



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #83 — FEB. 28, 2012

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SECRET: Why the Republican Party Is in Trouble

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Feb. 28, 2012)

I guess, in the view of Republicans, they would be much better off in 2012 if they had simply:

1. Never been slave owners.
2. Stopped illegal immigration.
3. Found better Presidential candidates.

What more can I say?

"2012 or Never" by Jonathan Chait, *New York Magazine*

Feb. 26, 2012, (<http://nymag.com/news/features/gop-primary-chait-2012-3/>)

(Republicans are worried this election could be their last chance to stop history. This is fear talking. But not paranoia.)

Of the various expressions of right-wing hysteria that have flowered over the past three years—goldbuggery, birtherism, death panels at home and imaginary apology tours by President Obama abroad—perhaps the strain that has taken deepest root within mainstream Republican circles is the terror that the achievements of the Obama administration may be irreversible, and that the time remaining to stop permanent nightfall is dwindling away.

"America is approaching a 'tipping point' beyond which the Nation will be unable to change course," announces the dark, old-timey preamble to Paul Ryan's "The Roadmap Plan," a statement of fiscal principles that shaped the budget outline approved last spring by 98 percent of the House Republican caucus. Rick Santorum warns his audiences, "We are reaching a tipping point, folks, when those who pay are the minority and those who receive are the majority." Even such a sober figure as Mitt Romney regularly says things like "We are only inches away from no longer being a free economy," and that this election "could be our last chance."

The Republican Party is in the grips of many fever dreams. But this is not one of them. To be sure, the apocalyptic ideological analysis—that "freedom" is incompatible with Clinton-era tax rates and Massachusetts-style health care—is pure crazy. But the panicked *strategic* analysis, and the sense of urgency it gives rise to, is actually quite sound. The modern GOP—the party of Nixon, Reagan, and both Bushes—is staring down its own demographic extinction. Right-wing warnings of impending tyranny express, in hyperbolic form, well-grounded dread: that conservative America will soon come to be dominated, in a semi-permanent fashion, by an ascendant Democratic coalition hostile

to its outlook and interests. And this impending doom has colored the party's frantic, fearful response to the Obama presidency.

The GOP has reason to be scared. Obama's election was the vindication of a prediction made several years before by journalist John Judis and political scientist Ruy Teixeira in their 2002 book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*. Despite the fact that George W. Bush then occupied the White House, Judis and Teixeira argued that demographic and political trends were converging in such a way as to form a natural-majority coalition for Democrats.

The Republican Party had increasingly found itself confined to white voters, especially those lacking a college degree and rural whites who, as Obama awkwardly put it in 2008, tend to "cling to guns or religion." Meanwhile, the Democrats had increased their standing among whites with graduate degrees, particularly the growing share of secular whites, and remained dominant among racial minorities. As a whole, Judis and Teixeira noted, the electorate was growing both somewhat better educated and dramatically less white, making every successive election less favorable for the GOP. And the trends were even more striking in some key swing states. Judis and Teixeira highlighted Colorado, Nevada, and Arizona, with skyrocketing Latino populations, and Virginia and North Carolina, with their influx of college-educated whites, as the most fertile grounds for the expanding Democratic base.

Obama's victory carried out the blueprint. Campaign reporters cast the election as a triumph of Obama's inspirational message and cutting-edge organization, but above all his sweeping win reflected simple demography. Every year, the nonwhite proportion of the electorate grows by about half a percentage point—meaning that in every presidential election, the minority share of the vote increases by 2 percent, a huge amount in a closely divided country. One measure of how thoroughly the electorate had changed by the time of Obama's election was that, if college-educated whites, working-class whites, and minorities had cast the same proportion of the votes in 1988 as they did in 2008, Michael Dukakis would have, just barely, won. By 2020—just eight years away—nonwhite voters should rise from a quarter of the 2008 electorate to one third. In 30 years, nonwhites will outnumber whites.

Now, there are two points to keep in mind about the emerging Democratic majority. The first is that no coalition is permanent. One party can build a majority, but eventually the minority learns to adapt to an altered landscape, and parity returns. In 1969, Kevin Phillips, then an obscure Nixon-administration staffer, wrote *The Emerging Republican Majority*, arguing that Republicans could undo FDR's New Deal coalition by exploiting urban strife, the unpopularity of welfare, and the civil-rights struggle to pull blue-collar whites into a new conservative bloc. The result was the modern GOP. Bill Clinton appropriated some elements of this conservative coalition by rehabilitating his party's image on welfare and crime (though he had a little help from Ross Perot, too). But it wasn't until Obama was elected that a Democratic president could claim to be the leader of a true majority party.

The second point is that short-term shocks, like war, recession, or scandal, can exert a far more powerful influence than a long-term trend: The Watergate scandal, for instance, interrupted the Republican majority at its zenith, helping elect a huge raft of Democratic congressmen in 1974, followed two years later by Jimmy Carter.

But the dominant fact of the new Democratic majority is that it has begun to overturn the racial dynamics that have governed American politics for five decades. Whatever its abstract intellectual roots, conservatism has since at least the sixties drawn its political strength by appealing to heartland identity politics. In 1985, Stanley Greenberg, then a political scientist, immersed himself in Macomb County, a blue-collar Detroit suburb where whites had abandoned the Democratic Party in droves. He found that the Reagan Democrats there understood politics almost entirely in racial terms, translating any Democratic appeal to economic justice as taking their money to subsidize the black underclass. And it didn't end with the Reagan era. Piles of recent studies have found that voters often conflate "social" and "economic" issues. What social scientists delicately call "ethnocentrism" and "racial resentment" and "ingroup solidarity" are defining attributes of conservative voting behavior, and help organize a familiar if not necessarily rational coalition of ideological interests. Doctrines like neoconservative foreign policy, supply-side economics, and climate skepticism may bear little connection to each other at the level of abstract thought. But boiled down to political sound bites and served up to the voters, they blend into an indistinguishable stew of racial, religious, cultural, and nationalistic identity.

