed "sabotage will not affect our oil production and exports because we can fix these damages within days, or even hours".

Whipple, a fellow at the Post-Carbon Institute, says Baghdad had driven a hard bargain with western oil companies.

"The only reason they are participating is because everybody else is and they hope to get a foot in the door in case some new government in Iraq changes its policies to let other outsiders make more money. Remember it is not all the traditional western oil companies that are in there; the Chinese, Russians and Singapore all want a piece of the action."

Wrong idea?

Spokesman Jihad told Al Jazeera that the reason many Iraqis think western oil companies are operating in Iraq is simply to steal Iraq's oil.

"These ideas were obtained during the regime of deposed dictator Saddam Hussein, and these are the wrong ideas," he said. "The future will help Iraqis understand these companies have come to work here to help Iraq sell its oil to help the people, and they work to serve the country."

Jihad admitted that his media office works "to help Iraqis understand the nature of the work of these companies and their investing in Iraq".

Despite the efforts of Jihad's office to prove otherwise, Iraqis Al Jazeera spoke with disagree.

"Only a naïve child could believe the Americans came here for something besides our oil," Ahmed Ali, an unemployed engineer, told Al Jazeera. "Nor can we believe their being here has anything to do with helping the Iraqi people."

Basim al-Khalili, a restaurant owner in Baghdad's Karada district, agrees.

"If Iraq had no oil, would America have sacrificed thousands of its soldiers and hundreds of billions of dollars to come here?"

Oil analyst Juhasz also agrees.

The US and other western oil companies and their governments had been lobbying for passage of a new national law in Iraq, the Iraq Oil Law, which would move Iraq from a nationalized to a largely privatized oil market using Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs), a type of contract model used in just approximately 12 per cent of the world's oil market.

She explained that this agreement has been summarily rejected by most countries, including all of Iraq's neighbours, "because it provides far more benefits to the foreign corporation than to the domestic government".

But it has not been an easy road for the western oil companies in Iraq.

Major western companies, such as Chevron and ConocoPhillips, that had hoped to sign contracts were unable to do so. A third round [of contracts] took place in December 2010 and saw no major western oil companies (except Shell) win contracts. I believe that there was an Iraqi backlash against the awarding of contracts to the large western major oil companies. Thus, in December 2010, fields went to Russian oil companies Lukoil and Gazprom, Norway's Statoil, and the Angolan company Sonangol, among others.

Unlike under Iraq's Oil Law, these contracts do not need to go through parliament, according to the central government. This means the contracts are being signed without public discourse.

"The public is against privatization, which is one reason why the law has not passed," added Juhasz. "The contracts are enacting a form of privatization without public discourse and essentially at the butt of a gun - these contracts have all been awarded during a foreign military occupation with the largest contracts going to companies from the foreign occupiers' countries. It seems that democracy and equity are the two largest losers in this oil battle."

Iraq's oil future

Under the current circumstances, the possibility of a withdrawal of western oil companies from Iraq appears remote, and the Obama administration continues to pressure Baghdad to pass the Iraq Oil Law.

Nevertheless, resistance to the western presence continues.

"The bottom line is that it seems clear that the majority of Iraqis want their oil and its operations to remain in Iraqi hands," said Juhasz. "Thus far, it has required a massive foreign military invasion and occupation to grant the foreign oil companies the access they have thus far garnered."

While Iraq's security remains as volatile as ever, as does the political landscape - which can change dramatically at any moment - there is one thing we can always count on as being at the heart of these conflicts, and that is Iraq's oil.

[20120109-10](#)

18:46

SteveB

Re: "Western Oil Firms Remain as U.S. Exits Iraq" (reply to SteveG, above)

"Prior to the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, U.S. and other western oil companies were all but completely shut out of Iraq's oil market," oil industry analyst Antonia Juhasz told Al Jazeera. "But thanks to the invasion and occupation, the companies are now back inside Iraq and producing oil there for the first time since being forced out of the country in 1973."

Says a lot, huh? Though, if somebody's got to pump it, better us than the Chinese. I hope there are a few spoils to such a costly war.

I just thought of this: **Obamanomics—an economic system which produces economic recoveries just in time for elections.** (WE HOPE!)

[20120109-14](#) 20:01 SteveG Re: "Western Oil Firms Remain as U.S. Exits Iraq" (reply to SteveB, above)

Probably 90% of the reason we invaded Iraq. Seriously doubt that we will see a decrease of gasoline prices in this country. We may see an increase in exportation of refined oil to other countries. I think it is also interesting that Shell is a Netherlands based company, BP is a British based company, and CITGO is a Venezuelan based company. Wonder where they park their profits?

[20120109-13](#) 19:50 SteveG Fw: MoveOn Petition: Order a Full Federal Banking Investigation!

from MoveOn:

Last Wednesday, President Obama stood up to Wall Street by appointing Richard Cordray as director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. For months, Republicans have been blocking the appointment, and Obama's action will finally allow the agency to get to work.

Now, President Obama has a choice to make: whether or not to order a full federal investigation into bank practices during the housing crisis.

