



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #56 — JAN. 20, 2012

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Shakespearean Drama

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Jan. 20, 2012)



Selecting an American President is played upon such a huge stage. I wonder if it must be quite so titanic? We make it this way, largely, so it must be what we want. We want it all to be heroic. Maybe that's why we're so disappointed when one of our favorites—be it Perry or Obama—proves to be more human than hero.

The Republican debate in South Carolina last night was indeed high drama.

After all, we are talking about a little bit of power here, even in these times of decline. I find it kind of fun to think of the whole thing in the grandest Shakespearean terms possible. I could start with some of those out of the race.

Herman Cain seems to match up with Othello pretty well. There's the stupid thing that Othello is the only black character I can remember out of Shakespeare. But more than that, the tragic falls of both had something to do with women and mysterious, devious outside forces. Poor Herman was brought down pretty low, almost as if to show how easily it can be done, in the case of some men, anyway.

Michele Bachmann is Lady Macbeth. Maybe more like Lady Macbeth combined with the three witches. Maybe that's what the magic spell was!

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.
[Make me President on the double!]

Rick Perry is a Clown. No elevation to "Fool" (see below).

Rick Santorum reminds me of Hamlet. He turned-in a masterful performance in this debate, yet somehow seems torn. He doesn't really know which way to turn. He hates gays so violently and passionately that you have to wonder if there's some tinge of sexuality there. Maybe he's secretly, deathly afraid that he's gay? Maybe he always wears women's underwear to remind him that he's not? Maybe he loves the definition of "santorum"? Who knows. Don't ask me how any of that works. Ask Santorum. But as with so many "holier than thou" types, I sense the basic building blocks of some major hypocrisy in Rick Santorum. I wonder if he spends much time in Buenos Aires?

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock is intent of extracting his "pound of flesh" for gold, which Antonio owes him. Portia, the bride of Antonio's friend, attempts to save him:

Portia: Then must the Jew be merciful.

Shylock: On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

Portia: The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

This Christian appeal gets nowhere with Shylock, just as similar appeals from America's poor fall on the deaf ears Republican conservatives and Libertarian Ron Paul.

Mitt Romney is the classic Fool. Make-up. Superficial. Facile. Fake. A fool. Listen to him giggle. When I learned that his wife is known in the family as the "Mitt Stabilizer", I knew there was a fool problem.

To me, Newt Gingrich is the most complex character of all. I see elements of Henry VIII, Iago, and Sir John Falstaff. He certainly seems to have problems with women and divorce. Now, I can't say I'm totally against open marriage, even if Rick Santorum and Mitt Romney can turn it down, I'm not so quick to condemn. And I'm all for virility in a President. It's just that, with Newt, you don't know it's virility or just the Viagra talking. The Iago is the devious, lurking, coiling, springing to the attack side of Newt, like we saw in this debate's opening salvo. And Falstaff not because "the better part of valor is discretion" (haha), but because of how high Newt can get when he's UP, like last night when he talked to the press after the debate:

The world's mine oyster
Which I with sword will open.

(I wonder if this quote would, then, refer to America or to Callista or to both?)

"The GOP Debate: 6 Takeaways" by Maggie Haberman, Politico

Jan. 20, 2012, (<http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=00747E80-BE70-4AF4-8E97-1AE9A23164A5>)

In less than 48 hours, Newt Gingrich will know if his good night was good enough.

The former House speaker was the standout — and early — star of Thursday's CNN-hosted Republican debate in South Carolina, the last before voting begins in the first-in-the-South primary.

Below are POLITICO's six takeaways on the crackling debate:

1. Newt Gingrich saw the pitch coming.

Gingrich was looking for a fastball and proceeded to knock it out of the park. Yes, it's a sports cliché, but it's a fitting one here. Gingrich knew full well that CNN moderator John King would ask him about his ex-wife's claims that the former House Speaker had sought an "open marriage" over a decade ago. And CNN made a clear choice to open with it, knowing that would make the network a part of the news story.

Gingrich came prepared.

The former Georgia congressman, who stoked debate hall crowds at several of these forums, had the audience on its feet applauding him as he bashed King, his network and ABC News for the "despicable" move to make his messy marital past part of the discussion.

