



# **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE**

## **MARCH, 2012 NEWSLETTERS**

Edited by Steven W. Baker for FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

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### Game Change: Women in Power

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #97 — MAR. 19, 2012**

**Game Change: Women in Power**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**Game Change: Women in Power**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

#97 – Mar. 19, 2012

### How to Talk Like a Republican

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #98 — MAR. 20, 2012**

**How to Talk Like a Republican**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**How to Talk Like a Republican**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

#98 – Mar. 20, 2012

### What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #99 — MAR. 21, 2012**

**What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

#99 – Mar. 21, 2012

### It Is Simply NOT Going to Happen!

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #100 — MAR. 22, 2012**

**It Is Simply NOT Going to Happen!**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**It Is Simply NOT Going to Happen!**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

#100 – Mar. 22, 2012

### Oliver North on Afghanistan

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #101 — MAR. 23, 2012**

**Oliver North on Afghanistan**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**Oliver North on Afghanistan**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

#101 – Mar. 23, 2012

### The Reality of Obamacare

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #102 — MAR. 26, 2012**

**The Reality of Obamacare**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**The Reality of Obamacare**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

#102 – Mar. 26, 2012

### What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve?

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #103 — MAR. 27, 2012**

**What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve?**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve?**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

#103 – Mar. 27, 2012

### Obamacare Deep in SCOTUS Trouble

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #104 — MAR. 28, 2012**

**Obamacare Deep in SCOTUS Trouble**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**Obamacare Deep in SCOTUS Trouble**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)



#104 – Mar. 28, 2012

### The Strategy: Repeat. President Obama Acts Like a Muslim! Repeat...

### ...And Justice for All?

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #105 — MAR. 29, 2012**

**...And Justice for All?**

Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**...And Justice for All?**

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)



#105 – Mar. 29, 2012

### The Strategy: Repeat. President Obama Acts Like a Muslim! Repeat...

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #106 — MAR. 30, 2012**

**The Strategy: Repeat. President Obama Acts Like a Muslim! Repeat...**

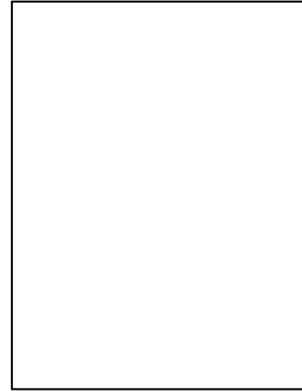
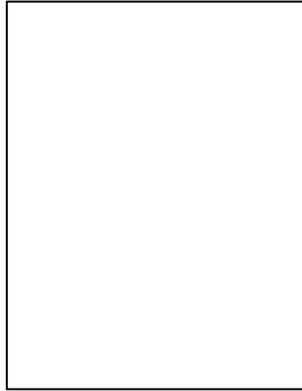
Author: Steven H. Beebe, Ph.D., Ph.D.

Read the entire issue for free at [www.fom.org](http://www.fom.org)

**The Strategy: Repeat. President Obama Acts Like a Muslim! Repeat...**

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<b>(01-12) 2012 PRIMARIES</b>			
<a href="#">20120314-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Santorum Still a Zombie, R0mney Still a Zero</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Rick Santorum Relieved No One Has Asked Him About Interracial Marriage Yet")
<a href="#">20120315-03</a>	09:56	Pam	My Nightmare Scenario for the 2012 Primaries & Elections
<a href="#">20120316-03</a>	11:49	Beth	Re: My Nightmare Scenario for the 2012 Primaries & Elections (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #96)
<a href="#">20120316-06</a>	15:43	SteveB	"Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" [& Anything having to Do with S-E-X]
<a href="#">20120316-07</a>	15:59	Pam	Re: "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120318-01</a>	06:57	SteveB	Re: "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120316-08</a>	16:01	Ben	Re: "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120316-10</a>	17:48	Art	Re: "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120317-01</a>	11:25	SteveG	Fw: Somebody Else's Opinion: 2012 Republican Primaries
<a href="#">20120317-02</a>	12:41	Art	Re: Somebody Else's Opinion: 2012 Republican Primaries (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120317-03</a>	13:23	Pam	Re: Somebody Else's Opinion: 2012 Republican Primaries (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120320-09</a>	17:36	SteveG	Cartoon: R0mney-Santorum: What Kind of Knot Is This?
<a href="#">20120323-06</a>	11:20	SteveG	"Santorum Suggests Obama Beats an 'Etch-A-Sketch' Candidate"
<a href="#">20120323-12</a>	13:06	MarthaH	"Santorum: GOP Better Off with Obama Than 'Etch-A-Sketch' Republican"
<a href="#">20120323-13</a>	13:49	Pam	Re: "Santorum: GOP Better Off with Obama Than 'Etch-A-Sketch' Republican" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120323-14</a>	13:52	SteveG	Re: "Santorum: GOP Better Off with Obama Than 'Etch-A-Sketch' Republican" (reply to MarthaH & Pam, above) & "Romney Does Etch-A-Sketch Damage Control"
<a href="#">20120323-10</a>	12:26	Pam	Magical Thinkers
<a href="#">20120323-11</a>	13:05	SteveB	Re: Magical Thinkers (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120323-20</a>	17:04	Dennis	Re: Magical Thinkers (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120323-21</a>	17:26	Pam	Re: Magical Thinkers (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120324-03</a>	13:41	SteveG	More Magical Thinkers
<a href="#">20120324-05</a>	14:51	Art	Re: More Magical Thinkers (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120324-10</a>	22:17	SteveG	Re: More Magical Thinkers (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120325-05</a>	18:11	Dennis	Fw: Internet Warning
<b>(02-12) 2012 ELECTIONS</b>			
BARACK OBAMA			
<a href="#">20120229-02</a>	10:18	Phil	Fw: Lemon Picker
<a href="#">20120229-07</a>	11:38	SteveB	Re: Lemon Picker (reply to Phil, above)
<a href="#">20120301-02</a>	10:44	Beth	Re: Lemon Picker (reply to Phil, FotM Newsletter #85)
<a href="#">20120330-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Strategy: Repeat. President Obama Acts Like a Muslim! Repeat...</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Creating the Muslim Manchurian Candidate")

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MITT ROMNEY			
<a href="#">20120305-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Mitt Romney: 'Mr. President, What's the Rush?' LOL!</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney Health Care Op-Ed Presents Deeper Problem" & "07/30/2009 – Mr. President, What's the Rush?")
<b>(03) CONSERVATIVE MIND, THE</b>			
<a href="#">20120229-14</a>	22:18	Dick	Video: The Candy Man
<a href="#">20120229-15</a>	22:26	SteveB	Re: The Candy Man (reply to Dick, above)
<a href="#">20120307-00</a>		SteveB	<b>What Has America Become?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Response to Ken Huber and 'What Has America Become?'"")
<a href="#">20120306-10</a>	17:46	Phil	Re: What Has America Become? (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120306-12</a>	18:03	SteveB	Re: What Has America Become? (reply to Phil, above)
<a href="#">20120306-13</a>	18:17	Art	Re: What Has America Become? (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120309-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i></b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Dumbest Things Rush Limbaugh Has Ever Said")
<a href="#">20120309-01</a>	10:45	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #91)
<a href="#">20120309-03</a>	11:55	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120309-02</a>	11:53	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above) & Fw: Daily Kos Action: Hit Rush's Advertisers
<a href="#">20120309-04</a>	12:11	Pam	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120309-05</a>	13:02	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120314-03</a>	14:49	Dennis	"Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America"
<a href="#">20120314-05</a>	16:02	Pam	Re: "Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America" (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120315-04</a>	11:15	Pam	Re: "Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #95)
<a href="#">20120315-05</a>	11:22	Art	Re: "Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120320-00</a>		SteveB	<b>How to Talk Like a Republican</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("5 Words & Phrases Democrats Should Never Say Again")
<a href="#">20120324-01</a>	09:02	SteveB	Fw: 2012 Republican Political Survival Total Ideological Immersion Suit
<a href="#">20120327-00</a>		SteveB	<b>What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve?")
<a href="#">20120327-05</a>	15:11	Art	Re: What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve? (reply to SteveB. FotM Newsletter #103)
<a href="#">20120327-06</a>	15:42	SteveB	Re: What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve? (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120327-08</a>	16:30	Art	Re: What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve? (reply to SteveB. FotM Newsletter #103)
<a href="#">20120326-01</a>	07:05	SteveB	"The Right's Etch a Sketch Imperative"
<a href="#">20120328-03</a>	15:41	Dennis	"The Strange Conservative Brain: 3 Reasons Republicans Refuse to Accept Reality About Global Warming"
<a href="#">20120329-01</a>	05:49	MarthaH	"Study Tracks How Conservatives Lost Their Faith in Science"
<a href="#">20120329-03</a>	11:05	SteveB	The Paradox of Our Times

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<b>(04) DEMOCRATS</b>			
<a href="#">20120321-02</a>	09:47	SteveG	"Bob Kerrey Runs Hard on Old Washington"
<a href="#">20120324-07</a>	18:29	SteveG	"U.S. Rep. Brad Miller: 'If Duke Was Playing the Taliban, I'd Have to Pull for the Taliban'"
<b>(05) LIBERAL MIND, THE</b>			
<a href="#">20120305-03</a>	11:02	SteveG	Cartoon: "Buyers' Remorse"
<a href="#">20120322-11</a>	15:06	SteveG	"Please Stop Apologizing"
<a href="#">20120322-12</a>	15:23	Pam	Re: "Please Stop Apologizing" (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120323-05</a>	11:19	Art	Re: Please Stop Apologizing (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #101)
<b>(06) MISC. POLITICS / CORRESPONDENCE w/ POLITICIANS</b>			
<a href="#">20120305-10</a>	20:21	MarthaH	Quotes: Bipartisan
<a href="#">20120306-07</a>	12:08	Dale	Old Butch
<a href="#">20120306-09</a>	16:32	SteveB	Re: Old Butch (reply to Dale, above) & Henry the Rooster
<b>(07) REPUBLICANS</b>			
<a href="#">20120229-01</a>	07:55	MarthaH	"Maine Sen. Olympia Snowe to Retire in Blow to GOP"
<a href="#">20120302-06</a>	12:45	SteveG	Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe.
<a href="#">20120302-08</a>	14:10	Phil	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120302-09</a>	14:19	Pam	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to Phil & SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120302-10</a>	14:44	Bill	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to Phil & SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120302-11</a>	14:49	SteveG	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120302-12</a>	15:13	Bill	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to SteveG, above) / Bloviators
<a href="#">20120302-14</a>	16:46	SteveG	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to Bill, above)
<a href="#">20120302-16</a>	17:54	Dennis	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120304-06</a>	14:48	SteveB	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120304-07</a>	15:18	Art	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120304-08</a>	17:06	SteveB	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120302-17</a>	17:56	Pam	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to Dennis, above) / Rush Limbaugh
<a href="#">20120302-19</a>	23:21	SteveG	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Rush Limbaugh (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120322-13</a>	15:43	SteveG	Quote: Barry Goldwater on Christians in Politics
<a href="#">20120322-14</a>	15:46	Pam	Re: Quote: Barry Goldwater on Christians in Politics (reply to SteveG, above)
<b>(08) STATE / LOCAL POLITICS</b>			
<b>(09) THIRD PARTIES</b>			
<b>(10) CONSTITUTION</b>			
<a href="#">20120301-00</a>		SteveB	<b>History Lessons for Christian Zealots</b> by SteveG ("5 Great Moments in History That Could Teach Christian Zealots Important Lessons")
<a href="#">20120306-03</a>	10:04	SteveG	Fw: The Occupied Amendment Petition: Corporations Are Not People!

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120321-04</a>	11:20	SteveG	Fw: Common Cause Webinar: Toward a Constitutional Amendment to Overthrow Citizens United
<b>(11) CORRUPTION</b>			
<a href="#">20120315-08</a>	16:02	SteveB	"Special Weapons for Fighting Giants"
<b>(12) EDUCATION</b>			
<a href="#">20120320-08</a>	15:49	Ben	"South Carolina Teacher Suspended for Reading Ender's Game to Middle School Students"
<b>(13) ELECTION REFORM</b>			
<a href="#">20120317-05</a>	16:14	SteveG	"The Power of Recalls in Wisconsin"
<b>(14) EXECUTIVE BRANCH</b>			
<b>(15) GUNS / INSURRECTION / CRIME</b>			
<a href="#">20120229-04</a>	10:48	Art	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #84)
<a href="#">20120229-05</a>	11:05	SteveB	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120229-06</a>	11:29	Pam	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120229-08</a>	15:33	Dennis	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120229-09</a>	15:38	Art	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120229-11</a>	17:38	Pam	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120229-12</a>	19:13	SteveG	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120307-01</a>	11:18	SteveG	"Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle"
<a href="#">20120307-04</a>	20:25	Bill	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120307-05</a>	21:04	SteveG	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to Bill, above)
<a href="#">20120307-07</a>	21:32	Pam	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120307-09</a>	22:25	SteveB	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120322-16</a>	18:27	SteveG	"Walking While Black: The Killing of Trayvon Martin"
<a href="#">20120327-01</a>	08:09	SteveB	Fw: From the Right: Why Gun Restrictions Face Tough Battles
<a href="#">20120327-02</a>	10:45	Dale	Who Are the Racists? & Video: "Black Panthers Offer Bounty for Teen's Shooter"
<a href="#">20120327-03</a>	10:52	SteveB	Re: Who Are the Racists? (reply to Dale, above)
<a href="#">20120328-06</a>	19:16	Dick	"Zimmerman Was on the Ground Being Punched When He Shot Trayvon Martin"
<a href="#">20120329-07</a>	17:28	Art	Re: "Zimmerman Was on the Ground Being Punched When He Shot Trayvon Martin" (reply to Dick & SteveB, FotM newsletter #105)
<a href="#">20120329-08</a>	18:05	Pam	Re: "Zimmerman Was on the Ground Being Punched When He Shot Trayvon Martin" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120329-09</a>	18:57	Art	Re: "Zimmerman Was on the Ground Being Punched When He Shot Trayvon Martin" (reply to Pam, above)
<b>(16) IMMIGRATION</b>			

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120315-11</a>	22:41	SteveG	"Southern Miss Band Chants 'Where's Your Green Card?' to Puerto Rican Kansas State Player"
<b>(17) JUDICIAL BRANCH</b>			
<a href="#">20120328-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Obamacare Deep in SCOTUS Trouble</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Obamacare's Supreme Court Disaster")
<a href="#">20120327-04</a>	11:46	MarthaH	Poll: How Do You Interpret the Constitution?
<a href="#">20120327-09</a>	16:32	SteveB	"Healthcare Jujitsu"
<a href="#">20120328-04</a>	16:43	MarthaH	"Brace Yourself for Another 5-4 Decision"
<b>(18) LEGISLATIVE BRANCH</b>			
<a href="#">20120320-11</a>	17:55	MarthaH	Heaven or Hell?
<a href="#">20120320-12</a>	20:17	Pam	Re: Heaven or Hell? (reply to MarthaH, above)
<b>(19) MISC. GOVERNMENT / CORRESPONDENCE w/ OFFICIALS</b>			
<b>(20) REPRODUCTION / WOMEN / LGBT</b>			
<a href="#">20120302-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Right's Incredible Sensitivity (of a Bulldozer!)</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Rush Limbaugh: I'll Buy Georgetown Women 'as Much Aspirin to Put Between Their Knees as They Want'")
<a href="#">20120306-01</a>	09:36	Art	Re: Rush Limbaugh's Giant Lie (& Joke) of the Day (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #88)
<a href="#">20120306-02</a>	09:40	MarthaH	Rush Limbaugh & Rick Santorum
<a href="#">20120306-05</a>	10:12	Art	Cartoons: Rush Limbaugh (A Prostitute in Hot Water)
<a href="#">20120306-04</a>	10:10	SteveG	"Culture Wars Come To Two Super Tuesday States"
<a href="#">20120306-11</a>	17:58	Art	Re: "Culture Wars Come To Two Super Tuesday States" (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120307-10</a>	23:42	Charis	Happy International Women's Day!
<a href="#">20120312-01</a>	06:58	Tom	Laura Ingraham & the War on Women
<a href="#">20120315-00</a>		Pam	<b>What Is a Woman to Do?</b> by Pam McRae
<a href="#">20120314-04</a>	15:52	SteveB	Re: What Is a Woman to Do? (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120314-06</a>	16:18	Pam	Re: What Is a Woman to Do? (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120315-09</a>	19:38	SteveG	Fw: Furious: The Republican War on Women (from Washington Sen. Maria Cantwell)
<a href="#">20120315-10</a>	10:05	Pam	Re: Furious: The Republican War on Women (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120319-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Game Change: Women in Power</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mikulski Makes History While Creating 'Zone of Civility' for Senate Women" & "God's Will?: Sarah Palin's Secret Plot to Capture the White House in 2012" & "10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts" & "Did Robert Downey Jr. Really Just Accuse Kirk Douglas of a Brutal Rape?")
<a href="#">20120316-11</a>	17:58	SteveG	"George Clooney Arrested for Protesting at Sudanese Embassy" & "Facing Recall, Wisconsin Senator Pam Galloway Will Resign" & "130,000 Texas Women Lose Health Care Just So Texas Can Prove How Anti-Abortion It Is"
<a href="#">20120320-03</a>	12:15	Art	"10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts"
<a href="#">20120320-07</a>	14:47	Pam	Re: "10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120329-00</a>		Pam	<b>...And Justice for All?</b> by Pam McRae ("Adopted or Abducted?")
<a href="#">20120328-02</a>	15:09	SteveB	Re: ...And Justice for All? (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120329-02</a>	09:11	Pam	Re: ...And Justice for All? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #105)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<b>(21) SOCIAL SECURITY / RETIREMENT</b>			
<b>(22) STATE / LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>			
<b>(23) TAXES</b>			
<a href="#">20120313-05</a>	13:51	SteveB	"Why We Need a Surtax on the Super Wealthy"
<a href="#">20120321-00</a>		SteveB	<b>What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?")
<a href="#">20120322-03</a>	10:55	Art	U.S. and Australian National Debt: "What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?" & "Reality Pill Needed for Australians" & "State of the Nation: Australia Today"
<a href="#">20120325-02</a>	12:35	SteveB	"Ryan Budget Plan Would Cut Income Taxes for Millionaires by at Least \$187,000 Annually & Facilitate Corporate Tax Avoidance"
<b>(24) TRADE / INT'L RELATIONS</b>			
<a href="#">20120306-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Free Trade vs. Democracy</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Free Trade or Democracy, Can't Have Both")
<b>(25) WAR / SECURITY</b>			
<a href="#">20120301-03</a>	11:52	Pam	Re: A Christian Dictatorship? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #84) & Syrian Crisis
<a href="#">20120301-06</a>	13:25	Art	Re: A Christian Dictatorship? (reply to Pam, above) & Syrian Crisis
<a href="#">20120307-02</a>	12:30	MarthaH	"One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice"
<a href="#">20120307-03</a>	19:50	Art	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120307-06</a>	21:30	Pam	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120307-08</a>	10:07	Tom	Video: "The Deal" with Jack Hunter: "Does Rush Want to 'Cut and Run?'" [in Afghanistan]
<a href="#">20120308-01</a>	05:34	SteveB	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #90)
<a href="#">20120308-03</a>	11:16	Art	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120308-02</a>	11:04	Pam	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120314-01</a>	10:30	Art	"Israel Will Not Attack"
<a href="#">20120314-02</a>	12:04	Pam	Re: "Israel Will Not Attack" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120315-01</a>	07:06	MarthaH	"In Reactions to Two Incidents, a U.S.-Afghan Disconnect"
<a href="#">20120320-05</a>	13:22	Tom	"National Defense Resources Preparedness Executive Order"
<a href="#">20120321-01</a>	08:02	Dick	Fw: Where Are Muslims Happy?
<a href="#">20120321-06</a>	13:29	SteveG	U.S. History: When the U.S. Pulled-Out of the Olympics Over Afghanistan
<a href="#">20120321-07</a>	13:40	Pam	Re: When the U.S. Pulled-Out of the Olympics Over Afghanistan (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120321-08</a>	14:39	Bill	Re: When the U.S. Pulled-Out of the Olympics Over Afghanistan (reply to SteveG & Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120321-09</a>	15:26	SteveG	Re: When the U.S. Pulled-Out of the Olympics Over Afghanistan (reply to Pam & Bill, above)
<a href="#">20120323-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Oliver North on Afghanistan</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Afghan Ambivalence")
<a href="#">20120323-04</a>	10:52	SteveG	Planned Defense Expenditure by Country (2011)
<a href="#">20120324-08</a>	19:40	Larry	War
<b>(26) ART / LITERATURE / WRITING / MOVIES / MUSIC</b>			

