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Is Today the Eve of Destruction or Resolution?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Feb. 27, 2012)

And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend,
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve of destruction.
—Barry McGuire ("Eve of Destruction")

The Michigan Primary tomorrow will prove to be a pivotal contest in the race of Mr. Zero against Mr. God. I believe, thankfully, one of them should start to go away. Logically, that would be Rick Santorum, but logic does not seem to be playing much of a part in the 2012 Republican Primaries. Emotion and panic rule because pretty much everybody sees the writing on the wall to one degree or another—the GOP is in big trouble with crazy candidates in a crucial year.

Both Romney and Santorum seem to be doing their best to lose and go home. In Michigan, where there is so much unemployment and misery, Romney brags about how many Cadillacs he owns and his lavish, bicoastal life-style. Santorum whines about how President Obama is not a Christian, and how the separation of church and state makes him puke. Huge proportions of their own party dislike one or the other of them. It appears more and more like the GOP has fielded a bunch of prospects who can't win the election. I guess the real candidates, the 2016 candidates, decided a long time ago that they couldn't beat President Obama this year, or why wouldn't they have thrown their poison into the ring too?

Thus do the Republican candidates and the Obama recovery cause President Obama's approval ratings to rise. If this keeps up (And why wouldn't it? Romney and Santorum are both losers.), Obamacracy will rule for at least another four years. Maybe after that we can find a way to make him dictator of the new socialist state—Obamamerica!

Change the Republicans can count on! Bye-bye Tea Party! Now, when can we get started on this wealth redistribution? LOL!

"The Lost Party" by John Heilemann, *New York Magazine*

Feb. 25, 2012, (<http://nymag.com/news/features/gop-primary-heilemann-2012-3/>)

(The strangest primary season in memory reveals a GOP that's tearing itself apart.)

On a biting, brittle mid-February morning 30 miles north of Detroit, Rick Santorum plants his flag in a patch of turf as politically fertile as exists in these United States. For three decades, Macomb County, Michigan, has been both a bellwether and a battleground, as its fabled Reagan Democrats first abandoned the party of Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, and Mike Dukakis, then gradually drifted back in support of Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and Barack Obama. Today in Macomb, the action is as much on the Republican as the Democratic side, with the county GOP riven by a split between mainstream and tea-party cadres. And yet in demographic terms, Macomb remains Macomb: overwhelmingly white and mostly non-college-educated, heavily Catholic and staunchly socially conservative, economically anti-globalist and culturally anti-swell.

All of which is to say that when Santorum takes the podium to address a Michigan Faith & Freedom Coalition rally in Shelby Charter Township, the 1,500 souls he sees before him are his kind of people—and soon enough he is speaking their language. To explain how America has always differed from other nations, Santorum invokes the Almighty: "We believe ... we are children of a loving God." To elucidate the evils of Obamacare, Dodd-Frank, and cap-and-trade, he inveighs against liberal elites: "They want to control you, because like the kings of old, they believe they know better than you." To highlight what's at stake in 2012, he unfurls a grand (and entirely *farkakte*) historical flourish: "This decision will be starker than at any time since the election of 1860"—you know, the one featuring Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas on the eve of the Civil War.

But before the nation faces that decision, Michigan has its own to make: between him and Mitt Romney in the Republican primary that takes place on February 28. "Do you want somebody who can go up against Barack Obama, take him on the big issues ... or do you want someone who can just manage Washington a little bit better?" Santorum asks, as the audience rises cheering to its feet. "That's your choice. What does Michigan have to say?"

What Michiganders are telling pollsters is that their affections are split evenly between the two men, despite Romney's status as the scion of one of the Wolverine State's great political families. In Ohio, arguably the most important of ten states with primaries or caucuses on Super Tuesday, March 6, two recent surveys found Santorum holding a wide lead there, and the Gallup national tracking poll put him ahead of Romney by eight points as of February 24. Taken together, all this more than makes clear that Santorum has emerged as the dominant conservative alternative to Romney. It illustrates a shift in momentum so pronounced that, unless Romney takes Michigan and fares strongly on Super Tuesday, his ascension to his party's nomination will be in serious jeopardy, as the calls for a late-entering white-knight candidate escalate—and odds of an up-for-grabs Republican convention rise. "Right now, I'd say they're one in five," says one of the GOP's grandest grandees. "If Romney doesn't put this thing away by Super Tuesday, I'd say they're closer to 50-50."

That Mitt Romney finds himself so imperiled by Rick Santorum—Rick Santorum!—is just the latest in a series of jaw-dropping developments in what has been the most volatile, unpredictable, and just plain wackadoodle Republican-nomination contest ever. Part of the explanation lies in Romney's lameness as a candidate, in Santorum's strength, and in the sudden efflorescence of social issues in what was supposed to be an all-economy-all-the-time affair. But even more important have been the seismic changes within the Republican Party. "Compared to 2008, all the candidates are way to the right of John McCain," says longtime conservative activist Jeff Bell. "The fact that Romney is running with basically the same views as then but is seen as too moderate tells you that the base has moved rightward and doesn't simply want a conservative candidate—it wants a *very* conservative one."

The transfiguration of the GOP isn't only about ideology, however. It is also about demography and temperament, as the party has grown whiter, less well schooled, more blue-collar, and more hair-curlingly populist. The result has been a party divided along the lines of culture and class: Establishment versus grassroots, secular versus religious, upscale versus downscale, highfalutin versus hoi polloi. And with those divisions have arisen the competing electoral coalitions—shirts versus skins, regulars versus red-hots—represented by Romney and Santorum, which are now increasingly likely to duke it out all spring.

Few Republicans greet that prospect sanguinely, though some argue that it will do little to hamper the party's capacity to defeat Obama in the fall. "It's reminiscent of the contest between Obama and Clinton," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell recently opined. "[That] didn't seem to have done [Democrats] any harm in the general election, and I don't think this contest is going to do us any harm, either."

Yet the Democratic tussle in 2008, which featured two undisputed heavyweights with few ideological discrepancies between them, may be an exception that proves the rule. Certainly Republican history suggests as much: Think of 1964 and the scrap between the forces aligned with Barry Goldwater and Nelson Rockefeller, or 1976, between backers of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan. On both occasions, the result was identical: a party disunited, a nominee debilitated, a general election down the crapper.

With such precedents in mind, many Republicans are already looking past 2012. If either Romney or Santorum gains the nomination and then falls before Obama, flubbing an election that just months ago seemed eminently winnable, it will unleash a GOP apocalypse on November 7—followed by an epic struggle between the regulars and red-hots to refashion the party. And make no mistake: A loss is what the GOP's political class now expects. "Six months before this thing got going, every Republican I know was saying, 'We're gonna win, we're gonna beat Obama,'" says former Reagan strategist Ed Rollins. "Now even those who've endorsed Romney say, 'My God, what a f*cking mess.'"

Should Romney ultimately fail to become the Republican standard-bearer, history will record with precision the day the wheels came off the wagon—January 19. Until that morning, his march to the nomination was proceeding even more smoothly than he and his advisers had hoped. The apparent eight-vote win in Iowa. The landslide in New Hampshire. And then the double-digit leads in South Carolina polling, positioning him to pull off a historic early-state trifecta. But in the space of a few hours, Romney was serially (and surreally) battered by unwelcome events: three tracking polls putting him behind Gingrich for the first time in 2012; word from Iowa that his victory there was being snatched away and handed to Santorum; Rick Perry's exit from the race and endorsement of Gingrich; and Newt's masterly mau-mauing of CNN's John King at a debate in Charleston over a (foolish, inartful, walking-blithely-into-a-buzzsaw) question about accusations by Gingrich's second wife that he'd sought an "open marriage."

By the next morning, it was evident that Romney was on his way to defeat in South Carolina, though few would have forecast the scale of the drubbing to come. In truth, any expectations Romney would win there were always overblown. His long-standing weakness with Evangelical voters was always likely to make him a hard sell to an electorate in which nearly two thirds self-identify as born-again. And that, in turn, led Team Romney to devote few resources to the state. "They had no real structure in South Carolina—none, nada," says Jon Huntsman's former chief strategist, John Weaver. "They ended up with a few figurehead endorsements and some late hires, but they had nothing on the ground."

But South Carolina also laid bare weaknesses in Romney's candidacy, some already well known, others brand spanking new—and devastating to the core rationale behind his campaign. All through 2011, Romney had focused laserlike on the economy, arguing that his private-sector background made him best suited to tackle Obama on the election's central issue. Sure, Romney inspired little passion in the Republican base; but his rivals were clueless, cartoonish, or crackers, and with the GOP intent above all on ousting the incumbent, the presumption was that Romney's combination of experience and presidential bearing would conquer all. "The Romney folks faced a fork in the road between the electable route and the ideological route," says the manager of a previous Republican presidential campaign. "And they decided to go all-in on electability."

Romney and his people never expected, however, to be confronted in the Republican phase of the race with a raft of challenges related to the legitimacy of his wealth. But first on his record at Bain Capital and then on his tax returns, that is what occurred. With Gingrich and Perry sounding more like commenters on Daily Kos than Republicans, Romney coughed up a remarkable collection of gaffes: from his fear of pink slips to his enjoyment of firing people to his "not very much" in speaker's fees (when they totaled \$374,327 last year).

For many Republicans, Romney's maladroitness in addressing the issues at hand was worrisome, to put it mildly. Here he was handing Obama's people a blooper reel that would let them paint him as a hybrid of Gordon Gekko and Thurston Howell III. "Republicans were saying, 'This is the guy who's gonna be carrying the ball for our side, defending the private sector?'" Rollins says incredulously. "Warren Buffett would kick his a*s in a debate, let alone Obama."

Nor were Romney's rehearsed turns on the hustings appreciably better. From Iowa through New Hampshire, his campaign events had been progressively pared back and whittled down. By the time he reached South Carolina,

they had achieved a certain purity—the purity of the null set. The climactic moment in them came when Romney would recite (and offer attendant textual analysis that would make Stanley Fish beat his head against a wall) the lyrics of “America the Beautiful.” Even staunch Romney allies were abashed by this sadly persistent, and persistently sad, rhetorical trope. “I have never seen anything more ridiculous or belittling,” a prominent Romney fund-raiser says.

Gingrich, by contrast, was on fire in South Carolina, and not just at the debates. His final event on the night before the primary, a rally aboard the USS *Yorktown* aircraft carrier in Charleston Harbor, included an encounter with a heckler who shouted out, “When will you release your ethics report?”—from a congressional investigation of Gingrich in the nineties.

Gingrich replied with a spontaneity and forcefulness as foreign to Romney as Urdu. “Actually, if you’d do a little research instead of shouting mindlessly, you’d discover the entire thing is available online in the Thomas system”—the online congressional database Gingrich brought into existence as Speaker of the House in 1995—“and you can print it out,” he fired back. “I think it is 900 pages. When you get done reading it, let me know if there are any questions.” The crowd cheered loudly and then Gingrich delivered the coup de grâce: “I assume you’re for the candidate who’s afraid to release his income taxes.”

But Gingrich wasn’t merely a superior performer to Romney on the stump. With his hot-eyed imprecations against Obama, his race-freighted mugging of Fox News’s Juan Williams at the debate in Myrtle Beach, his unbridled (if theatrical and hypocritical) enmity toward the media and East Coast elites more broadly, and his relentless ideological attacks on his rival as a timid “Massachusetts moderate,” he was far more deeply in sync with the raging id of the party’s ascendant populist wing.

The coalescence of the various elements of that wing around Gingrich accounted for the 40 to 28 percent pistol-whipping he administered to Romney on Primary Day—and marked the sharpening of the shirts-skins schism that would play out from then on. According to the exit polls, Gingrich captured 45 percent (to Romney’s 21) of Evangelical voters, 48 percent (to 21) of strong tea-party supporters, and 47 percent (to 22) of non-college graduates. Romney, meanwhile, held his own with the groups making up what the journalist Ron Brownstein has dubbed the GOP’s “managerial wing”—richer, better-educated, less godly, more pragmatic voters. One trouble for Romney was that this assemblage constitutes less than half his party now. But even more disconcerting was that he lost badly to Gingrich among South Carolinians who said that the most crucial candidate quality was the ability to beat Obama—which suggested not simply that ideology trumped electability but that for many Republicans, hard-core conservative ideology was *tantamount* to electability.

Thus did Romney find himself facing his first existential peril. The influential conservative blogger Erik Erickson, on the grounds that South Carolina represented less an embrace of Gingrich than a grassroots rejection of the front-runner, his themeless pudding of a campaign, and the Establishment support of it, encouraged Romney to “refine his message, not sharpen his knives” as the race moved to Florida. But that suggestion would be rejected—with huge consequences for Gingrich, Romney, and even Santorum.

An hour or so after the Republican debate in Jacksonville on January 26, Romney’s chief strategist, Stuart Stevens, was in the spin room employing his iPad as a weapon. Stevens asked if I knew how many times Gingrich was mentioned in Reagan’s memoir. Calling up the text onscreen and searching the document, he revealed the answer: zero. Stevens then asked the same about a different memoir—Jack Abramoff’s. Here the number of mentions was larger: thirteen. Stevens asked, “What does that tell you?” I ventured, “That Newt is full of sh*t?” Stevens: “You said it, buddy.”

Stevens’s parlor trick was a minor, albeit delightful, element of the two-front assault waged by Team Romney on Gingrich in Florida: strafing him from the air with negative ads and badgering him on the ground, which involved not only working the press but sending operatives to Gingrich’s every event to offer instant rebuttals. One objective here was to refute Gingrich’s claims to being at once instrumental to the Reagan Revolution and a Washington outsider; another was to rattle him, to pi*s him off, to get inside his head.

Together with two stellar debate showings by Romney, the anti-Newt incursion accomplished all that and more, driving Gingrich to fits of defensive distraction, undisguised irritation, and an in toto effort in Florida that was every

bit as feeble as his South Carolina bid had been robust. And in its indiscipline, lassitude, and wackiness—how many news cycles did he squander on that freaking lunar colony?—it made manifest why he was never a plausible Republican nominee. But while Gingrich today seems an afterthought, his role in shaping the contours of the contest cannot be overstated.

“Of all the candidates, he has had the biggest impact,” says Steve Schmidt, McCain’s 2008 chief strategist. “By making the case he made against Romney, Gingrich did a significant amount of damage to him, both in the primary and in the general, if Romney does become the nominee.”

The damage Schmidt is talking about in the latter case revolves around independent voters. By pressing Romney on Bain and his tax returns, Gingrich helped create the context for his rival’s errors. “The toughest thing in a campaign is when there’s synergy between your opponents’ attacks on the left and right,” Schmidt explains. “The same criticisms of Romney being made by Democrats are being echoed by his Republican challengers. And when criticism becomes ecumenical, that really impacts independent voters.”

And how. An NBC News–*Wall Street Journal* poll in late January found Romney’s unfavorability rating among independents had risen twenty points, from 22 to 42 percent, over the previous two months. “It’s not as though they have said Bain has disqualified him or that he can’t be trusted because of his taxes, but this has created a gulf between him and the average voter,” one of the pollsters behind the survey, Peter Hart, told the *Washington Post*. “Bain and the taxes just reinforce the sense that this person is in a different world.”

Every presidential candidate faces a trade-off between maintaining his viability with independents and catering to his party’s base. The difficulty for Romney is that, even as his appeal to the middle has sharply waned, the lack of enthusiasm for him on the right has remained acute. Even in Florida, where Romney’s fourteen-point victory was broad and sweeping, he was beaten soundly by Gingrich among very conservative voters and strong tea-party adherents.

To a large extent, Romney’s concurrent problems with conservatives and independents are of his own making. His campaign’s incineration of Gingrich in Florida, though perhaps necessary and certainly skillful, also contributed mightily to alienating the center while doing nothing to remedy his main malady in the eyes of conservatives: the absence of a positive message that resonates with them, coupled with a tic-like tendency to commit unforced errors that exacerbate their doubts that he is one of their own. Crystallizing this phenomenon was an episode that took place the morning after Florida, when, on CNN, Romney disgorged another gem: “I’m in this race because I care about Americans. I’m not concerned about the very poor. We have a safety net there. If it needs repair, I’ll fix it.”