Obama's election dramatized the degree to which this long-standing political dynamic had been flipped on its head. In the aftermath of George McGovern's 1972 defeat, neoconservative intellectual Jeane Kirkpatrick disdainfully

identified his voters as “intellectuals enamored with righteousness and possibility, college students, for whom perfectionism is an occupational hazard; portions of the upper classes freed from concern with economic self-interest,” and so on, curiously neglecting to include racial minorities. All of them were, in essence, people who heard a term like “real American” and understood that in some way it did not apply to them. Today, cosmopolitan liberals may still feel like an embattled sect—they certainly describe their political fights in those terms—but time has transformed their rump minority into a collective majority. As conservative strategists will tell you, there are now more of “them” than “us.” What’s more, the disparity will continue to grow indefinitely. Obama actually lost the over-45-year-old vote in 2008, gaining his entire victory margin from younger voters—more racially diverse, better educated, less religious, and more socially and economically liberal.

Portents of this future were surely rendered all the more vivid by the startling reality that the man presiding over the new majority just happened to be, himself, young, urban, hip, and black. When jubilant supporters of Obama gathered in Grant Park on Election Night in 2008, Republicans saw a glimpse of their own political mortality. And a galvanizing picture of just what their new rulers would look like.

In the cold calculus of game theory, the expected response to this state of affairs would be to accommodate yourself to the growing strength of the opposing coalition—to persuade pockets of voters on the Democratic margins they might be better served by Republicans. Yet the psychology of decline does not always operate in a straightforward, rational way. A strategy of managing slow decay is unpleasant, and history is replete with instances of leaders who persuaded themselves of the opposite of the obvious conclusion. Rather than adjust themselves to their slowly weakening position, they chose instead to stage a decisive confrontation. If the terms of the fight grow more unfavorable with every passing year, well, all the more reason to have the fight sooner. This was the thought process of the antebellum southern states, sizing up the growing population and industrial might of the North. It was the thinking of the leaders of Austria-Hungary, watching their empire deteriorate and deciding they needed a decisive war with Serbia to save themselves.

At varying levels of conscious and subconscious thought, this is also the reasoning that has driven Republicans in the Obama era. Surveying the landscape, they have concluded that they must strike quickly and decisively at the opposition before all hope is lost.

Arthur Brooks, the president of the conservative American Enterprise Institute and a high-profile presence on the Republican intellectual scene, wrote a 2010 book titled *The Battle*, urging conservatives to treat the struggle for economic libertarianism as a “culture war” between capitalism and socialism, in which compromise was impossible. Time was running short, Brooks pleaded in apocalyptic tones. The “real core” of what he called Obama’s socialistic supporters was voters under 30. “It is the future of our country,” he wrote. “And this group has exhibited a frightening openness to statism in the age of Obama.”

The same panic courses through a new tome by James DeMint, who has made himself probably the most influential member of the Senate by relentlessly pushing his colleagues to the right and organizing primary challenges to snuff out any hint of moderation among his co-partisans. DeMint’s book, titled *Now or Never*, paints a haunting picture: “Republican supporters will continue to decrease every year as more Americans become dependent on the government. Dependent voters will naturally elect even big-government progressives who will continue to smother economic growth and spend America deeper into debt. The 2012 election may be the last opportunity for Republicans.”

That apocalyptic rhetoric is just as common among voters as among conservative eggheads and party elites. Theda Skocpol, a Harvard sociologist, conducted a detailed study of tea-party activists and discovered that they saw themselves beset by parasitic Democrats. “Along with illegal immigrants,” she wrote, “low-income Americans and young people loom large as illegitimate consumers of public benefits and services.”

It’s easy for liberals to dismiss these fears as simple racism—and surely racism, to some degree, sways the tea party. But it is not just conservative white people who react fearfully when they see themselves outnumbered by an influx of people unlike themselves. Minorities do it. White hipsters do it. Recall the embarrassing spectacle of liberal panic, in the aftermath of George W. Bush’s reelection, when Kerry voters believed their country had been taken over by gay-bashing Evangelical Christians.

That the struggles over the economic policies of the last few years have taken on the style of a culture war should come as no surprise, since conservatives believe Obama has pulled together an ascendant coalition of voters intent on expropriating their money. Paul Ryan, the House Republican budget chairman, has, like many Republicans, cast the fight as pitting “makers” against “takers,” with the latter in danger of irrevocably gaining the upper hand. “The tipping point represents two dangers,” he announced in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute, “first, long-term economic decline as the number of makers diminishes [and] the number of takers grows ... Second, gradual moral-political decline as dependency and passivity weaken the nation’s character.”

Of course, both parties make use of end-times rhetoric, especially in election season. What’s novel about the current spate of Republican millennialism is that it’s not a mere rhetorical device to rally the faithful, nor even simply an expression of free-floating terror, but the premise of an electoral strategy.

In that light, the most surprising response to the election of 2008 is what did not happen. Following Obama’s win, all sorts of loose talk concerning the Republican predicament filled the air. How would the party recast itself? Where would it move left, how would it find common ground with Obama, what new constituencies would it court?

The most widely agreed-upon component of any such undertaking was a concerted effort to win back the Hispanic vote. It seemed like a pure political no-brainer, a vital outreach to an exploding electoral segment that could conceivably be weaned from its Democratic leanings, as had previous generations of Irish and Italian immigrants, without altering the party’s general right-wing thrust on other issues. George W. Bush had tried to cobble together a comprehensive immigration-reform policy only to see it collapse underneath a conservative grassroots revolt, and John McCain, who had initially co-sponsored a bill in the Senate, had to withdraw his support for it in his pursuit of the 2008 nomination.

In the wake of his defeat, strategists like Karl Rove and Mike Murphy urged the GOP to abandon its stubborn opposition to reform. Instead, incredibly, the party adopted a more hawkish position, with Republicans in Congress rejecting even quarter-loaf compromises like the Dream Act and state-level officials like Jan Brewer launching new restrictionist crusades. This was, as Thomas Edsall writes in *The Age of Austerity*, “a major gamble that the GOP can continue to win as a white party despite the growing strength of the minority vote.”

None of this is to say that Republicans ignored the rising tide of younger and browner voters that swamped them at the polls in 2008. Instead they set about keeping as many of them from the polls as possible. The bulk of the campaign has taken the form of throwing up an endless series of tedious bureaucratic impediments to voting in many states—ending same-day voter registration, imposing onerous requirements upon voter-registration drives, and upon voters themselves. “Voting liberal, that’s what kids do,” oversaw William O’Brien, the New Hampshire House speaker, who had supported a bill to prohibit college students from voting from their school addresses. What can these desperate, rearguard tactics accomplish? They can make the electorate a bit older, whiter, and less poor. They can, perhaps, buy the Republicans some time.