The crowd ate up the red meat about the "elite media," and the tone of the debate was immediately set. Nothing that happened after those first five minutes were anywhere near as memorable. Gingrich had the type of moment that GOP strategist Alex Castellanos has described as a critical "moment of strength."

This is, of course, Gingrich's specialty - whipping up the GOP base's distrust of the mainstream media. He himself has said on the trail that it's perfectly appropriate for voters to ask him about his personal history, a statement at odds with his indignation Thursday evening.

Still, the crowd's strong response inoculated him over the ex-wives issue and made it all but impossible for other candidates to attack him. Rick Santorum came the closest to touching it, but veered away just before he crossed the line into booing territory.

It was, simply put, Gingrich's best single moment in any 2012 debate, and he's had many good ones. His overall performance in Monday's debate was better, but coming so close to the primary election, last night was exactly what he needed.

2. Mitt Romney whiffed at the plate.

The issue of Romney's tax returns — and his muddled response about whether he'd release them at all - has dominated the headlines and the cable news networks for the last few days, along with the somewhat unfair reports about money in Cayman Islands accounts. Even his ally Chris Christie has said he needs to get on with it, conform to tradition, and eliminate doubts creeping into voters' minds.

So it was surprising that Romney had such a marble-mouthed response when King asked him about releasing his tax forms. King noted that Romney's father George, when he was running for president decades ago, set the precedent for releasing multiple years of tax returns.

Will Romney do the same? "Maybe," he said, to boos. How the framing of that question could have caught him off guard is unclear.

Tax returns are not, as Romney advisers correctly assert privately, generally an issue voters really care about. But the combination of Romney's personal wealth and a narrative about him being distant and opaque is making it a sustained media issue.

The discussion of abortion and Romneycare — which Romney, in an apparent first, referred to as "Romneycare" — didn't really favor him, since Santorum and Gingrich landed some shots on him.

Romney also declared during that back-and-forth that he rarely hears attacks on his character and integrity, which might come as a surprise to the Democrats who have been hammering him as lacking a "core."

But Romney didn't have a bad night overall, and had some strong spots, including his statement that he wished the candidates had all spent more time focused on Barack Obama.

He was blessed by Rick Santorum's practice of drilling down with gusto on Gingrich, a fight that kept some of the attention away from him. Romney had, ironically, one of his best moments, also during the issue of taxes, when he said that he would not apologize for being successful, and underscored he'd earned his own wealth.

For someone who has seemed uncomfortable dealing with questions about his money — earlier he awkwardly stated he'd lived on the "real streets of America" — this was a strong note.

But it was somewhat lost amid the "maybe" response, and the evening did nothing to change the sense that Gingrich is the momentum candidate in South Carolina.

3. Rick Santorum will not be ignored.

On points, Rick Santorum was actually the winner of the debate. Alas, debates are not won on points, but key moments.

Still, Santorum had his best debate of the season, and made clear he is not going to lie down for Gingrich, who is hoping upon hope that he will.

Santorum's attacks were measured but sharp. He did what Rick Perry and Michele Bachmann could never quite figure out how to do - hit Gingrich and Romney hard, where they live, and sustain the pressure.

He cleverly yoked the two together repeatedly, especially on Romneycare. He went straight at Gingrich over the congressional check-kiting scandal of the early 1990s.

Santorum also leveled the charge that many Romney backers also have made about Gingrich — he's unreliable, and there is the prospect of waking up to terrible headlines every morning if Gingrich is the GOP nominee.

He twice declared he'd won the Iowa caucuses, a fact that's in some dispute, but which nonetheless served him well. As for Gingrich's push to get him out of the GOP race despite the fact that the former Pennsylvania senator outperformed him in the only two contests, Santorum summed it up this way: "These are not cogent thoughts."

Santorum is every bit as good a debater as Gingrich — and in some ways, he's better. He tends to make his points more cleanly and not get lost in the moment. That has not come through very often, but it did tonight.

4. Bad, grandiose **Newt** is still lurking.

Gingrich tossed out a few discordant lines Thursday that will endure.

At the top of that list was this: "I have grandiose thoughts."

Gingrich probably meant "grand" instead of "grandiose." But it's a case, unfortunately, of truer words never spoken, and of inadvertent self-parody. The comment underscored Santorum's comment about Gingrich's penchant for self-inflicted wounds.