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120301-04</a>	12:18	MarthaH	Re: Books! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #84)
<a href="#">20120301-11</a>	15:29	SteveB	Re: Books! (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120317-06</a>	17:24	Pam	Poem: "The Necklace" by Osip Mandelstam
<a href="#">20120320-02</a>	11:29	Pam	Why There Are Monsters
<a href="#">20120325-04</a>	16:21	SteveB	Music from the Friends of the Middle Website
<b>(27) BUSINESS / MONEY / ECONOMICS</b>			
<a href="#">20120229-13</a>	20:24	SteveG	"Bonus Withdrawal Puts Bankers in 'Malaise'"
<a href="#">20120301-01</a>	09:51	Pam	Re: "Bonus Withdrawal Puts Bankers in 'Malaise'" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #85)
<a href="#">20120301-09</a>	14:29	Dennis	"Grantham Wonders If Marx Was Right After All"
<a href="#">20120316-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Betrayal at Goldman Sachs</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Truth About Goldman Sachs")
<a href="#">20120324-09</a>	20:48	SteveG	"Wall Street Confidence Trick: The Interest Rate Swaps That Are Bankrupting Local Governments"
<a href="#">20120327-07</a>	16:26	Art	Our American Business (Leaders)???
<b>(28) CLASS WAR / POVERTY / RICH &amp; POOR</b>			
<a href="#">20120303-10</a>	19:57	Art	Video: "Jacob Hacker & Paul Pierson on Engineered Inequality"
<a href="#">20120310-04</a>	18:21	SteveG	"Three Ways to Beat Corporate Giants"
<a href="#">20120312-02</a>	17:22	Dennis	Video: When Bank of America Takes Your House...
<a href="#">20120312-03</a>	17:26	Dennis	"What If the 'Broken Windows' Theory Were Applied to Wall Street?"
<a href="#">20120313-04</a>	13:50	SteveB	"The Audacity of Bonuses at MF Global"
<a href="#">20120313-08</a>	18:38	Dennis	"Carlyle Owners Took \$398.5 Million Payout with Debt Before IPO"
<a href="#">20120313-09</a>	19:35	Pam	Re: "Carlyle Owners Took \$398.5 Million Payout with Debt Before IPO" (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120322-00</a>		SteveB	<b>It Is Simply NOT Going to Happen!</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Republicans' Social-Darwinist Budget Plan")
<a href="#">20120321-10</a>	17:13	SteveG	"Banker Hubris Knows No Bounds"
<b>(29) DAILY PHOTOS / PHOTOGRAPHY</b>			
<a href="#">20120229-16</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Santa Cruz Cathedral
<a href="#">20120301-19</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Two Dogs from Friends of the Middle Out for a Drive in Glacier National Park, Montana
<a href="#">20120304-11</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Lake Wales, Florida
<a href="#">20120305-15</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Cuevas Falls, Samaipata, Bolivia
<a href="#">20120306-15</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Greencastle, Indiana
<a href="#">20120307-11</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Grand Canyon, Colorado
<a href="#">20120308-08</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Grand Rapids, Michigan & "Whitecaps' 'Fifth Third Burger' Not for Faint of Heart"
<a href="#">20120311-02</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Baby Hedgehog
<a href="#">20120312-05</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Tarija, Bolivia
<a href="#">20120313-10</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Lake Titicaca, Bolivia (elevation: 12,500')
<a href="#">20120314-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Tortola, British Virgin Islands
<a href="#">20120315-12</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Woombye, Queensland, Australia
<a href="#">20120318-05</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Sojourner Truth: An American Hero
<a href="#">20120319-02</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Butterfly in Porongo, Santa Cruz, Bolivia
<a href="#">20120320-13</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Portland, Maine
<a href="#">20120321-11</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photos: Picking Cotton for the 'Boss' (Here We Go Again!)
<a href="#">20120322-19</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photos: War in Afghanistan

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120325-07</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Terminators = Corporations (Control Is the Key)
<a href="#">20120326-04</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: <i>Altiplano</i> , Bolivia
<a href="#">20120327-11</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Rhino
<a href="#">20120328-07</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: near Greencastle, Indiana
<a href="#">20120329-06</a>	14:36	Pam	Re: Photo: Near Greencastle, Indiana (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #105)
<a href="#">20120329-12</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: near Solsberry, Indiana
<b>(30) ENERGY / TRANSPORTATION / WATER</b>			
<a href="#">20120301-10</a>	14:52	MarthaH	Fw: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline
<a href="#">20120301-14</a>	17:30	Pam	Re: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120301-15</a>	18:35	Art	Re: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120310-01</a>	07:57	MarthaH	"How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?"
<a href="#">20120310-02</a>	21:45	Pam	Re: "How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120316-04</a>	14:41	Ben	"Gasoline Lifts Inflation, Dents Confidence"
<a href="#">20120323-15</a>	14:05	SteveB	"Can We Escape the Global Energy Spiral?"
<a href="#">20120323-19</a>	17:03	SteveB	Fw: An All-of-the-Above Energy Plan (from Sen. John Tester) & "EIA Projects U.S. Non-Hydro Renewable Power Generation Increases, Led by Wind & Biomass"
<a href="#">20120324-04</a>	13:48	SteveG	Shipping Container Homes (to SteveB)
<a href="#">20120324-06</a>	17:11	SteveB	Re: Shipping Container Homes (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120326-02</a>	12:12	Tom	Internal Memo: Keystone XL Pipeline Statement from Valero CEO
<a href="#">20120329-04</a>	12:59	Dennis	"The Truth About \$6 Gas, \$200 Oil & the Quest for Energy Independence"
<b>(31) FOOD / DRINK</b>			
<a href="#">20120305-06</a>	16:23	SteveB	"The 'All Natural' Scam: How to Shop Healthy for You & Your Family"
<b>(32) FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE</b>			
<a href="#">20120301-07</a>	13:26	Pam	A Bad Day
<a href="#">20120301-18</a>	21:30	SteveB	Re: A Bad Day (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120304-02</a>	23:58	SteveB	Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 1
<a href="#">20120305-04</a>	11:21	Art	Re: Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 1 (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #87)
<a href="#">20120305-14</a>	23:58	SteveB	Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 2
<a href="#">20120306-14</a>	23:58	SteveB	Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 3
<a href="#">20120308-07</a>	23:58	SteveB	Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 6
<a href="#">20120312-00</a>		SteveB	<b>My Papá Roger (Feb. 10, 1933 — Mar. 10, 2012)</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB
<a href="#">20120309-06</a>	15:06	SteveB	FotM Announcement
<a href="#">20120309-08</a>	20:06	Art	Re: FotM Announcement (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120316-02</a>	10:17	SteveB	Friends of the Middle Website
<a href="#">20120316-05</a>	15:32	Pam	Re: Friends of the Middle Website (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120316-09</a>	17:39	SteveB	Re: Cartoon (reply to MarthaH)
<a href="#">20120316-13</a>	19:35	Pam	Re: Cartoon (reply to MarthaH)
<a href="#">20120322-01</a>	09:04	Pam	News
<a href="#">20120323-01</a>	10:06	Pam	Being a Grandparent

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120328-01</a>	12:22	various	Friends of the Middle
<b>(33) FUN / DIVERSION</b>			
<a href="#">20120322-15</a>	17:07	SteveG	Conspiracy Theory
<a href="#">20120326-03</a>	15:42	Tom	Catoon: Casual Friday
<a href="#">20120328-05</a>	16:51	MarthaH	Fw: A Punny Diversion
<b>(34) HEALTH CARE / HEALTH / MEDICINE</b>			
<a href="#">20120304-05</a>	13:34	SteveB	Re: Changing Times (to GaryF)
<a href="#">20120314-07</a>	18:10	Dennis	"Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs"
<a href="#">20120314-08</a>	19:35	SteveB	Re: "Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs" (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120315-02</a>	08:59	Pam	Re: "Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #95)
<a href="#">20120315-07</a>	14:36	SteveB	Re: "Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs" (reply to Pam, above & Dennis, FotM Newsletter #95)
<a href="#">20120316-12</a>	18:02	SteveG	"Senate Bill Could Roll Back Consumers' Health Insurance Savings"
<a href="#">20120322-17</a>	18:33	SteveG	"Three Hidden Time Bombs in the GOP's Medicare Budget"
<a href="#">20120326-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Reality of Obamacare</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Health Care Reform Repeal Would Put People at Risk")
<a href="#">20120325-01</a>	10:02	MarthaH	"As Supreme Court Justices Review Health-Care Law, Stakes Will Be Hard to Ignore"
<a href="#">20120325-03</a>	14:22	SteveG	"116 Billion Reasons to Be For the Health Care Mandate"
<a href="#">20120325-06</a>	19:37	Art	"5 Myths About the Health-Care Law"
<b>(35) HISTORY</b>			
<a href="#">20120229-03</a>	10:41	Pam	Re: Republican Politics, the Decline & Dick Lugar (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #84)
<a href="#">20120302-01</a>	09:27	MarthaH	Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB)
<a href="#">20120302-02</a>	09:42	SteveB	Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120302-07</a>	12:59	Pam	Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120304-03</a>	13:04	SteveB	Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120302-04</a>	12:17	Beth	Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120302-05</a>	12:30	Ben	Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120304-04</a>	13:34	Paula	Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120302-03</a>	09:53	GaryF	Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120305-02</a>	09:53	Pam	Re: Photos: How's This for Nostalgia?(reply to Beth, FotM Newsletter #87)
<a href="#">20120318-03</a>	17:20	Pam	Tony Judt R.I.P.
<a href="#">20120318-04</a>	21:16	Bill	Re: Tony Judt R.I.P. (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120329-10</a>	22:04	SteveG	Fw: 1950's Car Test
<a href="#">20120329-11</a>	23:00	SteveB	Re: 1950's Car Test (reply to SteveG, above)
<b>(36) JOBS / LABOR</b>			

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120312-04</a>	20:35	SteveB	"Steve Jobs & American Jobs"
<a href="#">20120321-05</a>	13:21	SteveG	"One Graphic Republicans Hope You Don't Share with Your Friends"
<b>(37) LIFE / PHILOSOPHY / SPIRITUALITY</b>			
<a href="#">20120301-05</a>	12:50	SteveB	"Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences"
<a href="#">20120301-16</a>	19:38	Art	Re: "Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120301-17</a>	20:24	SteveB	Re: "Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" (reply to Art, above) & "Even Dick Cheney's Dog Is Prone to Unprovoked Attacks"
<a href="#">20120303-13</a>	20:45	SteveB	From the Archive: "The Bible Has Some Shocking 'Family Values'"
<a href="#">20120303-17</a>	21:16	SteveG	Re: "The Bible Has Some Shocking 'Family Values'"
<a href="#">20120305-07</a>	16:55	SteveG	"Where Are the Progressive Christians?"
<a href="#">20120306-06</a>	11:14	Beth	Re: "Where Are the Progressive Christians?" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter # 88)
<a href="#">20120313-02</a>	12:08	Ben	Fw: Will I Live to See 90?
<a href="#">20120322-02</a>	10:52	Dale	"Topography of Faith" [in the U.S.]
<a href="#">20120322-04</a>	11:29	SteveB	Re: "Topography of Faith" (reply to Dale, above)
<a href="#">20120329-05</a>	13:18	SteveG	"How Religion Has Been Used to Promote Slavery"
<b>(38) MEDIA / NEWS MEDIA</b>			
<a href="#">20120301-12</a>	17:19	SteveG	"WikiLeaks vs. Stratfor: Pursue the Truth, Not Its Messenger"
<a href="#">20120303-03</a>	13:49	SteveG	"Would Mitt Like to Fire Bain Employee Rush Limbaugh?"
<a href="#">20120305-01</a>	07:25	Martha	"A 7th Advertiser Pulls Out of Limbaugh's Show"
<a href="#">20120305-13</a>	22:17	SteveB	Rush Limbaugh's Giant Lie (& Joke) of the Day
<a href="#">20120313-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Rush Limbaugh Is a Victim</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Rush Limbaugh, Media Victim")
<a href="#">20120313-06</a>	15:11	Dennis	"Fox News on Gas Prices & the President in 2008"
<a href="#">20120316-01</a>	08:05	SteveB	"Andrew Breitbart: Big Deal, Big Coronary, Big Corpse"
<b>(39) MISC. REALITY</b>			
<b>(40) OCCUPY WALL ST.</b>			
<a href="#">20120304-09</a>	19:41	SteveG	"Protesters Occupying Monsanto Corp. Arrested"
<a href="#">20120323-08</a>	12:20	SteveG	Fw: Video: The 99% Spring—100,000 Strong!
<a href="#">20120323-16</a>	15:03	SteveG	"OWS Activist Cecily McMillan Describes Seizure, Bodily Injuries in Arrest by NYPD"
<b>(41) PETITIONS / ACTIONS / CAUSES</b>			
<a href="#">20120301-13</a>	17:21	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Hands-Off Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid!
<a href="#">20120302-13</a>	15:45	Dennis	Fw: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh!
<a href="#">20120302-15</a>	16:50	SteveG	Re: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh! (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120302-18</a>	19:05	Art	Re: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh! (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120303-01</a>	10:30	Pam	Re: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh! (reply to Art, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120303-02</a>	12:07	SteveG	Re: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh! (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120303-05</a>	15:02	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh
<a href="#">20120303-06</a>	16:10	Pam	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120303-07</a>	16:39	Dennis	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120303-08</a>	18:14	SteveG	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120303-09</a>	18:56	Art	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120303-12</a>	20:15	Pam	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120303-14</a>	20:48	SteveB	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120303-15</a>	21:11	SteveB	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to all, above) & "Rush Limbaugh Apologizes to Sandra Fluke for Calling Her a 'Slut'"
<a href="#">20120303-16</a>	21:14	Art	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120304-10</a>	21:19	SteveG	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120304-01</a>	06:25	SteveB	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Art & SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120303-11</a>	20:10	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: Help Henry Young
<a href="#">20120305-05</a>	15:39	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Rush Limbaugh Must Go!
<a href="#">20120305-09</a>	17:52	SteveB	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Rush Limbaugh Must Go! (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120305-08</a>	17:51	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Rush Limbaugh Must Go!
<a href="#">20120306-08</a>	13:26	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Cancel Rush Limbaugh!
<a href="#">20120310-03</a>	18:19	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: No More 'Pink Slime' or 'Mystery Meat'!
<a href="#">20120311-01</a>	05:56	SteveB	Re: No More 'Pink Slime' or 'Mystery Meat'! (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120313-03</a>	12:30	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Petition: Uphold the Affordable Care Act
<a href="#">20120313-07</a>	17:36	SteveB	Fw: Feminist Majority Foundation Petition: Stop the War on Women!
<a href="#">20120315-06</a>	13:22	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Bravo NPR!
<a href="#">20120317-04</a>	16:12	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: Don't Let the Bullies Win
<a href="#">20120319-01</a>	07:48	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Stop Tuna Plunder in the Pacific!
<a href="#">20120320-01</a>	11:05	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Petition: Push the Supreme Court Toward a Fair Healthcare Decision!
<a href="#">20120320-04</a>	13:06	SteveB	Fw: Get a Cool, Free, NationofChange Canvas Bag (for a Donation)
<a href="#">20120320-10</a>	17:44	SteveG	Fw: Health Care for America Now Petition: Kill Congress's Plan to Kill Medicare!
<a href="#">20120322-05</a>	13:40	SteveG	Fw: EDF Petition: Stop the Toxic Air Bill!
<a href="#">20120322-06</a>	13:44	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Investigate the Death of Trayvon Martin!
<a href="#">20120322-07</a>	13:46	SteveG	Change.org Petition: Bring Zimmerman to Trial!
<a href="#">20120322-08</a>	13:49	Art	Re: Trayvon Martin Petitions (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120322-09</a>	13:54	SteveG	Re: Trayvon Martin Petitions (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120322-10</a>	14:05	SteveB	Re: Trayvon Martin Petitions (reply to SteveG & Art, above)
<a href="#">20120322-18</a>	19:04	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: End the Bush Tax Cuts on the Rich!
<a href="#">20120323-02</a>	10:40	SteveG	Fw: POGO (the Project On Government Oversight)
<a href="#">20120323-03</a>	10:41	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Protect Access to Birth Control!
<a href="#">20120323-09</a>	12:25	SteveG	Fw: Common Cause Petition: Stop the Koch Brothers!
<a href="#">20120323-17</a>	16:01	SteveG	Fw: USAction Petition: Demand a Budget for All, Not Just the 1%!
<a href="#">20120323-07</a>	12:19	SteveG	No Kid Hungry Request: Watch <i>Hunger Hits Home</i>

<b>DATE-ID</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>FROM</b>	<b>SUBJECT/TITLE</b>
<a href="#">20120324-02</a>	11:19	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell the FDA: No BPA in Food Packaging!
<a href="#">20120327-10</a>	21:14	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Save the Rhino!
<b>(42) SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY</b>			
<a href="#">20120229-10</a>	16:17	SteveB	Re: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #84)
<a href="#">20120301-08</a>	13:27	Art	Continuing Saga: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment
<a href="#">20120303-04</a>	14:22	Charis	Earth Hour, Sat., Mar. 31, 2012, 8:30 pm
<a href="#">20120308-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Closing In on the 'God Particle'</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("US Physicists Confirm Higgs Finding Is Near")
<a href="#">20120308-05</a>	12:04	Phil	Re: "Closing In on the 'God Particle'" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #90)
<a href="#">20120308-06</a>	12:26	SteveB	Re: "Closing In on the 'God Particle'" (reply to Phil, above)
<a href="#">20120313-01</a>	09:05	SteveB	Solar System Scale Model
<a href="#">20120318-02</a>	13:33	SteveG	"Scientists Warn EPA Over Monsanto's GMO Crop Failures, Dangers"
<a href="#">20120321-03</a>	10:37	Charis	"Beyond Environment: Falling Back in Love with Mother Earth"
<a href="#">20120323-18</a>	16:10	Art	"Epic March Heat Wave in Midwest, Great Lakes & Northeast: Link to Global Warming?"
<b>(43) U.S.A., THE</b>			
<b>(44) WORLD, THE</b>			
<a href="#">20120308-04</a>	11:47	Phil	Re: The Strangest & Most Beautiful Streets/Roads in the World (reply to Bill)
<a href="#">20120309-07</a>	16:04	Charis	Video: Risking It All in Bolivia
<a href="#">20120320-06</a>	13:36	Tom	"International Pressure on Bolivarian Countries: A Hopeful Sign"



## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #85 — MAR. 1, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **History Lessons for Christian Zealots**

(posted by SteveG, Mar. 1, 2012)

One of the great benefits of having an opportunity to reflect on history (and I don't mean the tear soaked diatribes of Glenn Beck) is to really stand back and understand that there are reasons why the pious religionists have done far more damage than good. Right now we have the power hungry playing on the emotions of the weak and uneducated to hand them the reins to the future – where their "religious virtue" will triumph – yea, right – like it has done in the past. And this article doesn't take into account why people were in a hurry to get away from the Inquisitional residue of religion in England and Europe. Before we vote in a group of people who idolize Pat Robertson, Dobson and the other "Popes" of the evangelical hierarchy, ask just what agenda these lunatics have in mind. They are simply the western version of the Taliban, drunk with power from faith based funding and what they squeeze out of their delusional followers. True, big money supports them because big money has bought them. I don't get tears in my eyes when I look at their objectives, nor their attitudes toward the future. Please pass this on to stir up more debate and light on the subject. —White Crow

"5 Great Moments in History That Could Teach Christian Zealots Important Lessons" by Rob Boston, AlterNet

Feb. 29, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/154330/>)

Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum says John F. Kennedy's strong defense of church-state separation makes him want to "throw up." His rival on the campaign trail, Newt Gingrich, frequently knocks "secular elites" who supposedly yearn to tear down America's great Christian heritage. Meanwhile, Mitt Romney, a Mormon whose faith is not well understood by many Americans, would seem likely to benefit from an embrace of church-state separation, but fear of angering Religious Right voters keeps him from doing it.

It seems these days that a lot of public figures are wary of endorsing the separation of church and state. They shouldn't be: The principle is as American as apple pie and has long roots in our nation.

Of course, church-state separation and the religious and philosophical freedom it gives us didn't just happen in America. It was all part of a long process, an evolution of attitudes over many years. There were plenty of bumps along the way, and lots of people weren't convinced that dividing religion and government was the way to go – and some still aren't today.

There have been many crucial moments in America's church-state history, some of which took place before we were officially a nation. Here are five of the most significant.

## 1. The Flushing Remonstrance (1657):

Back in the day when New York was New Amsterdam, it was a good idea to belong to the state-established Dutch Reformed Church. In fact, other religions were banned in the colony, and failing to show the proper degree of government-approved piety could land you behind bars. Everyone had to pay church taxes, and the law mandated that all children be baptized in the Reformed Church.

New Amsterdam's leaders had a special antipathy toward Quakers. Members of that faith were barred from even entering the colony, and anyone who came across a Quaker was expected to turn him over to the authorities. Steep fines were levied on those who harbored Quakers.

In light of these strict laws, what happened in 1657 is nothing short of remarkable. Thirty residents of the village of Flushing (now part of Queens) sent a letter to Peter Stuyvesant, director of the colony, telling him to let up on the Quakers.

The signers argued that religious persecution wasn't in keeping with Christian theology, and they boldly closed their letter by vowing to protect Quakers. Wrote the signers, "Therefore if any of these said persons come in love unto us, we cannot in conscience lay violent hands upon them, but give them free egress and regress unto our Town, and houses, as God shall persuade our consciences, for we are bounde by the law of God and man to doe good unto all men and evil to noe man."

It should be noted that none of the signers were themselves Quakers. They were arguing for the rights of others. Not surprisingly, this didn't go down too well. Some of the signers were thrown into jail and ordered to recant. Locked in filthy, vermin-ridden cells, they did so – at least on paper. Who knows what was really in their hearts?

The Remonstrance proved to be ahead of its time, but the signers were vindicated when religious liberty was ensured in the Bill of Rights in 1791.

## 2. James Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments (1785):

Patrick Henry was a fiery patriot famous for uttering the line, "Give me liberty or give me death!" But there was one area where Henry could not break with the British: All of his life, he argued in favor of church-state union.

James Madison disagreed. And when Henry proposed a bill in 1785 to require all Virginians to pay a tax to support "teachers of the Christian religion," Madison swung into action. The diminutive Virginian penned the "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," one of the greatest documents in American church-state history.

Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance is essentially a list of 15 reasons why no one should be forced to pay taxes to support religion. The broadside circulated throughout the state, and petitions flooded the Virginia legislature demanding the defeat of the Henry bill. It was rejected.

What's amazing about Madison's document is that its arguments remain so relevant today, in this age of "faith-based" initiatives and demands for vouchers to fund religious schools.

Consider Point 5:

[T]he Bill implies either that the Civil Magistrate is a competent Judge of Religious Truth; or that he may employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy. The first is an arrogant pretension falsified by the contradictory opinions of Rulers in all ages, and throughout the world: the second an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation.

Point 7 is also powerful:

[E]xperience witnesseth that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of Religion, have had a contrary operation. During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution.

After the defeat of the Henry bill, Madison used the momentum he gained to push Thomas Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom through the legislature in 1786. The bill disestablished the Anglican Church in Virginia and ensured that no resident "shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."

Historians agree that the Virginia struggle reverberated nationally. Five years later, Madison helped draft the First Amendment, writing church-state separation into the federal constitution.

### 3. George Washington's Letter to Touro Synagogue (1790):

Jews were uncertain of their status in the new nation of the United States of America. Even after the revolution, many states retained established Christian churches, and some states even barred non-Christians from holding public office.

In 1790, one year before the Bill of Rights was adopted, members of Touro Synagogue in Newport, RI, wrote to President George Washington to express their support for complete religious freedom.

Washington's reply is a classic of religious liberty. He didn't say that America was a "Christian nation." He didn't tell the Jews that they could expect toleration but little else. Instead, Washington assured the members of the synagogue that they need have no fears, and he assured them that they were valued members in the American experiment of freedom of conscience. Washington wrote:

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

Religious Right activists who believe that Washington favored an officially Christian America must find this letter vexing. Their vision was of a nation that favored Christianity by law but that might deign to extend toleration to other faiths. The father of our country explicitly rejected this vision in his missive.

### 4. Thomas Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists (1802):

Although the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791, it wasn't made binding on the states until Congress passed the 14th Amendment after the Civil War. After the Revolution, Connecticut retained its established church, Congregationalism. Members of other religions were compelled to support the church through taxation and were harassed in other ways.