And to what end? The Republicans’ most audacious choice is the hyperaggressive position they’ve adopted against Obama to sabotage his chances for a second term. Frustrated liberals, assessing the methods of the Republicans in Congress, see a devious brilliance at work in the GOP strategy of legislative obstruction. And indeed, Republicans very skillfully ground the legislative gears to a halt for months on end, weakening or killing large chunks of Obama’s agenda, and nurturing public discontent with Washington that they rode to a sweeping victory in 2010. At the same time, their inability to waver from desperate, all-or-nothing opposition often meant conservatives willingly suffered policy defeats for perceived political gain, and failed to minimize the scale of those defeats.

Take the fight over health-care reform. Yes, Republicans played the politics about as well as possible. But it was their hard line on compromise allowed the bill to pass: The Democrats only managed to cobble together 60 votes to pass it in the Senate because conservatives drove Arlen Specter out of the GOP, forcing him to switch to the Democratic Party. Without him, Democrats never could have broken a filibuster. When Scott Brown surprisingly won the 2010 race to fill Ted Kennedy’s Senate seat, Democrats were utterly despondent, and many proposed abandoning comprehensive health-care reform to cut a deal for some meager expansion of children’s health insurance. But Republicans refused to offer even an olive branch. Presented with a choice between passing the comprehensive bill they had spent a year cobbling together or collapsing in total ignominious defeat, the Democrats passed the bill.

Last summer, Obama was again desperate to reach compromise, this time on legislation to reduce the budget deficit, which had come to dominate the political agenda and symbolize, in the eyes of Establishment opinion, Obama's failure to fulfill his campaign goal of winning bipartisan cooperation. In extended closed-door negotiations, Obama offered Republicans hundreds of billions of dollars in spending cuts and a permanent extension of Bush-era tax rates in return for just \$800 billion in higher revenue over a decade. This was less than half the new revenue proposed by the Bowles-Simpson deficit commission. Republicans spurned this deal, too.

Instead the party has bet everything on 2012, preferring a Hail Mary strategy to the slow march of legislative progress. That is the basis of the House Republicans' otherwise inexplicable choice to vote last spring for a sweeping budget plan that would lock in low taxes, slash spending, and transform Medicare into private vouchers—none of which was popular with voters. Majority parties are known to hold unpopular votes occasionally, but holding an unpopular vote that Republicans knew full well stood zero chance of enactment (with Obama casting a certain veto) broke new ground in the realm of foolhardiness.

The way to make sense of that foolhardiness is that the party has decided to bet everything on its one "last chance." Not the last chance for the Republican Party to win power—there will be many of those, and over time it will surely learn to compete for nonwhite voters—but its last chance to exercise power in its current form, as a party of anti-government fundamentalism powered by sublimated white Christian identity politics. (And the last chance to stop the policy steamroller of the new Democratic majority.) And whatever rhetorical concessions to moderates and independents the eventual Republican nominee may be tempted to make in the fall, he'll find himself fairly boxed in by everything he's already done this winter to please that base.

Will the gamble work? Grim though the long-term demography may be, it became apparent to Republicans almost immediately after Obama took office that political fate had handed them an impossibly lucky opportunity. Democrats had come to power almost concurrently with the deepest economic crisis in 80 years, and Republicans quickly seized the tactical advantage, in an effort to leverage the crisis to rewrite their own political fortunes. The Lesser Depression could be an economic Watergate, the Republicans understood, an exogenous political shock that would, at least temporarily, overwhelm any deeper trend, and possibly afford the party a chance to permanently associate the Democrats with the painful aftermath of the crisis.

During the last midterm elections, the strategy succeeded brilliantly. Republicans moved further right and won a gigantic victory. In the 2010 electorate, the proportion of voters under 30 fell by roughly a third, while the proportion of voters over 65 years old rose by a similar amount—the white share, too. In the long run, though, the GOP has done nothing at all to rehabilitate its deep unpopularity with the public as a whole, and has only further poisoned its standing with Hispanics. But by forswearing compromise, it opened the door to a single shot. The Republicans have gained the House and stand poised to win control of the Senate. If they can claw out a presidential win and hold on to Congress, they will have a glorious two-year window to restore the America they knew and loved, to lock in transformational change, or at least to wrench the status quo so far rightward that it will take Democrats a generation to wrench it back. The cost of any foregone legislative compromises on health care or the deficit would be trivial compared to the enormous gains available to a party in control of all three federal branches.

On the other hand, if they lose their bid to unseat Obama, they will have mortgaged their future for nothing at all. And over the last several months, it has appeared increasingly likely that the party's great all-or-nothing bet may land, ultimately, on nothing. In which case, the Republicans will have turned an unfavorable outlook into a truly bleak one in a fit of panic. The deepest effect of Obama's election upon the Republicans' psyche has been to make them truly fear, for the first time since before Ronald Reagan, that the future is against them.

"Mr. Bumble vs. Mr. Scary" by Roger Simon, Politico

Feb. 28, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0212/73346.html>)

Is it possible to stumble and bumble your way to a presidential nomination?

Certainly. And Mitt Romney is determined to prove it.

Romney's verbal gaffes are plentiful. And often hilarious. If you really wanted to make the case that they show how "out of touch" Romney is with the average American, I wouldn't dispute it.

I would say only that all these guys running for president are out of touch. Even though most brag about their humble beginnings, all now lead lives of privilege and comfort and come in contact with average Americans only when their water heaters give out. (And their spouses usually handle that.)

Sure they grip and grin on the rope lines with average Americans, but that lasts for about 2 seconds or however long it takes somebody to snap a cellphone picture.

If these guys did not live in a bubble before they entered politics, they certainly live in one now. And they have large staffs whose job it is to keep the candidate away from the public (and press) as much as possible unless the situation is highly controlled.

Still, Romney manages to screw up.

In December, at one of the innumerable Republican debates, Rick Perry accused Romney of having changed his position on something or other. Perry had about as much chance of getting the Republican nomination as getting Texas to secede from the Union and naming him king, but he got Romney's goat nonetheless.