While he had a few sharp lines about jobs and the economy, overall it was not his tightest performance. And, in a too-cute move, Gingrich put out his tax returns, after deriding Mitt Romney for days on the issue, in the middle of the debate when no one was paying attention — a bit of a low mark in a discussion of transparency.

5. Ron Paul faded from view.

Literally. To the point where he was frantically waving his arms at moderator King when the debate hall crowd reminded him that the congressman had gotten no time to answer a specific question.

The debates this cycle, unlike the 2008 race, have not been Paul's calling card. He has a tendency to disappear, or to try to suppress some of his famously fringy instincts, none of which has made him much of a factor on stage.

Last night was no exception. He had no real standout lines, and repeatedly reminded King that he had experience as a doctor that's relevant to discussions about health care and abortion.

Candidates need to seize the moments they can to get attention, and that's not Paul's specialty.

Still, the fact that the audience repeatedly called out to King to call on Paul is a reminder that he speaks to a real constituency in the GOP — and that he may still be the candidate that Romney haters/conservatives turn to in a two-man race.

6. Smaller debates make better theater.

Not necessarily better substance, mind you. There was not a single question about foreign policy, Iran, Israel, China or North Korea during the 120-minute event.

But without the cluster of eight candidates on one stage, the four who remain got a whole lot more attention, and interacted on a much more intense level.

Some of it is due to the fact that the remaining candidates know they're running out of time to make a dent in Romney's frontrunner status. But there's also an intimacy to the four-candidate set up that made it more intense and more focused than earlier debates.

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20120119-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Montana: 'The Last Best Place' (for Jim & BrentR)

20120119-01	08:32	SteveB	"Iowa Republicans to Call Caucus Result 'Split Decision'"
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This gives me a lot of confidence in the voting process. If Iowa can't accurately count 122,000 votes, what happens when there are millions? Gulp!

How can they not have an actual vote tally?

And if R0mney by 8 was a "Win", why is DoucheBag by 34 called a "split decision"?

"Iowa Republicans to Call Caucus Result Split Decision" by Reuters

Jan. 19, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/iowa-republicans-call-caucus-result-split-decision-114838850.html>)

(WASHINGTON) The Iowa Republican Party will certify this month's presidential caucuses as a split decision between former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney and former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum, citing missing data from eight precincts, the Des Moines Register reported on Thursday.

The party had previously awarded the contest to Romney, with an eight vote margin. The official certified caucus results are due out Thursday at 8:15 a.m. local time (1415 GMT).

The Register said the new count put Santorum ahead by 34 votes. However, results from any one of the eight precincts with "missing data" could hold an advantage for Romney, the Register reported.

"It's a split decision," the newspaper said, citing a party official in the state. There are too many holes in the certified total from the caucuses to know for certain who won, it said.

GOP officials discovered inaccuracies in 131 precincts, although not all the changes affected Romney or Santorum, the newspaper reported.

"The results from Iowa caucus night revealed a virtual tie," Romney said in a statement early Thursday from Boston.

"I would like to thank the Iowa Republican Party for their careful attention to the caucus process, and we once again recognize Rick Santorum for his strong performance in the state.

"The Iowa caucuses, with record turnout, were a great start to defeating President Obama in Iowa and elsewhere in the general election."

20120119-02	11:09	Pam	Re: "Iowa Republicans to Call Caucus Result 'Split Decision'" (reply to SteveB, above)
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"And if R0mney by 8 was a "Win", why is DoucheBag by 34 called a "split decision"?"--indeed!

20120119-03	11:32	Art	Re: "Iowa Republicans to Call Caucus Result 'Split Decision'" (reply to Pam & SteveB, above)
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My thought: What possesses these people?

[I keep thinking there must be a reason why they do exorcisms! :-) -SteveB]

20120119-05	12:27	SteveG	Re: "Iowa Republicans to Call Caucus Result 'Split Decision'" (reply to all, above)
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If there is not a national process for a federal election that uses the same equipment and the same process across all voting precincts, then the elections are left to 50 different rules/regulations and hundreds if not 1000's of processes and equipment utilization. I have not heard 1 person on the national level talk of this except to say it is up to each state.