Members of the Danbury Baptist Association were aware that Thomas Jefferson was a champion of religious liberty; they also knew Jefferson wrote the law that ended Virginia's state-established church. In 1801, the Baptists wrote to Jefferson to thank him and express their hope that his view of religious freedom would someday come to Connecticut.

Jefferson knew his reply would become public and decided to use it to make a pronouncement on his views about church-state relations. He consulted with two members of his cabinet before sending the letter, revising and editing as he went along.

Jefferson's response, dated Jan. 1, 1802, is rightly famous for this passage:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.

Our third president's "wall" metaphor has infuriated the Religious Right over the years, and they have labored in vain to dismiss the letter as a mere courtesy reply. The history of the document shows that the opposite was true: In a cover memo to Attorney General Levi Lincoln, Jefferson said he hoped his reply would assist in "sowing useful truths and principles among the people, which might germinate and become rooted among their political tenets."

#### 5. John F. Kennedy's Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association (1960):

This is the speech that makes Rick Santorum nauseous. It wouldn't if he had a real appreciation for religious tolerance in America.

John F. Kennedy had to deal with a great deal of anti-Catholic prejudice during the 1960 presidential campaign. Rumors circulated that a Catholic president could not put loyalty to America above Rome, and some feared JFK would seek to impose Catholic doctrine on a nation that was still culturally Protestant.

With polls showing Kennedy running neck and neck with Richard M. Nixon, the Massachusetts senator decided to tackle the matter head on. He entered the lions' den and arranged to deliver a major address on religion to a collection of Protestant ministers in Houston.

The Sept. 12, 1960 speech, strongly worded and deftly delivered, is today remembered as both a turning point in the 1960 campaign and a powerful affirmation of tolerance and church-state separation. Asserted Kennedy, "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute – where no Catholic prelate would tell the President, should he be Catholic, how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote – where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference – and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

He continued, "I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish – where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source – where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials – and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all."

During his presidency, Kennedy put those words into action. He rejected demands from the Catholic hierarchy to extend tax aid to Catholic schools, and when the Supreme Court struck down mandatory school prayer in 1962, Kennedy reminded people that they could pray at home. Kennedy's full-throttle endorsement of church-state separation and his vow to put the interests of the people ahead of church dogma still infuriates today's budding theocrats.

Separation of church and state isn't always respected today. Plenty of Religious Right activists, TV preachers and even politicians blast it. They should know that when they assail a principle that has given our nation a greater degree of religious liberty than any other people, they're at odds with our history.

The current flock of GOP candidates might understand that if they spent less time pandering to religious zealots on the campaign trail and more time reading documents like these.

(Rob Boston is senior policy analyst at Americans United for Separation of Church and State.)

20120229-01 07:55 MarthaH "Maine Sen. Olympia Snowe to Retire in Blow to GOP"

More signs of the times...



[I am sorry to see Olympia go, though it would be good if Democrats picked-up her seat. She's definitely one of the last true Independents. I love this photo! That look she's giving her fellow Republicans! She can't believe how stupid and stubborn they are. Are they really serious? This is just like the look our cat used to give us when we'd give him a cat food he didn't like. "I can't believe you gave me that, a\*s-hole!" Such looks of assured superiority and condemnation! As my mother used to say, "If looks could kill..." -SteveB]

"Maine Sen. Olympia Snowe to Retire in Blow to GOP" by Chris Cillizza and Aaron Blake, *The Washington Post*

Feb. 28, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/maine-sen-olympia-snowe-to-retire-in-blow-to-gop/2012/02/28/gIOAkzWkgR\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/maine-sen-olympia-snowe-to-retire-in-blow-to-gop/2012/02/28/gIOAkzWkgR_blog.html))

In announcing her plans, Snowe, 65, emphasized that she is in good health and was prepared for the campaign ahead. But she said she was swayed by the increasing polarization in Washington.

"Unfortunately, I do not realistically expect the partisanship of recent years in the Senate to change over the short term," Snowe said in a statement. "So at this stage of my tenure in public service, I have concluded that I am not prepared to commit myself to an additional six years in the Senate, which is what a fourth term would entail."

Snowe's retirement represents a major setback for the GOP's efforts to regain a majority in the Senate. As a moderate Republican, she may be the party's only hope to hold a seat in the strongly blue state.

Republicans did get some traction in the state in 2010, including electing Republican Paul LePage as governor.

But in a more neutral political environment, and in a federal race, Democrats will be heavy favorites to steal this seat from Republicans — their best pickup opportunity in the country, for sure.

Snowe's announcement took Republican leaders completely by surprise; she informed Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.) and National Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman John Cornyn (Texas) of her decision today, according to a person familiar with the decision.

The person noted that Snowe had given no indication that she was doing anything but planning to run an aggressive reelection bid; she had hired Justin Brasell, a renowned Republican operative, to manage her campaign.

One Republican said Snowe had sent an invitation for a fundraiser as late as Monday. [It's like something very specific precipitated her actions. I'd love to know what happened. –SteveB]

Among the names mentioned as possible replacements on the ballot for the GOP: 2002 gubernatorial candidates Peter Cianchette, 2010 gubernatorial candidate Steve Abbott, state Treasurer Bruce Poliquin, state Attorney General Bill Schneider, state Senate President Kevin Raye and Jock McKernan, Snowe's husband and the state's former governor. Businessman Scott D'Amboise was already challenging Snowe in a primary.

On the Democratic side, Reps. Chellie Pingree (D) and Mike Michaud (D) could run, as well as former congressman Tom Allen (D), who unsuccessfully challenged Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) in 2008.

The filing deadline is fast approaching: March 15.

Snowe is known for her independent streak, often voting with Collins against many of her Republican colleagues. According to the just-released National Journal 2011 vote rankings, only Collins voted with Democrats more than Snowe last year.

The most moderate Democrat in the Senate — Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) — is also retiring.

<a href="#">20120229-02</a> 10:18 Phil Fw: Lemon Picker
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For your comedic relief:

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says this is definitely NOT true! :-)] –SteveB]

Sally Mullihan of Coral Springs, Florida decided to take one of the jobs that most Americans are not willing to do.

The woman applying for a job in a Florida lemon grove seemed to be far too qualified for the job.

She had a liberal arts degree from the University of Michigan and had worked as a social worker and school teacher.

The foreman frowned and said, "I have to ask you, have you had any actual experience in picking lemons?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I have! I've been divorced three times, owned two Chryslers and voted for Obama."

[20120229-07](#) 11:38 SteveB Re: Lemon Picker (reply to Phil, above)

PHILLIP! I'm giving you that look! (See above.)

[20120229-03](#) 10:41 Pam Re: Republican Politics, the Decline & Dick Lugar (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #84)

It's great to see you on here, MarthaH. I always enjoy hearing about Indiana politics, because in North Carolina we never know about anything that isn't happening in Raleigh. I haven't lived in Greencastle in a long time, but I still feel I have roots there.

I'm reading Howard Zinn's *History of the United States* as we speak. Incredible. Perhaps it's merely a matter of perception, but doesn't it seem like the Right is always in your face with their opinions and hatreds, yet the so-called Left is ignored by everyone who's not a liberal or a progressive? I'm so aware of them. I don't think they are as aware of us, only what they think we are (by "we" I mean smart, thoughtful people). Tea-baggers are essentially absolutists; they would have rallied around the French king in the 18th c. I don't see them as analogous to the peasants, certainly not to the intellectuals in the Revolution. I don't defend the excesses of the French Revolution--it's the kind of political extremism we all want to avoid--but I hope that, just as in 1793, our government is also moving in the direction of increased freedom, not loyalty oaths and witch hunts. They called Robespierre "The Incorruptible." Sanitary Santorum is cut from similar cloth. Sincerity is no argument.

[20120229-04](#) 10:48 Art Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #84)

If all those kids in that school had been "carryin'" this wouldn't have happened. What we really need is more guns in the hands of kids. Just say'n.

[20120229-05](#) 11:05 SteveB Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Art, above)

ARTHUR! (See the look, above.)

[20120229-06](#) 11:29 Pam Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Art, above)

I know a lot of you fellas own guns, and I never expect America to be gun-free. I'm not even sure that would be a good thing. I have heard NO ONE calling for a ban on guns, yet the NRA carries on as if they were under siege by a despotic government. Why do they think automatic rifles and heavy weapons are necessary or desirable? What is their objection to adequate gun registration (we register our cars), adequate control of access to guns (we require a driver's license), and a limit to how many guns an individual can buy at one time? None of those safeguards infringe in any way on the right to bear arms. If they use the slippery slope argument, they should realize that's a logical fallacy. We require prescriptions for drugs. How is getting certified to own a gun any different? Both can be dangerous when used improperly. We recently had a deranged individual go on a shooting spree in our neighborhood. We were evacuated from our house for an entire day while the police used our sunroom for a lookout. Fortunately, no one was hurt, though it took 13 hours for this guy to be subdued; he fought back until the end. How is it that someone as crazy as that was able to stockpile an arsenal in his home in a neighborhood filled with kids and families? We get all in a tizzy whenever a shooting incident like the one in Ohio occurs, but we take no steps to prevent the next one.

[20120229-08](#) 15:33 Dennis Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Pam, above)

This is all so perfectly logical that it is pointless as an argument with the right-wing fanatics who intimidate Congress. If Jim Brady couldn't convince Congress to pass minimal legislation, such as banning military assault weapons, then all appeals to sanity are just blowing in the wind.

"Washington, D.C. — U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder has stated that the Obama administration would like to resurrect the Clinton ban on semi-automatic firearms, as well as other gun control laws... According to a recent poll conducted by The O'Leary Report and Zogby International, a vast majority of the American voting public disagrees." (from "New Poll Finds Majority of American Voters Don't Fault U.S. Gun Laws for Mexican Drug Violence" by Brad O'Leary, Mar. 30, 2009, <http://archives.hawaiiireporter.com/storyPrint.aspx?4167be41-f79e-4803-af58-e2a43e32900d>)

America historically is a violent country and is absolutely determined to stay that way. So it's best to stay out of the woods during hunting season, out of Texas bars at all times, and if you have to go to school, better wear your Kevlar vest (now on sale @ <http://www.safeguardclothing.com/15-bullet-proof-vests?gclid=CPXr0Yj2w64CFe4DQAodb1RB5g>).

[20120229-09](#) 15:38 Art Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)

I was joking of course but I'll bet money some NRA nimrod has already penned the same thing. As Pam says much better, when are we going to wake up and realize people with guns kill people, a lot? Solution, get guns under control.

[20120229-11](#) 17:38 Pam Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)

There are days when I don't think much of human nature.

[20120229-12](#) 19:13 SteveG Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)

When we lived in Crawfordsville, IN, the estimate of people out at night with hand guns was 200 (population about 15,000). In Yakima the number has to be higher – 22 homicides last year down from 29 the previous year. Police here tend to shoot first and ask questions later.

[20120229-10](#) 16:17 SteveB Re: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #84)

Here are a couple of little things:

<http://www.cosmosmagazine.com/features/print/4376/merchants-doubt>

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/12/02/1041875/-Pew:-Dems,-Indies-Moderate-Repubs-Agree-Global-Warming-is-Real>

<http://news.msu.edu/media/documents/2011/04/593fe28b-fbc7-4a86-850a-2fe029dbeb41.pdf>

<http://mediamatters.org/research/201112190006>

Good luck! May the Force be with you.

[20120229-13](#) 20:24 SteveG "Bonus Withdrawal Puts Bankers in 'Malaise'"

The "poor" 1% (Boo-hoo-hoo!)

Don't you just feel sorry for them?

"Bonus Withdrawal Puts Bankers in 'Malaise'" by Max Abelson, Bloomberg

Feb 29, 2012, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/news/bonus-withdrawal-puts-bankers-malaise-050100338.html>)

Andrew Schiff was sitting in a traffic jam in California this month after giving a speech at an investment conference about gold. He turned off the satellite radio, got out of the car and screamed a profanity.

"I'm not Zen at all, and when I'm freaking out about the situation, where I'm stuck like a rat in a trap on a highway with no way to get out, it's very hard," Schiff, director of marketing for broker-dealer Euro Pacific Capital Inc., said in an interview.

Schiff, 46, is facing another kind of jam this year: Paid a lower bonus, he said the \$350,000 he earns, enough to put him in the country's top 1 percent by income, doesn't cover his family's private-school tuition, a Kent, Connecticut, summer rental and the upgrade they would like from their 1,200-square-foot Brooklyn duplex.

"I feel stuck," Schiff said. "The New York that I wanted to have is still just beyond my reach."

The smaller bonus checks that hit accounts across the financial-services industry this month are making it difficult to maintain the lifestyles that Wall Street workers expect, according to interviews with bankers and their accountants, therapists, advisers and headhunters.

"People who don't have money don't understand the stress," said Alan Dlugash, a partner at accounting firm Marks Paneth & Shron LLP in New York who specializes in financial planning for the wealthy. "Could you imagine what it's like to say I got three kids in private school, I have to think about pulling them out? How do you do that?"

### Bonus Caps

Facing a slump in revenue from investment banking and trading, Wall Street firms have trimmed 2011 discretionary pay. At Goldman Sachs Group Inc. (GS) and Barclays Capital, the cuts were at least 25 percent. Morgan Stanley (MS) capped cash bonuses at \$125,000, and Deutsche Bank AG (DBK) increased the percentage of deferred pay.

"It's a disaster," said Ilana Weinstein, chief executive officer of New York-based search firm IDW Group LLC. "The entire construct of compensation has changed."

Most people can only dream of Wall Street's shrinking paychecks. Median household income in 2010 was \$49,445, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, lower than the previous year and less than 1 percent of Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein's \$7 million restricted-stock bonus for 2011. The percentage of Americans living in poverty climbed to 15.1 percent, the highest in almost two decades.

### House of Mirth

Comfortable New Yorkers assessing their discomforts is at least as old as Edith Wharton's 1905 novel *The House of Mirth*, whose heroine Lily Bart said "the only way not to think about money is to have a great deal of it."

Wall Street headhunter Daniel Arbeeney said his "income has gone down tremendously." On a recent Sunday, he drove to Fairway Market in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn to buy discounted salmon for \$5.99 a pound.

"They have a circular that they leave in front of the buildings in our neighborhood," said Arbeeney, 49, who lives in nearby Cobble Hill, namesake for a line of pebbled-leather Kate Spade handbags. "We sit there, and I look through all of them to find out where it's worth going."

Executive-search veterans who work with hedge funds and banks make about \$500,000 in good years, said Arbeeney, managing principal at New York-based CMF Partners LLC, declining to discuss specifics about his own income. He said he no longer goes on annual ski trips to Whistler (WB), Tahoe or Aspen.

He reads other supermarket circulars to find good prices for his favorite cereal, Wheat Chex.

"Wow, did I waste a lot of money," Arbeeney said.

### \$17,000 on Dogs

Richard Scheiner, 58, a real-estate investor and hedge-fund manager, said most people on Wall Street don't save.

"When their means are cut, they're stuck," said Scheiner, whose New York-based hedge fund, Lane Gate Partners LLC, was down about 15 percent last year. "Not so much an issue for me and my wife because we've always saved."

Scheiner said he spends about \$500 a month to park one of his two Audis in a garage and at least \$7,500 a year each for memberships at the Trump National Golf Club in Westchester and a gun club in upstate New York. A labradoodle named Zelda and a rescued bichon frise, Duke, cost \$17,000 a year, including food, health care, boarding and a daily dog-walker who charges \$17 each per outing, he said.

Still, he sold two motorcycles he didn't use and called his Porsche 911 Carrera 4S Cabriolet "the Volkswagen of supercars." He and his wife have given more than \$100,000 to a nonprofit she founded that promotes employment for people with Asperger syndrome, he said.

### 'Crushing Setback'

Scheiner pays \$30,000 a year to be part of a New York-based peer-learning group for investors called Tiger 21. Founder Michael Sonnenfeldt said members, most with a net worth of at least \$10 million, have been forced to "reexamine lots of assumptions about how grand their life would be."

While they aren't asking for sympathy, "at their level, in a different way but in the same way, the rug got pulled out," said Sonnenfeldt, 56. "For many people of wealth, they've had a crushing setback as well."

He described a feeling of "malaise" and a "paralysis that does not allow one to believe that generally things are going to get better," listing geopolitical hot spots such as Iran and low interest rates that have been "artificially manipulated" by the Federal Reserve.

### Poly Prep

The malaise is shared by Schiff, the New York-based marketing director for Euro Pacific Capital, where his brother is CEO. His family rents the lower duplex of a brownstone in Cobble Hill, where his two children share a room. His 10-year-old daughter is a student at \$32,000-a-year Poly Prep Country Day School in Brooklyn. His son, 7, will apply in a few years.

"I can't imagine what I'm going to do," Schiff said. "I'm crammed into 1,200 square feet. I don't have a dishwasher. We do all our dishes by hand."

He wants 1,800 square feet -- "a room for each kid, three bedrooms, maybe four," he said. "Imagine four bedrooms. You have the luxury of a guest room, how crazy is that?"

The family rents a three-bedroom summer house in Connecticut and will go there again this year for one month instead of four. Schiff said he brings home less than \$200,000 after taxes, health-insurance and 401(k) contributions. The closing costs, renovation and down payment on one of the \$1.5 million 17-foot-wide row houses nearby, what he called "the low rung on the brownstone ladder," would consume "every dime" of the family's savings, he said.

"I wouldn't want to whine," Schiff said. "All I want is the stuff that I always thought, growing up, that successful parents had."

### Vegas, Ibiza

Hans Kullberg, 27, a trader at Wyckoff, New Jersey-based hedge fund Falcon Management Corp. who said he earns about \$150,000 a year, is adjusting his sights, too.

After graduating from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in 2006, he spent a \$10,000 signing bonus from Citigroup Inc. (C) on a six-week trip to South America. He worked on an emerging-markets team at the bank that traded and marketed synthetic collateralized debt obligations.

His tastes for travel got "a little bit more lavish," he said. Kullberg, a triathlete, went to a bachelor party in Las Vegas in January after renting a four-bedroom ski cabin at Bear Mountain in California as a Christmas gift to his parents. He went to Ibiza for another bachelor party in August, spending \$3,000 on a three-day trip, including a 15-minute ride from the airport that cost \$100. In May he spent 10 days in India.

### Wet T-Shirt

Earlier this month, a friend invited him on a trip to Mardi Gras in New Orleans. The friend was going to be a judge in a wet T-shirt contest, Kullberg said. He turned down the offer.

It wouldn't have been "the most financially prudent thing to do," he said. "I'm not totally sure about what I'm going to get paid this year, how I'm going to be doing."

He thinks more about the long term, he said, and plans to buy a foreclosed two-bedroom house in Charlotte, North Carolina, for \$50,000 next month.

M. Todd Henderson, a University of Chicago law professor who's teaching a seminar on executive compensation, said the suffering is relative and real. He wrote two years ago that his family was "just getting by" on more than \$250,000 a year, setting off what he called a firestorm of criticism.

"Yes, terminal diseases are worse than getting the flu," he said. "But you suffer when you get the flu."

### 'Have to Cut'

Dlugash, the accountant, said he's spending more time talking with Wall Street clients about their expenses.

"You don't necessarily have to cut that -- but if you don't cut that, then you've got to cut this," he said. "They say, 'But I can't.' And I say, 'But you must.'"

One banker who owes Dlugash \$20,000 gained the accountant's sympathy despite his six-figure pay.

"If you're making \$50,000 and your salary gets down to \$40,000 and you have to cut, it's very severe to you," Dlugash said. "But it's no less severe to these other people with these big numbers."

A Wall Street executive who made 10 times that amount and now has declining income along with a divorce, private school tuitions and elderly parents also suffers, he said.

"These people never dreamed they'd be making \$500,000 a year," he said, "and dreamed even less that they'd be broke."

[Gee! And we've been told so often by those on the Right that rich individuals are somehow superior to the rest of us, and smarter. LOL!!! Welcome to the real world, a\*s-holes! –SteveB]

[20120229-14](#) 22:18 Dick Video: The Candy Man

[http://www.youtube.com/watch\\_popup?feature=player\\_embedded&v=5u03KAcEbEo#%21](http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?feature=player_embedded&v=5u03KAcEbEo#%21)

[20120229-15](#) 22:26 SteveB Re: The Candy Man (reply to Dick, above)

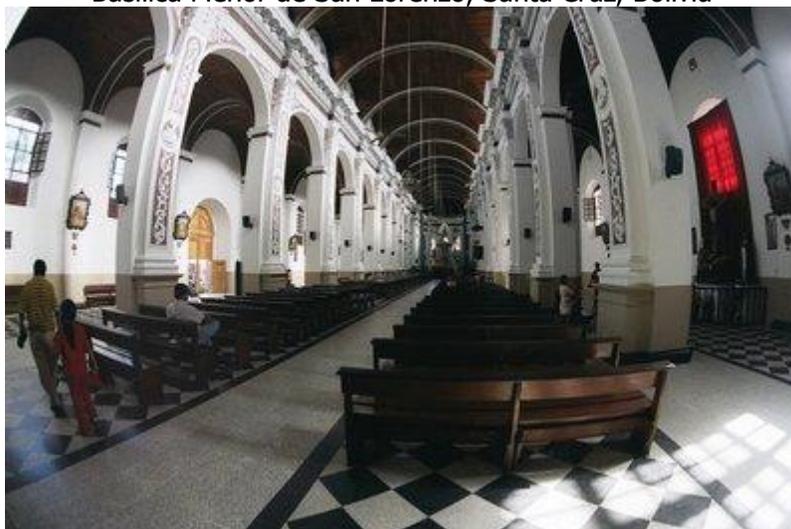
I hate to do this three times in one day, but...

Richard! (Yer gettin' "the look" too.) :-)

[20120229-16](#) 11:59 SteveB Photo: Santa Cruz Cathedral

<http://ac-frieden.travellerspoint.com/3/>

Basilica Menor de San Lorenzo, Santa Cruz, Bolivia



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #86 — MAR. 2, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **The Right's Incredible Sensitivity (of a Bulldozer!)**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 2, 2012)

I no longer even know what to say about this flaming a\*s-hole! But isn't his thinking so representative? Unbelievable! What fucking year is it, Rush? 1405?

I suppose Dale would say that this story can't be true, because it appeared in the communist Huffington Post. "Consider the source," right? So you don't even attempt to wrap your mind around the indisputable FACTS. I'm very sorry that's the case, my friends on the Right.