Romney angrily stuck out his hand and said, "Rick, I'll tell you what, 10,000 bucks? \$10,000 bet?"

Grand, Mitt. Just grand. Remind everybody that \$10,000 is chump change to you.

And who can forget Romney telling us that "corporations are people" or that he made "not very much" money in speaking fees in a year in which he made \$374,000 in speaking fees. He wasn't lying. It's just that \$374,000 wasn't very much to him.

Politico's Reid J. Epstein has assembled a delicious list of all these gaffes that is worth wandering through.

What it shows is a man totally sincere in his isolation from average Americans. Except for his blue jeans — which one comic says that he wears over his suit pants — Romney doesn't pretend to be average. He is a highly successful businessman, and he is proud of it.

So when he recently listed some of the American-nameplate cars he has owned — a Ford, a Chevy, a Dodge — it was only natural that he include his wife's vehicles. "Ann drives a couple of Cadillacs, actually," he said.

Actually, she doesn't do so simultaneously. One is at their La Jolla, Calif., home and one is at their Belmont, Mass., home.

But Romney is a car lover and so he goes down to the Daytona International Speedway on Sunday, and he gets asked if he is a NASCAR fan — note to Romney team: At least try to prep the guy for the obvious questions — and Romney replies honestly.

"Not as closely as some of the most ardent fans," Romney says. "But I have some great friends that are NASCAR team owners."

Doh! Just in case you were wondering, it costs about \$15 million a year to maintain a NASCAR team, which allows you to buy really nice blue jeans and rub elbows with Mitt at country clubs.

But even with all this, Romney has one great thing going for him: Rick Santorum.

Rick Santorum doesn't flub. He speaks from his deeply held convictions. Some of which are very scary.

Speaking in Troy, Mich., on Saturday, Santorum said, "President Obama once said he wants everybody in America to go to college. What a snob."

Had Santorum gone on to say that not everyone in America wants to go to college and that there is nothing shameful about manual labor, he may have had a point.

But that's not all Santorum was saying. He added that he doesn't want kids to go to college because if they do they are going to be "taught by some liberal college professor trying to indoctrinate them."

Then on ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos," Santorum opened up like he was on a psychiatrist's couch.

"You talk to most kids who go to college who are conservatives, and you are singled out, you are ridiculed, you are — I can tell you personally," Santorum said. "I went through a process where I was docked for my conservative views. This is sort of a regular routine. You know the statistic ... that 62 percent of kids who enter college with some sort of faith commitment leave without it. This is not a neutral setting."

I am not entirely sure what Santorum was venting about or what Satanic ritual he was made to undergo in college — paddling? beer pong? — but it obviously affected him deeply.

So much so that he left college convinced that the First Amendment was not only hoey, but stomach-turning. Literally.

Santorum says that John F. Kennedy's famous 1960 speech stating there should be an "absolute separation" of church and state in America "makes me throw up and it should make every American."

Santorum went on: "I don't believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute. The idea that the church can have no influence or no involvement in the operation of the state is absolutely antithetical to the objectives and vision of our country."

That is not a flub or a gaffe or an off-the-cuff remark. That is what Rick Santorum deeply believes and, moreover, what he believes "every American" should believe.

So you listen to Santorum. And you listen to Romney. And it sort of makes you not care how many Cadillacs Romney owns.

(Roger Simon is POLITICO's chief political columnist.)

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Here the religious nuts come, if you let 'em.

I guess Republicans don't mind if women are controlled, but now they want to control your nuts! LOL!

The Constitution and history mean nothing to these fruitcakes!

"Santorum: Separation of Church and State 'Makes Me Want to Throw Up'" by Alana Horowitz, Huffington Post

Feb. 26, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/26/santorum-church-and-state_n_1302246.html)

Rick Santorum on Sunday took on separation of church and state.

"I don't believe in an America where the separation of church and state are absolute," he told 'This Week' host George Stephanopoulos. "The idea that the church can have no influence or no involvement in the operation of the state is absolutely antithetical to the objectives and vision of our country...to say that people of faith have no role in the public square? You bet that makes me want to throw up."

The GOP candidate was responding to comments he made last October. He had said that he "almost threw up" after reading JFK's 1960 speech in which he declared his commitment to the separation of church and state.

Santorum also on Sunday told Meet The Press host David Gregory that separation of church and state was "not the founders' vision."

The GOP candidate has been doubling down on religious rhetoric in an effort to court evangelical voters ahead of Super Tuesday. Last week, he questioned Obama's spiritual beliefs.

"[Obama believes in] some phony ideal, some phony theology ... not a theology based on the Bible, a different theology," he said.

[Rick, you make me want to puke! –SteveB]

20120227-04	18:55	SteveB	"Mitt Romney's Budget in About 150 Words" & "Mitt Romney's Budget in Less Than 15 Words" ('ROMNEY WILL BALANCE THE BUDGET ON THE BACKS OF POOR PEOPLE, THE END.')
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A LOSING STRATEGY:

"Mitt Romney's Budget in About 150 Words" by Ezra Klein, *Washington Post*

Feb. 25, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/mitt-romneys-budget-in-less-than-150-words/2011/08/25/gIQATzJRaR_blog.html)

Let's try to make this as simple as possible. Money comes into the federal government through taxes and bonds. The vast majority of it is then spent on old-people programs, poor-people programs, and defense.

Mitt Romney is promising that taxes will go down, defense spending will go up, and old-people programs won't change for this generation of retirees. So three of his four options for deficit reduction — taxes, old-people programs, and defense — are now either contributing to the deficit or are off-limits for the next decade.

Romney is also promising that he will pay for his tax cuts, pay for his defense spending, and reduce total federal spending by more than \$6 trillion over the next 10 years. But the only big pot of money left to him is poor-people programs. So, by simple process of elimination, poor-people programs will have to be cut dramatically. There's no other way to make those numbers work.

"Mitt Romney's Budget in Less Than 15 Words" by Jason Linkins, *Huffington Post*

Feb. 26, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/26/tv-soundoff-sunday-talkin_n_1302165.html?ref=elections-2012)

ROMNEY WILL BALANCE THE BUDGET ON THE BACKS OF POOR PEOPLE, THE END.