20120119-10	13:49	Dennis	Re: "Iowa Republicans to Call Caucus Result 'Split Decision'" (reply to SteveB, above)
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A voter in South Carolina interviewed on NPR said she wouldn't vote for Santorum because he is from the North and doesn't understand Southerners. When asked who she intended to vote for, she replied "Romney."

20120119-12	14:25	Pam	Re: "Iowa Republicans to Call Caucus Result 'Split Decision'" (reply to Dennis, above)
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It's people like this who will elect our next president. Everyone who trusts the American public, raise your hand.

20120119-06	12:29	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell President Obama: It's Time to Lead on Climate!
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from CREDO Action:

Tell President Obama: It's time to lead on climate. Make the case in your State of the Union Address. Click here to sign the petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/sotu_climate/index2.html.

This is why activism matters: Six months ago, the Obama Administration was set to approve one of the single most environmentally disastrous fossil fuel projects imaginable. Today, it's dead.

The Keystone XL pipeline — designed to bring filthy tar sands oil from Canada to refineries on the Gulf Coast of Texas so that oil companies can profit by selling the oil overseas — was dealt a severe setback yesterday when President Obama said no to an election year blackmail threat by the American Petroleum Institute and its lackeys in Congress.

But President Obama didn't reject Keystone XL because he wanted to. Or because he thought it was the right thing to do. Or because he thought it would help his reelection campaign. He rejected it because you made him do it.

It's a victory for activists. But because the President rejected the pipeline on a narrow technicality, in no way has he set down a clear marker against the pipeline or the carbon bomb that burning Canadian tar sands oil in China represents.

We want to thank the many groups and thousands of activists, who, following the inspiring call of Bill McKibben, joined us in putting massive public pressure on the President. In fact, CREDO waged the single largest activism campaign in our history.

It was this pressure that forced President Obama to initially delay the decision in November. And it was this pressure, combined with the Republicans' overzealous and irresponsible demand of a 60-day deadline that forced him yesterday to reject the pipeline permit.

Our pressure overcame the lies and propaganda of Republicans and oil giants, and their threats of "huge political consequences" if he didn't approve it.

Rejecting this pipeline was the right thing to do. But by rejecting it purely on a technicality, there are many things President Obama did not do:

- He did not close the door to this pipeline once and for all. In fact, he specifically opened the door to the southern portion of Keystone XL, which would allow this oil to be exported overseas — the real reason TransCanada wanted Keystone XL in the first place.
- He did not explain the imperative of stopping not just this project, but others that will expedite disastrous warming. Just the opposite — he touted the need to expand oil and gas drilling and made no mention of clean energy.

- He did not refute the lies of Republicans and polluters, whose biggest "jobs plan" is a foreign oil pipeline whose chief purpose is to export oil overseas.

The time to lead us away from dirty fuels and prevent escalating global catastrophes from climate change is here. And President Obama still can.

Until President Obama makes a clear and compelling case to the American people for sweeping action to reduce our dependence on any and all fossil fuels, the pace of our transition will remain slower than what is required to stem the onrushing danger of climate pollution.

Until he refutes the false choice presented by Big Oil and Republicans — that we must choose between a clean energy future and a stable economy — he empowers and remains vulnerable to their attacks.

Until he shows his commitment to clean energy over dirty fossil fuels, the energy of progressive activists will be spent fighting individual bad decisions, instead of pushing to support needed progressive policies.

And ultimately, until President Obama takes the opportunity for a true moment of leadership that publicly raises the stakes on the fight to stabilize our climate, the State of our Union will remain deeply clouded.

For now, it is clear that we must fight for every victory. It's also clearer than ever that when we fight, we can win.

Let's use this momentum to push for even broader victories to bring about the type of future that you and I know is still possible.

Thank you for being part of this historic victory.

Becky Bond, Political Director

20120119-04	12:21	Art	Re: "The Romney Tax Loophole" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #54)
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Too good not to share.

Among others, Mitt, Newt, and his friends have expressed concerns about getting pink slips themselves and being without a job. These guys and their friends are really hurting and we all need to sacrifice to give them additional tax breaks, as this will undoubtedly help our country.

Think we might have a clue as to one of the things wrong with American business?