With these few short sentences in what should have been a moment of triumph for him, Romney managed to send the wrong message to an array of factions. To independent voters, “I’m not concerned about the very poor” sounds callous. To conservative intellectuals and activists, talk about fixing the safety net—as opposed to pursuing policies that enable the poor to free themselves from government dependency—is rank apostasy. And to congressional Republicans, the comment reflected a glaring lack of familiarity with the party’s anti-poverty positions. “Electeds were flabbergasted,” says a veteran K Street player. “Even moderate Republican members, if they’ve been here for more than four months, get dipped in the empowerment agenda.”

A week later, Romney attempted to repair part of the damage with his speech at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference—and promptly put his foot in it again. In an address in which he employed the word *conservative* or some variation of it 24 times, as if trying to prove he is a member of the tribe through sheer incantation, his use of the adverb *severely* to express the depth of his conviction raised eyebrows inside and outside the hall. “The most retarded thing I have ever heard a Republican candidate say” was the verdict of one strategist with ample experience in GOP presidential campaigns.

At CPAC in 2008, Romney had used the convocation to announce he was dropping out of the race, as the party was rallying around McCain despite long-held suspicions of him among movement conservatives. Four years later, the rightward drift of the GOP and its shirts-skins fractiousness meant that Romney was still struggling to close the deal. His problems doing so were more, well, severe than his vocabulary—for by then Santorum had achieved liftoff and was streaking across the Republican sky.

The launching pad for Santorum was the trio of states that held contests on February 7: Colorado, Minnesota, and Missouri. His sweep of all three was unexpected to everyone but him—Santorum is a confident man—and reflected a grievous miscalculation on the part of Team Romney, which only barely played in Colorado and ignored the other two. “The idiocy to do that with all of the resources they have; there’s no limit to their money,” Rollins says. “It’s that kind of arrogance: ‘We won Florida; it’s over.’ That was four years ago. That’s not this time. This time it’s trench warfare all the way, and somebody’s gonna keep rising up, and it’s now Santorum.”

For many Democrats, the idea of Santorum elevating beyond the level of a punch line is all but inconceivable. The extremeness of the former Pennsylvania senator’s views on social issues—from the out-front homophobia that led him to compare gay sex to “man-on-child, man-on-dog, or whatever the case may be,” to his adamant opposition to contraception and abortion even in cases of rape or incest—have long made him the subject of scorn and ridicule on the left, in the center, and on the Internet. (Even with his newfound fame, the first result of a Google search for his name is spreading santorum.com, a site dealing with “frothy” matters too coarse to discuss in a family magazine, and also in this one.)

But in a Republican-nomination contest, these views are not necessarily liabilities, and are even assets in some quarters—which doesn’t mean Santorum is without vulnerabilities in the context of his party. On spending, earmarks, and labor relations, he is by no means pure in conservative terms. He has been embroiled in ethics issues and is a bone-deep creature of the Beltway. Then there is his personality: “In the Senate as well as his home state, Santorum often struck people as arrogant and headstrong, preachy and judgmental,” writes Byron York in the *Washington Examiner*. Or, as a Republican lobbyist puts it to me, “When he was in the Senate, he was probably the most friendless guy there.”

That the Romney campaign will hit Santorum hard on virtually all this (and more) is a given; indeed, it already is, holding regular conference calls with surrogates to attack him, outspending him by three to one on TV ads in Michigan (if the super-pacs on each side are included in the totals). “The Romney campaign has realized there’s nothing it can do to communicate Romney’s record in a way that moves the needle, so their focus is on disqualifying Santorum as a plausible nominee and authentic conservative,” says a top GOP operative. “Can Santorum survive the onslaught? Gingrich certainly couldn’t.”

Santorum may be a different story, however—less erratic, less prone to light himself on fire, less saddled with XXXL baggage. “Santorum is a much more sympathetic character than Gingrich,” says the Evangelical leader Richard Land. “If a guy has 57 percent negatives, you can carpet-bomb him with impunity. But if Romney comes out swinging for Santorum, people are going to get angry. It’s a lot harder to demonize him than Gingrich.”

If Santorum can weather the welter of attacks, his combination of governing and ideological bona fides might make him Romney’s bête noire. “The one thing Romney had to avoid that’s a mortal threat to him was an ideological contest with someone who has the credentials to be commander-in-chief,” says Schmidt. “And Santorum, as a three-term member of Congress and two-term senator, clears that hurdle, especially running against a one-term governor. That’s why the race is more wide open now than at any other point before—because Romney is dealing for the first time with a plausible nominee in the eyes of Republican voters, where it’s absolutely impossible to get around his right flank.”

Nowhere is this more true than on social issues, naturally. Whatever risks it might pose in the general election, the controversy over contraceptives, the Catholic Church, and the Obama administration has been an unalloyed blessing for Santorum in the Republican-nomination fight. Popping up unexpectedly, it has shifted what the political sharpies call the “issue matrix” in an awkward direction for Romney and a comfortable one for Santorum, and is likely to help the latter further solidify his already firm hold over a voting bloc with which his rival is notably weak.

Evangelicals and other devout voters are, to be sure, Santorum’s most ardent supporters within the grassroots coalition. He has also demonstrated considerable traction with tea-party supporters, carrying the largest proportion of them in Iowa (29 percent) against four far-right foes. But equally crucial is the non-college-educated, blue-collar vote, which accounts for more than half the electorate in Michigan, as well as Super Tuesday states such as Ohio, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. So far in 2012, Santorum has not done consistently well with this cohort. But between his policy focus on reviving American manufacturing, a biography that includes growing up in Western Pennsylvania

steel country and a coal-miner grandfather, and a Joe Six-Pack-meets-Mister Rogers demeanor, he seems well positioned to make inroads here.

If Santorum can consolidate the support of these groups as Gingrich did momentarily in South Carolina, the battle between him and his amalgam of red-hots and Romney and his army of regulars will be pitched—and, depending on what happens on Tuesday in Michigan, maybe bloody and protracted.

The day before Santorum's speech in Macomb County, Romney delivers a talk of his own right next door in Oakland County, at the Greater Farmington–Livonia Chamber of Commerce Lunch. Oakland couldn't be more different from Macomb: affluent, professional, well educated, and reasonably diverse. The Romney crowd reflects the divergence, decked out in suits and ties where Santorum's crowd was all sweatshirts and baggy jeans. The event begins with Michigan governor Rick Snyder bestowing his endorsement on Romney. Beaming and amped up, Romney begins with a paean that reads like a parody—and instantly goes viral:

"I was born and raised here. I love this state. It seems right here. Trees are the right height. I like seeing the lakes. I love the lakes. There's something very special here. The Great Lakes, but also all the little inland lakes that dot the parts of Michigan. I love cars. I grew up totally in love with cars. It used to be, in the fifties and sixties, if you showed me one square foot of almost any part of a car, I could tell you what brand it was, the model, and so forth. Now, with all the Japanese cars, I'm not quite so good at it. But I still know the American cars pretty well and drive a Mustang. I love cars. I love American cars. And long may they rule the world, let me tell ya."

In his TV ads as well as on the stump, Romney has been slapping the favorite-son card on the table like a drunk at a game of strip poker, and is leaning hard on the state GOP Establishment to help him win the hand. "Regardless of the polls that show Santorum with a lead, it's still Romney's to lose," says consultant and former state-party executive director Greg McNeilly. "He has massive organizational strength Santorum can't match." Bill Ballenger, editor of *Inside Michigan Politics* newsletter, agrees: "Romney has a list of endorsements as long as both your arms. He's raised far more money here than any other candidate, including Barack Obama. Santorum is a total cipher. He's an unknown. And he has not done anything here."

But the savviest political players in the state also allow that, as McNeilly puts it, "the race is in flux in a way that defies conventional wisdom," that anti-Establishment sentiments are running high in the state, and therefore Santorum might just pull off an upset. And while Eric Ferhnstrom, Romney's spokesman, insists the primary is not a must-win for his boss, others close to the candidate admit that losing, in the words of one of them, would be "absolutely, completely f*cking horrible."

The reality is that even winning Michigan (and Arizona the same day) may not be enough to rescue Romney from the rough. "Every money guy I know thinks Romney can't win a general election," says a respected Washington player and presidential-campaign veteran. "Our guys on Capitol Hill are moving into survival-of-the-fittest, only-worrying-about-themselves mode. They think the damage to Romney may be done and may be irreversible—and now he might not even be the nominee. So Romney not only has to win Michigan and Arizona, but he has to have a resounding knockout on Super Tuesday or he's gonna be in real, real trouble."

Yet the likelihood of Romney delivering a KO, or even a TKO, on Super Tuesday is slight. According to University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato, at least five of the ten states with contests on March 6—Georgia, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia—have electorates in which more than 40 percent of voters are Evangelical. That presents a significant hurdle to Romney and advantage to Santorum, provided he emerges from Michigan with either a win or a narrow enough loss that his momentum isn't utterly halted. True, Santorum isn't on the ballot in Virginia. But also true is that Alaska, Idaho, and North Dakota, for which there is no data available on the size of the born-again contingent, are all caucus states in which religious conservatives (and tea-partyers) are thick on the ground.

None of which suggests that Santorum, even if he wins in Michigan, is much better positioned to deal a death blow to Romney on Super Tuesday. "I still am a believer that you've gotta have some kind of an organization, some kind of resources, beyond living off a super-pac, to go all the way," says Rollins. "I can't imagine Santorum just all of a sudden putting it together and racing to the finish line. So my sense is Super Tuesday may be a day that gets split up. And, I mean, Romney's not gonna quit. He's spent six years of his life running for this thing, and he will have

delegates. And it's not like if he drops out all the Establishment are gonna jump on Santorum. They're all gonna basically say Santorum can't win."

This kind of thinking is increasingly widespread among Republicans. And it is giving rise to ever-louder (though still private) calls for a Romney-Santorum alternative to enter the race after Super Tuesday. Last week, Politico reported that Indiana governor Mitch Daniels and New Jersey governor Chris Christie have been subject to mounting entreaties by GOP leaders to dive in. And so, I am reliably told, have Wisconsin congressman Paul Ryan and Jeb Bush.

Logistically speaking, the white-knight scenario is a stretch, but nothing like as fantastical as it sounds. After Super Tuesday, there are still seven states—five voting on June 5, including winner-take-all monsters California and New Jersey—where it is possible to get on the ballot. And if a stud Republican were to put himself forward, as a "tippy-top Republican" told Politico's Mike Allen, "he would suck all the oxygen out of the race. People wouldn't even give a sh*t who won on these other dates in March that are after Super Tuesday. I mean, seriously, who would care? It would all be about a new savior."

Even if such a savior won all five states, he would be far away from the 1,145 delegates necessary to secure the nomination. But given the proportional nature of many of the contests in March, April, and May, there's a decent chance no one else would obtain that number, either. Meaning Republicans would be staring down the barrel of a brokered or contested convention in Tampa this summer.

Could it happen? Yes, it could, especially if, not to beat a dead equine, Romney loses Michigan on Tuesday. But will it happen? Don't hold your breath, particularly since none of the putative white knights evince the slightest interest in putting themselves in the near-suicidal position of having to assemble and fund a general-election campaign on the fly with only 67 days left between the convention and November 6. And while a contested convention—at which the existing candidates all arrive in Tampa shy of 1,145 and the nomination is settled through backroom dealing—is more conceivable, the likeliest outcome of that would be the eventual coronation of Romney or Santorum. (Sigh.)

The question is, what will happen then—not just to them but to their party?

For Democrats, the answer is easy, reflexive, and comforting: Barack Obama wins. And at this moment, they have reasons to think so—starting with the historical precedents suggesting that the Romney-Santorum death match and the intraparty tensions it represents will undermine the eventual nominee. "Goldwater hurt Nixon in 1960, Rockefeller hurt Goldwater in 1964, and Reagan hurt Ford in 1976," says historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. "When splits become open in the party, it's never a good thing."

Then there is the current polling. The RealClearPolitics average of public surveys pitting the president head-to-head against Romney gives Obama a 4.8 percent lead, and 6.1 percent against Santorum. (Against Gingrich, the gap widens to 13.7 percent.)

Not one of the president's presiding reelection gurus—David Axelrod, David Plouffe, Jim Messina—believes that, come November, their margin of victory will be as big as even the smallest of those numbers. All along, they have been operating from the assumption that the Republican base will be riled up and ready to turn out in droves on Election Day. That Richard Land is right when he asserts that, for all the lack of enthusiasm for the extant crop of candidates, no one should ever "underestimate the ability of President Obama to rally conservatives to vote against him." That, given the still fragile state of the nation's recovery, the high percentage of voters who continue to regard the country as on the wrong track, and the possibility that Iran or Europe might throw the world a nasty curveball in the months ahead, 2012 will be a closer-run election than 2008. That, in other words, it's still perfectly conceivable that Obama might lose this thing.

If that happens, the implications for the Republican Party will be straightforward: It will be reshaped in the image of whichever of the candidates becomes president-elect. A Romney victory would signal the resurgence of the regulars, while one by Santorum would usher in an era of red-hot regnancy.

But if Obama prevails, precisely the opposite dynamic is likely to kick in: a period of bitter recriminations followed by a reformation (or counterreformation) of the GOP. This, please recall, was what many Republicans were counting

on to happen in the wake of their party's loss of the White House and seats in the House and Senate in 2008. Instead, Republicans seized on a strategy of relentless opposition to Obama, which proved politically effective in 2010 but left the party as bereft of new ideas, a constructive agenda, or a coherent governing philosophy as before. With Obama having looked beatable months ago, a botched bid to oust him—especially if coupled with a failure to take over the Senate—would usher in a full-blown Republican conflagration, followed by an effort to rise from the ashes by doing the opposite of what caused the meltdown of 2012.

What that would mean for the GOP would differ wildly depending on which of the two current front-runners, along with the coalition that elevated him to the nomination, is blamed for the debacle. "If Romney is the nominee and he loses in November, I think we'll see a resurgence of the charismatic populist right," says Robert Alan Goldberg, a history professor at the University of Utah and author of a biography of Barry Goldwater. "Not only will [the grassroots wing] say that Romney led Republicans down the road to defeat, but that the whole type of conservatism he represents is doomed."

Goldberg points out that this is what happened in 1976, when the party stuck with Ford over Reagan, was beaten by Carter, and went on to embrace the Gipper's brand of movement conservatism four years later. So who does Goldberg think might be ascendant in the aftermath of a Romney licking? "Sarah Palin," he replies. "She's an outsider, she has no Washington or Wall Street baggage, she's electric—and she's waiting, because if Romney doesn't win, she will be welcomed in."

But if it's Santorum who is the standard-bearer and then he suffers an epic loss, a different analogy will be apt: Goldwater in 1964. (And, given the degree of the challenges Santorum would face in attracting female voters, epic it might well be.) As Kearns Goodwin points out, the rejection of the Arizona senator's ideology and policies led the GOP to turn back in 1968 to Nixon, "a much more moderate figure, despite the incredible corruption of his time in office." For Republicans after 2012, a similar repudiation of the populist, culture-warrior coalition that is fueling Santorum's surge would open the door to the many talented party leaders—Daniels, Christie, Bush, Ryan, Bobby Jindal—waiting in the wings for 2016, each offering the possibility of refashioning the GOP into a serious and forward-thinking enterprise.

Only the most mindless of ideologues reject the truism that America would be best served by the presence of two credible governing parties instead of the situation that currently obtains. A Santorum nomination would be seen by many liberals as a scary and retrograde proposition. And no doubt it would make for a wild ride, with enough talk of Satan, abortifacients, and sweater vests to drive any sane man bonkers. But in the long run, it might do a world of good, compelling Republicans to return to their senses—and forge ahead into the 21st century. Which is why all people of common sense and goodwill might consider, in the days ahead, adopting a slogan that may strike them as odd, perverse, or even demented: Go, Rick, go.

(Additional reporting by Clint Rainey.)

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20120226-05	12:39	Pam	"What If We Treated Doctors the Way We Treat Teachers?"

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20120224-17	20:18	SteveG	Photo: Hoosier Post Office

20120224-01	12:44	Pam	"Senator Santorum's Planet"
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Saw this on newyorker.com and thought you'd like to see it. I wish I'd written this.