20120227-05	19:07	SteveG	"My Take: Stop Sugarcoating the Bible"
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Take a read:

"My Take: Stop Sugarcoating the Bible" by Steven James, *CNN*

Feb. 25, 2012, (http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/25/my-take-stop-sugarcoating-the-bible/?hpt=hp_c2)

(Editor's note: Steven James is the author of more than 30 books, including *Flirting with the Forbidden*, which explores forgiveness.)

The Bible is a gritty book. Very raw. Very real. It deals with people just like us, just as needy and screwed up as we are, encountering a God who would rather die than spend eternity without them.

Yet despite that, it seems like Christians are uncomfortable with how earthy the Bible really is. They feel the need to tidy up God.

For example, look in any modern translation of Isaiah 64:6, and you'll find that, to a holy God, even our most righteous acts are like "filthy rags." The original language doesn't say "filthy rags"; it says "menstrual rags." But that sounds a little too crass, so let's just call them filthy instead.

And let's not talk so much about Jesus being naked on the cross, and let's pretend Paul said that he considered his good deeds "a pile of garbage" in Philippians 3:8 rather than a pile of crap, as the Greek would more accurately be translated.

And let's definitely not mention the six times in the Old Testament that the Jewish writers referred to Gentile men as those who "pisseth against the wall." (At least the King James Version got that one right.)

The point?

God's message was not meant to be run through some arbitrary, holier-than-thou politeness filter. He intended the Bible to speak to people where they're at, caught up in the stark reality of life on a fractured planet.

Dozens of Psalms are complaints and heart-wrenching cries of despair to God, not holy-sounding, reverently worded soliloquies. Take Psalm 77:1-3: "I cry out to God; yes, I shout. Oh, that God would listen to me! When I was in deep trouble, I searched for the Lord. All night long I prayed, with hands lifted toward heaven, but my soul was not comforted. I think of God, and I moan, overwhelmed with longing for his help" (New Living Translation).

And rather than shy away from difficult and painful topics, the Old Testament includes vivid descriptions of murder, cannibalism, witchcraft, dismemberment, torture, rape, idolatry, erotic sex and animal sacrifice. According to St. Paul, those stories were written as examples and warnings for us (1 Corinthians 10:11). So obviously they were meant to be retold without editing out all the things we don't consider nice or agreeable.

I believe that Scripture includes such graphic material to show how far we, as a race, have fallen and how far God was willing to come to rescue us from ourselves.

God is much more interested in honesty than pietism.

And that's what he gives us throughout Scripture, telling the stories of people who struggled with the same issues, questions and temptations we face today.

Peter struggled with doubt, and we hear all about it.

Elijah dealt with depression; Naomi raged with bitterness against God; Hannah struggled for years under the burden of her unanswered prayers.

David had an affair and then arranged to have his lover's husband killed. Noah was a drunk, Abraham a liar, Moses a murderer. Job came to a place where he found it necessary to make a covenant with his eyes not to lust after young girls (Job 31:1).

It's easy to make "Bible heroes" (as Protestants might say) or "saints" (as Catholics might refer to them) out to be bigger than life, immune from the temptations that everyone faces.

I find it encouraging that Jesus never came across as pietistic. In fact, he was never accused of being too religious; instead he partied so much that he was accused of being a drunkard and a glutton (Matthew 11:19).

Jesus never said, "The Kingdom of God is like a church service that goes on and on forever and never ends." He said the kingdom was like a homecoming celebration, a wedding, a party, a feast to which all are invited.

This idea was too radical for the religious leaders of his day. They were more concerned about etiquette, manners, traditions and religious rituals than about partying with Jesus. And that's why they missed out.

That's why we miss out.

According to Jesus, the truly spiritual life is one marked by freedom rather than compulsion (John 8:36), love rather than ritual (Mark 12:30-33) and peace rather than guilt (John 14:27). Jesus saves us from the dry, dusty duties of religion and frees us to cut loose and celebrate.

I don't believe we'll ever recognize our need for the light until we've seen the depth of the darkness. So God wasn't afraid to get down and dirty with us about life and temptation and forgiveness. And grace.

Only when the Bible seems relevant to us (which it is), only when the characters seem real to us (which they were), only then will the message of redemption become personal for us (which it was always meant to be).

We don't need to edit God. We need to let him be the author of our new lives.

20120227-06 20:37 Jim "The Great Carbon Bubble: Why the Fossil Fuel Industry Fights So Hard"

[Where's the snow, my dear children and grandchildren? –SteveB]

Look at the lack of snow and cloud and remember the years you have seen before and read the article about the real reason the oil companies are spending so much to deny climate change.

"The Great Carbon Bubble: Why the Fossil Fuel Industry Fights So Hard" by Bill McKibben, TomDispatch

Feb. 7, 2012, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/02/07-2>)



"The U.S. and Canada are virtually snow-free and cloud-free, which is extremely rare for a January day. The lack of snow in the mountains of the Western U.S. is particularly unusual. I doubt one could find a January day this cloud-free with so little snow on the ground throughout the entire satellite record, going back to the early 1960s." (Photo: Creative Commons / NASA Goddard)

If we could see the world with a particularly illuminating set of spectacles, one of its most prominent features at the moment would be a giant carbon bubble, whose bursting someday will make the housing bubble of 2007 look like a lark. As yet -- as we shall see -- it's unfortunately largely invisible to us."The U.S. and Canada are virtually snow-free and cloud-free, which is extremely rare for a January day. The lack of snow in the mountains of the Western U.S. is particularly unusual. I doubt one could find a January day this cloud-free with so little snow on the ground throughout the entire satellite record, going back to the early 1960s." (Photo: Creative Commons / NASA Goddard)

In compensation, though, we have some truly beautiful images made possible by new technology. Last month, for instance, NASA updated the most iconic photograph in our civilization's gallery: "Blue Marble," originally taken from Apollo 17 in 1972. The spectacular new high-def image shows a picture of the Americas on January 4th, a good day for snapping photos because there weren't many clouds.

It was also a good day because of the striking way it could demonstrate to us just how much the planet has changed in 40 years. As Jeff Masters, the web's most widely read meteorologist, explains, "The U.S. and Canada are virtually snow-free and cloud-free, which is extremely rare for a January day. The lack of snow in the mountains of the Western U.S. is particularly unusual. I doubt one could find a January day this cloud-free with so little snow on the ground throughout the entire satellite record, going back to the early 1960s."