"Rush Limbaugh: I'll Buy Georgetown Women 'as Much Aspirin to Put Between Their Knees as They Want'" by Laura Bassett and Jennifer Bendry, Huffington Post

Mar. 1, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/01/rush-limbaugh-sandra-fluke\\_n\\_1313891.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/01/rush-limbaugh-sandra-fluke_n_1313891.html))

Conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh drew sharp criticism from Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) and others on Wednesday when he called Sandra Fluke, a Georgetown University law student, a "slut" and a "prostitute" for publicly advocating that employers cover contraception in their health plans. But instead of apologizing for his offensive comments on his show Thursday, he geared up for round two.

Channeling Foster Friess, a main financial backer of former Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), Limbaugh said that he would "happily buy [Sandra Fluke] all the aspirin she wants" to put between her knees in lieu of contraception.

He then expanded his offer to the whole university:

"A Georgetown coed told Nancy Pelosi's hearing that the women in her law school program are having so much sex they're going broke, so you and I should have to pay for their birth control. So what would you call that? I called it what it is," he said. "So, I'm offering a compromise today: I will buy all of the women at Georgetown University as much aspirin to put between their knees as they want."

Limbaugh, of course, was referencing the controversial comment Friess made in February, when he referenced the "gals" in "his day" who put aspirin between their knees in lieu of using contraception.

Fluke's testimony in the hearing was not, as Limbaugh claimed, about the fact that she's "having so much sex she's going broke buying contraceptives." She told the story of her friend who had an ovary removed because the insurance company wouldn't cover the prescription birth control she needed to stop the growth of ovarian cysts.

Limbaugh concluded his sexist rant by insisting that if women want their contraception covered, they should post pornographic videos of themselves online. "So Miss Fluke and the rest of you feminazis, here's the deal," he said. "If we are going to pay for your contraceptives and thus pay for you to have sex, we want something. We want you to post the videos online so we can all watch."

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which has raised a significant amount of money and gained support in the wake of the recent battles over birth control, circulated a petition on Thursday to ask Republican leaders to denounce Limbaugh's tirade.

"Rush Limbaugh has come to Republicans' defense in their war on women," said Jesse Ferguson, a spokesperson for the DCCC, "but now the real question is whether Republicans are willing to stand up to him and his repulsive attacks on women." [They aren't. They have no balls! –SteveB]

UPDATE: 3:45 p.m. -- More than 75 Democratic lawmakers signed a letter to House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) on Thursday expressing outrage over Limbaugh's comments.

"On his February 29, 2012 show, Mr. Limbaugh repeatedly used sexually charged, patently offensive, and obscene language to malign the character of this courageous young woman who has chosen to be the voice for many of her peers," the letter says. "This kind of direct attack on a private citizen is unacceptable. Mr. Limbaugh is as free as any American to speak his mind about the political and social issues of our time, but using his radio show as a means for blatantly insulting a hard-working American with obscene and indecent language because he disagrees with her personal choices is an abuse of the public airwaves."

UPDATE: 4:15 p.m. -- Sandra Fluke responded to Limbaugh's comments in a statement on Thursday.

"I thank the thousands of women and men, including members of Congress, Georgetown University students and faculty, and total strangers of all political stripes across the country who have offered kind words and support following recent egregious personal attacks," she said. "We are fortunate to live in a democracy where everyone is entitled to their own opinions regarding legitimate policy differences. Unfortunately, numerous commentators have gone far beyond the acceptable bounds of civil discourse. No woman deserves to be disrespected in this manner. This language is an attack on all women, and has been used throughout history to silence our voices. The millions of American women who have and will continue to speak out in support of women's health care and access to contraception prove that we will not be silenced."

<a href="#">20120301-01</a>	09:51	Pam	Re: The 'Poor' One Percent (Boo-Hoo-Hoo!) (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #85)
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The ancient regime in France were pretty bummed too.

<a href="#">20120301-02</a>	10:44	Beth	Re: Lemon Picker (reply to Phil, FotM Newsletter #85)
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Sorry Phil, I don't find that funny. I had two Chrysler Sebring convertibles, which I loved and two electric blue PT Cruisers, which were great cars. On top of that I am a big fan of Obama.

[See, Phil, I told you that you were going to be in trouble! :- ) –SteveB]

<a href="#">20120301-03</a>	11:52	Pam	Re: A Christian Dictatorship? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #84) & Syrian Crisis
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There's an interesting article in the Jan. 5th *London Review of Books* on two biographies, one of Obama's father, one of his mother. It is quite revealing. His father was a jackass who drank heavily and whose talents failed to

bring him the success he desperately desired. His mother was apparently more "normal," if you call her rather free-wheeling life normal. Perhaps it wasn't so remarkable in the 60s as we would view it today. The child is father of the man, so I always think it's interesting to know about a person's childhood in order to really understand something about him. As a kid in Indonesia, Barack was taunted for being black and skinny, but he learned to ignore the teasing, which perhaps accounts for his incredible cool today. If as a ten-year old he had dissolved in tears or lashed out, he would only have brought on more harassment. Self control meant social survival.

I had not known that Michelle was assigned to be his mentor when he joined her law firm in Chicago. This is a power couple, to be sure, but I can't help feeling for them, trapped as they are in the nation's fishbowl. He has fulfilled the ambitions of his father and hopefully found a consistency with Michelle he didn't have with his mother. What a lot of baggage this man has, none of it his fault.

The article concludes by noting that Obama does better with foreign policy than domestic issues, the danger being our increasing interventionist tendencies, which leads me to my question of the day. Art, you have praised our military for their performance in Libya. Do you see the Syrian crisis as similar? Should we be jumping into that snake pit as well? One the one hand, it is dreadful to imagine what the people in Homs are going through, but if Syria is on the brink of all-out civil war, is that something we want to take on? Maybe these dictators need to fall and be crushed by their own people. Perhaps a decisive civil war would be better than a protracted insurgency. Whatever happens, I just hope it is explained to the American public without deceit or subterfuge. Art?

20120301-06	13:25	Art	Re: A Christian Dictatorship? (reply to Pam, above) & Syrian Crisis
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Tough one but again I agree with the position we are taking. For the record I think I praised the Administration for its position in Libya but OK, the military handled it pretty well also. Syria needs to solve it one problems and we simply cannot be the world's policemen. Yes, I know it is tough to see all that suffering but if we go in and try to solve it for them, we will not receive any gratitude in the end, just dislike for interfering.

One of the hardest jobs I ever had was serving as the G-5 (Civil Affairs Officer) for the USA Army VII Corps in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. We occupied southern Iraq in the aftermath of the ground campaign and the Shiites revolted while we were there. They kept sending delegations south to request our assistance and I kept being told by CENTCOM not to talk to them. Easy to say when you are back in Riyadh or Tampa, not so easy when you are sitting just south of the Euphrates. So I sort of ignored CENTCOM ( if anyone forwards this e-mail I will hunt you down) and did meet with many of them but had to tell them repeatedly we were not coming north to help. Tough, but I felt they deserved someone meeting them face to face and telling them the truth. Eventually Saddam crushed the rebellion.

Same with Syria today. I think again Clinton and the Administration has been very up front and honest about what we will and will not do. And I think it is the right answer. wed just can't solve everything Pam.

Tell Tanner to adopt another doggie and love it as much as Lily. Lily would like that.

20120301-04	12:18	MarthaH	Re: Books! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #84)
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Along with Zinn: This is an "oldie" but have you read *Freethinkers* by Susan Jacoby? I was trying to put in pieces that did not fit after 2000 and came upon it.

Our school books didn't do justice to a lot of subjects we need to understand, but it did make flag wavers--and I am one of them WHEN it is appropriate.

There are many good reasons folks come to the US, legally and illegally. One only has to travel to see that most of the world lives in another century--and I don't mean the 20th. Until our selfishness gets us past a lot of things, we have no place UP to go. Power, *Faith and Fantasy* by Oren is another excellent, easier read on the reasons for our stupidity's beginning in the ME. Maybe you, :-), should compile a list of books. I would always throw in Zakaria!. I can't join a book club--they won't read what I want to read...mgch

And we wonder why folks can't write or read or THINK...

[20120301-11](#) 15:29 SteveB Re: Books! (reply to MarthaH, above)

I like the idea of a list of books. Kind of an FotM bibliography. Right now I'm working on the links for the website, which also compiles the sources of a lot of info. There could be a book list too...

We'll also make Pam aware of these. I think you two are the big readers of books in the group. I wish I could be one too, but I just don't have the time and they make me tired. Too much to write.

I guess my beloved book and magazine reading days are pretty much behind me. I once had a library of around 3000-4000 books that I had almost entirely read. I saved them for years. Finally, we just didn't have the space, plus I had an opportunity (we created) to donate them to the St. Lucia National Library. Now, when I'm on vacation there, I can stop-by and say hello to some of them, and know they are doing so much good there. We also used to box-up and send down text books that American schools were discarding. Anyway, that's the story of me and books.

I'm really appreciating your contributions, Martha.

[20120301-05](#) 12:50 SteveB "Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences"

I told ya they go to heaven...

from the FotM Archive:

"Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" by Jennifer Viegas, Curiosity.com/Discovery Channel

Oct. 8, 2010, (<http://news.discovery.com/animals/animals-spiritual-brain.html>)

Animals (not just people) likely have spiritual experiences, according to a prominent neurologist who has analyzed the processes of spiritual sensation for over three decades.

Research suggests that spiritual experiences originate deep within primitive areas of the human brain -- areas shared by other animals with brain structures like our own.

The trick, of course, lies in proving animals' experiences.

"Since only humans are capable of language that can communicate the richness of spiritual experience, it is unlikely we will ever know with certainty what an animal subjectively experiences," Kevin Nelson, a professor of neurology at the University of Kentucky, told Discovery News.

"Despite this limitation, it is still reasonable to conclude that since the most primitive areas of our brain happen to be the spiritual, then we can expect that animals are also capable of spiritual experiences," added Nelson, author of the book *The Spiritual Doorway in the Brain*, which will be published in January 2011.

The finding is an extension of his research on humans, which has been published in many peer-reviewed journals. A Neurology journal study, for example, determined that out-of-body experiences in humans are likely caused by the brain's arousal system, which regulates different states of consciousness.

"In humans, we know that if we disrupt the (brain) region where vision, sense of motion, orientation in the Earth's gravitational field, and knowing the position of our body all come together, then out-of-body experiences can be

caused literally by the flip of a switch," he said. "There is absolutely no reason to believe it is any different for a dog, cat, or primate's brain."

Other mammals also probably have near-death experiences comparable to those reported by certain humans, he believes. Such people often say they saw a light and felt as though they were moving down a tunnel.

The tunnel phenomenon "is caused by the eye's susceptibility to the low blood flow that occurs with fainting or cardiac arrest," he said. "As blood flow diminishes, vision fails peripherally first. There is no reason to believe that other animals are any different from us."

Nelson added, "What they make of the tunnel is another matter."

The light aspect of near-death experiences can be explained by how the visual system defines REM (rapid eye movement) consciousness, he believes.

"In fact," he said, "the link between REM and the physiological crises causing near-death experience are most strongly linked in animals, like cats and rats, which we can study in the laboratory."

Mystical experiences -- moments that inspire a sense of mystery and wonderment -- arise within the limbic system, he said. When specific parts of this system are removed from animal brains, mind-altering drugs like LSD have no effect.

Since other animals, such as non-human primates, horses, cats and dogs, also possess similar brain structures, it is possible that they too experience mystical moments, and may even have a sense of spiritual oneness, according to Nelson.

Marc Bekoff, a professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, also believes animals have spiritual experiences, which he defines as experiences that are nonmaterial, intangible, introspective and comparable to what humans have.

Both he and primatologist Jane Goodall have observed chimpanzees dancing with total abandon at waterfalls that emerge after heavy rains. Some of the chimps even appear to dance themselves into a trance-like state, as some humans do during religious and cultural rituals.

Goodall wondered, "Is it not possible that these (chimpanzee) performances are stimulated by feelings akin to wonder and awe? After a waterfall display the performer may sit on a rock, his eyes following the falling water. What is it, this water?"

"Perhaps numerous animals engage in these rituals, but we haven't been lucky enough to see them," Bekoff wrote in a Psychology Today report.

"For now, let's keep the door open to the idea that animals can be spiritual beings and let's consider the evidence for such a claim," he added.

"Meager as it is, available evidence says, 'Yes, animals can have spiritual experiences,' and we need to conduct further research and engage in interdisciplinary discussions before we say that animals cannot and do not experience spirituality."

20120301-16	19:38	Art	Re: "Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Wow!! Beckie and I have had the sad duty to help a number of both dogs and cats cross the Rainbow Bridge over the years. We always make sure they are held in our arms and I swear they seem to know what we are doing and give it their blessing. Can't prove it and won't get mushy but there's something. Plus they are all very different with distinct personalities. Thanks.

20120301-17

20:24

SteveB

Re: "Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" (reply to Art, above) & "Even Dick Cheney's Dog Is Prone to Unprovoked Attacks"

And innocent and pure and good, like most children. I just love the sweethearts! Even George Bush had a dog. But I bet Cheney never has.

Oops! I was wrong:

"Even Dick Cheney's Dog Is Prone to Unprovoked Attacks" by Nathan Pippenger, *The New Republic* [Interesting...is the emphasis on Cheney or dog? -SteveB]

Aug. 26, 2011, (<http://www.tnr.com/blog/the-study/94270/even-dick-cheney-s-dog-prone-unprovoked-attacks>)

Among the head-bursting revelations in Dick Cheney's new book is the news that the former Vice President's Labrador Retriever, Dave, once got into big trouble for an unprovoked attack. The incident in question took place at Camp David, where the canine companions of the president and vice president were accompanying their masters on retreat. Apparently, Cheney's dog caught sight of the president's treasured terrier Barney and immediately launched into a "hot pursuit." The chase got so out of hand that President Bush was moved to demonstrate a rare demand for accountability, appearing during the fracas to ask, "What's going on here?" The mad dog could only be calmed with a pastry from the breakfast buffet. Soon after, Cheney was told that his dog was no longer welcome at Camp David. But what could have driven the beast to such aggression in the first place? [Maybe living with Dick Cheney? -SteveB]

20120301-07

13:26

Pam

A Bad Day

Today has been one of those days. Tanner's dog Lily died last night of very old age, and Tanner is so sad. Plus, and worse, Atty jumped off a slide at school and broke his leg. I've spent the day getting people from here to there and hanging out in various doctors' offices. I about fainted at the Urgent Care and had to lie down with a cold compress. I can't stand it when a child of mine--or any child--is in pain. I kept thinking about all those children in Syria, Iraq, and everywhere the bombs are falling. NOTHING is worth putting a child in pain like that. As you can tell, I am a bit rattled, but Atty is home now with his leg up on a pillow. I got him some chocolate ice cream, his favorite, so hopefully that will help.

I hope Lily had a spiritual experience. I know Tanner is broken-hearted.

A tough day, but it helps having friends like you guys.

20120301-18

21:30

SteveB

Re: A Bad Day (reply to Pam, above)

Pam, I just got your email. I'm so sorry to hear about Lily and Tanner and, especially, Atty. What bad luck! I can imagine how much pain he must have been in, and you. It will heal and things will be OK, of course you know, but that never seems to help much at the time. I wonder why? Maybe the same reason that seeking heaven doesn't improve our personalities?

Those playgrounds are so dangerous, even though less so now. Remember what we used to play on! That awful/wonderful rocking merry-go-round that could break anything you put in the wrong place, and the "Log"! And what are you going to do? Kids must play and playgrounds are necessary and beloved.

I think most of my worst experiences in life involved the pain of one of my children. I hate it.

I once had to see a child I didn't know hit by a speeding car. I couldn't figure how the mother was going to live through that day.

To imagine the suffering in Syria...is perhaps beyond my capacity to imagine.

Anyway, I hope tomorrow (today) will be a better day. Please let us know how Atty's doing. (My Mom used to use that chocolate ice cream trick too! :-)

You have been so full of news lately. And you thought I had a busy life!

<a href="#">20120301-09</a> 14:29 Dennis "Grantham Wonders If Marx Was Right After All"
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Look who's discussing what marx got right...

"Grantham Wonders If Marx Was Right After All" by Al Lewis, MarketWatch/ *Wall Street Journal*

Feb. 29, 2012, ([http://www.marketwatch.com/story/grantham-wonders-if-marx-was-right-after-all-2012-02-29?link=MW\\_popular](http://www.marketwatch.com/story/grantham-wonders-if-marx-was-right-after-all-2012-02-29?link=MW_popular))

(Commentary: Capitalism will gladly sell the rope used to hang itself.)

(DENVER) With all the news focused on Warren Buffett's annual shareholder letter, it was easy to miss Jeremy Grantham's more urgent missive.

Like Buffett, Grantham is a legendary value investor. He's co-founder of the Boston-based investment firm GMO LLC, which manages \$97 billion. That's about half the market value of Berkshire Hathaway Inc., but still big enough to produce a noteworthy letter. Read Grantham's letter to GMO investors: [http://www.gmo.com/websitecontent/JGLetter\\_LongestLetterEver\\_4Q11.pdf](http://www.gmo.com/websitecontent/JGLetter_LongestLetterEver_4Q11.pdf).

Buffett, in his widely anticipated letter, is content to repeat platitudes, such as "America's best days lie ahead." The Oracle of Omaha proclaimed "the banking industry was back on its feet" and even managed to find the bright side of foreclosures: "Large numbers of people who have 'lost' their house through foreclosure have actually realized a profit because they carried out refinancings earlier that gave them cash in excess of their cost."

Grantham, however, takes a longer view, and isn't so "aw shucks" about the future of our broken economic system.

**"Capitalism," he writes, "threatens our existence."**

Already, capitalism is proving that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were at least partially correct. They "looked forward to globalization and the supranational company because they argued it would make capitalism even more powerful, overreaching, and eventually reckless," Grantham writes.

Globalization "would ... offer the capitalists more rope to hang themselves with ... rope ... bought from briskly competing capitalists, eager till the end for a good deal."

Grantham, who is British, studied economics at the University of Sheffield and has an MBA from Harvard Business School. He started his investment career as an economist with Royal Dutch Shell before starting GMO in 1977.

He says capitalism does almost everything better than any other economic system. It's just that its two or three main flaws are potentially fatal and have gone largely unaddressed. A sustainable economic system, for instance, can't be based on ever-increasing debt, corporations can't be allowed to run governments and loot treasuries, and "growth at any cost" is a recipe for planetary suicide.

Here are some of Grantham's finer points:

- Capitalism too heavily discounts the future value of cash flows as it seeks to raise debts: "Your grandchildren have no value."
- Companies foolishly reward executives for taking on debt: "Total remuneration ... for senior officers ... rose as a percentage of the average worker's pay from 40 times in Eisenhower's era to over 600 times today with no indication of any general improvement in talent."
- It's about profit, not people: "Capitalism in general has no sense of ethics or conscience. Whatever the Supreme Court may think, it is not a person."
- The more people borrow, the more they just gamble: "Leverage ... increases your returns over and over until, suddenly, it ruins you. ... There are no Investors Anonymous meetings to attend."
- This time, it's not so different: "Ignore the ... inevitable cheerleaders who will assure you that this time it's a new high plateau ... even if that view comes from the Federal Reserve itself. No. Make that, especially if it comes from there."
- Washington is becoming a corporate subsidiary: "What capitalism has always had is money with which to try to buy influence. ... The issues they influence are precisely ... the ones that are most important to society's ... very existence."
- Big companies can't help it: "Ethical CEOs can drag a company along for a while, but this is an undependable and temporary fix."
- Economic theory ignores natural laws. It suffers an "absolute inability to process the finiteness of resources. ... Capitalism wants to eat into ... limited resources at an accelerating rate with the subtext that everyone on the planet has the right to live like the wasteful polluting developed countries do today."
- It's not just inexpensive oil we are running out of: The "loss of our collective ability to feed ourselves, through erosion and fertilizer depletion — has received little or no attention."
- Americans are too optimistic: "They adopt a hear-no-evil approach to life and listen exclusively to good news. ... There are always a few experts lacking in long-horizon vision, simple common sense, or whose cooperation has been rented, like "expert" witnesses at a murder trial, who can be dragged out to reliably say that everything will always work out fine."
- Governments must step in. "To interfere with Marx's apocalyptic vision, we need some enlightened governmental moderation ... before capitalism gets so cocky that we have some serious social reaction."
- Where Marx and Engels got it wrong was in thinking workers would unite. "It's going to be hard to have a workers' revolution with no workers. Organizing robotic machine tools will not be easy."

(German political philosopher and economist Karl Marx was born in Trier in 1818 and died in London 1883.)

20120301-10	14:52	MarthaH	Fw: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline
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While he was a hero of my youth, we have parted ways. So to speak, I went LEFT and he went RIGHT. Here is the latest reply to my "observations" to his interns:

from Sen. Richard Lugar:

Thank you for contacting me to share your concerns regarding the proposed TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline.

As you may be aware, the Obama Administration recently announced a delay of this project until 2013, pending review of the pipeline's proposed route through the Sand Hills region of Nebraska.

I appreciate this opportunity to share the reasons for my support of the Keystone XL pipeline. The proposed Keystone XL pipeline would carry oil from Canada's Alberta province and the Bakken oil formation in North Dakota and Montana to refineries on the U.S. Gulf coast. This major pipeline is shovel-ready in all states except Nebraska, and it is privately funded, meaning there would be no federal government subsidy.

In the 1,217 days that the Obama Administration has been reviewing the Keystone XL application for a permit, oil prices have sky-rocketed and our national interests have been challenged by major oil producing countries such as Iran, Venezuela and Russia. Our troops fight wars in the oil-rich Middle East at the great cost of lives and taxpayer expense, and in recent weeks, the Iranian government has made threats against the free flow of oil and the U.S. Navy.

Alleviating our dangerous addiction to oil from unreliable countries overseas requires production of more domestic oil and alternative fuels and innovation for fuel savings. At the same time, the sources of oil imports are important for ensuring reliable supplies and stable prices. Canada is Indiana's largest trading partner and a reliable oil source. The Keystone XL pipeline will help replace oil imports from hostile and unstable regimes.

The Keystone XL offers employment opportunities for tens of thousands of American workers, particularly those in the hard-hit construction and manufacturing sectors. These new jobs are in addition to perhaps hundreds of thousands of workers along the supply chain who will have their jobs bolstered in manufacturing parts for the pipeline and processing the oil it will carry.

Recently, I visited with Hoosier workers who would get a boost from the Keystone XL pipeline. To name just a few examples of the pipeline's impact on Hoosiers, in Greenwood employees of Endress+Hauser build gauges that will be used along the route. In South Bend, Koontz-Wagner builds control boxes to manage the pumps that would move the oil. In Lafayette, employees at Caterpillar build engines for the large trucks that are used to produce the oil in Alberta. In my judgment, the Keystone XL pipeline clearly will benefit Hoosier jobs and America's national security.