"Senator Santorum's Planet" posted by James Wood, *The New Yorker* "Daily Comment"

Feb. 24, 2012, (<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/comment/2012/02/senator-santorums-planet.html>)

If Rick Santorum is so staunch a Catholic, why does he often sound such a Protestant, not to say puritanical, note? His remarks about how President Obama's world view is just "some phony theology" have received a lot of attention but too little examination. It turned out that Santorum was talking, in general terms, about "radical environmentalists," and using environmentalism as a synecdoche for everything he abominates in secular progressive politics. "This idea that man is here to serve the earth as opposed to husband its resources and be good stewards of the earth" is, he maintained on CBS's "Face the Nation," "a phony ideal. I don't believe that's what we're here to do. That man is here to use the resources and use them wisely, to care for the earth, to be a steward of the earth. But we're not here to serve the earth. The earth is not the objective. Man is the objective, and I think a lot of radical environmentalists have it upside-down." That kind of ideology, he complained, "elevates the earth above man."

Put aside theology for a moment. Just intellectually, there are many peculiarities here. According to Santorum, environmentalists and leftists believe in serving the earth, while proper Christians "should have dominion over it, and should be good stewards of it." The distinction Santorum is working here is between a very narrow definition of service as idol-worship (in which the earth becomes our fetish), and stewardship as responsible husbandry. He means, in effect: "Secularists have made a false idol of the earth, whereas God is the only true object of worship." (And note that he can make this point only by taking the cherished Christian term "service" and casting secular dirt on it.) There may indeed be radical outliers in contemporary ecology for whom the survival of man is subservient to the survival of the world. But for most people anxious about the fate of the environment, service and stewardship would seem to go together. Note, too, that all this talk about making man the objective sounds quite like the supposed heresy of rational humanism. If you took away the theological context of Santorum's screed, you would have a program for secular politics: Since we are here to serve man, then we should start getting busy with projects of political salvation, like universal health care, environmental protection, the alleviation of poverty, and so on.

Of course, it is not possible to put theology aside. I know the theological weight of that word, "steward." When I was a boy, my mother, in the grip of her Scottish evangelical Protestantism, used to chide me for my untidy bedroom, adding that, as a Christian, it was an example of "poor stewardship." Everything is the Lord's, and our brief role on earth is merely to husband it in a right way, a way that gives the Lord His due. Christianity, with its emphasis on the afterlife, has always had a tendency to derogate earthly living as a kind of spectral vanity. And the early Christians, who like St. Paul were convinced that Jesus' return, and thus the end of the known world, was imminent, had particular reason to treat life as a ghostly antechamber to the joys of eternity. There is a sharp difference between the other-worldly asceticism of Christianity and the life-filled practicality of Biblical Judaism, which has a vague or non-existent notion of the afterlife. It was this asceticism, among other irritants, that caused Nietzsche to accuse Christianity of turning life upside-down—of privileging sickness over health, weakness over strength, the life to come over the life here. "Christianity was, from the beginning, essentially and fundamentally, nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed up as, faith in 'another' or 'better' life," he wrote in *The Birth of Tragedy*. As the secularist might see it, Santorum is the one who has got things upside-down.

The curious aspect of this apocalyptic asceticism is that it is more obviously associated with Protestantism and Puritanism than with the Catholic Church. Growing up, I was always struck by the relatively relaxed worldliness of Catholics. Their priests were officially barred from sex, but they enjoyed good food and wine, told dirty jokes, lived in the world, and so on. Catholics seemed to lay the emphasis on forgiveness rather than Calvinist damnation; the whole delicious mystery of the confessional bespoke a customary accommodation with the temptations and consolations of secular life. Historically, Protestantism came about, in part, as a reaction to such Catholic relaxation. And a major theme of Protestantism—more sharply focused through the lens of Puritanism—became the image of life as a kind of shadow of the true life above; of our time on earth as a pilgrimage toward the heavenly kingdom. It is there in the works of John Hooper (c. 1500-1555), considered the father of English Puritanism, when he writes that we must “see, know and understand the vanities of this world, the shortness and misery of this life, and the treasures of the life to come.” It is there in John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and omnipresent in Jonathan Edwards’s work, notably in “The Christian Pilgrim,” when he writes that the enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied:

To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodation here. Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends are but shadows; but God is the substance.

Melville, brought up in the Dutch Reformed Calvinist faith, plays around with this kind of theology in *Moby-Dick*, when he has Captain Ahab claim that all visible objects are but “pasteboard masks.” Santorum may claim, as he did in 2008, that “mainline Protestantism in this country ... is gone from the world of Christianity, as I see it,” but, with his attacks on “Satan” and “sensuality,” and his apocalyptic or even post-millennial Christianity, he often sounds like an eighteenth-century American Puritan.

Hence a particular impatience with the values of environmental conservation. For the apocalyptic Christian, sights set firmly on heavenly life, the earth might indeed be a finite and transitory thing, what William Blake wonderfully called a “mundane egg.” Man is what needs to be protected, because each of us is a soul, whose eternal fate is up for grabs.

So when Santorum says that we must be good stewards of the earth, there is religious zealotry behind the sweet words. He is proposing, in effect, that the earth is dispensable but that our souls are not; that we will all outlive the earth, whether in heaven or hell. The point is not that he is elevating man above the earth; it is that he is separating man and earth. If President Obama really does elevate earth over man (accepting Santorum’s absurd premise for a moment), then at least he believes in keeping man and earth together. Santorum’s brand of elevation involves severing man from man’s earthly existence, which is why it is coherent only within a theological eschatology (a theology of the last days). And he may well believe that man cannot actually destroy the earth through such violence as global warming, for the perfectly orthodox theological reason that the earth will come to an end (or be renewed) only when Christ comes again to judge the living and the dead. In other words, global warming can’t exist because it is not in God’s providential plan: the Lord will decide when the earth expires. This is Santorum’s “theology,” phony or otherwise.

[20120224-02](#)

12:51

SteveG

Quote: V.P. Henry Wallace on American Fascists

“They claim to be super-patriots, but they would destroy every liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. They demand free enterprise, but are the spokesmen for monopoly and vested interest. Their final objective toward which all their deceit is directed is to capture political power so that, using the power of the state and the power of the market simultaneously, they may keep the common man in eternal subjection.”

**- Vice President
Henry Wallace
Speaking of
American Fascists**

RepublicanDirtyTricks.com



[20120224-03](#)

13:24

Beth

Re: The Worst Pop Singer of All Time? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #81)

Interesting. I never really thought that much about Billy Joel and his music. I don't want to offend anyone, but I feel the same way about Bruce Springsteen. You can't have that much money and be "real." It doesn't help that he is the favorite of our governor Chris Christie, who is not my favorite. To give Bruce credit, he refused to play for Christie's inauguration.

[20120224-13](#)

17:46

SteveB

Re: The Worst Pop Singer of All Time? (reply to Beth, above)

I like that, Beth. I agree with you. Though slightly better than Billy Joel, I've always found most of the Boss's music to be rather phony and imitative. Very young, he was a little better. Give me the Blues, middle-era Stones, Little Feat, Led Zeppelin, and Bob Marley.

20120224-04	13:29	Phil	Video: IED (Improvised Explosive Device) in Iraq
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Price of gasoline too high? Maybe we should send some more young men and women overseas to help stabilize other regions. And to help them achieve a democratic society of course.

YOU MIGHT FIND THIS INTERESTING -- IRAQ IED

Amazing and horrible!

(Nov. 3, 2007) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_PsyfHhEx4&oref=http%3A%2F%2F8l0l0l315l1607l2-5.1l6l0&has_verified=1

Keep your eye on the slow moving truck on the top left corner coming down the road towards you. It looks like he is going slow to allow the military truck behind him to pass, and when it is along side...THIS is the type of explosion that our troops are dealing with, not the puny kind you see on television or the movies.

Pass this on... so people know and will understand better what an IED really is.

20120224-05	13:36	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Attend 99% Spring training!
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from MoveOn.org:

Last year, massive nonviolent direct action transformed America—from the protests for workers' rights in Madison that took over the state capitol for nearly a month, to the 1,000 people who performed civil disobedience at the White House to stop the Keystone XL pipeline, to Occupy Wall Street, we changed the political debate.

But still, millions of jobs have been destroyed, millions of homes foreclosed on, and an unconscionable number of children live in poverty. We have to do more to fix America, and we all know it. That's why people from across the 99% movement are preparing to take action this spring in bigger numbers than ever before to fight for change.

To prepare for the 99% Spring, groups from every corner of our movement are joining forces to do something that's never been tried before. During the week of April 9-15, across America, we will bring 100,000 people together for an unprecedented national movement-wide training on what happened to our economy, on the history of peaceful direct action, and how—following in the footsteps of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—we can take direct action this spring to challenge corporate power, end tax giveaways to the 1%, fight the influence of money in politics, and more.

Yes! I'm interested in hosting or attending a training during the week of April 9-15:

http://civic.moveon.org/event/events/create.html?rc=mo&id=36118-20195165-NXck%3D6x&action_id=268.

Anyone can host a training—you can host just a handful of people in your living room or you can find a local community center, place of worship, campus, or public space and put together a larger event. We'll follow up with all the details and provide the support and guidance you'll need to coordinate an event and we'll help you connect and collaborate with other local 99% Spring volunteers and groups.

The heroes who took action for the 99% last year from Madison to Occupy Wall Street have now joined our shared American history of everyday people standing up to demand justice, freedom, and dignity. From the seamstress in

Alabama who launched a bus boycott to the women in New York who dreamed they could one day speak with an equal voice to the mother who spoke up in Love Canal to stop the poisoning of her community, the power of nonviolent direct action has been essential in the great movements for social change in our country and around the world.

Right now our country needs a whole lot more of that spirit, because we need change on that scale again. The 99% Spring is our chance to step into the great tradition of creating lasting systemic change through nonviolent direct action—but it will only work if a huge number of us prepare ourselves and join in.

Thanks for all you do. —Lenore, Robin, Elena, Ryan, and the rest of the team

20120224-06 14:06 Dennis "Revealed: Romney's Top Funders Made Billions on Auto Bail-Out"

Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney called the federal government's 2009 bail-out of the auto industry, "nothing more than crony capitalism, Obama style... a reward for his big donors to his campaign."

In fact, the biggest rewards – a windfall of more than two billion dollars care of U.S. taxpayers — went to Romney's two top contributors according to a shocking new report.

"Revealed: Romney's Top Funders Made Billions on Auto Bail-Out" by Greg Palast, NationofChange

Feb. 23, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/revealed-romney-s-top-funders-made-billions-auto-bail-out-1330019614>)

Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney called the federal government's 2009 bail-out of the auto industry, "nothing more than crony capitalism, Obama style... a reward for his big donors to his campaign." In fact, the biggest rewards – a windfall of more than two billion dollars care of U.S. taxpayers — went to Romney's two top contributors.

John Paulson of Paulson & Co and Paul Singer of Elliott International, known on Wall Street as "vulture" investors, have each written checks for one million dollars to Restore Our Future, the Super PAC supporting Romney's candidacy.

The two hedge fund operators turned a breathtaking three-thousand percent profit on a relatively negligible investment by using hardball tactics against the U.S. Treasury and their own employees.

Gov. Romney last week asserted that the Obama Administration's support for General Motors was a, "payoff for the auto workers union." However, union workers in GM's former auto parts division, Delphi, the unit taken over by Romney's funders, did not fair so well. The speculators eliminated every single union job from the parts factories once manned by 25,200 UAW members.

Under the control of the speculators, Delphi, which had 45 plants in the U.S. and Canada, is now reduced to just four factories with only 1,500 hourly workers, none of them UAW members, despite the union agreeing to cut contract wages by two thirds.

It wasn't supposed to be quite so bad. The Obama Administration and GM had arranged for a private equity investor to provide half a billion dollars in new capital for Delphi, but that would have cut the pay-out to Singer and Paulson. The speculators blocked the Obama-GM plan, taking the entire government bail-out hostage. Even the Wall Street Journal's DealMaker column was outraged, accusing Paul Singer of treating the auto company, "like a third world country."

But it worked. Singer and Paulson got what they demanded. Using U.S. Treasury funds:

- GM agreed to pay off \$1.1 billion of Delphi's debts,

- Forgave \$2.15 billion owed GM by Delphi (which had been spun off as an independent company)
- Pumped \$1.75 billion into Delphi operations, and
- Took over four money-losing plants that the speculators didn't want.

If those plants had been closed, GM factories would have shut down cold for lack of parts.

Then there was the big one: The U.S. government agreed to take over \$6.2 billion in pension benefits due Delphi workers under U.S. labor law.

Governor Romney, while opposing the bail-out of GM, accused Obama of eliminating the pensions of 21,000 non-union employees at Delphi. In fact, it was Romney's funders who wiped out 100% of the pensions and health care accounts of Delphi salaried retirees.

Paulson and Singer paid an average of about 67 cents a share for Delphi. In November, 2011, Paulson sold a chunk of his holdings for \$22 a share. Paulson's gain totals a billion and a half dollars (\$1,499,499,000), and Singer gained nearly a billion (\$899,751,000) — thirty-two times their investment.

One-hundred percent of this gain for the Paulson and Singer hedge funds is accounted for by taxpayer bail-out support.

But, unlike the government loans and worker concessions given to GM, the U.S. Treasury and workers get nothing in return from Delphi.

From GM, the U.S. Treasury got warrants for common stock (similar to options) that have already produced billions in profit.

And Delphi? It's doing well for Paulson and Singer. GM and Chrysler, still in business by the grace of the U.S. Treasury, remain Delphi's main customers, buying parts now made almost entirely in China and other cheap-labor nations.

And exactly who are Paulson and Singer?

Billionaire John Paulson became the first man in history to earn over \$3 billion in a single year — not for his hedge fund, but for himself, personally. At the core of this huge payday was a 2007 scheme by which, via Goldman Sachs, he sold "insurance" on subprime mortgage loans. According to a lawsuit filed by the Securities Exchange Commission, Goldman defrauded European banks by pretending that Paulson was investing in the insurance. In fact, Paulson was, secretly, the beneficiary of the insurance, reaping billions when the mortgage market collapsed.

Goldman paid half a billion dollars in civil fines for the fraud. While the SEC states that Paulson knowingly participated in the scheme, he was not fined and denies he defrauded the banks.

Multi-billionaire Singer is known as Wall Street's toughest "vulture" speculator. Vulture fund financial attacks on the world's poorest nations have been effectively outlawed in much of Europe and excoriated by human rights groups, conduct Britain's former Prime Minister Gordon Brown described as, "morally outrageous."

(Greg Palast has been investigating vulture speculator Paul Singer for BBC Television "Newsnight" and Britain's *Guardian* for five years. The investigative reporter is author of *Vultures' Picnic: In Pursuit of Petroleum Pigs, Power Pirates and High-Finance Carnivores* and the *New York Times* bestseller, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*.)

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Stupidest op-ed of all time?

"Let Detroit Go Bankrupt" by Mitt Romney, *The New York Times*

Nov. 18, 2008, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/opinion/19romney.html>)

If General Motors, Ford and Chrysler get the bailout that their chief executives asked for yesterday, you can kiss the American automotive industry goodbye. It won't go overnight, but its demise will be virtually guaranteed.

Without that bailout, Detroit will need to drastically restructure itself. With it, the automakers will stay the course — the suicidal course of declining market shares, insurmountable labor and retiree burdens, technology atrophy, product inferiority and never-ending job losses. Detroit needs a turnaround, not a check.

I love cars, American cars. I was born in Detroit, the son of an auto chief executive. In 1954, my dad, George Romney, was tapped to run American Motors when its president suddenly died. The company itself was on life support — banks were threatening to deal it a death blow. The stock collapsed. I watched Dad work to turn the company around — and years later at business school, they were still talking about it. From the lessons of that turnaround, and from my own experiences, I have several prescriptions for Detroit's automakers.

First, their huge disadvantage in costs relative to foreign brands must be eliminated. That means new labor agreements to align pay and benefits to match those of workers at competitors like BMW, Honda, Nissan and Toyota. Furthermore, retiree benefits must be reduced so that the total burden per auto for domestic makers is not higher than that of foreign producers.

That extra burden is estimated to be more than \$2,000 per car. Think what that means: Ford, for example, needs to cut \$2,000 worth of features and quality out of its Taurus to compete with Toyota's Avalon. Of course the Avalon feels like a better product — it has \$2,000 more put into it. Considering this disadvantage, Detroit has done a remarkable job of designing and engineering its cars. But if this cost penalty persists, any bailout will only delay the inevitable.

Second, management as is must go. New faces should be recruited from unrelated industries — from companies widely respected for excellence in marketing, innovation, creativity and labor relations.