In fact, it's likely that the week that photo was taken will prove "the driest first week in recorded U.S. history." Indeed, it followed on 2011, which showed the greatest weather extremes in our history -- 56% of the country was either in drought or flood, which was no surprise since "climate change science predicts wet areas will tend to get wetter and dry areas will tend to get drier." Indeed, the nation suffered 14 weather disasters each causing \$1 billion or more in damage last year. (The old record was nine.) Masters again: "Watching the weather over the past two years has been like watching a famous baseball hitter on steroids."

In the face of such data -- statistics that you can duplicate for almost every region of the planet -- you'd think we'd already be in an all-out effort to do something about climate change. Instead, we're witnessing an all-out effort to... deny there's a problem.

Our GOP presidential candidates are working hard to make sure no one thinks they'd appease chemistry and physics. At the last Republican debate in Florida, Rick Santorum insisted that he should be the nominee because he'd caught on earlier than Newt or Mitt to the global warming "hoax."

Most of the media pays remarkably little attention to what's happening. Coverage of global warming has dipped 40% over the last two years. When, say, there's a rare outbreak of January tornadoes, TV anchors politely discuss "extreme weather," but climate change is the disaster that dare not speak its name.

And when they do break their silence, some of our elite organs are happy to indulge in outright denial. Last month, for instance, the *Wall Street Journal* published an op-ed by "16 scientists and engineers" headlined "No Need to Panic About Global Warming." The article was easily debunked. It was nothing but a mash-up of long-since-disproved arguments by people who turned out mostly not to be climate scientists at all, quoting other scientists who immediately said their actual work showed just the opposite.

It's no secret where this denialism comes from: the fossil fuel industry pays for it. (Of the 16 authors of the *Journal* article, for instance, five had had ties to Exxon.) Writers from Ross Gelbspan to Naomi Oreskes have made this case with such overwhelming power that no one even really tries denying it any more. The open question is why the industry persists in denial in the face of an endless body of fact showing climate change is the greatest danger we've ever faced.

Why doesn't it fold the way the tobacco industry eventually did? Why doesn't it invest its riches in things like solar panels and so profit handsomely from the next generation of energy? As it happens, the answer is more interesting than you might think.

Part of it is simple enough: the giant energy companies are making so much money right now that they can't stop gorging themselves. ExxonMobil, year after year, pulls in more money than any company in history. Chevron's not far behind. Everyone in the business is swimming in money.

Still, they could theoretically invest all that cash in new clean technology or research and development for the same. As it happens, though, they've got a deeper problem, one that's become clear only in the last few years. Put briefly: *their value is largely based on fossil-fuel reserves that won't be burned if we ever take global warming seriously.*

When I talked about a carbon bubble at the beginning of this essay, this is what I meant. Here are some of the relevant numbers, courtesy of the Capital Institute: we're already seeing widespread climate disruption, but if we

want to avoid utter, civilization-shaking disaster, many scientists have pointed to a two-degree rise in global temperatures as the most we could possibly deal with.

If we spew 565 gigatons more carbon into the atmosphere, we'll quite possibly go right past that reddest of red lines. But the oil companies, private and state-owned, have current reserves on the books equivalent to 2,795 gigatons -- five times more than we can ever safely burn. **It has to stay in the ground.**

Put another way, in ecological terms it would be extremely prudent to *write off \$20 trillion worth* of those reserves. In economic terms, of course, it would be a disaster, first and foremost for shareholders and executives of companies like ExxonMobil (and people in places like Venezuela).

If you run an oil company, this sort of write-off is the disastrous future staring you in the face as soon as climate change is taken as seriously as it should be, and that's far scarier than drought and flood. It's why you'll do anything -- including fund an endless campaigns of lies -- to avoid coming to terms with its reality. So instead, we simply charge ahead. To take just one example, last month the boss of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Thomas Donohue, called for burning all the country's newly discovered coal, gas, and oil -- believed to be 1,800 gigatons worth of carbon from our nation alone.

What he and the rest of the energy-industrial elite are denying, in other words, is that the business models at the center of our economy are in the deepest possible conflict with physics and chemistry. The carbon bubble that looms over our world needs to be deflated soon. As with our fiscal crisis, failure to do so will cause enormous pain - pain, in fact, almost beyond imagining. After all, if you think banks are too big to fail, consider the climate as a whole and imagine the nature of the bailout that would face us when that bubble finally bursts.

Unfortunately, it won't burst by itself -- not in time, anyway. The fossil-fuel companies, with their heavily funded denialism and their record campaign contributions, have been able to keep at bay even the tamest efforts at reining in carbon emissions. With each passing day, they're leveraging us deeper into an unpayable carbon debt -- and with each passing day, they're raking in unimaginable returns. ExxonMobil last week reported its 2011 profits at \$41 billion, the second highest of all time. Do you wonder who owns the record? That would be ExxonMobil in 2008 at \$45 billion.

Telling the truth about climate change would require pulling away the biggest punchbowl in history, right when the party is in full swing. That's why the fight is so pitched. That's why those of us battling for the future need to raise our game. And it's why that view from the satellites, however beautiful from a distance, is likely to become ever harder to recognize as our home planet.

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(Bill McKibben is Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College and co-founder of 350.org. His most recent book is *Earth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet.*)

20120227-08	23:43	Phil	Fw: Wisdom from an Old Jewish Man
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[Source of original email unknown. --SteveB]

A female CNN journalist heard about a very old Jewish man who had been going to the Western Wall to pray, twice a day, every day, for a long, long time.

So she went to check it out. She went to the Western Wall and there he was, walking slowly up to the holy site.

She watched him pray and after about 45 minutes, when he turned to leave, using a cane and moving very slowly, she approached him for an interview.

"Pardon me, sir, I'm Rebecca B. Smith from CNN. What's your name?"

"Morris Feinberg," he replied.

"Sir, how long have you been coming to the Western Wall and praying?"

"For about 60 years."

"60 years! That's amazing! What do you pray for?"

"I pray for peace between the Christians, Jews and the Muslims."

"I pray for all the wars and all the hatred to stop."

"I pray for all our children to grow up safely as responsible adults and to love their fellow man."

"I pray that politicians tell us the truth and put the interests of the people ahead of their own interests."