The Obama Administration examined the pipeline for 1,217 days before saying it did not have enough time to review the application – far longer than review periods for similar projects.

Should you wish to read the final environmental impact statement (EIS) released by the State Department after completing more than two and a half years of review, this report and a fact sheet about the project are available online at: <http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/clientsite/keystonexl.nsf?Open>. The EIS concluded that this project "would have a degree of safety greater than any typically constructed domestic oil pipeline system under current regulations and a degree of safety along the entire length of the pipeline system that would be similar to that required in high consequence areas as defined in the regulations."

I regret that we do not agree on this issue, but I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on this important topic. Thank you, again, for taking the time to contact me.

<a href="#">20120301-14</a>	17:30	Pam	Re: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Not ONE word about the environment or global warming. Jobs and money, money and jobs. That's all that matters. But god forbid the government should hire people--as teachers, police officers, social workers, etc. etc. Free Market uber allies. F-----g unbelievable!

<a href="#">20120301-15</a>	18:35	Art	Re: Letter from Sen. Richard Lugar on Keystone XL Pipeline (reply to MarthaH, above)
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And none of what he did say substantiated. You wonder, do they really believe this stuff?

20120301-12	17:19	SteveG	"WikiLeaks vs. Stratfor: Pursue the Truth, Not Its Messenger"
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"WikiLeaks vs. Stratfor: Pursue the Truth, Not Its Messenger" by Amy Goodman, NationofChange

Mar. 1, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/wikileaks-vs-stratfor-pursue-truth-not-its-messenger-1330619364>)

WikiLeaks, the whistle-blower website, has again published a massive trove of documents, this time from a private intelligence firm known as Stratfor. The source of the leak was the hacker group "Anonymous," which took credit for obtaining more than 5 million emails from Stratfor's servers. Anonymous obtained the material on Dec. 24, 2011, and provided it to WikiLeaks, which in turn partnered with 25 media organizations globally to analyze the emails and publish them.

Among the emails was a short one-liner that suggested the U.S. government has produced, through a secret grand jury, a sealed indictment against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. In addition to painting a picture of Stratfor as a runaway, rogue private intelligence firm with close ties to government-intelligence agencies serving both corporate and U.S. military clients, the emails support the growing awareness that the Obama administration, far from diverging from the secrecy of the Bush/Cheney era, is obsessed with secrecy, and is aggressively opposed to transparency.

I traveled to London last Independence Day weekend to interview Assange. When I asked him about the grand-jury investigation, he responded: "There is no judge, there is no defense counsel, and there are four prosecutors. So, that is why people that are familiar with grand-jury inquiries in the United States say that a grand jury would not only indict a ham sandwich, it would indict the ham and the sandwich."

As I left London, The Guardian newspaper exposed more of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. phone-hacking scandal, which prompted the closing of his tabloid newspaper, the largest circulation Sunday newspaper in the U.K., News of the World. The coincidence is relevant, as News of the World reported anything but what its title claimed, focusing instead on salacious details of the private lives of celebrities, sensational crimes, and photos of scantily clad women. For this and his other endeavors, Murdoch amassed a reported personal fortune of \$7.6 billion.

Meanwhile, Assange—who, like Murdoch, was born in Australia (Murdoch abandoned his nationality for U.S. citizenship in order to purchase more U.S. broadcast licenses)—had engaged in one of the largest and most courageous acts of publishing in history by founding wikileaks.org, which allows people to safely and securely deliver documents using the Internet in ways that make it almost impossible to trace. He and his colleagues at WikiLeaks had published millions of leaked documents, most notably about the U.S. wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and thousands of U.S. diplomatic cables, true "news of the world." The Sydney Peace Foundation awarded Assange a gold medal for "exceptional courage and initiative in pursuit of human rights." In contrast, the U.S. government targeted him, possibly under the Espionage Act. Murdoch is hailed as a pioneering newsman, while pundits on Murdoch-owned cable-television outlets openly call for Assange's murder.

The Stratfor emails will be released over time, along with context provided by WikiLeaks' media partners. Already revealed by the documents are the close, and potentially illegal, connections between Stratfor employees and government-intelligence and law-enforcement officials. Rolling Stone magazine reports that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was monitoring Occupy Wall Street protests nationally, and the Texas Department of Public Safety has an undercover agent at Occupy Austin who was disclosing information to contacts at Stratfor. Stratfor also is hired by multinational corporations to glean "intelligence" about critics. Among companies using Stratfor were Dow Chemical, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and Coca-Cola.

Fred Burton, Stratfor's vice president of intelligence, and a former head of counterintelligence at the U.S. State Department's diplomatic corps, wrote in an email, "Not for Pub—We have a sealed indictment on Assange. Pls protect." Burton and others at Stratfor showed intense interest in WikiLeaks starting in 2010, showing intense dislike for Assange personally. Burton wrote: "Assange is going to make a nice bride in prison. Screw the terrorist. He'll be eating cat food forever." Another Stratfor employee wanted Assange waterboarded.

Michael Ratner, legal adviser to Assange and WikiLeaks, told me, "The Obama administration has gone after six people under the Espionage Act. That's more cases than happened since the Espionage Act was actually begun in 1917. ... What this is about is the United States wanting to suppress the truth."

1917 is also the year when U.S. Sen. Hiram Johnson famously said, "The first casualty when war comes is truth." The White House is holding a gala dinner this week, honoring Iraq War veterans. Bradley Manning is an Iraq War vet who won't be there. He is being court-martialed, facing life in prison or possibly death, for allegedly releasing thousands of military and diplomatic documents to WikiLeaks revealing the casualties of war. President Barack Obama would better serve the country by also honoring Assange and Manning.

We should pursue the truth, not its messengers.

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<a href="#">20120301-13</a>	17:21	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Hands-Off Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid!
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from CREDO Action:

The corporatist wing of the Democratic Party once again has its sights set on cutting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits under the guise of deficit reduction. And our friends on Capitol Hill tell us House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer is leading the charge.

Last November CREDO activists helped stop Senate Democrats from agreeing to a terrible Super Committee deal, which would have resulted in deep cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits in exchange for promised but unspecified tax increases that may have never materialized.

But now House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, a prominent member of Democratic Leadership in Congress, is once again pushing a similar legislative proposal that would sell out our social safety net. He is working on a potential backroom deal to put the cuts we defeated last year back on the table.

According to recent reports, Rep. Hoyer is "looking to shake legislative politics" by forcing a vote on what the *Washington Post* called "a so-called grand bargain to raise taxes and restrain entitlement spending."

Hoyer declined to provide any specifics to this proposal but he gave his remarks at an event hosted by an organization called Third Way, which is a Washington-based, so-called "moderate" Democratic think tank that shills for corporate interests and has previously advanced debunked arguments promoting cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits.

Hoyer's move — which appears to be in coordination with Third Way — poses a danger to our social safety net. We cannot remain quiet while such a prominent member of Democratic Leadership appears to be working on a proposal which likely includes brutal cuts to Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security benefits.

Medicare and Social Security are wildly popular programs, and the clear majority of Americans want to protect these benefits. If we push back hard and make sure that conservative Democrats like Hoyer don't cut a back room deal on benefit cuts with Republicans, we can hold the line and protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

House Democrats will be particularly sensitive to this kind of pressure in an election year — if we can expose this potential sell out, we can quash the momentum Hoyer and conservative Democrats need to move forward with a "grand bargain" at the expense of benefit programs pivotal to millions of Americans.

To be clear, we are not against sensible reforms to these programs. But we shouldn't be cutting benefits for our seniors and other vulnerable Americans in order to spend more on our bloated military or keep taxes low for the ultra-wealthy.

If Democratic Leaders such as Hoyer are serious about addressing our nation's debt and deficit, they should work to address the biggest drivers of our debt — the Bush tax cuts, foreign wars and our economic downturn.

Sign our petition today and let House Majority Whip Steny Hoyer know that we are watching and we will not stand for any back room deal that puts cuts to Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security benefits on the table. Click below to sign the petition:

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=5537665&id=35909-3891339-CQmhh0x&t=10>

Thank you for speaking out. – Murshed Zaheed, Deputy Political Director

<a href="#">20120301-08</a>	13:27	Art	Continuing Saga: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment
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Probably the last of these but this shows the difficulty of getting people to think differently. [I hope not. –SteveB]

Dear Bob/RoyS,

Well as I said previously I certainly hope you are right. Trouble is facts and science say otherwise. I'll stop after this e-mail but first a couple of facts:

- Recently a corpse discovered in the Alps was labeled the Ice Man. The body had been there covered and preserved by ice and snow for SIX THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED (6300) years. It was exposed after all that time when the ice melted away.
- The fabled Northwest Passage searched for in previous centuries by Henry Hudson, Martin Frobisher, and John Franklin among others opened in 2009, and ships sailed from the Atlantic to the Pacific.
- The glaciers in Glacier National Park have disappeared.

I could go on and these are just a few examples of global warming but these are undisputed facts, period. By themselves each could be labeled an anomaly but taken together, they began to form a worrisome picture. I am not sure who these environmentalists are who preach global warming and anti nuclear power but I think they are mainly a figment of the imaginations of a lot of extreme right wing politicians like Limbaugh. I personally think we need to look seriously at all alternate sources of energy to fossil fuels recognizing that nuclear power has it's risks. When it goes bad, it goes very bad. Chernobyl for example and Japan recently.

As for the Keystone Project, as far as I know, it has nothing to do with natural gas. It is production from tar sands oil and very dirty. Of course I do realize that House Speaker Boehner recently invested quite a bit in at least 7 companies in Canada producing that oil, so his personal enthusiasm for the project is understandable.

from Wikipedia:

Making liquid fuels from oil sands requires energy for steam injection and refining. This process generates two to four times the amount of greenhouse gases per barrel of final product as the "production" of conventional oil. If combustion of the final products is included, the so-called "Well to Wheels" approach, oil sands extraction, upgrade and use emits 10 to 45% more greenhouse gases than conventional crude.

The below extracted from the National Park Service when I was confirming the status of any remaining glaciers in Glacier National Park:

Despite scientific evidence about the realities of climate change, we are still faced with persistent and confusing myths in the media. To allow the National Park Service to manage for climate change, we have dissected and examined these myths and found the realities of potential climate forecasts sobering. Not only

will climate change impact the natural, cultural and historic resources we protect, but also how we serve the National Park Service mission and maintain a high-quality visitor experience.

The climate change story is more than dire predictions of the future. There are compelling reasons for federal agencies, as well as individuals, to act quickly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The future is not written yet. The actions we take today will determine the future Earth we leave our children and grandchildren. Will they be proud that we embraced the challenges of climate change? Or will they be dismayed at our excuses to avoid controversy and challenge? We find hope in the fact that we still have time to create a better, more livable planet.

As the National Park Service moves forward in a world where climate change is a reality, we find common ground where all Americans can stand. First, we are charged with preserving some of the most amazing resources in this country, resources that American livelihoods are based on, and these special places provide a connection with nature and offer personal inspiration. Second, the actions we can take to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions ultimately create a better world through energy efficiency, healthy ecosystems, energy independence and improved human health. These are all desirable outcomes that benefit everyone, regardless of climate change.

[20120301-19](#) 23:59 SteveB

Photo: Two Dogs from Friends of the Middle Out for a Drive in Glacier National Park, Montana

(In a PT Cruiser, no less, Beth!)

<http://blog.travelpod.com/travel-photo/troycar4444/1/1246969051/wa-driving-dog-personx.jpg/tpod.html>

Maybe THIS is doggy Heaven—the “Last Best Place”



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

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Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #87 — MAR. 5, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Mitt R0mney: 'Mr. President, What's the Rush?' LOL!**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 5, 2012)

Two of the most famous Op-Eds of all time were written (supposedly) by Mitt R0mney. The disastrous one, opposing government assistance to save the American automobile industry, appears in "FotM Newsletter #82". That one hurt Romney in Michigan, though not as much as one might have expected, which is probably a reflection of how small the auto industry has become, even in Michigan. But President Obama saved at least 1,000,000 decent jobs. This step was necessary, you'll remember, because our fine financial institutions were refusing to make auto loans, or simply found it impossible to do so. The government ended-up making money on the "bailout". It actually cost the taxpayers zilch by keeping those payroll taxes flowing. The final result was a whopping \$14+ billion profit for the government and an entire industry and all those jobs were saved. Yet Republicans say they hate it and Romney opposed it and says he still does. Even practical results don't matter to dogmatic Republicans. Ain't socialism terrible?

Now Romney's other famous Op-Ed has surfaced (2nd article, below). This is the inventor of Obamacare blasting Obamacare for all the wrong reasons, while cutting his own throat...again! What a track record this zero has!

Ya, I know, this stuff is obviously way too subtle for the base, but that base seems to be shrinking more and more. Poor GOP.

By the way, my dear Republican friends, if you want to blame someone for high U.S. gasoline prices, you might want to look a little further than President Obama. Your rich Republican friends in the oil industry sell tons of U.S. gasoline to countries like Bolivia (#2 import from the U.S.). Anything to reduce the supply of gasoline in the U.S. to keep prices artificially high in their biggest market, so record profits and bonuses can continue to grow. They say it's just the "American Way". I call it the "Screw the Americans Way".

"Mitt Romney Health Care Op-Ed Presents Deeper Problem" by Ryan Grim, Huffington Post

Mar. 3, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ryan-grim/mitt-romney-health-care-oped-problem\\_b\\_1319051.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ryan-grim/mitt-romney-health-care-oped-problem_b_1319051.html))

(WASHINGTON) The immediate reaction to Mitt Romney's 2009 USA Today op-ed on health care reform has zeroed in on his suggestion that President Barack Obama pursue an individual mandate. But that focus misses a broader problem the op-ed creates for the former Massachusetts governor.

Romney has consistently defended his health care reform effort in Massachusetts on 10th Amendment grounds, insisting that it was merely "a state solution to a state problem." The trouble with the president's plan, Romney has argued, is not that its policy particulars -- the individual mandate to buy health insurance, the coverage subsidies, the Medicaid expansion -- were based on the Massachusetts plan, but rather that it "was a power grab by the federal government to put in place a one-size-fits-all plan across the nation."

But Romney's op-ed, published during the heat of the health care debate and recently unearthed by BuzzFeed, is squarely on the side of health care reform being driven by the federal government. In fact, the national plan that Romney sketched out as acceptable to conservatives closely resembles the one that Obama ultimately signed into law.

Romney, after touting the success of the Massachusetts plan in the op-ed, noted that the main problem facing health care generally is soaring inflation and that only the federal government can rein it in. "Here is where the federal government can do something we could not: Take steps to stop or slow medical inflation," he wrote.

Simply believing that the federal government could take action to slow medical cost inflation is not evidence of hypocrisy, of course. Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), for instance, has put forth a plan that is nothing like Obama's and that he believes would ultimately lower health care costs. Romney has since embraced the basic contours of the Ryan plan. But Romney's Massachusetts law and Ryan's proposal are as divorced from each other as possible, and there's no indication that Romney was referring to a Ryan-type system in his 2009 op-ed.

After all, MIT economics professor Jonathan Gruber, a key policy architect behind both the federal and Massachusetts plans, famously compared them by saying "they're the same f\*cking bill."

Indeed, Romney said in 2009 that Republicans would back the federal reform effort -- under a few conditions.

"Republicans will join with the Democrats if the president abandons his government insurance plan, if he endeavors to craft a plan that does not burden the nation with greater debt, if he broadens his scope to reduce health costs for all Americans, and if he is willing to devote the rigorous effort, requisite time and bipartisan process that health care reform deserves," he wrote in the final paragraph of his op-ed.

[What a stupid joke! "Republicans join with the Democrats"? History shows the opposite in this case, despite the accommodation mentioned and more. --SteveB]

Nobody could accuse the president of not spending the "requisite time," with 14 months devoted to the process.

As for that "bipartisan process," the White House and Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) worked endlessly with the bipartisan Gang of Six, threatening to drag down the entire bill as they negotiated for months. Ultimately, the only Republican who voted for the bill was Sen. Olympia Snowe (Maine), and she did so only in the Finance Committee, opposing it on final passage.

As for the "government insurance plan," also known as the public option, Obama discarded that. The final bill did not increase the debt according to the Congressional Budget Office. And it will reduce "health care costs for all Americans" not just by providing subsidies but also by rewarding doctors and hospitals for healthy outcomes in general, rather than for a total number of procedures, just as Romney has repeatedly advocated.

**The problem for Romney is that the federal-state distinction was the only real way he had of differentiating what he did from what the president has done. His own op-ed suggesting a bipartisan federal health care approach undermines any attempt to make that distinction between now and November.**

["07/30/2009 – Mr. President, What's the Rush?" from Mitt Romney Central](#)

Mar. 2, 2012, (<http://mittromneycentral.com/op-eds/2009-op-eds/mr-president-whats-the-rush/>)

(Welcome visitors from BuzzFeed, Hot Air, Talking Points Memo, The Gateway Pundit, and yes... even The Blue Mass Group. While you are here may we suggest you also check out our extensive research on RomneyCare which can be found here: RomneyCare – The Truth about Massachusetts Health Care: [http://mittromneycentral.com/resources/romneycare/.](http://mittromneycentral.com/resources/romneycare/))

This opinion article by Mitt Romney appeared in *USA Today* on 07/30/2009. It is entitled "Mr. President, What's the Rush?"

Because of President Obama's frantic approach, health care has run off the rails. For the sake of 47 million uninsured Americans, we need to get it back on track.

Health care cannot be handled the same way as the stimulus and cap-and-trade bills. With those, the president stuck to the old style of lawmaking: He threw in every special favor imaginable, ground it up and crammed it through a partisan Democratic Congress. Health care is simply too important to the economy, to employment and to America's families to be larded up and rushed through on an artificial deadline. There's a better way. And the lessons we learned in Massachusetts could help Washington find it.

No other state has made as much progress in covering their uninsured as Massachusetts. The bill that made it happen wasn't a rush job. Shortly after becoming governor, I worked in a bipartisan fashion with Democrats to insure all our citizens. It took almost two years to find a solution. When we did, it passed the 200-member legislature with only two dissenting votes. It had the support of the business community, the hospital sector and insurers. For health care reform to succeed in Washington, the president must finally do what he promised during the campaign: Work with Republicans as well as Democrats.

Massachusetts also proved that you don't need government insurance. Our citizens purchase private, free-market medical insurance. There is no "public option." With more than 1,300 health insurance companies, a federal government insurance company isn't necessary. It would inevitably lead to massive taxpayer subsidies, to lobbyist-inspired coverage mandates and to the liberals' dream: a European-style single-payer system. To find common ground with skeptical Republicans and conservative Democrats, the president will have to jettison left-wing ideology for practicality and dump the public option.

Our experience also demonstrates that getting every citizen insured doesn't have to break the bank. First, we established incentives for those who were uninsured to buy insurance. Using tax penalties, as we did, or tax credits, as others have proposed, encourages "free riders" to take responsibility for themselves rather than pass their medical costs on to others. This doesn't cost the government a single dollar. Second, we helped pay for our new program by ending an old one — something government should do more often. The federal government sends an estimated \$42 billion to hospitals that care for the poor: Use those funds instead to help the poor buy private insurance, as we did.

When our bill passed three years ago, the legislature projected that our program would cost \$725 million in 2009. At \$723 million, next year's forecast is pretty much on target. When you calculate all the savings, including that from the free hospital care we eliminated, the net cost to the state is approximately \$350 million. The watchdog Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation concluded that our program's cost is "relatively modest" and "well within initial projections."

And if subsidies and coverages are reined in, as I've suggested, the Massachusetts program could actually break even. One thing is certain: The president must insist on a program that doesn't add to our spending burden. We simply cannot afford another trillion-dollar mistake.

The Massachusetts reform aimed at getting virtually all our citizens insured. In that, it worked: 98% of our citizens are insured, 440,000 previously uninsured are covered and almost half of those purchased insurance on their own, with no subsidy. But overall, health care inflation has continued its relentless rise. Here is where the federal government can do something we could not: Take steps to stop or slow medical inflation.

At the core of our health cost problem is an incentive problem. Patients don't care what treatments cost once they pass the deductible. And providers are paid more when they do more; they are paid for quantity, not quality. We

will tame runaway costs only when we change incentives. We might do what some countries have done: Require patients to pay a portion of their bill, except for certain conditions. And providers could be paid an annual fixed fee for the primary care of an individual and a separate fixed fee for the treatment of a specific condition. These approaches have far more promise than the usual bromides of electronic medical records, transparency and pay-for-performance, helpful though they will be.

I spent most of my career in the private sector. When well-managed businesses considered a major change of some kind, they engaged in extensive analysis, brought in outside experts, exhaustively evaluated every alternative, built consensus among those who would be affected and then moved ahead. Health care is many times bigger than all the companies in the Dow Jones combined. And the president is rushing changes that dwarf what any business I know has faced.

Republicans are not the party of "no" when it comes to health care reform. This Republican is proud to be the first governor to insure all his state's citizens. Other Republicans such as Rep. Paul Ryan and Sens. Bob Bennett and John McCain, among others, have proposed their own plans. Republicans will join with the Democrats if the president abandons his government insurance plan, if he endeavors to craft a plan that does not burden the nation with greater debt, if he broadens his scope to reduce health costs for all Americans, and if he is willing to devote the rigorous effort, requisite time and bipartisan process that health care reform deserves.

(Mitt Romney was governor of Massachusetts from 2003 to 2007.)

[20120302-01](#) 09:27 MarthaH Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB)

from SteveB:

I don't remember any of this stuff myself! Too young! Maybe some of you guys do? If the Republicans win in November, I'm looking forward to the return of my personal favorite, candy cigarettes! Why not? It would be a boon to tobacco sales. Money is all that counts, right?

Listen here, KID...all of this was GOOD, and I wouldn't trade a thing on the list for an iPod! :-)...TGIF!



I agree! Almost perfect!



20120302-07 12:59 Pam Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to all, above)

I remember all these things as if it were yesterday. Does anyone remember clove Life Savers. I loved those, and I don't think they make them anymore. And Valomilk and Bun candy bars? Except they were round. We shouldn't worry; the kids of today will be nostalgic about bey blades.

[I loved my Fort Apache!!! Those pesky Redskins! –SteveB]



20120304-03 13:04 SteveB Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to Pam, above)

I loved the clove chewing gum! Why do some flavors, like horehound and sassailla (and clove?) get old-fashioned and others don't?

How could Valomilk and Bun die? I guess the Clark Bar and Necco Wafers are still being made, but I haven't noticed them for years.