The new management must work with labor leaders to see that the enmity between labor and management comes to an end. This division is a holdover from the early years of the last century, when unions brought workers job security and better wages and benefits. But as Walter Reuther, the former head of the United Automobile Workers, said to my father, "Getting more and more pay for less and less work is a dead-end street."

You don't have to look far for industries with unions that went down that road. Companies in the 21st century cannot perpetuate the destructive labor relations of the 20th. This will mean a new direction for the U.A.W., profit sharing or stock grants to all employees and a change in Big Three management culture.

The need for collaboration will mean accepting sanity in salaries and perks. At American Motors, my dad cut his pay and that of his executive team, he bought stock in the company, and he went out to factories to talk to workers directly. Get rid of the planes, the executive dining rooms — all the symbols that breed resentment among the hundreds of thousands who will also be sacrificing to keep the companies afloat.

Investments must be made for the future. No more focus on quarterly earnings or the kind of short-term stock appreciation that means quick riches for executives with options. Manage with an eye on cash flow, balance sheets and long-term appreciation. Invest in truly competitive products and innovative technologies — especially fuel-saving designs — that may not arrive for years. Starving research and development is like eating the seed corn.

Just as important to the future of American carmakers is the sales force. When sales are down, you don't want to lose the only people who can get them to grow. So don't fire the best dealers, and don't crush them with new financial or performance demands they can't meet.

It is not wrong to ask for government help, but the automakers should come up with a win-win proposition. I believe the federal government should invest substantially more in basic research — on new energy sources, fuel-economy technology, materials science and the like — that will ultimately benefit the automotive industry, along with many others. I believe Washington should raise energy research spending to \$20 billion a year, from the \$4 billion that is spent today. The research could be done at universities, at research labs and even through public-private collaboration. The federal government should also rectify the imbedded tax penalties that favor foreign carmakers.

But don't ask Washington to give shareholders and bondholders a free pass — they bet on management and they lost.

The American auto industry is vital to our national interest as an employer and as a hub for manufacturing. A managed bankruptcy may be the only path to the fundamental restructuring the industry needs. It would permit the companies to shed excess labor, pension and real estate costs. The federal government should provide guarantees for post-bankruptcy financing and assure car buyers that their warranties are not at risk.

In a managed bankruptcy, the federal government would propel newly competitive and viable automakers, rather than seal their fate with a bailout check.

(Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts, was a candidate for this year's Republican presidential nomination.)

20120224-07	14:41	SteveB	From the Right: "Fridays with Erick Erickson, 02.24.12"
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President Obama's magic fuel...

"Fridays with Erick Erickson, 02.24.12" by Erick Erickson, Daily Events

Feb. 24, 2012, (<http://hoaxandchange.blogspot.com/2012/02/erickson-malkin-obamas-magic-fuel.html>)

If America could put in their cars what Barack Obama has been shoveling lately, we could fuel the 21st century. After campaigning in 2008 claiming his policies would bring down the price of gas, Barack Obama now says there really is not anything he can do. He also claims Republicans are licking their lips over higher gas prices.

Well, if they are not, they should. It is Barack Obama's fault. His policies have led to this moment, and it is not like the president and his advisers have been hiding from this.

Back in the mid-nineties, Republicans wanted to expand American domestic drilling. The Democrats blocked it, claiming it would take 10 years to see any results. 10 years later, the Republican Party tried again, and again the Democrats claimed it would take 10 years to see the results. 10 years later we have record high gas prices for this time of year.

In North Dakota, surprise, surprise, there is an oil drilling boom. People are back to work and making six figure salaries in areas that were desolate just a few years ago. The Obama administration can't stop the drilling because it is on private land. The Obama administration has, however, stopped drilling on public land.

For all of Barack Obama's talk about wanting to experiment with new energies and get people in battery powered clown cars of the future, all we need to do is go back to Jan. 20, 2011. President Obama's Energy Secretary, Stephen Chu, publicly said he wanted to "figure out how to boost the price of gasoline to the levels in Europe." At the time, gas in Europe was \$7 to \$8 per gallon.

President Obama may be publicly lamenting the high price of gasoline, but privately he and his administration have championed the high cost of fuel to force Americans to change their behavior and get out of cars. Hopefully, come November, Americans will get him out of office.

[I say, let's preserve our American treasure in the ground as long as possible and use everybody else's oil first. That's smart conservative politics, not this Republican drill, drill, drill mantra! –SteveB]

20120224-08	16:20	Pam	Video: 99 Problems / W.H. Auden's "Musee Des Beaux Arts"
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I thought you might enjoy this video: <http://vimeo.com/3463398>.

20120224-09	17:01	SteveG	"Super PACs & Montana vs. the Supreme Court"
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Take a read through – very interesting, especially Montana suing the U.S. Supreme Court based on a 1912 state law.

"Super PACs and Montana vs. the Supreme Court" by Adam Smith, Public Campaign Action Fund

Feb. 22, 2012, (<http://campaignmoney.org/press-room/2012/02/22/memo-super-pacs-and-montana-vs-supreme-court>)

I'm against very wealthy people attempting to or influencing elections, but as long as it's doable I'm going to do it. —Sheldon Adelson

The financing of the Republican presidential nomination fight is increasingly in the hands of a small number of wealthy Americans. That's the findings in from a trio of news stories from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today* this morning.

New York Times: "About two dozen individuals, couples or corporations have given \$1 million or more to Republican super PACs this year, an exclusive club empowered by the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision and other rulings..."

Washington Post: "Although many of these mega-donors have long participated in politics, none were able to wield the kind of influence now possible under loosened campaign finance regulations, which allow super PACs and other outside groups to spend unlimited amounts on political races."

USA Today: "Five wealthy people...have donated nearly \$1 of every \$4 flowing to the super PACs raising unlimited money in this year's presidential race, a *USA Today* analysis shows."

What we see is a result of two major factors.

First, the Supreme Court's deregulatory zeal, cloaked in First Amendment protections, has done to our elections what Wall Street interests and previous congresses did to our financial and housing markets. This Wild West of politics was fueled by several court decisions, including the notorious *Citizens United* decision and the less-well known *SpeechNow* case that accelerated the creation of Super PACs.

Second, despite the rhetoric of the Republican presidential candidates, government isn't the problem; it's the prize. The current crop of big donors representing hedge funds, casinos, and other big interests understand this. They are pouring their money into the presidential race to further a government that works primarily for them, not for everyday Americans.

Some pundits are saying that super PACs have made our elections fairer—giving candidates like Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich the ability to compete against the establishment. That’s only true, of course, if you have a millionaire donor at your disposal. We need more Main Street Americans in politics—not more billionaires.

Presidential candidates should support and push Congress to update the presidential public financing system and pass legislation like the Fair Elections Now Act, which would allow House and Senate candidates to run a competitive race for office by collecting small contributions from people back home.

Last week, the Supreme Court issued a stay on a Montana State Supreme Court decision regarding corporate money in politics. At issue was a 1912 state law banning direct corporate expenditures in state races called the Corrupt Practices Act. A corporation called American Tradition Partners sued the state, but the Montana Supreme Court upheld the law. The state’s Attorney General, Steve Bullock, said he’d enforce the statute even though it was an apparent conflict with the *Citizens United* decision.

On Friday, the Supreme Court said that the law could not be enforced and agreed to review briefings from both sides in the case. In an unusual move, two justices concurred with the stay but issued a statement asking the court to take up the case in order to revisit *Citizens United*.

As noted election lawyer Rick Hasen wrote in Slate, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg “like many Americans, appears concerned with the rise of super PACs and the disturbing role money is playing in the 2012 campaign season since the Supreme Court’s controversial decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*.” Arguments could be scheduled for late spring or in the Court’s fall term.

The additional backdrop, of course, is political. Montanans are already bracing for up to \$30 million in political spending by candidates and outside groups in one of the years marquee Senate contests pitting incumbent Senator Jon Tester (D) against incumbent Representative Denny Rehberg (R). The Attorney General, a Democrat, is running for Governor, and will likely become a target for his leadership on money-in-politics. Lastly, a ballot measure may appear on the November ballot asking voters to instruct Congress to adopt a constitutional amendment to address out of control political money.

Consider one increasingly likely scenario: in the midst of a nasty, negative campaign season featuring one of the most expensive Senate races in the country, voters could send a message to Washington they want an end to it, just as the Supreme Court, itself responsible for the mess, takes up a case to do away with, or restore, Montana’s century old Corrupt Practices Act.

20120224-10	17:04	SteveG	“Mississippians Are Ready for Comprehensive Sex Education”
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“Mississippians Are Ready for Comprehensive Sex Education” by Eric Thomas Weber, *Science Progress*

Feb. 14, 2012, (<http://scienceprogress.org/2012/02/mississippians-are-ready-for-comprehensive-sex-education/>)

(Social science and public opinion polls agree.)

Mississippi will surprise you. A recent Gallup poll found it to be the “most conservative state,” yet Mississippi’s voters rejected the personhood initiative in late 2011. But another development about reproductive health in Mississippi has gone largely unnoticed and deserves a closer look.

In December 2011, the Center for Mississippi Health Policy released a report titled “What Do Mississippi Parents Think about Sex-Related Education in Public Schools?” I expected to see a strong reluctance to have comprehensive sex education in public schools. The common political ideology suggests that educating children about sex is a parent’s responsibility, not that of the government.

The related inclination is to think that demonstrating condom use will only teach students that having sex before marriage is acceptable. Such judgments ignore the facts. A 20-year study published in the Jan., 2007 issue of *Public Health Reports* shows that premarital sex has been the norm since at least 1940. The study published in 2007

shows that of thousands of subjects surveyed, 95 percent of respondents between the ages of 15 and 44 had engaged in premarital sex. Plus, 75 percent of respondents had done so by the age of 20. These developments are not recent. The study showed in fact that "the number of Americans having premarital sex hasn't changed much since the 1940s," as Jennifer Warner put it for WebMD.

The 2011 Mississippi survey on sex education showed surprising results. Mississippi parents are overwhelmingly in favor of age-appropriate, comprehensive sex education. Marie Barnard, who is a parent of public school kids in Oxford, Mississippi and the assistant dean of applied sciences at the University of Mississippi, believes that "it is [clearly] a minority of parents" who oppose comprehensive sex education in the public schools, but "they are very passionate about their beliefs and are active in influencing their local school boards." So it seems that despite the great popularity of comprehensive sex education, a vocal minority is in control.

Sex education is an important topic in Mississippi. We have some of the highest rates of teen pregnancy and poverty, aggravated by some of the lowest rates of educational attainment in the country. Each of these factors can spur the others. A young woman in a school with inadequate sex education is more likely to become pregnant than one with comprehensive sex education. If she becomes pregnant, she is much more likely not to complete school. Having a child, furthermore, will limit her ability to work full time, diminishing the already low income she will earn if she does not complete high school.

The common refrain we hear from politicians in Mississippi is that there is only one sure way not to become pregnant, which is to abstain from having sex. Beyond the fact that 75 percent of Americans have sex before the age of 20, the crucial fact is that scholars have offered conclusive evidence showing that comprehensive sex education is "the most effective approach to reducing STDs and pregnancy." This statement was the conclusion of a 2010 Rutgers study published in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.

At the same time it is worth noting that abstinence-only sex education is effective for some limited groups. According to a Rutgers news release about the 2010 study, an "abstinence-only program helped sixth and seventh graders delay high-risk sexual behaviors up to two years after the initial intervention." But "nearly a quarter of these sixth and seventh graders had already had sex by the time they became a part of [the] study." The study highlighted an underappreciated lesson: "Sex education is not about teaching one topic to one age group and that's it. It has to start at the earliest ages, build upon and reinforce the previous knowledge and skills learned, and evolve as students get older and become more likely to start having sex."

In Mississippi the state passed House Bill 999 in 2011, which requires that all schools in Mississippi adopt a sex education policy by the end of June, 2012. Mississippi First, a nonpartisan nonprofit advocating for effective, data-driven policy in the state, strongly urges "comprehensive or 'abstinence-plus' education—because it works," following the clearly established lessons learned in countless studies.

Unfortunately, the Mississippi law allows school districts to choose between abstinence-only and abstinence-plus sex education. So some school districts will choose a more comprehensive form of sex education from which objecting families could opt out of the lessons beyond abstinence for their children. But others will teach abstinence-only education, offering no options for those who want comprehensive programs. Even those abstinence-plus districts, however, "shall not include instruction and demonstrations on the application and use of condoms," according to the law. Advocates for comprehensive sex education such as the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States argue that "there are many youth who still need to learn how to prevent errors in [condom] use." Nevertheless, the Mississippi law against such instruction is clear.

Barnard heard a parent opposed to comprehensive sex education claim that "his disagreement with abstinence-plus was based on his religious beliefs." She responded that "Our children deserve a comprehensive, factually accurate, nonjudgmental education that is not based on a few individuals' personal religious beliefs, but on scientifically validated educational programs." The comprehensive approach with an opt-out mechanism would respect both views, but some districts will not choose it.

One might expect Mississippians to be generally opposed to comprehensive sex education, given the legislation that passed, but Barnard is right. The Dec., 2011 study from the Mississippi Health Policy Center undercuts the common misconception.

First, 92 percent of the 3,600 parents responding were in favor of some form of sex education, which refers either to abstinence-only or abstinence-plus education. Abstinence-only would exclude, among other things, education about the use of contraceptives. The surprising result of the study, however, was that 89.8 percent of survey respondents said that they either "strongly support" (78.4 percent) or "somewhat support" (11.4 percent) education about birth control methods. The total opposition to the teaching of birth control methods came from fewer than 8 percent of respondents.

Despite the overwhelming support for education about birth control, some Mississippi students will be stuck with their school district's decision to teach abstinence-only sex education. This is a serious problem. The approach taken has been to deny some kids education, rather than to offer it with an opt-out policy approach.

Even the most controversial element of sex education in Mississippi, particularly the classroom demonstration of proper condom use, was in fact supported by a large majority of Mississippians. While 15.2 percent of respondents "strongly oppose" and 7.1 percent "somewhat oppose" classroom demonstrations of condom usage, 53.9 percent "strongly support" it and 17.2 percent "somewhat support" it. That means overall that 71.1 percent of respondents support in-class condom demonstrations, which the state's sex education law wholly forbids for all schools.

The Center for Mississippi Health Policy's Dec., 2011 study shows that Mississippians are misunderstood and poorly represented. It is now up to school districts to choose the more effective approach to sex education—abstinence-plus forms instead of abstinence-only curricula. Perhaps in the next few years the legislature will have the courage to require that all schools provide comprehensive sex education—including condom use—while offering parents the choice to opt out of portions for their own children as they see fit.

(Dr. Eric Thomas Weber is assistant professor of public policy leadership at the University of Mississippi, freelance columnist for *The Clarion Ledger* of Jackson, Mississippi, and author of three books, including the forthcoming *Democracy and Leadership* (2012). Visit his website at EricThomasWeber.org.)

20120224-11	17:07	SteveG	Fw: One.org Petition: Stop Bullying by Big Oil!
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from: One.org:

Right now, oil company lobbyists are trying to kill the best parts of a law that would put an end to secret deals with foreign governments. If big oil wins, that means billions of dollars put into the pockets of corrupt leaders, rather than life-saving programs to help pull the world's poorest people out of poverty.

Tell the Securities and Exchange Commission we can't be bullied by big oil. It's time to put an end to these closed door deals once and for all.

<http://www.one.org/us/actnow/>

20120224-12	17:11	SteveG	Fw: MoxyVote Petition: Make Chevron Clean-Up the Rain Forest!
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from [MoxyVote](http://MoxyVote.org):

Open oil wells in the rainforest?

Over the past 8 years, Chevron has been faced with a lawsuit seeking to hold the company accountable for the alleged impact of its oil drilling in the Ecuador rainforest. While Chevron has not operated in the area for the last 22 years, citizens and community members report that Chevron's presence is still felt and deep scars still remain. Read more from [The Financial Times](http://TheFinancialTimes.com).

Texaco Oil, now owned by Chevron, operated oil drilling facilities in Ecuador from 1964 until 1990. According to alleged reports, the company neglected environmental safety precautions to the extent that "the oil infrastructure

developed and operated by Texaco had utterly inadequate environmental controls...consequently Texaco dumped 18 billion gallons of toxic wastewater directly into the region's rivers."