"How do you feel after doing this for 60 years?"

"Like I'm talking to a f*cking wall."

20120227-01 13:40 Art "How the GOP Would Expand the Deficit"

Republican deficit expansion? How surprising!

Remember all the hullabaloo last summer about the deficit and how the nation was on the edge of ruin but the new Republican House would save us all. Remember also how Bonehead said during the 2010 election run up that the Republicans would immediately cut \$100B in spending but when pressed couldn't say just where from. (It never happened!)

Lost in all the critical issue of the day such as contraception, forcing steel instruments up the unwilling vaginas of women, who is more Christian or believe the correct way and my favorite, the right to buy as many hand guns per day as I want, is the more mundane issue of finance. As I have followed the Republican nominees' financial plans, both have proposed tax cuts for everyone and especially the rich, which they are among. I wondered just how this was going to work in view of the deficit issue. Did that just go away? Below is a nice short summary of where our two beloved potential leaders will take us.

Huhhhh?

"How the GOP Would Expand the Deficit" by *The Washington Post* Editorial Board

Feb. 26, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/how-the-gop-would-expand-the-deficit/2012/02/24/gIQAFqeUcR_story.html)

(Mr. Romney and Mr. Santorum court financial danger.)

At a time of record debts and deficits, the two leading Republican presidential candidates are proposing a path on taxes and spending likely to add trillions more. That's the sobering conclusion of the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (CRFB), whose board includes six Republican former lawmakers with expertise in budget issues, three Republican former heads of the Congressional Budget Office, and two former Office of Management and Budget directors under Republican presidents.

Last month, we examined former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney's reckless tax plan, which, according to calculations by the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center, would drain another \$180 billion from

the treasury in 2015 alone. The CRFB estimated the 10-year cost of the original Romney tax plan at \$1.3 trillion. By the end of the 10-year window, the debt would be a dangerous 86 percent of the gross domestic product.

But last week Mr. Romney upped the tax-cutting ante, promising, in addition to the previous grab bag of tax goodies, a 20 percent across-the-board cut in marginal rates and repeal of the alternative minimum tax. The Tax Policy Center estimated that the 20 percent rate cut would cost about \$150 billion in 2015 alone. The Romney campaign said that the rate change wouldn't add to the deficit because it would generate unspecified economic growth and be accompanied by spending cuts and elimination or cutbacks of deductions. Okay, which ones? On that question, the campaign was decidedly unspecific — understandably so, because its math doesn't add up. Until he is more specific about what sacred cows he would tackle — employer-sponsored health care? — Mr. Romney's plan cannot be taken as a fiscally responsible proposal.

Then again, he looks reasonable by comparison with former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum, who envisions a tax cut costing an eye-popping \$6 trillion over 10 years — above and beyond the \$4 trillion cost of extending the George W. Bush tax cuts. Mr. Santorum would flatten the tax code, collapsing today's six brackets into two: 10 percent and 28 percent. Those in the 10 percent bracket would pay no taxes on capital gains and dividends; those in the 28 percent bracket would pay a 12 percent rate. He would triple the exemption for dependent children and cut the corporate tax rate in half — except for manufacturers, who would pay nothing.

How to do this without blowing a huge hole in the budget? Mr. Santorum outlines some \$2.2 trillion in specific policies, such as shifting Medicare to a premium support system, transforming social programs into block grants to states and capping their growth, and cutting other domestic spending. Then he offers up the biggest magic asterisk of all time, cutting another \$5 trillion within five years, details not provided. Wisely discounting that gauzy promise, the CRFB projects that under its intermediate scenario Mr. Santorum's policies would increase deficits by \$4.5 trillion through 2021, bringing the debt to a scary 107 percent of the economy.

The campaign debate needs to move from pie-in-the-sky promises. Promising additional tax cuts may win votes, but these proposals are unaffordable and dangerous.

20120227-02 16:09 SteveB "Hoyer Not Sold on Tapping Oil Reserve"

"Speculation in the oil markets, not a shortage of supply, is driving the recent spike in gas price."

Speculation in commodities could be stopped immediately by simple rules requiring the buyer of all futures contracts to actually take delivery of the product or face a stiff penalty.

This way, only true buyers would be in the market. The way it now stands, prices in these markets are kept artificially high by non-buyers. These markets are a little like a Christie's auction in which many bidders are just bidding up the price with no intention to buy.

Rampant speculation, especially in fuels and precious metals, must be stopped.

Then we should tax gasoline to bring the pump price for gasoline up to \$6-\$8/gallon so we can encourage electric cars and alternative fuels.

1% of this money should be redistributed to me.

"Hoyer Not Sold on Tapping Oil Reserve" by Seung Min Kim, Politico

Feb. 27, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/on-congress/>)

House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer isn't so sure tapping the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to help ease rising gas prices is a good idea.

Despite calls from lawmakers in his own party to open up the reserve, the Maryland Democrat said he's skeptical that doing so would lower prices at the pump much. **Speculation in the oil markets, not a shortage of supply, is driving the recent spike in gas price**, Hoyer added.

"Historically, I have been reticent about using the [Strategic Petroleum Reserve] in what I believe to be non-emergency times," Hoyer said Monday morning. "Emergency times are when supply is disrupted. Very frankly, supply is not getting disrupted and [there are] no lines at the gas tanks at anywhere in the country, as far as I know."

Three House Democrats – Vermont Rep. Peter Welch, Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro and Massachusetts Rep. Ed Markey – last week urged President Barack Obama to open up the SPR, which holds roughly 700 million barrels of oil.

"Releasing even a small fraction of that oil could once again have a significant impact on speculation in the market place and on prices," the lawmakers wrote in the letter. "It would also stand as a reminder to markets that the United States is ready to employ an aggressive and effective SPR drawdown policy if needed."

Hoyer acknowledged that it is "very difficult" for Congress to act immediately to lower gas prices and that lawmakers are in ongoing discussions about how to do so, including tapping the SPR. Gas is currently averaging \$3.70 per gallon, according to AAA.

20120227-07 22:09 SteveB "Corporate Tax: Next Battle for the White House"

Of course we have to tax foreign profits, otherwise there will continue to be less and less investment in America.