20120119-07	12:31	SteveG	"Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands"
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"Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" by Joe Conason, *The National Memo*

Jan. 19, 2012,

(<http://cl.exct.net/?qs=880302aae0b3929083fe0528b61a90a7def8962556f0da5ab307461dd7521643>)

Mitt Romney's reluctance to release his tax returns suddenly makes perfect sense: According to a report filed by the ABC News investigative team late Wednesday, the Romneys have invested millions of dollars in offshore tax havens -- specifically, in several accounts domiciled in the "notorious" Cayman Islands.

Headlined "Romney Parks Millions In Cayman Islands," an article on the network website notes that "he has used a variety of techniques to help minimize the taxes on his estimated \$250 million fortune." Earlier this week, he admitted paying as little as 15 percent of his multi-million-dollar annual income in federal taxes. But the ABC report said that "in addition to paying the lower tax rate on his investment income, Romney has as much as \$8 million

invested in at least 12 funds listed on a Cayman Islands registry." A Romney campaign spokesman told ABC that the Cayman accounts had no effect on the tax liability of the candidate and his wife Ann.

[Continue...](#)

20120119-08	12:35	Art	Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Going to be fun to see his tax returns. Of course the danger is then we may have Newt or Ricky to live with. Hard to say what is worse. Maybe Bachman or Cain will dive back in???

20120119-09	12:42	SteveG	Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to Art, above)
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None of the above could win easily. Seemingly the Republicans are making it too easy for Obama. There is time yet, but I am not confident of major changes.

20120119-11	14:10	Dennis	Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to all, above)
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Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands



© Dennis Cox / WorldViews

It just so happens that I photographed Mitt Romney's yacht (foreground) in Grand Cayman a few years ago.

20120119-13	14:26	Pam	Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to Dennis, above)
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Ha! What's the skull and crossbones in aid of?

[20120119-14](#) 14:59 Bill Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to Dennis, above)

He pirated away his millions to the Caymans. Trusting that this really is the Romney yacht, I would think the Obama campaign might like to have your photo. Good work.

[20120119-15](#) 15:24 Dennis Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to Bill, above)

Okay, just kidding. It's a pirate cruise for tourists. Does seem appropriate that it's in Grand Cayman.

[20120119-16](#) 15:37 Pam Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to Dennis, above)

Oh heck. I thought you were serious.

[20120119-17](#) 15:38 Bill Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to all, above)

Well, anyway, where is Dick Nixon, now that we need him?

[20120119-18](#) 15:42 Pam Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to Bill, above)

Back in the day, I thought Watergate was about the worst crisis our nation could face (not counting Viet Nam). It seems like a picnic at the beach compared to what we're dealing with today.

[20120119-19](#) 16:13 SteveG Re: "Mitt Romney's Taxes Took a Vacation in the Cayman Islands" (reply to Dennis, above)

J You are good!

[20120119-20](#) 19:00 SteveG "The Day the Internet Roared"

"The Day the Internet Roared" by Amy Goodman, NationofChange

Jan. 19, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/day-internet-roared-1326982915>)

Wednesday, Jan. 18, marked the largest online protest in the history of the Internet. Websites from large to small "went dark" in protest of proposed legislation before the U.S. House and Senate that could profoundly change the Internet. The two bills, SOPA in the House and PIPA in the Senate, ostensibly aim to stop the piracy of copyrighted material over the Internet on websites based outside the U.S. Critics, among them the founders of Google, Wikipedia, the Internet Archive, Tumblr and Twitter, counter that the laws will stifle innovation and investment, hallmarks of the free, open Internet. The Obama administration has offered muted criticism of the legislation, but, as many of his supporters have painfully learned, what President Barack Obama questions one day he signs into law the next.

First, the basics. SOPA stands for the Stop Online Piracy Act, while PIPA is the Protect IP Act. The two bills are very similar. SOPA would allow copyright holders to complain to the U.S. attorney general about a foreign website they allege is “committing or facilitating the commission of criminal violations” of copyright law. This relates mostly to pirated movies and music. SOPA would allow the movie industry, through the courts and the U.S. attorney general, to send a slew of demands that Internet service providers (ISPs) and search-engine companies shut down access to those alleged violators, and even to prevent linking to those sites, thus making them “unfindable.” It would also bar Internet advertising providers from making payments to websites accused of copyright violations.