<http://www.moxyvote.com/TakeAction/>

20120224-14 19:21 Art Re: "The Republican Brain..." (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #81)

Many of my friends have expressed surprise as to how I seem to have changed my political views and wonder why. So do I. As I think about it, it seems to me it is at least partially because I read a lot more political stuff now and look closer at things. For instance, I have been generally aware of climate change for sometime but now I have had time to really look at it. Once the facts are laid out, the course seems clear to me but I confess I am frustrated why so many continue to see another road. The below explains at least a little how this can happen. Some may take offense but it is worth a read.

In a recent conversation with a long time very conservative acquaintance the subject of climate change came up. I recommended he read 'Six Degrees' by Lynas. His response is "Well, I'll look at it but I don't want to hear any crap about carbon dioxide in the atmosphere". My reply was, "If 97% of climate scientists say that's a problem, why would you say that?"

This article maybe tells me why.

20120225-02 07:13 SteveB Re: "The Republican Brain..." (reply to Art, above)

Art, I do love this article.

I too have a confession to make. I was once an unreformed Republican conservative.

I still think the government is not the solution to everything. It's just that the solution to everything involves, first, building a government that works for everyone, not just the rich few. That is what you and I discovered is happening in this country that we love.

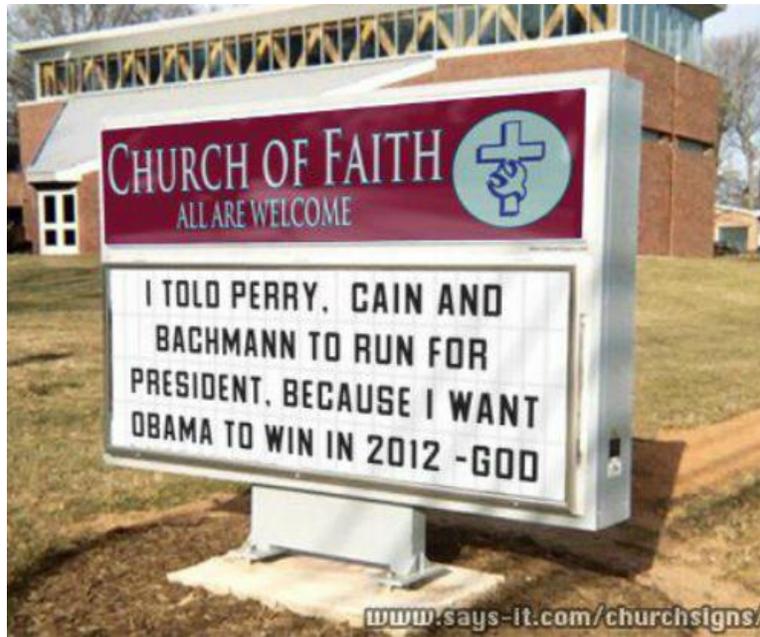
And even recently, working on the Archive, I have found that I was more conservative and less radical when the whole thing started back in 2007, not that long ago. In fact, I have been embarrassed enough by a couple of my sentences to edit them out. This, even though I'm trying to be as true as possible to the original.

Like you, I think, I've always been a logical person. I was a boy scientist. An engineer. Then I studied and read and observed what was happening in America and the world, much as you describe. I think our friend, Dennis, also radicalized me somewhat by bombarding me with Altnet articles and brainwashing me. ^_^

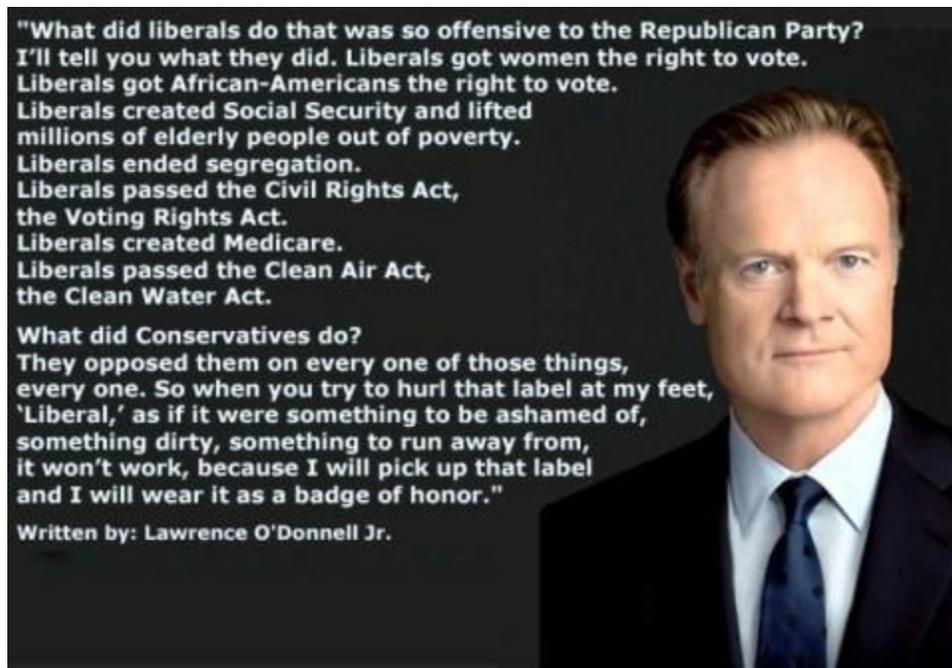
Now I'm a seething left-wing radical and loving it. Go figure! Haha

No matter what some of your friends may think, Art, I congratulate you. I wish more smart people would use their brains instead of whatever else they are using. Unfortunately, they are lost and I feel compelled to try to save them. I guess I'm an evangelical seething left-wing radical.

Just kidding about the radical part. I'm still more truly conservative than most people when it comes to government intrusion on morality, but not when it comes to fun!



Also submitted by MarthaH (Feb. 25, 2012, 8:08 pm): "This was in the script that O'Donnell wrote for the 'Live Debate' episode of The West Wing in 2005, and it's so perfect for these times."



[Good one. AMEN, brother! –SteveB]

What is there left to say?

[20120225-01](#) 01:21 Ben EarthRoamer RV

I think y'all will find this interesting. Be sure to do a slide show of one of the used ones...

<http://www.earthroamer.com/>

[20120225-04](#) 08:58 SteveB "R0mney Speech Falls Flat in Detroit"

From the party mired in antiquity...

"R0mney Speech Falls Flat in Detroit" by Cameron Joseph, *The Hill*

Feb. 24, 2012, (<http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/gop-presidential-primary/212493-romney-speech-falls-flat-in-detroit>)

Mitt Romney spoke to several empty seats Friday in Detroit, in a speech that offered Democrats more fodder for their attacks and failed to deliver the major economic address his campaign promised.

Television cameras showed rows of empty chairs as Romney rehashed many of the policies and quips he'd used in previous speeches, made a few jokes that appeared to fall flat with the audience and said that his wife, Ann, drives "a couple of Cadillacs," which will likely give Democrats more ammunition for their depiction of him as rich and out of touch.

The former Massachusetts governor also repeated a line that has been the butt of jokes by late-night comedians — that Michigan has good-sized trees.

"This feels good, being back in Michigan," he said. "The trees are the right height. The streets are just right."

Romney then listed the various cars he and his wife own.

"I drive a Mustang and Chevy pickup truck," he said. "Ann drives a couple of Cadillacs, actually. I used to have a Dodge truck, so I used to have all three [Detroit manufacturers] covered."

Polls show Romney is back in the lead in his home state of Michigan, which is considered a must-win for him. The primary is Tuesday.

His speech was held at Detroit's massive Ford Field, which holds tens of thousands of people, but only 1,000 or so attended. The campaign and the Detroit Economic Club, which hosted the event, sought to make the stadium look more full by putting the audience in one end zone of the football field and putting the cameras directly behind them.

But cameras showed empty chairs, and the Democratic National Committee blasted out photos that compared the crowd at Romney's speech to the filled stadiums where then-candidate Barack Obama had campaign rallies in 2008.

Comment posted by The Blunt Ugly Truth:

Mitt "Flip Flop" Romney is a piece of excrement. The reason the crowd was so un-enthusiastic and falling asleep was because the greasy-haired, flip-flopping douchebag didn't fill the stadium with Mormons, bible-bangers, people from the Deep South, people with a severe case of ODS (Obama Derangement Syndrome), uneducated

housewives, and people sucking on the government teat...otherwise known as the "GOP base." Empty stadium. Quite fitting for an empty suit with empty ideas.

[20120225-05](#) 09:15 SteveB Video: Rick Santorum and His Party

This great "Daily Show" video says it all about the Republican philosophy and candidates. Hilarious, but undeniably true!

<http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/thu-february-23-2012/indecision-2012---rick-santorum-s-conservative-rhetoric>

[20120225-07](#) 09:42 Pam Re: Video: Rick Santorum and His Party (reply to SteveB, above)

I would be totally insane if it weren't for Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert.

[20120225-06](#) 09:18 SteveB 2012 Republican Primaries & Platforms (to GaryC)

GaryC, you say you're a social liberal. You must be absolutely horrified, then, by what you see in the Republican Party?

Or you don't find the monster that's been created scary as hell?

[20120225-09](#) 12:00 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell President Obama: 55 Wall St. Investigators Aren't Enough!

from CREDO Action:

A month ago, President Obama announced during the State of the Union speech the creation of a new financial crimes task force to investigate the crimes and misdeeds that led to the economic collapse and "hold accountable those who broke the law."

Yet, despite the enormity of the issue, its direct impact on millions of Americans and the widespread nature of crimes and wrongdoing, the new financial crime unit has been given a paltry 55 staff members to undertake this enormous task.

This contrasts to the approximately 1,000 FBI agents and dozens of federal prosecutors who were assigned to prosecute cases related to the much smaller savings and loan scandal of the '80s, or the 100 FBI agents tasked with investigating the Enron scandal³, which involved just one company and caused none of the economy-wide damage we've seen since the collapse of the housing bubble.

Tell President Obama: 55 investigators are not enough. We need 20 times more staffing to launch a real investigation into Wall Street's crimes. Click here to sign the petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/fraud_task_force/.

[20120225-11](#) 13:12 Pam Re: Tell President Obama: 55 Wall St. Investigators Aren't Enough! (reply to SteveG, above)

I like Obama, and I'm going to vote for him again, but I have to say I find his record on exposing criminal behavior in high places lacking. The only way to clean things up is to expose the whole sorry mess--whatever it might be--to the light, something the Obama administration has been taking pains not to do. I am left to conclude that he and/or his advisers believe the fallout would be too great if the whole truth were known. It's as if the upper

echelon has decided to protect its own, no matter what. Truth and justice are apparently not a top priority. We need a new Woodward and Bernstein to blow the lid off. Those two had the advantage of being well-educated, well-spoken, and "respectable" looking, unlike Michael Moore and Julian Assange, both of whom seem a slight bit deranged. Fox News has been doing a number on the American public for years now. I wish more people were listening to the likes of Rachael Maddow, who is not hysterical and speaks the truth. Unless there is a G. Gordon Liddy and his crew to be dragged into the public square, my guess is that any investigation of financial wrongdoing will drag on so slowly and so eternally that the original impetus will be forgotten. It doesn't take long for the public mind to go numb.

20120225-10	12:30	FotM	The Federal Birth Control 'Mandate' (discussion)
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[I am presenting the entire thread to facilitate understanding the new posts concerning this important subject. – SteveB]

Mary (Feb. 6): Regardless of your political persuasion or position on birth control, it's imperative that you familiarize yourself with the latest federal birth control mandate. It is an unprecedented attack on religious liberty, a fundamental freedom protected by the first amendment. For an administration that believes in "choice", how can it justify forcing this on groups if it's against their moral beliefs??

mgobble01 (Feb. 8): I didn't understand it to be a mandate, it is just going to be mandatory for insurance companies to cover birth control IF a woman chooses to use it.

Carol (Feb. 9): Anything that is mandatory is a mandate. PPACA is forcing Christian & Catholic organizations who oppose abortifacient forms of birth control or sterilization to offer and to pay for what their consciences object to. For our government to put Catholics and others with similar convictions in the position of obeying their convictions or dropping health care coverage for their employees (and pay large fines), is a tremendous power grab. Where will this end? Will they someday require Jews and Muslims to serve pork in their restaurants? Will they required the Amish to serve in the military and kill against their consciences? Will they require Christian or Catholic adoption services to place children in homosexual households? (oh, wait....they're already doing this one). When will they start requiring doctors to perform abortions or to kill their terminally ill patients? This is a very slippery slope. Birth control is ultimately not the issue. This is a violent infringement to religious freedom and our First Amendment rights. If you want birth-control, just go down to the pharmacy and buy it yourself.

Pam (Feb. 10): Catholic taxes for contraception--a violation of religious liberty or the price of living in a democracy? Many of us would prefer our taxes not be used to prosecute wars or subsidize corn farmers or prop up dictators, but we pay them. Why should being a Catholic carry more weight than being a Quaker? The whole contraception brou-ha-ha is more politics as usual, which is to say, ridiculous.

Dennis (Feb. 10): Why is this not religion dictating public policy? What gives Catholic bishops the authority to discriminate against employees of a hospital serving the general public? Is this not the religious tyranny that the separation of church and state is intended to prevent? The above nonsense about Jews, Muslims, and pork dictates is just a red herring. Christians and Catholics can believe any narrow minded thing they want in their churches, but when they provide commercial services to the public, they can't determine what services to provide according to their own religious biases. I suppose you might believe it was a government power grab to require a member of the KKK who owned a restaurant to refuse service to blacks a couple of generations ago. That was the slippery slope argument then.

Carol (Feb. 11): This isn't public policy. These are not government-run hospitals, they are faith-based charities, hospitals and schools. Any of their employees are welcome to get different jobs that have more inclusive health insurance that suits their personal desires. This is not discrimination against employees. They won't pay for their cigarettes either; have a problem with that? I would go to jail before paying for someone else's morning-after pill. It completely violates my conscience, and it is absolutely ridiculous to assign me to the same category as the KKK (talk about red herring & nonsense!). Racism is evil, and so is abortion. I am completely against both. You have the tyranny exactly backwards. The "separation of church and state" phrase comes from a personal & private letter between President Thomas Jefferson and the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut, shortly after he became

president. Mr. Jefferson wrote the letter in the context of not allowing the government's restriction or interference in religious practices. He and the Founders believed and wrote extensively that the First Amendment was written to prevent the federal establishment of a national denomination and to keep them from trying to regulate or restrict religious expression (which unfortunately is what is going on now). As for this new "concession" the Obama administration issued today, it is just more politics. So now religious employers won't have to pay for abortion pills, sterilization and contraception, but their insurance companies will. Hmmm. Who pays for the insurance policy? The cost will still be theirs, because of course, the insurance companies will simply raise their premiums. If you want your birth control paid for, just don't get a job at a Catholic hospital. People switch jobs to get greater benefits all the time.

Dennis (Feb. 11): Wrong. The insurance companies will absorb the cost of contraception gladly. It is cheaper for them than paying for unintended pregnancies and deliveries.

Carol (Feb. 11): Doubt it. Insurance companies see their overhead go up, and they raise rates. They don't sit there and calculate how much they're "saving" by not paying for deliveries. No businesses absorb increased costs "gladly."

Dennis (Feb. 11): If you don't think insurance companies calculate every last penny of costs, then you must be some kind of naive libertarian.

Carol (Feb. 12): What's really naive is to think that people don't use birth control if their insurance companies don't pay for it.

Dennis (Feb. 12): I was once a social worker in inner city Detroit. I am not naive about this. Maybe you should get out of your self-righteous religious shell and find out about the real world.