News: Valomilk lives! — <http://www.valomilk.com/>.

Interesting site — <http://www.oldtimecandy.com/discontinued.htm>.



[20120302-04](#)

12:17

Beth

Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB, above)

I remember all that stuff. I also remember polio, mumps, measles, and scarlet fever. I remember when there was no reliable birth control. The ability to determine when and how many children we want to have has given women many more choices about how to live our lives. I remember segregation and inequality of women as well. I have fond memories as all older people do, but the fifties and early sixties were very repressive times. And that repression caused the upheaval in the late sixties and early seventies.

[You're right, Beth. Memory is such a strange instrument. It's funny, all the things you mention are things the Republicans seem to want to bring back, after all the battles we fought and won to get where we are (not far enough). I wonder if they'll bring back polio too? -SteveB]



[20120302-05](#)

12:30

Ben

Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB, above)

Dunno if you noticed that that particular 1955 cent is the version you could use to pay for a semester of college these days: yah, sure, I'd reach into a muddy gutter for that one, today!

(Take a close look. Maybe it was photoshopped, but it appears to be the "double-die" version.)



[20120304-04](#)

13:34

Paula

Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB, above)

Thanks! I love the nostalgia stuff! We wore the ugly gym uniforms, and chewed clove gum, and I remember gas at 29.9 cents...(instead it is now \$3.79) John had and loved his 57 Chevy. I won a hoola hoop contest— 1 hour and 45 minutes, but they made us stop because there were still 49 kids! We have a pack of candy cigs on the desk now (our drive thru beverage store sells them). anyway life is different, but at least we still have some memory to fall back on...



[20120302-03](#)

09:53

GaryF

Re: Photos: How's This for 1950's & 1960's Nostalgia (reply to SteveB, above)

I enjoyed your Nostalgia email, so I thought you might enjoy this and maybe pass it on.

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

TO ALL THE KIDS WHO SURVIVED the 1930's 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's !!

First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they were pregnant. They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can, and didn't get tested for diabetes.

Then, after that trauma, we were put to sleep on our tummies in baby cribs covered with bright colored lead-based paints.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets, not to mention, the risks we took hitchhiking.

As infants & children, we would ride in cars with no car seats, booster seats, seat belts, or air bags.

NO ONE actually died from this.

We ate cupcakes, white bread and real butter and drank Kool-Aid made with sugar, but we weren't overweight because WE WERE ALWAYS OUTSIDE PLAYING!

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on.

No one was able to reach us all day.

And we were O.K.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We did not have Playstations, Nintendo's, X-boxes, no video games at all, no 150 channels on cable, no video movies or DVD's, no surround- sound or CD's, no cell phones, no personal computers, no Internet or chat rooms.

We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents.

We ate worms and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever.

We were given BB guns for our 10th birthdays, made up games with sticks and tennis balls and, although we were told it would happen, we did not put out very many eyes.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend's house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just walked in and talked to them!

Little League had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment. Imagine that!!

The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law!

These generations have produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever! The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned HOW TO DEAL WITH IT ALL!

If YOU are one of them . . . CONGRATULATIONS!

You might want to share this with others who have had the luck to grow up as kids, before the lawyers and the government regulated so much of our lives for our own good. And while you are at it, forward it to your kids so they will know how brave (and lucky) their parents were. Kind of makes you want to run through the house with scissors, doesn't it?!

[Hey, Pam, sounds like Atty finds ways to be a normal kid just like we did (above), despite the changing times, huh? :-) –SteveB]

About your attachment: my Mom smoked while she was pregnant and I only weighed 5-1/2 lbs. I'd be smarter and tougher if she hadn't done that. She didn't know.

And was there such a thing as child abuse then? If they killed you, maybe?

[20120302-06](#) 12:45 SteveG Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe.

As the moderates go home, and I really don't blame them, are we not left with more polarization? Don't we need moderates to hang in there and for more moderates to be elected? It seems that from the middle we can grow together, not from the ends.



[20120302-08](#) 14:10 Phil Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to SteveG, above)

Absolutely right. Unfortunately, I think it is a reflection of the dissatisfaction of the population as a whole. The "divide" is enlarging and as a consequence I think people are choosing (or blaming ) the extremist left or right creating an even larger polarization. We need more centrists that appeal to both sides.

[20120302-09](#) 14:19 Pam Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to Phil & SteveG, above)

Yeeesssssss!

[20120302-10](#) 14:44 Bill Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to Phil & SteveG, above)

Democracy seems to have its defects in times when polarities are so sharp. Still, there has to be a way around or through the myriad litmus issues that divide the populace, and centrists who are strong leaders are needed.

[20120302-11](#) 14:49 SteveG Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to all, above)

True, but as time marches on the number of centrists decrease in both houses of congress. We have blue states, we have red states, and there are extremely few states that are red/white/and blue. Who on the horizon is a centrist running for election, election to any position of significance state or federal?

[20120302-12](#) 15:13 Bill Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to SteveG, above) / Bloviators

They're in short supply, and the political process never seems to award much charisma or following to those who don't bloviate about some injustice, cause, or crusade.

[20120302-14](#) 16:46 SteveG Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to Bill, above)

To be honest, I had to look bloviate up – good word – good word to describe Newt, Santorum, and the folks on Fox.

[20120302-16](#) 17:54 Dennis Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to SteveG, above)

Definitely add Keith Olbermann to the list of supreme bloviators. That guy can't even get along with people who agree with him politically.

[20120304-06](#) 14:48 SteveB Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to Dennis, above)

You're right, Dennis, yet the guy can have moments of pure genius. As is so often the case, though, genius is tempered by one kind of craziness or another. He's one pi\*sed-off dude! Like Pam says, Jon Stewart is amazing—and I might add, because he is sane!

I'm just glad nobody ever does any damned bloviating around here! :-)

[20120304-07](#) 15:18 Art Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to all, above)

It all sounds slightly perverted to me.

[20120304-08](#) 17:06 SteveB Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Bloviators (reply to Art, above)

No, Art, that's not Rush, it's Santorum! Look it up!

[20120302-17](#) 17:56 Pam Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. (reply to Dennis, above) / Rush Limbaugh

Yeah, Olbermann and Bill Maher both get on my nerves. I do agree with them, but I wish they wouldn't sound so condescending. I like Jon Stewart much better.

Also, I signed the anti-Rush petition. I love it that petitions are so easy to sign nowadays. I hope they do some good.

<a href="#">20120302-19</a>	23:21	SteveG	Re: Good-Bye, Sen. Olympia Snowe. / Rush Limbaugh (reply to Pam, above)
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Just read that three companies have pulled their ads and Bonehead through a spokesperson said Rush's comments were inappropriate.

<a href="#">20120302-13</a>	15:45	Dennis	Fw: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh!
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generated by DemocracyInAction website:

I just signed a pledge asking the right-wing leadership in Congress to stop the outrageous attacks on contraceptive availability and the concurrent assault on women's rights and dignity.

Join me in standing with Sandra Fluke, who was attacked last night by Rush Limbaugh because she dared to testify in Congress about birth control access. Limbaugh called Fluke a "slut" and a "prostitute." This is unacceptable.

When Limbaugh attacked Sandra, he also demeaned the 99% of women who use contraceptives in their lifetimes – regardless of religion. We will not be silenced nor shamed.

Stand with Sandra and demand coverage of contraceptives without co-pays or deductibles for most women under the Affordable Care Act's preventive care package. This coverage would apply to women who work at universities, hospitals, or social service agencies – regardless of any institutional religious affiliation.

Sandra Fluke was initially barred from testifying for birth control access at a so-called "religious liberty" hearing and later testified at a Democratic hearing. We believe that Speaker Boehner and the Congressional Republican leadership must hold real hearings and that they must allow women to testify concerning accessibility to contraceptives for birth control and other medical needs such as ovarian cysts or endometriosis. The Republican Congressional leadership must also condemn Limbaugh's outrageous comments, as the Democrats have already done.

The Catholic bishops, the right-wing leadership in Congress, and especially Rush Limbaugh have no right to control women's access to birth control. We are counting down to see how long it will take to stop the outrageous attacks on contraceptive availability and the concurrent assault on women's rights and dignity.

Please stand with me and sign the pledge. It's time to stand with Sandra and demand access to birth control.

Sign the petition @ [http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1400/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=9723](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1400/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=9723)

#### From Democracy in Action: Boycott Rush Limbaugh's Sponsors

This is our current list of Rush Limbaugh advertisers as of 03/02/12. We have tried to keep our list updated as sponsors come and go but cannot guarantee the complete accuracy of this list. Part of the problem of keeping a list like this is that some of his radio sponsors or web sponsors may not even be aware their ads appeared on his program/website because these ads are sold in blocks to various programs, stations, and websites.

Due to the recent deluge of complaints Sleep Train pulled their advertising with Rush. If you wish to thank them, please use the link below to find their contact information.

#### 1. Sleep Train Mattress Store

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

2. Quicken Loans - confirmed sponsor

<http://www.quickenloans.com/>  
1050 Woodward Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48226  
Client Relations - (800) 863-4332  
and: (800) 251-9080  
also: you can chat online

3. Century 21 Real Estate LLC - confirmed sponsor

<http://www.century21.com/>  
International Headquarters  
1 Campus Drive  
Parsippany, NJ 07054  
Web contact form

4. ProFlowers

<http://www.proflowers.com/>  
Email  
Web contact form  
Sales or Service: 1-800-580-2913  
Phone: 800.580.2913

5. eharmony

<http://www.eharmony.com/>  
300 N. Lake Ave., Suite 1111  
Pasadena, CA 91101  
[media@eharmony.com](mailto:media@eharmony.com)  
Web contact form  
Email  
626.795.4814  
FAX 626.585.4040

6. CARBONITE, Inc.

617-587-1100  
177 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115  
[carbonite@mailnj.custhelp.com](mailto:carbonite@mailnj.custhelp.com)  
Direct Dial Office: 617-587-1100 EXT:1115

7. Sleep Number Bed

<http://www.sleepnumber.com>  
Select Comfort Corporation - confirmed and long-time advertiser  
6105 Trenton Lane N  
Minneapolis, MN 55442  
Phone: 763-551-7000  
Fax: 763-551-7826  
800-438-2233  
[investorrelations@selectcomfort.com](mailto:investorrelations@selectcomfort.com)

8. Oreck Upright Vacuum Cleaners

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

Oreck Corporation  
100 Plantation Road  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123  
Online contact form  
800-289-5888

9. Mid-West Life Insurance Company of Tennessee

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

9151 Grapevine Hwy.  
North Richland Hills, TX 76180  
Phone (800) 733-1110  
(web banner ads on <http://www.rushlimbaugh.com>)

10. AutoZone Inc.

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

901-495-7185; Fax: 901-495-8374  
P.O. Box 2198, Memphis, TN 38101  
[investor.relations@autozone.com](mailto:investor.relations@autozone.com)

11. LegalZoom.com - confirmed and long-time advertiser

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

800-773-0888; Fax: 323-962-8300  
Site has a Web Form

12. Citrix Online (GoToMyPC)

[http://www.citrixonline.com/collaboration/online\\_collaboration](http://www.citrixonline.com/collaboration/online_collaboration)

[http://www.gotomypc.com/remote\\_access/remote\\_access](http://www.gotomypc.com/remote_access/remote_access)

6500 Hollister Avenue, Goleta, CA 93117  
Phone: 805-690-6400; Fax: 805-690-6471  
[info@citrixonline.com](mailto:info@citrixonline.com)

13. American Forces Network

<http://myafn.dodmedia.osd.mil/>

Contact Us: @MyAFN.net

14. Mission Pharmacal Company

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

10999 IH-10 West Suite 1000  
P.O. Box 786099  
San Antonio, TX 78278-6099  
Telephone: (800) 531-3333  
Bennett Kennedy - Citracal Product Manager

15. Life Quotes, Inc.

<http://www.lifequotes.com.au/>

32045 Castle Court  
Evergreen, CO 80439  
1-800-670-5433

[info@lifequotes.com.au](mailto:info@lifequotes.com.au)

<a href="#">20120302-15</a>	16:50	SteveG	Re: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh! (reply to Dennis, above)
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Petition signed, sent, and forwarded to others.

<a href="#">20120302-18</a>	19:05	Art	Re: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh! (reply to Dennis, above)
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We really need to call these companies.

<a href="#">20120303-01</a>	10:30	Pam	Re: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh! (reply to Art, above)
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Art, you're becoming an activist!

<a href="#">20120303-02</a>	12:07	SteveG	Re: DemocracyInAction Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke, Boycott Rush Limbaugh! (reply to Pam, above)
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Art has always been an activist, just a different focus at this point.

<a href="#">20120303-05</a>	15:02	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh
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from Daily Kos:

Since yesterday, at least five of Rush Limbaugh's advertisers have dropped their support for his program due to the outrage people have expressed over his disgusting comments on Sandra Fluke.

We can convince more advertisers to follow suit if we keep piling on the pressure. Please, sign the petition telling Rush Limbaugh's advertisers to pull their support for his program.

Keep fighting, Joan McCarter, Daily Kos

[http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=81](http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=81)

<a href="#">20120303-06</a>	16:10	Pam	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to SteveG, above)
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Thanks, SteveG. I have signed all the petitions that have come my way against Loudmouth Limbaugh. I think there's something seriously wrong with that man. He's just not normal. Either he is the most cynical shyster to come down the pike in a long time, or he is demented. Assuming he means what he says, he has, at the very least, anger issues. Anyone who goes around that angry all the time has a problem. I think the people who hire and support him are guilty of taking advantage of a sick man for their own profit--rather like aristocrats in the 18th c. going to mental asylums for entertainment. Some talking heads are just stupid, but he is screwed up.

<a href="#">20120303-07</a>	16:39	Dennis	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Pam, above)
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He's a very rich cynical shyster who has proven that being outrageously right-wing attracts a huge audience of willingly ignorant Americans and is highly profitable. Whether he is also demented depends upon how you look at it. The demented in his audience who identify with him and his demonizations of the "left" love to cheer him on as he reinforces their biases and ignorance. The last thing his audience wants to hear is logic and facts. As for his sponsors, they have to weigh how useful he continues to be now that he has stirred up what he calls "femi-nazis" and I assume us "femi-nazi sympathizers" too. Alienating too many women customers may lead to his downfall. But maybe not. In any case, there are many more opportunists who would gladly fill his place on the airwaves while smiling all the way to the bank.

<a href="#">20120303-08</a>	18:14	SteveG	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to all, above)
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Glen Beck, in my opinion, falls into the same category. Both will say anything to get the spotlight and people talking about them and their programs, and they both laugh all the way to the bank. Being outrageous sells. On the other side is Keith and it used to be Imus. Imus got fired though, oh yeah Keith almost got fired too.

<a href="#">20120303-09</a>	18:56	Art	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to all, above)
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This is pretty neat. I've actually gotten back a few things. Rather just bash 'em though.

Done!!

Notice how they are all pasty white fat tubs of guts? Gingrich too. Suspect they are all lacking some things.

<a href="#">20120303-12</a>	20:15	Pam	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Art, above)
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He and his like are disgusting human beings.

<a href="#">20120303-14</a>	20:48	SteveB	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Pam, above)
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Gee, Pam, he's just a comedian! LOL!

Wouldn't it be great if we could get rid of the rat, or at least lesson his impact, through his sponsors? It seems to be working so far.

I think "disgusting human being" puts it way too mildly and may even have the species wrong.

I think you were on to something when you were talking about Limbaugh and Beck and others being seriously crazy. Not that I know them, except through their public personas (not that fake, in my estimation), but I would bet that if almost anyone, even many Republicans, sat around with one of these guys for the evening at a cocktail party, they'd probably be convinced something was unhinged.

<a href="#">20120303-15</a>	21:11	SteveB	Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to all, above) & "Rush Limbaugh Apologizes to Sandra Fluke for Calling Her a 'Slut'"
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Oh, this makes it all OK...but it is something!

"Rush Limbaugh Apologizes to Sandra Fluke for Calling Her a 'Slut'" by Benjamin Hart and Jack Mirkinson, Huffington Post

Mar. 3, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/03/rush-limbaugh-apologizes-to-sandra-fluke\\_n\\_1318718.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/03/rush-limbaugh-apologizes-to-sandra-fluke_n_1318718.html))

After a media and political firestorm, Rush Limbaugh issued an apology on Saturday for calling student Sandra Fluke a "slut" on his radio show this week.

Fluke, a law student at Georgetown University who was advocating for health insurance plans to cover the cost of contraception, became the target of a series of attacks by Limbaugh. Besides calling her a "slut," he also called her a "prostitute," said that he wanted her to make sex tapes and post them online, and speculated that she only had a problem paying for contraception because she was having "so much sex."

Limbaugh's comments caused advertisers to flee from his show, and even prompted President Obama to weigh in. The statements also became an issue in the Republican presidential race.

Limbaugh — who has a long history of making incendiary remarks, and is not known to take them back — issued the rare apology on Saturday afternoon, saying he was "sincerely" sorry about his "insulting" characterization of Fluke. But he maintained that the birth control debate was about "personal sexual recreational activities," not any broader health questions, and compared contraception to sneakers.

Even as he walked back his comment, though, there were signs that Limbaugh is not out of the woods yet. Another advertiser, Carbonite, posted a message on Facebook saying that it was ending its sponsorship of his show.

"No one with daughters the age of Sandra Fluke, and I have two, could possibly abide the insult and abuse heaped upon this courageous and well-intentioned young lady," CEO David Friend wrote. "Mr. Limbaugh, with his highly personal attacks on Miss Fluke, overstepped any reasonable bounds of decency. Even though Mr. Limbaugh has now issued an apology, we have nonetheless decided to withdraw our advertising from his show."

Below, read Limbaugh's apology in full:

For over 20 years, I have illustrated the absurd with absurdity, three hours a day, five days a week. In this instance, I chose the wrong words in my analogy of the situation. I did not mean a personal attack on Ms. Fluke.

I think it is absolutely absurd that during these very serious political times, we are discussing personal sexual recreational activities before members of Congress. I personally do not agree that American citizens should pay for these social activities. What happened to personal responsibility and accountability? Where do we draw the line? If this is accepted as the norm, what will follow? Will we be debating if taxpayers should pay for new sneakers for all students that are interested in running to keep fit? In my monologue, I posited that it is not our business whatsoever to know what is going on in anyone's bedroom nor do I think it is a topic that should reach a Presidential level.

My choice of words was not the best, and in the attempt to be humorous, I created a national stir. I sincerely apologize to Ms. Fluke for the insulting word choices.

[20120303-16](#)

21:14 Art

Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to SteveB, above)

Hey!! Carbonite is one of the companies I've been talking to. Maybe this "activist" stuff does work.

[20120304-10](#) 21:19 SteveG Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Art, above)

Social media was a primary force behind Obama getting elected and a driving force in Egypt and Libya.

[20120304-01](#) 06:25 SteveB Re: Daily Kos Petition: Stand with Sandra Fluke Against Rush Limbaugh (reply to Art & SteveG, above)

And look at what Andrew Breitbart did in such a short time. The web makes small voices bigger and silent voices heard.

Obviously the second greatest invention for man on earth.

Now if we can just all use that power to accomplish the opposite and make Limbaugh silent! Ah, peace and fresh airwaves!!!

(Except, as Dennis says, there are plenty to take his place, but Limbaugh is the biggest and pastiest. He's #1. Mr. *Mierda*.)

Good work with Carbonite, Art. Sounds like you're ready for the next March on Washington!

[20120303-03](#) 13:49 SteveG "Would Mitt Like to Fire Bain Employee Rush Limbaugh?"

Does Rush Limbaugh Work for Mitt Romney?

"Would Mitt Like to Fire Bain Employee Rush Limbaugh?" by Henry Decker, *National Memo*

Mar. 2, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/article/would-mitt-fire-bain-employee-rush-limbaugh>)

In the wake of Rush Limbaugh's torrent of ignorant misogyny, just about everyone has jumped to condemn the conservative radio host's comments. Several of Limbaugh's corporate sponsors have dropped him, and politicians from both sides of the aisle -- such as Nancy Pelosi and John Boehner -- have denounced him. Even anti-contraception culture warrior Rick Santorum has labeled Limbaugh "absurd."

One notable exception? Republican presidential frontrunner Mitt Romney, who has been silent on the issue. Here's a fun possible reason why the "King of Bain" won't speak up:

The "Rush Limbaugh Show" is aired by Premiere Networks, a massively profitable syndication network, which is owned by Clear Channel Communications.

Clear Channel Communications is owned by Bain Capital.

So perhaps Romney's persistent silence is owed to the fact that Limbaugh's offensive comments make him quite a bit of money. After all, the majority of investment income in Romney's "blind trust" is derived from private equity funds managed by Bain Capital. Clear Channel is one of Bain's largest investments. Rush Limbaugh is one of Clear Channel's largest investments. Clearly, Romney has a real conflict of interest here.

The Limbaugh/Romney connection may or may not explain why Romney has refused to step forward and repudiate Limbaugh's comments. What it definitely does prove is this useful rule of thumb for covering the 2012 campaign: whenever something crazy happens in the electoral theater, it's a good policy to check if Mitt Romney owns one of the actors.

20120303-10 19:57 Art Video: "Jacob Hacker & Paul Pierson on Engineered Inequality"

This pretty good for those who have not seen it. A bit longish but hits at the heart of the matter. I will say from my perspective I feel absolutely nothing for these super rich dirtbags and could easily see them all fall with no regrets at all. Burn 'em out!

Video: "Jacob Hacker & Paul Pierson on Engineered Inequality", by Bill Moyers, Moyers & Co.

Mar. 1, 2012, (<http://billmoyers.com/segment/jacob-hacker-paul-pierson-on-engineered-inequality/>)

20120303-11 20:10 SteveG Fw: Change.org Petition: Help Henry Young

from Change.org:

In October of 2011, my father Henry Young -- a 62-year-old husband and father of three who was employed with Philips Medical System in Andover, MA -- had a heart attack while in the gym at work. His heart stopped ten times, leaving his brain deprived of oxygen. After being comatose for several weeks, he miraculously awoke one day and began making great strides towards recovery. Currently undergoing rehab at Whittier Rehabilitation Hospital, he has made enough progress to convince his medical team, family, and friends that with continued rehab he will regain functional motor and cognitive skills.

Despite the critical progress my Dad has made in recent weeks, his insurance provider Blue Cross Blue Shield will cease coverage of my father's rehab this coming Monday, March 5, 2012. If this happens, my family will be put in the position of choosing to either continue treatment and face financial ruin or give up on our beloved father & husband's recovery process.