"Corporate Tax: Next Battle for the White House" by David Saleh Rauf, Politico

Feb. 27, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0212/73353.html>)

President Barack Obama's top financial wizards face an uphill climb on Capitol Hill in the coming weeks when they pitch the administration's vision for revamping the corporate Tax Code — particularly on a provision that would tax all foreign earnings.

A House GOP memo drafted late last week shows how Republican budget writers plan to poke holes in the president's blueprint. Topping the list: the proposal to tax overseas earnings by multinational firms at a "minimum rate" regardless of whether they bring that money back home.

The GOP memo questions why the administration opted for a "worldwide system of taxation that double-taxes American employers and puts our workers at a competitive disadvantage in the global economy," according to a copy obtained by Politico.

That clash of views on tax reform is expected to mark the opening bell for the first round of what's likely to be a long battle over how to tax the foreign earnings of mega-firms like Google, Oracle, Pfizer, Duke Energy and Hewlett-Packard. It's a showdown that is putting Republicans and lobbyists for the tech, energy and pharmaceutical industries squarely at odds with the White House.

The president's plan ignores calls by the GOP and the tech lobby for a repatriation tax holiday and a transition to a territorial system, which would allow companies to largely avoid having foreign income taxed.

The administration, and some tax experts, say the plan will clamp down on the biggest companies shifting income and investments outside the U.S. to tax havens. The blueprint has been applauded by some lawmakers and trade groups because it lowers the overall corporate tax rate, broadens the tax base and pumps up manufacturing and R&D.

The administration last week rolled out the framework, which Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner described as the foundation to build consensus for a plan that can eventually pass muster with a bitterly divided Congress. He said the "process will take time. It will be politically contentious."

Already, Republicans and the tech lobby are taking aim at the blanket tax on overseas earnings, saying it will hurt U.S. companies trying to compete globally.

"It's going to be a topic of discussion not only among the ranking members and the chairs of the two [tax-writing] committees," said a senior GOP staffer, "but there's going to be some explaining to do when the administration comes up and tries to tell members why they are taking a turn that is so very different from our global competitors."

The president's willingness to weigh in on the issue has largely been praised. Most have been waiting for Obama to drop some form of corporate tax reform for years. But the tech industry, by and large, was blindsided by the White House's dismissal of a territorial system.

"We certainly didn't expect an embrace of a global system," said Dean Garfield, president and CEO of the Information Technology Industry Council. "On that, the administration is clearly out of step."

"We're not going to get behind a system that doesn't include a territorial competitive framework," he added.

Now that the plan has been rolled, the heavy lifting starts.

The administration and members of Congress will spend the better portion of this year — and possibly next year, too — largely focused on hashing out the details of how to tax the foreign earnings of U.S.-based multinationals, which have an estimated \$1.5 trillion in profits parked overseas that is not currently taxed by the U.S.

It's unclear whether Republicans will budge on the issue of international taxation since it's at the top of the agenda for the powerful business community.

Consider this: Google says it has \$21.2 billion in cash and assets, as of the end of last year, held by foreign subsidiaries, according to a regulatory filing. Apple puts its overseas assets at \$64 billion for the end of 2011, and Microsoft reported \$46 billion in profits held by foreign subsidiaries that would be subject to the U.S. 35 percent tax rate if they chose to repatriate.

Companies are loath to repatriate those profits because of the stiff tax penalty, so they're trying to sell Congress on a tax holiday. Obama has said he would consider repatriation only in the context of a tax reform package.

For now, that money is overseas, and while some is pumped back into U.S. stocks and securities, companies don't generally pay taxes to the U.S. on foreign earnings until they're repatriated. Obama's plan would do away with the deferral on foreign earnings and impose a minimum tax regardless of whether that money is ever brought home. It would provide a credit against earnings already taxed by a foreign jurisdiction.

"Today's global economy provides strong incentives for companies to shift investment and profits to countries with low tax rates. We want to reduce the opportunities the Tax Code now provides to shift income and investment outside the United States," Geithner told reporters last week.

Robert Pozen, a senior lecturer at Harvard Business School and a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution, defended the Obama approach, saying a territorial system would only exacerbate the current "race to the bottom," in which countries essentially bid for corporations by lowering tax rates.

"A pure territorial system will push a lot of U.S. corporate income to tax havens outside the U.S.," he said.

But Republicans already have this element of the president's plan in their cross hairs.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, called Obama's plan "a set of bullet points designed more for the campaign trail." He also chided the president for retaining "the antiquated worldwide system of corporate taxation."

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-Mich.), who has proposed a comprehensive tax reform plan that includes repatriation and a shift to a territorial system, told NPR on Friday that the president's plan is a "good step forward." But he said Obama "missed the boat by not addressing the fact that the U.S. is the only country in the world left with a worldwide system of taxation."

"I hope this is just the opening shot," Camp said. "I hope we can develop it into something that really will do a better job of making sure that American companies that do business overseas can bring those profits back and invest them back here for American workers."

Garfield said the administration has already showed some "willingness" to hear the tech industry's argument about moving to a territorial system. But moving forward, discussions about the tax plan will need to deeply involve the industry and that includes the chiefs at the top tech firms.

"They have reached out to a lot of CEOs in our community to get their feedback and walk them through the plan," Garfield said, adding that some CEOs of tech giants have already sounded off to the White House.

"I'm sure they're already getting an earful directly from those CEOs," he said.

There are still plenty of details to hash out, like a potential range for the minimum tax on foreign earnings.

Pozen, the tax expert from Harvard, said that figure is likely to be negotiated between 20 percent — the average of most U.S. trading partners — and 12.5 percent. The latter is Ireland's effective corporate tax rate and is considered the lowest of any non-tax haven jurisdiction. Tech sources have put a figure closer to 15 percent or 16 percent.

And the tech industry is still waiting to see how the administration tackles issues like transfer pricing and intellectual property, along with a number of other so-called offshore tax-haven loopholes — measures the administration say will boost efforts to prevent corporate tax lawyers from gaming the system.

At least one lawmaker, the Senate's foremost opponent of repatriation, has pledged to take up that fight as part of corporate tax reform.

"The president's proposal adds to the momentum that is building for tax reform that closes loopholes," Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) told Politico in a statement. "I'm going to keep working to make sure that any tax reform closes egregious loopholes such as offshore tax dodging and the stock-option loophole."

<http://www.poramoralisboa.com/arredores>



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

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