Carol (Feb. 13): Dennis, I almost responded to you several times, but have hesitated because I am rather baffled by your name-calling below. You know nothing about me or how much I know about the world. I have lived all over the United States, and abroad. I have done community service in gang-infested inner-city Los Angeles, and traveled to 35+ countries on pretty much most of the continents (haven't quite made it to Antarctica yet). It was rather interesting last night as I had a good friend from Michigan visit who's a social worker and very familiar with inner city Detroit. We had a great discussion, but she did not tell me anything I wasn't already aware of. My statement below is true and I stand by it. Anyone can go into Planned Parenthood and get as much free birth control that they want, especially in inner city Detroit! Try to watch the ad hominem attacks in the future. They add nothing to your argument. I read your article by Mr. Kristof, and of course he got his information from the Guttmacher Institute (non-partisan - HA!) The cost of birth control is NOT "the backdrop for the uproar over President Obama's requirement that Catholic universities and hospitals include birth control in their health insurance plans...." as Mr. Kristof states. This is about government control and King George is removing more and more of our freedoms. What's next? After our government requires Christian businesses to go against their faith/conscience by purchasing abortifacient forms of birth control and sterilizations for their employees, then it could be to provide/pay for abortions. Our president, when he was a state senator for Illinois, voted against allowing nurses to hold a dying babies from botched abortions TWICE. Where's all his compassion for poor helpless people there???? Or do you not consider an alive and independently breathing newborn (not even necessarily premature) a person deserving of medical care? I can barely stomach that. As Sen. Jim DeMint stated, the "contraception controversy is only the beginning of Obamacare's tyrannical reach into our personal lives." Honestly, I can't think of a bigger infringement on our religious liberties in the history of our country. It saddens me greatly.

Mary (Feb 25): Steve, could you put THIS in your newsletter w/o editing? I have Carol's permission. Their "exchange" is interesting. Sad to say, Dennis's remarks to Carol, are similar to other comments I've read in "Friends of the Middle(?)" ????. i.e. Very closed minded - Republicans are all bad, and Dems have all the answers. "Like a parachute, the mind works best when open!" Thanks!

SteveB (Feb. 25): Mary, Thank you, Carol, and Dennis for this. Happy to publish and discuss it. We hope to hear more from you and Carol. It's such an important issue, no matter which side you're on, lives are at stake. BUT...we edit nothing, except perhaps to correct a little spelling and punctuation, though we even try to leave that alone as

much as humanly possible. What is the impetus of your accusation, please? Did you find something "edited"? And I wish it weren't the case, but to be left of Republicans in 2012 still leaves a huge amount of territory right of the middle. In other words, very many reasonable, practical, moral people find themselves far left of Republicans. That's just the way it is. Check the numbers. After all, this is still a democracy. Majority rules. I believe in that, myself, heart and soul. That's what America is founded upon, right or wrong. (As to the issues at hand—reproductive matters—our nation seems tragically split down the middle at this time.) I have a lot of faith. I believe that, in the end, we are all brothers (and sisters) and we all want the same things for our children and grandchildren. I believe that we will find that we really agree on many things, despite the wedges driven by those who would control us.

Pam (Feb. 25): Very interesting, as you say, SteveB.

May I weigh in? Several things occur to me, in no particular order. First, all of us pay taxes that are used for things we may disagree with. Quakers wouldn't want their money spent on weapons of war. Orthodox Jews wouldn't want their money used for subsidies to farmers who raise hogs. Most religions have prohibitions of one kind or another (yet another aspect of religion that baffles me), but we'd be tied up in knots if we attempted to accommodate each and every one, and if we don't accommodate all, then where's the logic in supporting some?

Second, I don't believe the anti-birth-controllers are really exercised about women's reproductive rights. This brou-ha-ha is about religion, and the zealots have come out of the closet swinging. Birth control is a no brainer. Preventing pregnancy is no more heinous than a thirteen-year old in the bathroom with a jar of mayonnaise. About abortion I'm more understanding. I am pro-choice but not pro-abortion. I do believe a human fetus is a human life. What else could it be, a tadpole? This is such a problematic subject, I would urge erring on the side of individual choice. A woman should be able to decide for herself which is more intolerable to her: ending her child's life or spending her remaining years coping with a disaster. No one enjoys abortion, but only the woman and her doctor are close enough to the situation to know what is the right course to take. That said, I don't think people should be forced to act against their conscience. A Catholic doctor who doesn't want to perform abortions shouldn't be forced to. The problem is when some folks want to decide what other folks must do, and it works both ways. It isn't feasible to tease out the tax revenue used for defense or oil subsidies; it is easy to allow a physician to opt out of performing procedures he is uncomfortable with. If only people could see that their "opponents" feel as deeply as they do, then perhaps both sides could leave each other alone. If you don't believe in birth control, don't use it. If you don't believe in divorce, don't have one. What others do is none of your business.

Like it or not, there are very few absolutes. Mature individuals and societies take circumstances into account and make exceptions to rules when they are warranted. Thou shalt not kill--unless a maniac is after your wife with an ax. Thou shalt not steal--unless your child is starving under a bridge. We all make exceptions to moral precepts all the time, but they're usually small and we barely notice them. No one has a right to determine what others' exceptions should be; that's what they do in North Korea.

The Republican Presidential debates have demonstrated abundantly just how intensely all the candidates want to dictate morals, behavior, religious belief, and sexual behavior. Each one of them is saying, "Do as I say, or you are a bad, bad person." A couple using birth control is not evil. A woman with a seriously deformed fetus who chooses abortion is not evil. A Christian is not evil. An atheist is not evil. Judge not, lest ye be judged. America has become a snarling, nasty, bitter place, more concerned with how terrible everyone ELSE is than how it might address its own failings. We sit and listen to the candidates lie to us, know they're lying, and react as if they mirrored the truth. When you live in a looking-glass world, nothing appears as it really is, and appearances can be deceiving.

20120225-12	13:22	SteveG	"No Bailouts for Romney's Intellectual Bankruptcy"
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"No Bailouts for Romney's Intellectual Bankruptcy" by Jonathan Alter, The National Memo

Feb. 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/content/no-bailouts-romneys-intellectual-bankruptcy>)

By all accounts, Mitt Romney is a smart businessman with a sophisticated understanding of how economies work. So why is he so tied up in knots over basic questions of government spending in a recession and the limits of the free market?

Because he's running for president in a party that has lost its economic common sense, its political bearings and probably Michigan's electoral votes.

Here's the Republican candidate off-script (the best way to find out what's in his head) at a town hall meeting Tuesday in Shelby Township, Michigan: "If you just cut, if all you're thinking about doing is cutting spending, why, as you cut spending you'll slow down the economy, so you have to at the same time create pro-growth tax policies."

This is a classic example of a "Kinsley gaffe" (named for my Bloomberg View colleague Michael Kinsley), which is when a politician accidentally says something that's true but politically inconvenient.

Sure enough, Andy Roth, vice president for government affairs at the fiscally conservative Club for Growth, called Romney's comments "hogwash." Roth said the statement "confirms yet again that Romney is not a limited government conservative. The idea that balancing the budget would not help the economy is crazy. If we balanced the budget tomorrow on spending cuts alone, it would be fantastic for the economy."

Oh, really? If we balanced the budget by immediately cutting \$1.3 trillion in spending, as some Tea Party adherents advocate, unemployment would surge. Spending cuts (mostly through entitlement reform) are critical in the medium and long term, but they're harmful when the economy is weak. If you don't believe Romney or me on this point, ask any economics professor who isn't a crackpot.

After Romney's gaffe, a campaign spokesman undertook damage control with a tortured statement that amounted to saying that Romney supports the House Republican "Cut and Grow" economic policy. This is the one that shuns all "investment" as a Democratic codeword for spending (thereby repudiating 150 years of Republican support for infrastructure investments) and says that the route to economic growth is through tax cuts.

A preview of Romney's tax plan making its debut Friday in a speech in Detroit suggests that "Romneynomics" would in effect transfer wealth from the poor and the future old (through draconian cuts in Medicaid and Medicare) to the wealthy (through more tax cuts at the upper end). You may recall that President George W. Bush tried a variant of this with his 2001 tax cuts and the result was the weakest decade of job growth since the 1930s.

Romney is trapped in a "theology" (to use Rick Santorum's word in a different context) that he knows is completely inadequate for addressing our economic problems.

We first glimpsed that trap during the 2008-09 economic crisis. Like many in his party, Romney supported the Troubled Asset Relief Program for banks but opposed the portion of TARP devoted to the auto industry. He was sure the auto bailouts would fail and thus he was safe in writing his now famous "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt" op-ed article in the *New York Times*.

In fairness to Romney, that piece was written in November 2008, when clueless automakers were asking for money from the outgoing Bush administration with no strings attached. (They got \$17.4 billion and flushed it down the same old rat holes.) Romney wrote that government guarantees for warranties and post-bankruptcy financing would be acceptable and these eventually became part of the Obama deal.

Even so, the premise of that piece, which endorsed a "managed bankruptcy" without direct federal money, was itself Intellectually bankrupt. It assumed that the car companies would find new investors after reorganization. But the firm Romney co-founded, Bain Capital LLC, was among many potential creditors that refused to touch any deal involving auto companies. The billions necessary to keep General Motors Co. (GM) and Chrysler alive weren't available from any place but the government. When CNN moderator John King made this point during Wednesday's debate among Republican candidates, Romney tried to ignore it.

Romney's approach was popular among many Republicans, who hypocritically argued that the rules of free market capitalism could be suspended to bail out bankers but not workers. Sure, hundreds of thousands of people working for auto companies or their suppliers would lose their jobs, but that was just part of capitalism's "creative destruction."

This selective approach to conservative principles -- not Romney's opposition to the auto bailouts -- is what put Romney in trouble with primary voters in Michigan, where Santorum's consistency in opposing all bailouts has won him conservative support.

Santorum tried to use that consistency to his advantage in Wednesday's debate. Like so much else about his performance, he failed. Could it be that free market fundamentalists have been consistently wrong for three years? They are the "little minds" Ralph Waldo Emerson had in mind when he savaged the "hobgoblin" of "foolish consistency."

Every so often, history renders a clear verdict. However noxious and debatable the particulars, the TARP bank bailouts averted a global run on American banks and a depression. They helped to stabilize the global economy. Almost all of the money has been paid back.

The auto bailouts? The reduction in Michigan's unemployment rate from 14.1 percent in 2009 to 9.3 percent today isn't a matter of opinion or differing economic philosophy. It's a happy reality that should make any open-minded conservative acknowledge that dogmatic adherence to abstract principles usually ends badly.

Romney's core problem is that he doesn't have the courage of his pragmatic impulses. If he did, he'd stick with his view that cutting spending sharply in the short term is a bad idea, and that in extremely rare circumstances we must hold our noses, put principles aside and let Washington prop up vital industries.

Of course he can't say that, which means that winning Michigan is all but out of reach for him or any other Republican candidate this fall.

(Jonathan Alter is a "Bloomberg View" columnist and the author of *The Promise: President Obama, Year One*. The opinions expressed are his own.)

Comments

posted by Howz1:

I call Romney a Rubric cube because of the many sides he shows during elections. Against the liberal lion, Ted Kennedy he was publically a moderate to progressive governor who just championed health care reform. Now faced with a party that has shifted dramatically to the right and wants a conservative purist test given to every candidate, Romney goes against his own common economic sense to please the masses. The problem with the masses is, as a Canadian study just showed that the Tea Party members are of lesser intelligence, can't really comprehend the depth of the issues, and are easily manipulated, to repeat jargon(cut cut) and slogans (Obama care is bad). Romney, would probably have had more success running against Obama in the Democratic primary where he could have been the moderate on social issues that he was(pro choice) and slightly to the right of center on Economic issues like Clinton was.

posted by concernedusa7:

REPUBLICAN IDEALISM IS PROPAGANDA! The Obama Administration inherited a disastrous financial program leading the USA & World into a Second Republican Caused Depression. In order to rescue the USA & World from a Second Depression it was absolutely essential that the USA Financial Conglomerate be saved from total collapse. The Obama Administration was forced to and Wisely chose to shore up the USA Financial Conglomerate with USA Government Funds. That intelligent action saved the USA & World from a devastating Second Republican Depression and brought the USA & World to the Great Republican Recession, which slowed the financial collapse and is leading to a slow but steady recovery from deaths door, Thank you Obama Administration! Every Hair

Brained Idea the Republicans have put forth would throw the USA & World into a horrible Economic Collapse, Depression. I would also add that the Ideologue Republicans have tried to block every necessary measure that has been put forth to insure the Economic Recovery of the USA & World. The Republicans believe that destroying Collective Bargaining, Eliminating all programs that assist the poor and elderly, eliminating any and all abortions, as well as Cutting All Taxes on the Super Wealthiest of the Wealthy, doing away with Public Education, doing away with Health Coverage will bring the USA & World out of the Great Republican Recession, this Ideology lacks any Intelligence!

posted by Independent1:

I'd just like to point out that the deficit's charged to Bush aren't 5 trillion they're 10 trillion. The worst president the U.S. has ever seen runs the country into the ground and by magic the deficits needed to fix the mess he creates are suppose to stop when he runs out office??? Sorry friend...George is responsible for every bit of the deficits that Obama is having to run up to fix HIS disaster. Just because on some fake books they end the counting when he walks out the door, I'm sorry but it doesn't work that way. Besides, he negotiated a lot of the fixes that drove up the deficit by trillions that didn't take effect until he skipped out. Not only are Republicans these days completely bereft of common sense, they can't even learn from their own mistakes. They've had a lot of practice in creating recessions by their idiot notion that you can stimulate the economy via tax and budget cuts...every attempt they've tried in doing this has failed. But again, no common sense, no learning even from your mistakes.

20120225-13 16:49 Pam "Rick Santorum's Hypocrisy on Higher Education?"
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Yet one more sign of America's anti-intellectualism. I am sick and tired of people criticizing college professors for being "liberal." That's as stupid and reductive as calling all conservatives "idiots." (Yes, I have been known to do that, but always intending hyperbole.)

"Rick Santorum's Hypocrisy on Higher Education?" by Michael Falcone, ABC OTUS News

Feb 25, 2012, (June 6, 2012 — no longer available online)

(TROY, Mich.) At a campaign event in this Detroit suburb on Saturday, Rick Santorum called President Obama a "snob" for wanting all Americans to go to college.

But according to an archived page of Rick Santorum's 2006 Senate campaign website, Santorum said he was "committed to ensuring the every Pennsylvanian has access to higher education."

It's also unclear exactly what comments of Obama's Santorum was referring to.

Obama has said that "higher education cannot be a luxury; it is an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford." And according to the White House, the president wants "every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training."

ABC has reached out to the Santorum campaign for clarification.

At an Americans For Prosperity forum in Troy on Saturday, Santorum was making the pitch that he is the best candidate for working-class Americans and noting the importance of reviving the country's manufacturing sector, as he often does.

He began his "snob" riff by saying: "Not all folks are gifted in the same way," he said.

"President Obama once said he wants everybody in America to go to college. What a snob!" Santorum said to loud applause. "There are good, decent men and women who go out and work hard every day and put their skills to test that aren't taught by some liberal college professor."

Santorum said Obama doesn't just want Americans to go to college, "he wants to remake you into his image. I want to create jobs so people can remake their children into their image not his."

Saturday was also not the first time Santorum has accused the president of "snobbery" on the issue of higher education. He did so as far back as January.

[Remember, Hitler also attacked higher education. –SteveB]

[20120225-14](#)

19:29

SteveG

"Ranchers' Land Becomes Ground Zero in Energy Fight" & "What Happens If the Keystone XL Pipeline Isn't Built?"

Interesting article on the proposed Trans Canada Keystone XL pipeline, with the Canadian company threatening to use eminent domain in Nebraska.

"Ranchers' Land Becomes Ground Zero in Energy Fight" by Guy Raz and Brent Baughman, NPR

Feb. 25, 2012, (<http://www.npr.org/2012/02/25/147413520/ranchers-land-becomes-ground-zero-in-energy-fight>)

(Part one of a two-part series on the Keystone XL pipeline.)

Gas prices are spiking once again; the cost of a gallon of regular unleaded is about 12 percent higher than it was a year ago. But winter typically isn't the time for a rise in gas prices. Demand for gasoline is at a 14-year low and domestic oil production is at an eight-year high.

Some analysts link the increase in gas prices to the tensions in Iran and speculators on Wall Street. Others point to policy decisions limiting drilling in environmentally sensitive areas, as well as President Obama's decision to deny a permit for a massive oil pipeline called Keystone XL.

The proposed pipeline would travel 1,800 miles from Alberta, Canada, all the way down to the Gulf Coast. The controversy over its impact — environmentally, politically and economically — makes it prime election issue.

A Proposal Turns Controversial

TransCanada, the company behind the proposal, already operates a massive pipeline that has been pumping crude oil from Canadian tar sands. The pipeline ends in the small town of Cushing, Okla., where the oil is stored in massive tanks scattered across the town.

When you've got an 8.3 percent unemployment rate in America and we're trying to have energy independence, to me this was a no-brainer.