Health insurance is supposed to be there when you need it most. It's wrong for Blue Cross Blue Shield to drop coverage when my father's future depends on it. Please take a stand and help us change Blue Cross Blue Shield's mind. Not only is this morally and ethically wrong, this is a travesty of justice! Don't think this couldn't happen to you; be the change you want to see!

[http://www.change.org/petitions/blue-cross-blue-shield-henry-young-needs-rehab-to-live?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=action\\_alert](http://www.change.org/petitions/blue-cross-blue-shield-henry-young-needs-rehab-to-live?utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert)

20120303-13 20:45 SteveB From the Archive: "The Bible Has Some Shocking 'Family Values'"

I have a great Republican-type idea! Let's go back in time 2000 years and start over with a decent society (no gays, no contraception, no masturbation) this time, based on the Holy bible.

Except that I have a few problems if the Holy Bible is going to be jammed down our throats as the Law of the Land. (What if the nearly impossible happened and Rick "Satan" Santorum were elected President?) I don't really want to sell my daughters into slavery. Oh...you say I don't have to sell them into slavery, it's just that I can if I want to? I just have the option! Oh, OK. Much better. I have so much confidence that the sweet Evangelicals would never interpret the Holy Bible literally! LOL!

Gee...duh...maybe there's a reason why the Founding Fathers passed-on a separation of church and state to their grandchildren. Maybe it's something worth preserving, even worth fighting for!

From the FotM Archive:

"The Bible Has Some Shocking 'Family Values'" by Michael Coogan, CNN

Oct. 26, 2010, ([http://articles.cnn.com/2010-10-26/opinion/coogan.bible.family.values\\_1\\_biblical-writers-family-values-slavery?\\_s=PM:OPINION](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-10-26/opinion/coogan.bible.family.values_1_biblical-writers-family-values-slavery?_s=PM:OPINION))

(Editor's note: Michael Coogan is a lecturer on Hebrew Bible-Old Testament at Harvard Divinity School, professor of religious studies at Stonehill College, and director of publications for the Harvard Semitic Museum. Editor of *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, his most recent book is *God and Sex: What the Bible Really Says* (Twelve).)

When talking about so-called family values, pastors, popes, and politicians routinely quote the Bible as if it were an unassailable divine authority -- after all, they assume, God wrote the Bible, and therefore it is absolutely and literally true.

But that is a misconception. As the Bible itself makes clear, its authors were human beings, many of whom are named: David, Isaiah, Luke, and Paul. These human writers wrote over the course of more than a thousand years, and their writings reflect their own views and the values they shared with their contemporaries. So it's not surprising that inconsistencies are frequent in the Bible, both trivial and profound.

Although Jews and Christians, individually and collectively, have for the last 2,000 years accepted the Bible as authoritative in principle, in practice many of its values have been rejected. On issues such as slavery, no one today would maintain that slavery is acceptable, even though, according to the Bible, it was a divinely sanctioned institution. In the debates about slavery in the 19th century those opposed to its abolition cited the Bible in support of their position, but despite such biblical warrant, their views were renounced.

**According to biblical law, a father could sell his daughter as a slave**, and the last of the Ten Commandments lists as off-limits a neighbor's possessions -- his house, wife, slaves, and livestock. But the majority of modern Jews and Christians no longer accept the biblical view of women as men's property and hence subordinate to them, as they have also abandoned the biblical practice of polygamy.

In current debates about family values, most of which have to do with sex, opponents of abortion and advocates of a woman's right to choose both cite the Bible in support of their conflicting views, even though the Bible in fact says nothing specifically about the issue. And with regard to same-sex marriage, although the few biblical writers who mention same-sex relationships, especially between men, were unequivocally opposed to them, many contemporary believers would argue that, as with slavery and the status of women, it is time to recognize that the values of the biblical writers are no longer necessarily our own.

Opponents of same-sex marriage cite Leviticus, which says that when a man sleeps with a man as with a woman it is an abomination. They're right: It does say that. But it later calls for the death penalty for such activity, which only the most rabid opponents would insist on. The Bible also calls eating pork and a woman wearing a man's clothes abominations, yet many would no longer enforce such prohibitions.

Individual biblical texts should not be appealed to selectively: Such cherry-picking is all too easy because of the nature of the Bible as a multi-authored book. Rather, as with another formative text, the Constitution, one needs first to understand it historically -- what did its words mean when they were written -- and then attempt to determine what its underlying values are, not just what it says in a specific passage. Only in this sense can the Bible be considered to have timeless relevance that transcends the historical particularities of its authors.

What are those underlying values? I would argue that they are rooted in love of neighbor, which Jewish and Christian commentators over the ages have identified as the essential and enduring message of the Bible.

Here are three of them. The great Rabbi Hillel, who when asked what the basic principle of the Torah was, replied: "What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor: That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary." His words are echoed both by his near-contemporary, another rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth, who put it this way: "Whatever you wish people to do to you, so you should do to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets," and by an early leader in the movement that Jesus started, the rabbinically trained Paul, who pronounced that "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

So, I suggest, the essence of the Bible -- its ultimate authority -- is not in its individual pronouncements, but in its underlying message: equal, even loving, treatment of all persons, regardless of their age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

<a href="#">20120303-17</a>	21:16	SteveG	Re: "The Bible Has Some Shocking 'Family Values'"
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Reading one of Bart D. Ehrman's books – *God's Problem* or one of his 19 other books – doesn't help Santorum's philosophy and substantiates the need for separation of church and state.

<a href="#">20120303-04</a>	14:22	Charis	Earth Hour, Sat., Mar. 31, 2012, 8:30 pm
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<http://www.earthhour.org/>

<a href="#">20120304-09</a>	19:41	SteveG	"Protesters Occupying Monsanto Corp. Arrested"
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Good read – share with others.

"Protesters Occupying Monsanto Corp. Arrested" by Anthony Gucciardi, NationofChange

Mar. 4, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/protesters-occupying-monsanto-corp-arrested-1330870187>)

("Police threatened protesters with arrest if they did not move away from the doors, and 12 were ultimately arrested. According to the report, 10 were arrested for 'blocking the entrance' and 2 were arrested for crossing a police line.")

Taking a stand against the agricultural takeover of the United States and worldwide, a group of Occupy DC members began to protest outside the offices of Monsanto. Taking part in an attempt to help raise awareness over the atrocities committed by mega corporations like Monsanto, Occupy members as far away as Portland helped to organize the national protest. In the call to action statement provided by Occupy Portland, the movement stated that the protest was to highlight the fact that "corporations buy off legislators and craft legislation that serves the interests of corporations and not people." According to Occupy DC, about 12 members were arrested.

Protesters were told by D.C. police officers to remove themselves from the Monsanto office, where they formed a line around the building. One police officer, William Farr, said that around 50 protesters gathered around the building. Police threatened protesters with arrest if they did not move away from the doors, and 12 were ultimately arrested. According to the report, 10 were arrested for 'blocking the entrance' and 2 were arrested for crossing a police line. One of the individuals arrested was an American University student doing a report on police brutality.

During their protest at Monsanto corporation, protesters chanted things like "Monsanto and ALEC, corporations are making us sick." Protesters were even quoted as saying that Monsanto "is doing more to make a sustainable world impossible than almost any corporation on the planet."

Monsanto was declared worst company of 2011 for their numerous acts against nature and public health. In addition to running slave rings and controlling U.S. diplomats behind the scenes to push their agenda, Monsanto is also ensuring that you have no idea whether or not you are eating their genetically modified foods. Squashing labeling initiatives all over the nation through admitted influence, Monsanto wants to make sure you're in the dark about their latest GMO creations.

<a href="#">20120304-02</a>	23:58	SteveB	Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 1
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Yesterday, my wife, Marci, and I took the big plunge and began starting-up another Third World business. We're going to bake and sell gourmet cookies! (With the help of our "people", of course!)

I guess all you dear readers are familiar with the "Picture of the Day" which comes at the end of every "FotM Newsletter" (see below). Today I am starting here, just before the Picture of the Day, a new daily or frequent continuing article about the trials, tribulations, adventures, and rewards of small-business capitalism, Bolivian/American-style. Our little company is not any big deal, really (yet!), but we think it's going to be really fun to build and run, so I thought it might also be fun to write about our little \$10,000 adventure. The name of the company and cookies is still secret, pending getting the registered trademark started, but I'll let you know as soon as I can. It will be familiar English to you all, but sounds exotic and sophisticated to Bolivian ears—unforgettable!—exactly our requirement in a name.

Many of you already know that I've been working on getting an American restaurant off the ground, here, for more than a year. I have done all the research and written a complete 100+ page business plan, as a matter of fact. We have searched and searched, but have yet to find a suitable location at the right time. This project is still a "go", but will be put on the back burner for a while. Still looking. Meanwhile, we plan on doing restaurant experiments in the dine-in part of the cookie bakery/store. We'll evolve the restaurant as we go, like I do everything. Just about any restaurant is more complicated than our cookie bakery/shop, and I want it to be the best in the city too.

In the meantime, Marci started baking cookies. She gave them to members of her family, people at work, the security guards in our building, and even some to me. Do you remember Meg Ryan's fake orgasm in the restaurant in *Sleepless in Seattle* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9hstRfZVCY>)? ("Hey, I'll have whatever she's having!") That was pretty much the genuine, not fake, reaction Marci received from most folks lucky enough to try her delicious cookies. Come to think of it, one of them might have been faking, but I doubt it. Go, Meg! You women! :-)  
Love ya!

So what could an enterprising entrepreneur do except build a business around such a product (amazingly little-known here)? We really have no direct competition at this time.

Yesterday was the big day when we committed to renting our little bakery/store that we found last week during a taxi ride, very near where we live. We love the location on a great corner with plenty of foot and vehicle traffic, though that is not where our sales emphasis lies, as I will explain. Our landlords are a very nice family with a tiny grocery of their own and about a dozen pet parakeets, etc., one of whom loved standing on my shoulder, as we negotiated, licking the sweat off my neck. (Don't say yuk, I liked it!) The rent is surprisingly little (most financial details will be omitted from these posts). The place is newly constructed—cut-out of part of the family's patio, behind. The breaker box isn't even installed yet. We have to put in air-conditioning, a ventilation fan, a big oven, mixer, refrigerator, hot water heater, stainless-steel counter, a big sink, and a little remodeling, but not much, really.

We have an upscale product—a premium quality, gourmet cookie (4 varieties, actually) that we intend to sell at an above average price. We are committed to working hard and with love to making a very high quality product. Our emphasis, therefore, will be on a quality image. Everything must look clean and elegant (comparatively). This will definitely apply to our bakery/store, which could have been built in a cheap garage-type building on the outskirts of town, but that wouldn't be as helpful to our image. This quality image will also apply to our main sales effort, which will be focused outside the bakery/store.

The second part of our idea, after great cookies, is our sales force. Street vendors! Street vendors are very popular here, but they are a little like relics from the past, for the most part. No crisp and clean and gourmet and up to American standards. Most street vendors ride or push dilapidated vendor's carts. You've all see the ones that are used to sell hotdogs, etc., in many American cities, especially on the coasts. Wheelbarrows are very popular for fruit, juice, and many other products. You can be way out of town here, maybe sitting at a little restaurant in the middle of nowhere, and a guy will ride up on a bicycle with about 100 brooms sticking out in every direction and try to sell you one. I can buy reprints of old, early century maps, of all things, on many street corners. We found the full-length mirror in our bedroom being sold by a street vendor near the central plaza. Products here are brought directly to the people. Milk is still delivered to people's houses. Doctors make house calls. If you need a snack or a cold drink or ice cream almost anywhere in the city, someone will be there to meet your needs. Maybe this is the

future of America—poverty capitalism. When there are no jobs, people become street and market vendors. What else can they do but turn to capitalism? Especially after capitalism has failed them so miserably...

We will harness and modernize this force. We'll start with just one or two salesmen (consider this word an abbreviation of "saleswomen"), but our plan is to have about 10 as soon as possible. We want to start with about 100 cookies a day and quickly work our way up to 1000 per day. That's our target volume. Each of our salesmen will be on foot, though they will also take very cheap public transportation to many sales locations—soccer games, parades, office buildings, universities, the big bimodal bus/train terminal, the airport, the huge lines at government offices, the busy plazas. Our personnel—in and out of the store—will wear chef-type uniforms (photo to come, of course), with our name embroidered tastefully, and a matching hat. Outside salesmen will carry about 100 plastic-wrapped, artfully-labeled cookies in vendor trays strapped around their necks like hotdog vendors in the bleachers at U.S. sporting events. They will be very mobile and very distinctive and noticeable. (I'm going to try for people only above 7 feet tall. :-)) They will be happy because they will be the best-paid vendors in town, thanks to an upscale product. In the store, we'll sell individual cookies, boxes of a dozen, coffee, fruit juice, and some other drinks. We have room for just a few tables, but can expand to a widened sidewalk covered by an awning pretty easily if the future warrants. Once people discover the little bites of Heaven that we sell for very little more than ordinary treats which no one else makes, I think we'll have something interesting and, hopefully, very profitable. If others copy, we'll still stand out, and everyone will know we're the original and genuine best. We'll do whatever it takes to be the best! That's the plan in a nutshell.

We know so many people here who are great workers and want to work for us—actually, mostly with us, because our outside sales force will all be independent businesspeople, who will buy cookies from us, paying upon delivery, and will also invest a refundable deposit for their uniforms, etc. They each will need to invest about \$100 with the potential to make four or five times that every month—good money for here. More than many pharmacists with five years of college make, for instance. I'm pretty sure we'll be swamped with good applicants.

Tomorrow we'll probably sign our lease, which will start as soon as the place is completely ready for us to start moving in, possibly as soon as Wednesday, but it has to get cleaned-up, a little roof leak fixed, and a little electrical work done. Our first order of business is to get legally organized as a business. Fortunately, Marci is a lawyer and we have friends who are accountants, lawyers, and businesspeople. We will be the equivalent of a U.S. LLC (Limited Liability Corporation) as equal partners. Then we have to get our government tax ID number—called a "NIT" (I'll write about how this works at a later date). We need a couple of licenses, get our trademark application started, get our construction guy, don Joaquin, on the scene, and we'll be ready to go equipment shopping. I'll do my best to keep you posted.

If any of you have a great cookie recipe, and I bet you do, I'd love to try it. Maybe we could name it after you? Wow! You'd be famous in the entire country!

Consider this a "Before" picture. It's a cute place on a great corner near the heart of the city,  
And it will be even cuter when we get done with it (in about a month, we hope.)



You can see the hexagonal paving tiles used on many streets in Santa Cruz (pop. 2,000,000).  
The corner (*la esquina*) of Streets (*des Calles*) Tarija and ( $\gamma$ ) Manuel Ignacio Salvatierra,  
About 10 blocks (*diez quadras*) from the Central Plaza 24 de Septiembre.



Our neighborhood (*vecindad*) (late on a sleepy Saturday afternoon. Note our great trees!



20120304-11 23:59 SteveB Photo: Lake Wales, Florida

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/florida/travelblogs>

Bok Tower Gardens at Sunset with the Bells Playing



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #88 — MAR. 6, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Free Trade vs. Democracy**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 6, 2012)



America is desperately in need of jobs and has been for a long time. Yet the discussion of how things got that way and what we can do about it, other than glittering generalities, seems to be completely missing from American politics. I've been saying it for years and will keep saying it: "FREE" TRADE IS NOT FREE. THE ENTIRE GAME IS TILTED AGAINST THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. LAWS MUST BE CHANGED TO "ENCOURAGE" COMPANIES TO INVEST IN AMERICA. FOREIGN PROFITS MUST BE TAXED WITH A PENALTY TAX. DOMESTIC PROFITS REINVESTED OR PAID AS DOMESTIC SALARIES SHOULD NOT BE TAXED AT ALL. OTHER THAN PENALTY TAXES, INCOME TAXES ON AMERICAN BUSINESSES SHOULD NOT EXIST.

But my emphasis has always been economic. Now we understand that the human cost of "free" trade, both here and abroad, is enormous.

"Free Trade or Democracy, Can't Have Both" by Dave Johnson, NationofChange

Mar. 4, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/free-trade-or-democracy-can-t-have-both-1330873243>)

Recent stories about the conditions of Apple's contractors in China have opened many people's eyes about where our jobs, factories, industries and economy have been going, and why. The stories exposed that workers live 6-to-12-to-a-room in dormitories, get rousted at midnight to work surprise 12-hour shifts, get paid very little, use toxic chemicals, suffer extreme pollution of the environment, etc. Is this "trade?" Or is it something else?

### Is This "Trade?"

"Trade" means to exchange, to buy and sell, you buy from me and I buy from you. I have something you want and you have something I want, and we exchange. We both end up better off than where we started.

Is it "trade" to close a factory here and move it to a country where people don't have a say? It is "trade" to just move all of the machines from a factory here to a factory there, send the same parts and raw materials over there, and then bring bring back whatever it was the factory used to make and sell it in the same places here? Is that really "trade?" Or would another word be more appropriate?

### When People Have A Say

When people have a say we insist on good wages, benefits, safe working conditions, and a clean environment. We even go so far as to say we want good public schools, parks, and opportunities for our smaller businesses. When We, the People have a say we get so uppity and ask for the most outrageous things!

### Efficiency vs. Humanity

Yes, countries where people do not have a say are more "efficient" and "business friendly." Countries where people do not have a say can make things at a much lower cost than workers where people have rights. But when we let exploitation of human beings be a competitive advantage it undermines our own democracy. It means that democracy is a competitive disadvantage in world markets.

### We Can't "Compete" With This, We Have To Fight It

Let's get right to the core of this. Suppose the South actually did rise again, and they reimposed all-out slavery. Would it be "trade" to close factories here and move them south, so the companies would have lower costs?

When we allow companies to just import stuff that is made by exploited workers in countries where people do not have a say, we are granting not-having-a-say an advantage over having a say. We make democracy a competitive disadvantage.

### This Is About Preserving Democracy, Not About "Trade"

How often do you come across arguments that "globalization" and "free trade" mean that America's workers have to accept that the days of good-paying jobs and US-based manufacturing are over? We hear that countries like China are more "competitive." We hear that "trade" means that because it's cheaper to make things over there we all benefit from lower-cost goods that we import.

How often do you hear that we need to cut wages and benefits, work longer hours, get rid of overtime and sick pay? They say we should shed unions, get rid of environmental and safety regulations, gut government services, and especially, especially, especially we should cut taxes.

What they are saying is that we need to shed our democracy, to be more competitive.

**P.S. Tell Congress and the White House to Stop China's Illegal and Unfair Trade Practices:**

**[http://capwiz.com/americanmanufacturing/issues/alert/?alertid=60932291&MC\\_plugin=2801](http://capwiz.com/americanmanufacturing/issues/alert/?alertid=60932291&MC_plugin=2801).**

Read the last line. The plot thickens...

Whata phenomena: Limbaugh did not reply to msnbc.com's request for a comment.

"A 7th Advertiser Pulls Out of Limbaugh's Show" by Tali Arbel, AP

Mar. 4, 2012, (<http://www.newsday.com/business/a-7th-advertiser-pulls-out-of-limbaugh-s-show-1.3577423>)

(NEW YORK) A flower company is the seventh advertiser to pull its ads from conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh's radio program in reaction to his derogatory comments about a law student who testified about birth control policy.

ProFlowers said Sunday on its Facebook page that it has suspended advertising on Limbaugh's program because his comments about Georgetown University student Sandra Fluke "went beyond political discourse to a personal attack and do not reflect our values as a company."

The six other advertisers that say they have pulled ads from his show are mortgage lender Quicken Loans, mattress retailers Sleep Train and Sleep Number, software maker Citrix Systems Inc., online data backup service provider Carbonite and online legal document services company LegalZoom.

ProFlowers had said on Twitter that posts it received about Limbaugh's remarks affected its advertising strategy. ProFlowers is an online flower delivery service.

Limbaugh called the 30-year-old Fluke a "slut" and "prostitute" last week after she testified to congressional Democrats in support of national health care policies that would compel employers and other organizations, including her university, to offer group health insurance that covers birth control for women.

He apologized to Fluke on Saturday after being criticized by Republican and Democratic politicians and after several advertisers left the show.

Clear Channel's Premiere Radio Networks Inc. hosts Limbaugh's program, one of the country's most popular talk radio shows. The company is supporting Limbaugh, whose on-air contract with Premiere runs through 2016.

"The contraception debate is one that sparks strong emotion and opinions on both sides of the issue," Premiere Networks said in a statement emailed Sunday by spokeswoman Rachel Nelson. "We respect the right of Mr. Limbaugh, as well as the rights of those who disagree with him, to express those opinions."

Clear Channel Media and Entertainment operates more than 850 radio stations in the U.S., and Premiere says it's the largest radio content provider in the country, syndicating programs to more than 5,000 affiliate stations.

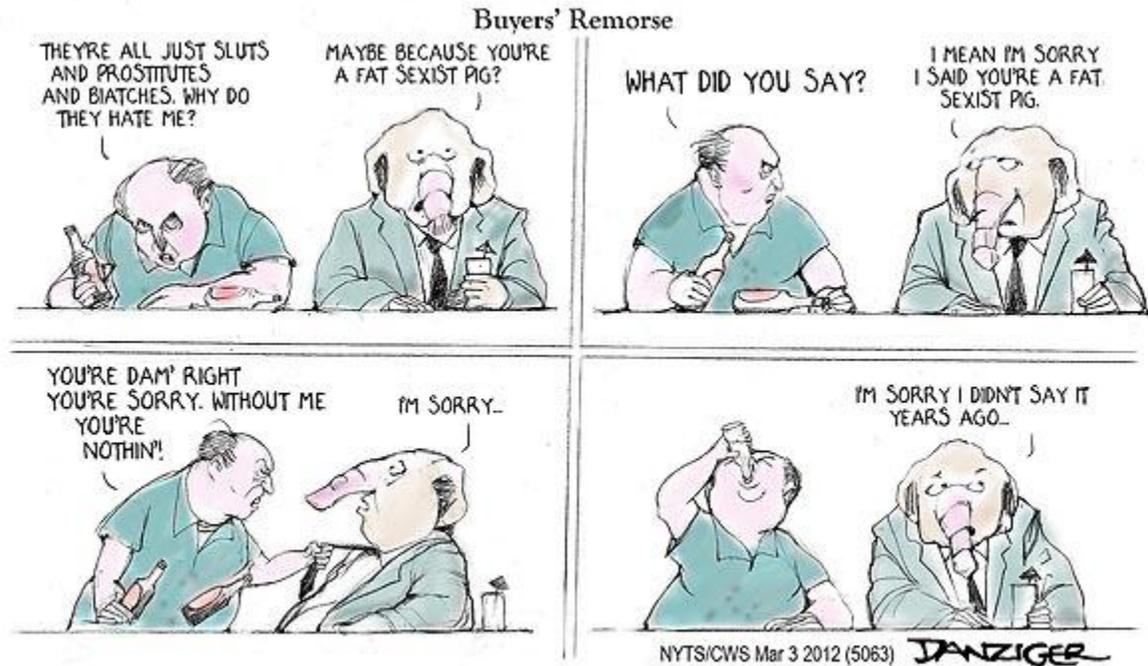
When asked which companies or organizations were the largest advertisers on Limbaugh's show, Nelson said that that information was "proprietary." Nelson didn't immediately respond Sunday to questions about how much revenue the company will lose with the advertiser defections or how much revenue Limbaugh's show brings in.