SOPA could, then, shut down a community-based site like YouTube if just one of its millions of users was accused of violating one U.S. copyright. As David Drummond, Google’s chief legal officer and an opponent of the legislation, blogged, “Last year alone we acted on copyright takedown notices for more than 5 million web pages.” He wrote, “PIPA & SOPA will censor the web, will risk our industry’s track record of innovation and job creation, and will not stop piracy.”

Corynne McSherry, intellectual property director at the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF.org), told me: “These bills propose new powers for the government and for private actors to create, effectively, blacklists of sites ... then force service providers to block access to those sites. That’s why we call these the censorship bills.”

The bills, she says, are the creation of the entertainment, or “content,” industries: “SOPA, in particular, was negotiated without any consultation with the technology sector. They were specifically excluded.” The exclusion of the tech sector has alarmed not only Silicon Valley executives, but also conservatives like Utah Republican Congressman Jason Chaffetz, a tea party favorite. He said in a December House Judiciary Committee hearing, “We’re basically going to reconfigure the Internet and how it’s going to work, without bringing in the nerds.”

PIPA sponsor Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said in a press release, “Much of what has been claimed about [PIPA] is flatly wrong and seems intended more to stoke fear and concern than to shed light or foster workable solutions.”

Sadly, Leahy’s ire sounds remarkably similar to that of his former Senate colleague Christopher Dodd, who, after retiring, took the job of chairman and CEO of the powerful lobbying group Motion Picture Association of America (at a reported salary of \$1.2 million annually), one of the chief backers of SOPA/PIPA. Said Dodd of the broad-based, grass-roots Internet protest, “It’s a dangerous and troubling development when the platforms that serve as gateways to information intentionally skew the facts to incite their users in order to further their corporate interests.”

EFF’s McSherry said, “No one asked the Internet—well, the Internet is speaking now. People are really rising up and saying: ‘Don’t interfere with basic Internet infrastructure. We won’t stand for it.’ ”

As the Internet blackout protest progressed Jan. 18, and despite Dodd’s lobbying, legislators began retreating from support for the bills. The Internet roared, and the politicians listened, reminiscent of the popular uprising against media consolidation in 2003 proposed by then-Federal Communications Commission Chairman Michael Powell, the son of Gen. Colin Powell. Information is the currency of democracy, and people will not sit still as moneyed interests try to deny them access.

When Internet users visited the sixth-most popular website on the planet during the protest blackout, the English-language section of Wikipedia.org, they found this message:

Imagine a World Without Free Knowledge.

For over a decade, we have spent millions of hours building the largest encyclopedia in human history. Right now, the U.S. Congress is considering legislation that could fatally damage the free and open Internet.

In a world with fresh, Internet-fueled revolutions, it seems that U.S. politicians are getting the message.

(Denis Moynihan contributed research to this column.)

from DCCC:

Wonder why Presidential candidate Mitt Romney won't follow decades of historical precedent and release his full tax returns now? So do we.

It might be because Romney likely pays a lower tax rate than middle class families. Despite having an estimated fortune of up to \$250 million, Mitt says he probably pays an effective tax rate of only 15%. That's less than what school teachers pay.

Help up hit 100,000 signatures on our petition telling Mitt Romney to release his full tax returns right now:

<http://www.dccc.org/pages/mitttaxes>.

Just this week, we learned that Mitt has millions invested in the Cayman Islands and other offshore accounts.

President Obama has released his tax returns going back to the year 2000. In fact, Mitt's own father, George Romney, started the tradition of Presidential candidates releasing their tax returns in 1968, releasing 12 years of returns.

Romney's response? He says if he does release his taxes, he won't do it until April, and he'll only release this year's records.

Something doesn't add up. Add your name and tell Mitt Romney to come clean to the American people.

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SteveB

Photo: Montana: 'The Last Best Place' (for Jim & BrentR)

We miss our Montana a lot. To be able to spend almost any weekend at Glacier or Yellowstone or a million places with no one but us. Truly as they say, "THE LAST BEST PLACE."

Glacier National Park, Montana (<http://www.montanaoutdoorstoreblog.com/>)



—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.

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>
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