Progressive attorneys general have temporarily blocked a sweetheart deal that would have given broad immunity to the banks. Now, the president can decide whether or not to move forward with a full federal investigation that would hold the banks accountable.

The president has the power to order this investigation today and start the year off right. It's up to us to make sure he hears loud and clear that progressives are counting on him to continue taking bold and immediate actions to help the 99%.

Can you sign the petition calling on the president to order a full federal investigation today? Click below to add your name:

<http://pol.moveon.org/bankfraud?id=34566-18997482-mRqjWmx&t=2>.

Who was hurt by the greed of Wall Street's 1%? Fellow MoveOn members like Eleanor., who was sold a high-interest subprime loan even though she qualified for a safer one. Now she is struggling to make payments after her home lost over a third of its value.

There are plenty of examples of Wall Street banks pushing bad loans on unsuspecting homeowners and lying about the value and risk of mortgage-backed securities. But without an investigation, we can't hold them truly accountable for the \$7 trillion they cost the global economy, and homeowners can't get fair compensation.

The president has the power to order a full investigation. Can you help send him a strong message today?

Click here to tell President Obama to launch a full federal investigation into the Wall Street banks and the housing crisis, and insist on a fair deal for homeowners.

Thanks for all you do, Elena, Stephen, Milan, Lenore, and the rest of the team

[20120109-15](#) 21:34 PamB Re: Brotherhood (If Only Republicans & Democrats Could Get Along Like THIS!) (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #47)

Love this!!! And keeping up to date with the Newsletter.

20120109-16

22:05

Paula

Quote: Donald Trump on Obamacare



No one can sum it up better than Trump:

"Let me get this straight . . . We're going to be 'gifted' [What a smart-a*s! –SteveB] 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 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?"



20120109-17

22:35

SteveB

Re: Quote: Donald Trump on Obamacare (reply to Paula, above) & "Donald Trump: We Need a Health Care System Like What Canada Has"

Thank you for the email, Paula. I only find one problem. Now, in your quote above, the Donald appears to be against the President's healthcare plan. But who knows what his position really is? When he said we need a system like Canada's, I believe he was 100% correct. The rest is just politics as usual.

And I seriously wonder if Donald Trump has read the bill himself? Odds must be at least 100,000 to 1 against it.

"Donald Trump: We Need a Health Care System Like What Canada Has" by Doug Mataconis, Outside the Beltway

Apr. 15, 2011, (<http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/donald-trump-we-need-a-health-care-system-like-what-canada-has/>)

Donald Trump may be running as a supposed conservative now, but ten years ago he was sounding a lot like Barack Obama:

For a few months, Trump hashed out a policy agenda. It wasn't much, but it was enough to fill a quickie book: *The America We Deserve*, published in January 2000. The Trump of 11 years ago sounds a lot like the Trump who has taken over cable TV and the Huffington Post top banner these past few weeks: He's against immigration amnesty. He's worried about terrorism. He's rending his hair over America's economic decline. Oh, and there were a few other things.

"We must have universal healthcare," wrote Trump. "I'm a conservative on most issues but a liberal on this one. We should not hear so many stories of families ruined by healthcare expenses."

The goal of health care reform, wrote Trump, should be a system that looks a lot like Canada. "Doctors might be paid less than they are now, as is the case in Canada, but they would be able to treat more patients because of the reduction in their paperwork," he writes.

The Canadian plan also helps Canadians live longer and healthier than Americans. There are fewer medical lawsuits, less loss of labor to sickness, and lower costs to companies paying for the medical care of their employees. If the program were in place in Massachusetts in 1999 it would have reduced administrative costs by \$2.5 million. We need, as a nation, to reexamine the single-payer plan, as many individual states are doing.

Trump also didn't think much of Republicans back then:

The year was 1999. Pets.com stock was trading at \$11 per share. Nobody was all that interested in Bill Clinton's birth certificate. More important, the Republican Party's nomination looked ungettable, sure to be captured by George W. Bush. So Trump left the party.

"I really believe the Republicans are just too crazy, right?" he told Tim Russert on "Meet the Press". "I mean, what's going on is just nuts."

You're being played, Republicans. It's really rather obvious, and the extent to which you're pandering to this guy makes you the kind of sucker that would make P.T. Barnum giddy with delight.

20120109-11	18:56	Art	Video: Auld Lang Syne
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This a little late but really well done. Beautiful voice and lovely pictures. Makes me think we really ought to try to save this planet.

Anyone recognize the ski run at the start of the video. It looks familiar but I can't quite place it. Reminds me a little of the Valluga run at St. Anton but don't think that's it?

<http://biggeekdad.com/2011/01/auld-lang-syne/>

20120109-18	23:05	SteveB	Re: Video: Auld Lang Syne (reply to Art, above)
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From SteveB (Jan. 9, 2012, 23:05)—reply to Art, above, Auld Lang Syne

Cool. Haha. Ya, maybe we ought to save the planet. No, on second thought, it's not worth it. ^_^

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

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