Canada has the potential to produce more than six times the amount of oil it now makes. Because the existing pipeline ends in Oklahoma, however, Canada can't deliver the oil to refineries on the Gulf Coast and, from there, to the lucrative global oil market. The Keystone XL was supposed to help resolve that issue.

When TransCanada proposed running the XL pipeline through the Sandhills of Nebraska, a delicate ecosystem, it hit a snag. All pipelines — even the most advanced like TransCanada's — eventually leak, and a few years ago, cattle ranchers said they were concerned the new pipeline would destroy the Ogallala aquifer. The Ogallala is one of the largest aquifers in America, and a primary water source for farmers and ranchers in seven states who raise cattle, wheat and corn.

Nebraska's Republican governor initially sided with the ranchers. Last August, he wrote a letter to President Obama, asking him to deny TransCanada a permit to build Keystone XL.

"When I wrote that letter, we were trying to get their attention to say look, we don't want it to go through the Sandhills," Gov. Dave Heineman says. "Probably the only option at that time was to deny the permit."

Heineman says if the Keystone XL could bypass the Sandhills, it could be an opportunity for both his state and the country.

"When you've got an 8.3 percent unemployment rate in America and we're trying to have energy independence, to me this was a no-brainer. We should have moved forward with the project," he says.

Supporters of the pipeline argue more oil from Canada means the U.S. would rely less on oil from places like Venezuela and Saudi Arabia.

TransCanada says the pipeline would create 20,000 direct jobs and thousands more related ones. (Opponents dispute those figures.)

A Rancher Fights Back

Rancher Randy Thompson is fighting to keep the Keystone XL pipeline from being built in Nebraska. Because of his vocal opposition to the pipeline, Randy Thompson has become a symbol in the state. There are signs all across Nebraska that feature his face and read, "I Stand With Randy."

Four years ago, Thompson was contacted by an agency representing TransCanada that said the pipeline could cross his land.

"He just said ... we're wondering if we could have permission to come on and do some surveying," Thompson says.

TransCanada wanted Thompson and other affected landowners to sign over the rights to parts of their land in order to build the pipeline.

Thompson was offered \$9,000. But he wasn't interested.

In 2010, TransCanada sent a letter to his 92-year-old mother, who co-owned the land with him. The gist of the letter was if they refused to cooperate, Keystone would use eminent domain to acquire an easement.

Thompson was stunned that a foreign company could potentially take over his land. But Robert Jones, TransCanada's vice president, says the company was following normal procedure.

"The Keystone pipeline system was under construction in 2010 and we were absolutely considering the precedent in the past, anticipating a presidential permit shortly," Jones says.

Thompson and other ranchers thought the tone of the letters was unnecessarily aggressive, but the letters had the opposite effect on other landowners.

"I had a neighbor told me, said, these guys are way too big," Thompson says. "There's no need to fight them. Just as well sign and get it over with. So he signed the easement right away."

Getting Personal

Four years ago, Sue Luebbe stood on the hood of the truck and pointed a rifle at a helicopter that was surveying her land for TransCanada.

Luebbe says she worries the pipeline would ruin her land. She lives right in the heart of the Sandhills. The water table on her land is so close to the surface, you need to dig down only two feet to hit the aquifer.

One afternoon four years ago, she noticed a helicopter hovering over her land. Inside the cockpit were two surveyors working on behalf of TransCanada.

The chopper terrified Luebbe's cattle, causing a stampede that sent them into a barbed-wire fence. Luebbe got on the hood of her pickup truck and pointed a rifle at the helicopter.

"I saw both of them and I also gave them some sign language. They kind of understood," she says. "So they took off as fast as they could."

She says she refused an \$18,000 offer from TransCanada to build the pipeline on her land. Like Thompson, she's joined Bold Nebraska, a group that's made it its mission to stop the Keystone XL.

The Battle Continues

TransCanada says it will submit a new proposal to the U.S. government next year. The proposed route, the company says, won't go through the Sandhills.

But now, Thompson and other ranchers are convinced the whole enterprise is bad for the environment and a raw deal for Nebraska.

Thompson says remembering his parents' perseverance through the Great Depression and droughts drive him. If they were able to survive those hard times, he says, he can get through this.

"I know what my folks went through to get a piece of ground. And these sons of bitches come along and they tell me we're going to take this land away from you whether you want us to or not," he says, "and they got a fight on their hands."

Heineman says he's sympathetic, but only to a point.

"The fact of the matter is we're still going to be using coal and oil for a long period of time. Hey, I'm a supporter that we need to move to cleaner coal technology and those things," he says, "but it is not going to happen overnight."

"What Happens If the Keystone XL Pipeline Isn't Built?" by Guy Raz and Brent Baughman, NPR

February 26, 2012, (<http://www.npr.org/2012/02/26/147451538/what-happens-if-the-keystone-xl-pipeline-isnt-built>)

(Part two of a two-part series on the Keystone XL pipeline.)

Gas isn't like a rare bottle of wine that fetches a high price just because it's rare. But at the same time, no one can agree what drives gas prices. Demand for gasoline in the U.S. is at its lowest point in more than a decade; domestic oil production is at an eight-year high.

There's no simple explanation for why most people are spending \$3.60 for a gallon of regular, unleaded gas. But many critics of President Obama's energy policy point to one possible reason: The U.S. isn't fully tapping into the potential supply from Canada and, specifically, a place called the Athabasca Tar Sands in Alberta.

Some are looking to a controversial proposal as a solution: the Keystone XL pipeline.

Pushing for Domestic Energy

There are consequences if the Keystone XL isn't built, but there are also issues if it never becomes a reality.

"If Canada can't produce this oil, we'll have higher oil prices than we otherwise would," says Michael Levi, senior fellow for energy at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Late last month, Obama rejected a plan by Calgary-based TransCanada to build a pipeline that would cross seven states and transport up to 700,000 barrels of Canadian oil a day to refineries on the Gulf Coast.

"The Keystone XL pipeline helps make sure that this resource can be developed if it's economically needed," Levy says. "And so that's good for the U.S. economy."

Obama doesn't necessarily oppose the pipeline, but he denied TransCanada the permit to build it because he argued there wasn't enough time to study its environmental impact. The company plans to file a new proposal next year.

A New Oil Boom

At the center of the Keystone XL debate is Cushing, Okla, the pipeline crossroads of the world. There are miles of giant white oil tanks across the town.

Cushing might be one of those rare places in the U.S. where the economic recession seems to have passed. Business is booming. It's so good that Pete Schwiering, chief operating officer of an oil storage company called Rose Rock Midstream, is adding a few new tanks on his tank farm. Each tank is capable of storing 250,000 barrels of oil.

Soon, Schwiering's tank farm will be capable of storing 2 million barrels a day, about 10 percent of all the oil consumed in America in a single day.

"I've been in this business 42 years and I've never seen activity out there on the production side like what's happening right now," he says.

There is so much oil coming into Cushing that there's actually a glut, which translates into big business for the storage companies. But what might be good for people like Schwiering is bad for pipeline companies like TransCanada. There are lots of incoming pipelines, but not enough outgoing ones.

Some of the oil moves to refineries in the Midwest where it's turned into gasoline. But it's not happening fast enough and now, there's a bottleneck in Cushing.

The Case for Jobs

The Keystone pipeline starts in Alberta, travels almost 2,000 miles and ends in Cushing. It was completed last year, but can only handle the flow of half a million barrels of oil a day from the Tar Sands in Alberta, which make up the second-largest proven oil reserve in the world.

Now, Canada wants to send more than twice that amount down to the Gulf Coast refineries where it can potentially be traded on the lucrative global oil market. In order to do that, TransCanada wants to build a second pipeline, known as Keystone XL, which Obama rejected last month. TransCanada's argument for building it is twofold, says Robert Jones, the company's vice president.

He says it'll create thousands of jobs, a figure disputed by other independent analysts. The second point, Jones says, is that it puts the U.S. in charge of its own energy production.

"When you look at the premise of the project and why the project was created—which is to serve the public and the public interest — it is solely that the U.S. is less dependent on foreign sources of oil from Venezuela or OPEC," says Jones, referring to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, a bloc of the world's top oil-producing nations.

It's a compelling argument. If only the U.S. could buy more oil from Canada, it wouldn't have to buy as much from potentially hostile countries in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

But TransCanada is a pipeline company, not an oil company. There's no guarantee that once refined on the Gulf Coast, that oil would stay in the U.S. If oil companies can make more money selling it overseas, then it just comes down to business.

Safety Concerns

Then there's the issue with Canadian crude oil. It's heavy.

The difference between Canadian Tar Sands oil and Oklahoma light sweet crude is like the difference between Coca-Cola and cake batter. So to make it easier for Canadian oil to flow thousands of miles south to Cushing, it has to be mixed with chemicals to thin out.

"They won't tell us what's in the oil to make it flow," says Randy Thompson, a Nebraskan cattle rancher who's opposed Keystone XL.

He's successfully spearheaded a campaign to halt the construction of Keystone XL through the ecologically sensitive Sandhills of Nebraska that lie atop one of America's largest underground aquifers.

"We know they're toxic chemicals. So this is a severe concern for a lot of us people out here," Thompson says. "A lot of us people out here, we gotta drink this water. Be nice to know what the hell they're pumping through it."

TransCanada claims that its proposed Keystone XL line will be the safest of its kind ever built.

"I believe we can absolutely build pipelines with new technology that are getting closer and closer to being leak free," Jones says.

Just Beginning of the Debate

But for many environmental activists, the heart of the debate isn't about the Keystone XL pipeline. It's about the source of the oil it would carry.

Last year, James Hansen, a NASA scientist, wrote that if the Alberta Tar Sands continue to be mined for oil, it's "game over for the climate."

Longtime environmental activist Bill McKibben agrees.

"Keystone XL will be by far the biggest push in terms of plumbing those tar sands, building the infrastructure to fully exploit them," says McKibben, who led a demonstration of anti-Keystone XL protesters in front of the White House last November.

In order to get crude oil from the tar sands, it needs to be heated up. Scientists estimate that process produces up to 80 percent more atmospheric carbon than traditional drilling in places like Saudi Arabia and Oklahoma.

McKibben sees this progress as a sign to keep the oil in the ground.

"Sooner or later, hopefully sooner, we have to start getting off fossil fuel. And this is a very good place to start. We need to keep carbon out of the atmosphere," McKibben says. "That's the bottom line."

McKibben and other opponents of Keystone XL say they believe that if they can prevent its construction, it could dramatically slow down the mining at the Canadian Tar Sands.

The arguments raised by the two sides are based on different sets of facts: lots of jobs vs. a few; lower gas prices vs. higher ones; an environmental catastrophe vs. the realities of human consumption. What is clear, though, is that both sides are determined to win.

[20120225-15](#) 20:18 Jim Re: "Ranchers' Land Becomes Ground Zero in Energy Fight" (reply to SteveG, above)

Why should a private foreign company have any right of eminent domain in the US?

Or is it that they are that confident that they have bought the politicians?

[20120225-16](#) 20:29 Dennis Re: "Ranchers' Land Becomes Ground Zero in Energy Fight" (reply to Jim & SteveG, above)

Unfortunately, not all Canadians are nice, eh?



[20120225-17](#) 21:55 SteveG Re: "Ranchers' Land Becomes Ground Zero in Energy Fight" (reply to Jim, above)

I think the second one. According to the Supreme Court money is free speech and they did not specify what country the money has to come from.

[20120225-18](#) 21:56 Jim "Bradley Manning, Solitary Confinement & Occupy 4 Prisoners"

Solitary confinement as torture... Check out the USA's record on solitary.

"Bradley Manning, Solitary Confinement and Occupy 4 Prisoners" by Bill Quigley, NationofChange

Feb. 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/bradley-manning-solitary-confinement-and-occupy-4-prisoners-1330180938>)

Today US Army Private Bradley Manning is to be formally charged with numerous crimes at Fort Meade, Maryland. Manning, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by members of the Icelandic Parliament, is charged with releasing hundreds of thousands of documents exposing secrets of the US government to the whistleblower website Wikileaks. These documents exposed lies, corruption and crimes by the US and other countries. The Bradley Manning defense team points out accurately that much of what was published by Wikileaks was either not actually secret or should not have been secret.

The Manning prosecution is a tragic miscarriage of justice. US officials are highly embarrassed by what Manning exposed and are shooting the messenger. As Glen Greenwald, the terrific Salon writer, has observed, President Obama has prosecuted more whistleblowers for espionage than all other presidents combined.

One of the most outrageous parts of the treatment of Bradley Manning is that the US kept him in illegal and torturous solitary confinement conditions for months at the Quantico Marine base in Virginia. Keeping Manning in solitary confinement sparked challenges from many groups including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the ACLU and the New York Times.

Human rights' advocates rightly point out that solitary confinement is designed to break down people mentally. Because of that, prolonged solitary confinement is internationally recognized as a form of torture. The conditions and practices of isolation are in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention against Torture, and the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination.

Medical experts say that after 60 days in solitary peoples' mental state begins to break down. That means a person will start to experience panic, anxiety, confusion, headaches, heart palpitations, sleep problems, withdrawal, anger, depression, despair, and over-sensitivity. Over time this can lead to severe psychiatric trauma and harms like psychosis, distortion of reality, hallucinations, mass anxiety and acute confusion. Essentially, the mind disintegrates.

That is why the United Nations special rapporteur on torture sought to investigate Manning's solitary confinement and reprimanded the US when the Army would not let him have an unmonitored visit.

History will likely judge Manning as heroic as it has Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers.

It is important to realize that tens of thousands of other people besides Manning are held in solitary confinement in the US today and every day. Experts estimate a minimum of 20,000 people are held in solitary in supermax prisons alone, not counting thousands of others in state and local prisons who are also held in solitary confinement. And solitary confinement is often forced on Muslim prisoners, even pre-trial people who are assumed innocent, under federal Special Administrative Measures.

In 1995, the U.N. Human Rights Committee stated that isolation conditions in certain U.S. maximum security prisons were incompatible with international standards. In 1996, the U.N. special rapporteur on torture reported on cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment in U.S. supermax prisons. In 2000, the U.N. Committee on Torture roundly condemned the United States for its treatment of prisoners, citing supermax prisons. In May 2006, the same committee concluded that the United States should "review the regimen imposed on detainees in supermax prisons, in particular, the practice of prolonged isolation."

John McCain said his two years in solitary confinement were torture. "It crushes your spirit and weakens your resistance effectively than any other form of mistreatment." The reaction of McCain and many other victims of isolation torture were described in an excellent 2009 New Yorker article on isolation by Atul Gawande. Gawande concluded that prolonged isolation is objectively horrifying, intrinsically cruel, and more widespread in the U.S. than any country in the world.

This week hundreds of members of the Occupy movement merged forces with people advocating for human rights for prisoners in demonstrations in California, New York, Ohio, and Washington DC. They call themselves Occupy 4 Prisoners. Activists are working to create a social movement for serious and fundamental changes in the US criminal system.

One of the major complaints of prisoner human rights activists is the abuse of solitary confinement in prisons across the US. Prison activist Mumia Abu-Jamal said justice demands the end of solitary, "It means the abolition of solitary confinement, for it is no more than modern-day torture chambers for the poor." Pelican Bay State Prison in California, the site of a hunger strike by hundreds of prisoners last year, holds over 1000 inmates in solitary confinement, some as long as 20 years.

At the Occupy Prisoners rally outside San Quentin prison, the three American hikers who were held for a year in Iran told of the psychological impact of 14 months of solitary confinement. Sarah Shourd said the time without human contact drove her to beat the walls of her cell until her knuckles bled.

When Manning was held in solitary he was kept in his cell 23 hours a day for months at a time. The US government tortured him to send a message to others who might consider blowing the whistle on US secrets. At the same time, tens of thousands of others in the US are being held in their cells 23 hours a day for months, even years at a time. That torture is also sending a message.

20120225-19 22:00 SteveG Fw: Change.org Petition: Save LGBT Lives in Uganda!
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From SteveG (Feb. 25, 2012, 10:00 pm)—Change.org Petition: Save LGBT Lives?

from Change.org:

Citibank and Barclays could save the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Uganda.

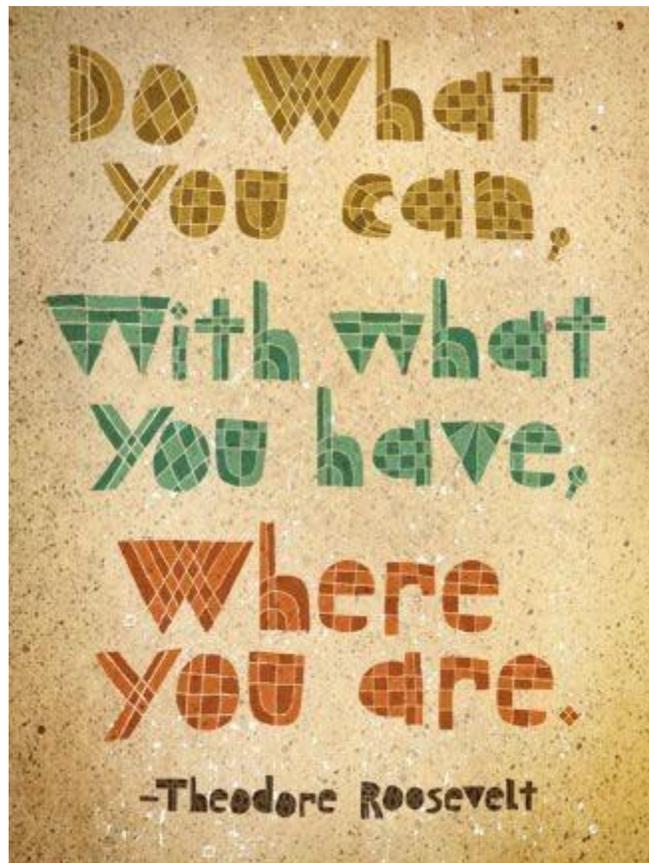
The Ugandan legislature could vote any day on a so-called "Kill the Gays" bill that could result in legalizing the death penalty for any LGBT person in the country. But Citibank and Barclays together have hundreds of millions of dollars invested in Uganda and wield significant influence in the country, just as banking lobbyists wield influence with Congress in the US. If Citibank and Barclays speak out against the "Kill the Gays" bill, Ugandan legislators will take notice in a hurry.

Collin Burton is a Citibank customer -- he's also gay. Collin started a petition on Change.org asking Citibank and Barclays to speak out against the "Kill the Gays" bill. Click here to sign Collin's petition right now.

http://www.change.org/petitions/citibank-and-barclays-condemn-ugandas-kill-the-gays-bill?utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert

Citibank and Barclays are both big supporters of LGBT rights for their own employees, yet they invest money with a government that is threatening to execute LGBT people. "I expect Citibank and Barclays to live up to the values of equality and fairness, not just list them on their websites," Collin says.

If Citibank and Barclays speak out against the "Kill the Gays" bill, Ugandan legislators will see that they are risking the business relationships that keep their government afloat.



"Virginia Safety Joseph Williams Is on a Hunger Strike for University Workers" by Graham Watson, Virginiasports.com

Feb. 24, 2012, (<http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/ncaaf-dr-saturday/virginia-safety-joseph-williams-hunger-strike-university-workers-173337610.html>)

Rarely do we see student-athletes, football players, get involved in political matters that affect the universities where they play. We're not talking about student government, but the politics that happen within the university, disputes between workers or teachers and administration.

Virginia safety Joseph Williams is changing that.

For the past eight days, Williams, a junior walk-on who has played in two games during his career, has been on a hunger strike "to protest the economic and social injustices perpetrated by the UVA administration against the vast majority of the University's service-sector employees."

Williams, a political and social thought major, wrote an eloquent and poignant essay about why he was participating in the hunger strike with the Living Wage Campaign.

Our University seeks to distinguish itself as a caring community and prides itself on traditions of honor and student self-governance. However, in our "caring community," hundreds of contract employees may make as little as \$7.25/hour while six out of the top ten highest paid state employees in Virginia hold administrative positions at the University. Many employees, mostly women and African Americans, do not receive enough pay for their basic necessities to exist in Charlottesville, where the cost of living is nearly 10% higher than the national average. This

extreme inequality has disturbed and disillusioned students for decades, many of whom have tried to grapple with issues of race, class, and poverty in and out of the classroom.

It's not often that you read this kind of political discourse by such a young man, and let's be honest, a football player. But Williams is not your ordinary student-athlete. He graduated from Dominion (Sterling, Va.) High when he was 16. In his essay he notes that he was one of four children supported by a single mother and that he lived in 30 different places, including many homeless shelters, which gave him a profound appreciation for socioeconomic challenges.

He walked on at Virginia at age 17 and has been refining his knowledge of politics ever since.

He does not say how long he plans to stay on strike, but as of Thursday, 18 students were involved in the cause. It's interesting, and even somewhat refreshing, to see a student-athlete go to the extremes for what he believes.

20120226-02	06:28	SteveB	"Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell's Wisdom"
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"Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell's Wisdom" posted by Ex-Rep. Artur Davis (Former Congressman (D-Ala.); Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics), The Arena Open Mike

Feb. 25, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/arena/>)

The skeptics will say that Gov. Bob McDonnell, the Virginia Republican who is openly interested in being vice president, had no choice but to switch positions on a bill requiring vaginal ultrasounds for women seeking abortions. Letting such a controversial mandate become law would have undoubtedly compromised his national appeal and undercut his party in the commonwealth this November.

But politics aside, McDonnell's change of heart is instructive for conservative politicians navigating the culture wars. First, McDonnell deserves credit for avoiding the usual rhetorical dodge. Rather than deflect the substance by basing his opposition on defects in the law-making process (think Haley Barbour criticizing Mississippi's personhood amendment on the ground that it didn't clear the regular pathway for complex legislation), McDonnell straightforwardly calls the ultrasound bill what it is: an "invasive procedure by the state without [the patient's] consent." When a conservative criticizes an act of unmitigated big government intervention, he shouldn't have to mince words.

Second, McDonnell, an unabashedly pro-life politician, didn't cave in to the idea that abortion politics requires politicians to cling to the extreme of their respective views. If that sounds intuitive enough, it is actually a departure from the way the right and left typically engages the issue. Liberals and the pro-choice lobby recoil from even the sanest limits on abortion access on the theory that they are a slippery slope, and weaken the principle of reproductive rights. Conservative politicians generally believe a pro-life culture requires every potential hurdle to be placed in the way of an abortion. It's a zeal that easily leaps from waiting periods and strict licensing rules for abortion clinics to outright psychological compulsion, which is what the ultrasound requirement really is.

It's no surprise that individuals who believe abortion is murder endorse any tool, no matter how harsh, to inconvenience it or discourage it. That's the necessary lot of pro-life activists who are fighting around the edges of a Supreme Court precedent that in their view sanctions killing. It's also a tempting time for social conservatives to forego compromise. They are galvanized because they despise the trend of government declaring selected portions of church doctrine a dead letter (the contraception fight, Illinois' hard line on Catholic adoption agencies who oppose gay relationships) and they catch the whiff of condescension in the mainstream media toward faith.

But Bob McDonnell just showed a grasp for this truth: building a pro-life majority in a closely divided state requires uniting the true believers who see nothing but moral clarity with an ambivalent center that believes abortion is more irresponsible than homicidal. That McDonnell made that nod to reality isn't "mushy moderation", or selling out the fruits of a legislative majority: it's a recognition that leadership and activism have different imperatives.

The fact is that in a country turning left on most social issues, pro-life politics is stronger than it's been in decades — Gallup says about half the country opposes the legality of abortions, and the number who favor making the practice rare and hard to get approaches a super majority. One undeniable reason is that technology is simultaneously exposing the violent details of abortion and the vitality of an unborn fetus. The science is making abortion on demand look more hard-hearted than ever to young, college educated women, whose opinions on the issue have shifted dramatically in the last decade. What a huge error it would be to squander those gains by pushing the same women to the other side of the argument.

[20120226-04](#)

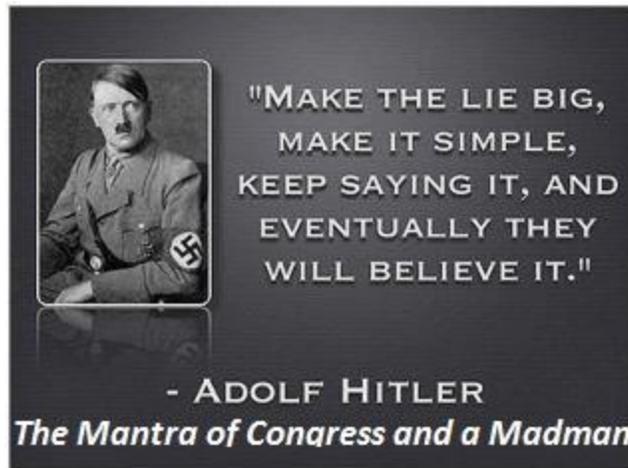
08:13

SteveB

Throw the Bums Out — Un-Elect Congress! & Quote: Hitler on the Big Lie

Marching from Spokane, WA to Washington, DC, starting Apr. 1, 2012.

<http://www.ttbo.org/>



[20120226-05](#)

12:39

Pam

"What If We Treated Doctors the Way We Treat Teachers?"

["What If We Treated Doctors the Way We Treat Teachers?" by Shaun Johnson, Huffington Post](#)

Jan. 24, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shaun-johnson/treating-doctors-like-teachers_b_812096.html?ref=email_share)

(Shaun Johnson is assistant professor of elementary education, Towson University.)

A good friend and colleague who is now in Chicago first gifted me with this parable. It's been in my thoughts lately as my wife pursues her medical degree. In fact, she and I have talked about this at length, and when making comparisons between how physicians and teachers are treated, she is just as astounded.

Parallels are occasionally noted between medical training and education, especially the capstone clinical experiences present in both professions. Let us pretend that physicians of all specialties were held to similar measures of accountability and enveloped with the same kinds of discourses that we see in education reform debates. What might that look like, and how would the general public, in addition to doctors, feel about that?

It would not take a skilled social scientist to observe that, despite exceptional achievements in treating disease and diagnostic technologies, for example, the medical profession is failing. It has failed in its tasks to disseminate good information about health, quash misconceptions, fight corporations and health lobbies that keep people sick, and prevent high rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, particularly in low-income populations. What do we do about this? Well, I have a few proposals listed in no particular order:

- We must begin to hold all physicians accountable, regardless of specialization, to certain quantifiable measures of health, namely cholesterol levels, blood pressure, weight, and BMI. All patients assigned to a physician must meet specific annual minimum standards of health. Bad doctors will be those who do not meet their patients' annual minimums, and they may be subject to certain penalties if the health scores of their patients do not improve in a reasonable amount of time.
- It will be mandatory for the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as all of the major governing bodies in medicine, to set a goal for reaching universal health and well-being in the United States. That is, a target year will be identified in which every person will achieve the ideal values in cholesterol, blood pressure, and BMI. Future targets may include assessments of mental health. A specific interval of time will also be determined to assess all patients for these values. Although pharmaceuticals may be used to stabilize or improve health outcomes, the patient must not be on any medications at the time of assessment unless approved by an official of the administrative body of the national health assessments.
- Quantifiable variables will be utilized to evaluate all practices and hospitals. All of this information will be made public. Additionally, medical schools will be evaluated based on the quantifiable health of patients in the care of their graduates. Medical schools will subsequently be ranked based on the health outcomes of their graduates' patients regardless of specialty. Given more advanced statistical models, these numbers could ultimately be used to assess the impact of pre-medical programs at the undergraduate level.
- In certain high needs areas, such as family practice, emergency medicine, or in practices in low income areas, alternative routes to being licensed will be provided. Moreover, data will determine what skills are necessary to impart in the curriculum of such programs. For instance, if a certain community prevails in specific medical conditions over others, then time will not be wasted covering rare conditions so that alternative programs can operate expeditiously.
- Barriers to participation will be lowered in certain instances, in the form of direct subsidies or significant tax exemptions, for the opening of small hospitals or short-term care centers by private organizations or motivated members of the community.
- Any hospital or practice is subject to a turnaround plan if minimum health requirements are not met. Should the facility not meet those requirements of minimum annual health, the entire staff will be terminated and reconstituted with more competent practitioners. Moreover, staff may be required to enroll in continuing medical education in advanced and remedial level re-licensing courses, including basic physics, chemistry, and biology.
- In addition to in- or out-of-network information and basic demographics, an online data warehouse will be established that will provide all health data and outcomes for every licensed physician in the United States, regardless of specialty. The individual physician's education, license information, and health outcomes of patients will be listed. Should in-network physicians be deemed unfit for local health care consumers, the Federal government, with matching funds by health providers, will offer subsidies for consumers to see other practitioners.
- Finally, a certain percentage of any and all physicians' patients will be assigned to them, care of those who qualify will be fully covered by providers. This will ensure adequate racial, income, and overall demographic diversity of clientele. The annual minimum health outcome data of these patients will also be included in the physician's overall quality.

Did I miss any? What if we indeed held doctors and other professionals to the same bloat and condescension that we currently hold teachers? I can predict some of the responses that physicians might make: "We can't control what our patients do or eat outside of our offices to maintain minimum levels of health. Also, these variables -- BMI, cholesterol, blood pressure -- are limited and don't adequately measure a healthy person. And one other thing, you can't expect us to be evaluated based on all patients equally, regardless of family history, poverty, and other complications." As an educator, my sentiments exactly!

20120226-07	17:44	SteveB	Re: "What If We Treated Doctors the Way We Treat Teachers?" (reply to Pam, above)
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I love this article! It should be mandatory reading for all educators! And, actually, I really wouldn't mind something being done about doctors. I would love to see the apoplexy in the AMA if any of these measures were actually proposed, yet teachers are expected to deal with the impossible daily, hourly, or on the minute.

20120225-03	07:41	SteveB	Re: Hoosier Post Office (reply to SteveG, below)
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From SteveB (Feb. 25, 2012, 7:41 am)—reply to SteveG, below, ref: Hoosier Post Offices; Public Education

There were three particular public buildings, besides schools, which I loved so very much when we were growing up.

One was the courthouse, where old war veterans sat around (I'm not sure why) and loved to tell me their war stories if I sat next to them. They taught me a lot about war and life. In junior high, at lunch time, when they let us out of school for an hour without supervision (dumb, huh?), we would go out onto the high balconies and shoot our pea shooters at random passersby below.

The public library was a marvel! People were very quiet and respectful. We were like a club, I thought. All those magazines and newspapers! I love magazines to this day, even though they're dying. I still remember the first time I ever ventured from the children's section, when I was 8 or 10, and went back into the adult books standing on tall shelves behind the librarian's desk. I was in heaven. I swore I would read them all someday.

The post office was the third. I always thought it was the friendliest place in town. This was the headquarters, sort of, of my high school mail order business.

I loved the way all three places smelled! Each different and unique. The last time I was in Greencastle, I went to the post office just to smell it. It still smelled exactly the same, and all those old memories came rushing back into my head.

I love the USPS and hope Congress will not destroy it. We can easily live without Saturday delivery. The Post Office can easily live without the ridiculous pension requirements.

But America cannot survive as the country we know without public schools for nearly all and public mail for all. These are part of our freedoms and our rights, yet our stupid Constitution does not recognize them as such, or really consider them as much of anything. That is wrong! God certainly did NOT write the Constitution, no matter what the Right says. A similar chorus of lies is probably what has resulted in our thinking God, himself, wrote the Bible. Next, I suppose He is going to write an anti-abortion bill?

20120225-08	09:41	Pam	Re: Hoosier Post Office (reply to SteveB, above & SteveG, below)
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We are lucky to have grown up in small-town, rural America, the land, as I remember it, of no extremes. Unless you were black, that is. How insulated we were! And how safe. I was happy there as a child, but the older I got the more eager I was to leave. My almost next stop was New York City, and I thought I'd moved from the edge of the universe to the very center. I couldn't wait to leave there either. I remember going through various phases in my teen years, from super-preppy sorority girl to cigarette-smoking, long-haired hippie. Neither really fit. It's poetic justice or fitting or ironic or something that I have fetched up here in Friends of the Middle, the place I was searching for all along. As the Greeks would say, Nothing too much. Know Thyself. I know everyone makes fun of poor old Polonius, but I've always thought he gave good advice. To Thine Own Self Be True.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Save-our-Hickory-Post-Office/263891410322693?sk=wall&filter=12>

Small Post Offices on the Chopping Block Because of Congressional Stupidity



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

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