Clear Channel's parent company was taken private in 2008 by private equity firms Thomas H. Lee Partners and Bain Capital.

You're so right, Beth. I wouldn't go back in time, certainly not to the days before polio vaccine and all the other medical advances of the past 40 years. I had measles before there was a vaccine, and I was sick for a year from

complications. Children did die (and still do) because they weren't buckled safely in the car. I loved my physical freedom when I was a kid, but that was before Polly Klaas and Elizabeth Smart. There was no PBS, no Masterpiece Theater, no brie in the supermarket, no decent wine; there was a lot we didn't have in the "good old days." The one thing I do miss is kids being untethered from TV, computer, and cell phone. Just running around in the sunshine--or the rain or snow--was soul-enhancing. Imagination was required to avoid boredom. Overall, I think life is better today. Our kids will be just as nostalgic for the 20'teens as we are for the 50s, 60s, and 70s.

20120305-03 11:02 SteveG Cartoon: "Buyers' Remorse"



20120305-05 15:39 SteveG Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Rush Limbaugh Must Go!

The petition lists remaining advertisers of Rush. [List not found. -SteveB]

Medications are medications and treat medical problems. Contraception medications allow for treatment of certain medical conditions for women, they are not a religious issue but a medical issue.

Imus got fired within two days for comments and yet Rush is still around – double standard?

from Daily Kos:

Nine advertisers have pulled their support for Rush Limbaugh's radio program over his outrageous personal attacks on Sandra Fluke. As the outrage continues to grow, the number keeps climbing.

Nearly 100,000 members of the Daily Kos community have signed our petition telling Rush Limbaugh's remaining advertisers to pull their support. Please, add your name now before we deliver the signatures tomorrow:

[http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=81](http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=81).

Keep fighting, Joan McCarter, Daily Kos

[20120305-09](#) 17:52 SteveB Re: Daily Kos Petition: Rush Limbaugh Must Go! (reply to SteveG, above)

You are exactly right about the medical issue part, SteveG. The oral contraceptive for women is a very useful medicine. And these are the same insurance companies, that I believe (though it seems impossible) have no problem covering Viagra for men? Is that correct? Where is Viagra mentioned in the Bible? In the part where it's OK if I make slaves of my daughters? (Gee, maybe the morality in the Bible is rooted in a slightly more primitive culture. Slavery and ridiculous sanctions don't seem very timeless nor divine to me.)

I think Rush can't get it up because that's God's way of telling him to slow down. Maybe he should listen and retire! Frustrated, anal-retentive as\*-hole!

[20120305-08](#) 17:51 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Action: Rush Limbaugh Must Go!

from Daily Kos:

Please send an email to Armed Forces Network, asking them to support servicewomen and women veterans and stop airing Rush Limbaugh's radio program.

In addition to the eleven sponsors that have withdrawn their advertising from Rush Limbaugh's radio program, now a group of female veterans are calling on Armed Forces Network to drop Rush Limbaugh from its programming. Here is an excerpt from the letter they sent to the network:

Rush Limbaugh has a freedom of speech and can say what he wants, but in light of his horribly misogynistic comments, American Forces Radio should no longer give him a platform. Our entire military depends on troops respecting each other – women and men. There simply can be no place on military airwaves for sentiments that would undermine that respect. When many of our female troops use birth control, for Limbaugh to say they are “sluts” and “prostitutes” is beyond the pale. It isn't just disrespectful to our women serving our country, but it's language that goes against everything that makes our military work.

Support servicewomen and women veterans by joining their call: send an email to Armed Forces Network, asking them to stop airing Rush Limbaugh's radio program:

[http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=84](http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=84)

Keep fighting, Kaili Joy Gray, Daily Kos

[20120305-13](#) 22:17 SteveB Rush Limbaugh's Giant Lie (& Joke) of the Day

From Rush Limbaugh (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0312/73619.html>):

“I always tried to maintain a very high degree of integrity and independence on this program.” --RL

LOL! This is why Rush has always reminded me of Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite, or Wolf Blitzer. A paragon of truth and integrity. (I love it that he slipped and used the past tense.)

“In fighting them [the Demoncrats --SteveB] on this issue last week, I became like them. Against my own instincts, against my own knowledge, against everything I know to be right and wrong, I descended to their level when I used those two words to describe Sandra Fluke. That was my error. I became like them.” --RL

LOL! Ya, that damned Obama is famous for calling private female citizens “ho's”. Happens every day. But, of course, the evil liberal media never reports it, but let Limbaugh make one little innocent mistake and they're on him like Santorum on his famous “man-on-dog”.

I believe the "scam" is much grander than indicated—extending to the common fallacy that "natural" is inherently any better in the first place.

"The 'All Natural' Scam: How to Shop Healthy for You and Your Family" by Andre Evans, NationofChange

Mar. 5, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/all-natural-scam-how-shop-healthy-you-and-your-family-1330966761>)

How do you make an educated food purchase that will protect you and your family from harmful yet common food contaminants? You must be privy to the subtleties. Many people today accept 'all natural' as a stamp of integrity for their food. FDA regulations, however, make the guidelines for authenticity rather lenient, and capitalize on the unawareness of the average buyer with strong advertising.

The average person on a base level acknowledges that there are dangerous additives like MSG and high fructose corn syrup in many products. As a result, they generally attempt to avoid these, and will instead often pick a product with an 'all natural' label in an effort to do so. Products that are labeled as such, however, oftentimes don't contain many 'natural' ingredients.

Under federal regulations, it's entirely acceptable to include additives that are not even deemed as 'natural', or use unnatural preparation methods like frying, genetic modification, or pasteurization. The product only has to be part 'natural'. But what does natural really mean?

The definition of a 'natural' product has no defined parameters in law or regulation, so essentially these products can be — and are easily — as contaminated as what the consumer may have originally tried to avoid.

In a cunning way, company advertisers have adapted to the fact that consumers are aware of the issues with their food products, but have performed a proverbial hijack by marketing their products within what the consumer believes to be the alternative to chemical-laden food. These products pose as the real deal, but are often just as unhealthy as their formers.

Generally, consumers think they want 'all natural' products, but really are looking for certified organic foods. Certified organic products are generally of higher quality and maintain greater nutritional value than conventional foods and the 'natural' alternatives.

Despite even this, organic labeling requires only 70% of the product to be organic in order for it to be certified. This means that similar to how the 'natural' foods are manipulated, the product can be organic, yet still be subject to unnatural preparation methods. In addition, the product may contain certain quantities of non-organic substance.

What people are really looking for are the most unprocessed, purest organic foods they can buy or grow. These are the highest in nutritional value, and are completely free of any form of manipulation. If they are self grown (to get started check out our starting guide on organic gardening), then they are subject solely to the individual's care, and are completely free of processing or outside manipulation. Despite this, many do not grow their own foods, and there are good products to be found out there.

So what does the smart consumer look for?

- Organic products will contain a percentage of organic content as indicated on label. Look for the highest possible percentage rates.
- GMO-free foods. Among health concerns, genetically modified food is arguably the highest priority to avoid. Most foods that contain GMOs are not labeled. GMO-free products make a note that they are such, often with a verified GMO-free label.

- Pay attention to certain food processing methods, like pasteurization, irradiation, or frying.
- Check sugar and salt content. Despite being organic, it's still not healthy to consume huge amounts of sugar or sodium.
- Most oils used in products (canola, sunflower, vegetable) unless otherwise stated, may be GMO.
- Avoid soy as it is one of the most genetically modified crops used in food products today.
- Avoid artificial sweeteners like aspartame and sucralose. [But not "stevia" from Bolivia! Great product! Natural! –SteveB]
- Note the number of ingredients in a product in general. The less number of ingredients, the less processed it is, and usually foregoes the majority of chemical additives.

You may even be so inclined as to learn the names for many of the artificial preservatives, so you are aware of their presence in foods. Often when you can't pronounce or recognize what it is, it likely should not be a part of your diet.

20120305-07	16:55	SteveG	"Where Are the Progressive Christians?"
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Interesting article, especially when combined with the "60 Minutes" report that ran last night (Mar. 4) in regards to the Catholic church in Ireland. No priest is allowed to speak or be alone with a child – another adult has to be present. Further, the Vatican has pulled its ambassador to Ireland. All because of the abuse of priests against children and the following cover ups.

Please read the article, below, then go back and watch the "60 Minute" piece.

"Where Are the Progressive Christians?" by Dekker Dreyer, NationofChange

Mar. 5, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/where-are-progressive-christians-1330960317>)

Where are the left-wing Christian voices in American politics? The rise of Rick Santorum to a contender position in the GOP primary race, alongside the current debate over contraception has shown proof positive that Christian conservative politics are near the height of their power in guiding the national conversation. This month, while questioning President Obama's Christianity, Bill O'Reilly said, "A Christian wouldn't be telling other Christians that you have to put your belief system aside and do what the government tells you as far as birth control or anything else." On every front it appears that this year's Republican political race will be defined by theology, but why is the Christian perspective so one sided?

I, like nearly one in four Americans, am not a Christian. In fact, I was raised as secular and my understanding of the Christian faith has been an education from afar. I have never belonged to a church and likewise I have never seen any reason to deny anyone of any faith their right to worship. Over the past decade I have to admit that my primary source of information about the Christian church has been through mainstream coverage of fundamentalist talking points. I know that by human nature there must be a difference of political opinion within Christianity, if there wasn't then numbers alone would dictate that the 78% of Americans who are Christian would continually out-vote liberals. But where are they in the national media? Why do these Christians allow conservative fundamentalists to dictate the popular perception of their faith? The answer is more complicated than it would seem.

In some schools of thought Christians are not supposed to, by virtue of their faith, publicly disagree with any church leaders. This is a bible-backed mandate based upon interpretation of scripture. In a Feb. 14, 2012 sermon on the nationally syndicated radio show "The Gospel Truth"<sup>1</sup>, Rev. Andrew Wommack is quoted as saying:

“God calls people to be leaders in the church. He raises up apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. So God ordained this governmental system in the body of Christ. But does that mean that every pastor functions exactly the way God wants them to? Does that mean every one of them is perfect so therefore you have to just submit to everything that they say? No. This isn’t saying that people don’t make mistakes and that there’s not room for improvement, but I’m telling you this... that rather than you go in if somebody does something wrong as a member of the church and splitting the church and coming against the governmental system and saying I don’t like the way you’re doing it so I’m criticizing you, you’re worse than the person and what they’re doing wrong.”

This thread of ambiguous punishment for criticizing church authority is only one in a variety of issues facing the rise of a left-leaning Christian movement. Another set of obstacles is in the insular nature of the Christian community itself. If you are not inside of the Christian religious community you may be largely unaware of the amount of media outlets that cater specifically to the faithful. In every part of the United States you’ll find numerous radio and television stations that deliver information directly to their target audience. Aside from broadcast media, the local Christian infrastructure often includes multiple churches, faith-based civic organizations, Christian business coalitions, and after school programs. The need for national media outreach may seem unnecessary to liberal minded Christians when there are so many options for them to make themselves heard within the religious spectrum.

I asked the operators of the blog community, “Christians Tired of Being Misrepresented”<sup>2</sup>, about this and received the following quote in email:

**Jesus never demanded attention, prominence, recognition, influence or wealth. He went about doing the will of the Father, touching lives one by one. While the Religious Right cloaks itself as the "Christian Choice" merely because they are anti-choice and loudly proclaim selectively chosen scriptures from the Bible as their political platform, it seems like they get all the attention. Generally, Christian Liberals are less interested in the attention and more interested in changing the lives of their neighbor through love and social justice.**

It may have the best of intentions, but the local action agenda may not be enough to combat the conservative media machine. The belief in ground-level insular politics is not shared by well funded right-wing organizations like The Speak Up Movement of the Alliance Defense Fund<sup>3</sup> which offers guidance and legal assistance to churches who wish to preach a fundamental political agenda while maintaining their tax exempt status. This goes hand in hand with methods employed by the Christian Coalition of America who regularly circumvent the issue of individual churches maintaining their tax exempt status by being a third party entity which supplies agenda pamphlets and other supporting materials directly to church members.

Although their mainstream reach may be limited, some Christians are breaking the mold and speaking out against fundamentalists. I posed the question of why politically liberal Christians have not gained the kind of media traction that their conservative counterparts enjoy to the organization “The Christian Left”. They are a movement-based organization that fosters a growing Facebook community of over 60,000 members. Their CEO, Charles Toy, referred me to a recent radio interview on KLAJ AM’s “The Practical Christian”<sup>4</sup> program in which board member Rev. Mark Sandlin is quoted as saying:

One of the reasons why the right is so connected is because they’ve been around for so long and they kind of naturally formed these connections; and then you look at our side, in terms of if we’re naming who’s on what side, the Christian Left is, at least in comparison, a fairly new movement.

Longevity may be a factor, but it’s not the whole story. Many Christians know that a ground-swell of conservative politics sprung up in their churches over the past thirty years, but not as many know how. To understand the rise of fundamental politics you need to understand one man, Pat Robertson. His position in the current world of conservative Christianity can’t be understated and in many ways he is the architect of it. In a playing field that included Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority and Robert Grant’s Christian Voice organization, only Pat Robertson’s political ministry has stood the test of time. Robertson’s influence extends not only into the media and church, but directly into American politics through campaign contributions and placement of his Regent University students in positions of government. He also actively fights the judiciary through his American Center for Law and Justice, a conservative counterpoint to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Robertson is one of the forefathers of televangelism, having started the foundations of his Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in 1960 by buying a small rural UHF affiliate. It wasn't until 1977 that cable television made his long-established dream of a national media outlet for conservative Christians a reality. His rise to celebrity came quickly and donations to his organization could now be solicited at the national level through his ever expanding cable television properties, making his ministry one of the best funded in the world. In 1986, when Falwell's Moral Majority was in its twilight, he gained greater exposure by running for the United State's Presidency. Robertson is the son of Virginia congressman / senator Absalom Willis Robertson whose collective political career in Washington lasted 33 years. Robertson learned first-hand the power of political office and how the fundamentalist agenda could be served by mingling religion with politics. His 1988 bout for the Republican nomination ultimately failed, but what was left in its wake was a new era for right-wing theologians. In 1989, Robertson, now flush with cash from his exposure as a Republican candidate, continued to operate CBN and "The 700 Club", but began building a network of theo-political organizations to further his agenda. The first was the aforementioned Christian Coalition for America. That same year he renamed his small campus for theological study to Regent University, placed himself as chancellor, and established a distance learning program to expand its reach nationally. In 1990 he founded the American Center for Law and Justice to fight on behalf of his beliefs in the court system.

In the years that followed, Robertson continued to directly aid political candidates, including being a major campaign financier to Virginia Attorney General Mark Earley (R), who in 1999 refused prosecution of Robertson on charges of willfully misleading the public in solicitation of donations against the recommendation of the Commonwealth of Virginia's Office of Consumer Affairs. In 1994 Robertson's Christian Coalition was sued by the Federal Election Commission for "coordinating its activities with Republican candidates for office in 1990, 1992 and 1994 and failing to report its expenditures"<sup>5</sup>, after which the Coalition was fined for improperly financing current GOP primary candidate, and then Representative, Newt Gingrich.

Robertson's acolytes have continued to foster the politicalization of Christianity with many Regent University graduates entering government under the Bush administration. These hirings came under fire in 2007 by The Boston Globe<sup>6</sup> due to George W. Bush's appointment of Kay Coles James, former Dean of Regent's Government School as Director of the Office of Personnel Management prior to the hirings.

In essence, a small group of well-funded, politically connected, conservative theologians have controlled nearly every aspect of the national Christian political message for over two decades. Robertson's strategies for political organization in the name of Christianity have been used as a template to establish many modern conservative groups and churches.

Even though Christians may have their own religious conflicts with speaking against fellow believers, it's clear that the system is rigged against them even if they decide to take a public stand. The statements from The Christian Left hold serious weight when examined against the history of the rise of fundamentalism. What makes things difficult for liberal Christians isn't finding their voice, but finding the platform to broadcast it. The opposition to their message is well established. With conservative news organizations in close relationships with the fundamentalists, especially Fox who purchased Pat Robertson's Family Channel in 1997, Christians who don't share conservative political views are hard-pressed to get air time.

The left is also at fault. Many progressive news organizations consider faith-based commentary outside of their editorial mandate, and they may be doing a disservice to themselves by that. Perhaps the left oriented political press should be more welcoming of voices from Christianity who have a different point of view from what is presented by the fundamentalist lobbying arm of their religion. With three out of four Americans associating themselves as Christian, embracing the liberal voices from that community and giving them a platform might help to close the rift between secular America and believers; A rift that a select few conservative political organizations have fought so hard, and spent so much, to widen.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup><http://www.awmi.net/radio/2012/week7>

<sup>2</sup><http://christianstiredofbeingmisrepresented.blogspot.com/>

<sup>3</sup><http://speakupmovement.org/church>

<sup>4</sup><http://soundcloud.com/thechristianleft/111022-1>

<sup>5</sup><http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-dc-circuit/1354172.html>

<sup>6</sup>[http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2007/04/08/scandal\\_puts\\_spotlight\\_on\\_christian\\_law\\_school/?page=full](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2007/04/08/scandal_puts_spotlight_on_christian_law_school/?page=full)

20120305-10	20:21	MarthaH	Quotes: Bipartisan
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The problem with political jokes is they get elected.

—Henry Cate

We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.

—Aesop

If we got one-tenth of what was promised to us in these acceptance speeches there wouldn't be any inducement to go to heaven.

—Will Rogers

Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber.

—Plato

Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.

—Nikita Khrushchev

When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President; I'm beginning to believe it.

—Clarence Darrow

Why pay money to have your family tree traced; go into politics and your opponents will do it for you.

—Author Unknown

Politicians are people who, when they see light at the end of the tunnel, go out and buy some more tunnel.

—John Quinton

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.

—Oscar Ameringer

I offer my opponents a bargain: if they will stop telling lies about us, I will stop telling the truth about them.

—Adlai Stevenson, campaign speech, 1952

A politician is a fellow who will lay down your life for his country.

—Texas Guinan

Any American who is prepared to run for president should automatically, by definition, be disqualified from ever doing so.

—Gore Vidal

I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.

—Charles de Gaulle

Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks.

—Doug Larson

Don't vote; it only encourages them.

—Author Unknown

There ought to be one day - just one - when there is open season on senators.

—Will Rogers

[20120305-11](#) 21:11 Pam Re: Quotes: Bipartisan (reply to MarthaH, above)

Wonderful. Each and every one.

[20120305-12](#) 21:42 SteveB Re: Quotes: Bipartisan (reply to MarthaH, above)

Excellent! Thank you.

I love my job. I love fighting for what I believe in. I love having fun while doing it. I love reporting stories that the Complex refuses to report. I love fighting back, I love finding allies, and - famously - I enjoy making enemies.

—Andrew Breitbart

[20120305-04](#) 11:21 Art Re: Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 1 (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #87)

I'll take a dozen!

[20120305-14](#) 23:58 SteveB Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 2

We actually got quite a lot done today, though it may not sound like much.

1. We rounded-up samples of five possible vendor trays for our outside salesmen. We will probably have the final product made by a local artisan—of wicker or whatever you call that. They must be above average looking (the vendor trays, not the artisan, GaryC). Distinctive.
2. We looked at some promising chairs in a few places and even saw a couple of refrigerators nearby. We have identified much of our other required equipment—mixer, oven, A-C, water heater, sink, etc.
3. I spent some time (while Marci worked half a day lawyering) going over possible fonts for our logo and emailed back and forth with my logo design artist in Portugal. We discussed dark chocolate brown as a good possibility for one of our colors, probably with some shade of red and white.
4. I thought about couches and a coffee table for one area of the shop instead of table and chairs.
5. We had a long meeting with our accountant discussing business organization, taxes, etc. We have decided to skip the limited liability corporation temporarily and quickly form a proprietorship with a side contract between Marci and me that covers partnership. Partnerships don't exist here the way they do in the U.S., for some reason. We will pay a 13%+3% quasi-value-added tax on sales, recoverable from the same tax we pay on equipment and materials. We will also pay a 25% income tax on profit at the end of the year. There are no personal income taxes in Bolivia, though wages are subject to 13% of the quasi-value-added tax, also recoverable when taxes are paid—essentially to avoid double-and-up taxation. This is why I call it a *quasi*-value-added tax.
6. We fantasized and dreamed together about what it will all be like.

We'll probably see our landlords tomorrow and arrange a few things. We can't actually sign the contract until we have a tax ID number, known in Bolivia as the famous "NIT". (Famous because that's the number many people must use everywhere, for anything they buy, in order to recover taxes paid.) I'm sure other adventures await.

[20120305-15](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Cuevas Falls, Samaipata, Bolivia

<http://www.myperuboliviatickets.com/blog/samaipata-2.html>

Cuevas Falls, Samaipata, Bolivia (Ahhhh! Refreshing!)



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

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Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #89 — MAR. 7, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **What Has America Become?**

(posted by Dick and Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 7, 2012)

from Dick (Mar. 6, 2012, 11:23):

This is getting nationwide attention. Where is Tawas City, MI? Actually, it is on Lake Huron and has a population of just over 2,000!! Go figure. A Small MICHIGAN NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL.....Short and to the point...

Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, and your government when it deserves it.

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

What Has America Become?

Editor,

Has America become the land of special interest and home of the double standard?

Lets see: if we lie to the Congress, it's a felony and if the Congress lies to us its just politics; if we dislike a black person, we're racist and if a black person dislikes whites, its their 1st Amendment right; the government spends millions to rehabilitate criminals and they do almost nothing for the victims; in public schools you can teach that homosexuality is OK, but you better not use the word God in the process; you can kill an unborn child, but it is wrong to execute a mass murderer; we don't burn books in America, we now rewrite them; we got rid of communist and socialist threats by renaming them progressive; we are unable to close our border with Mexico, but have no problem protecting the 38th parallel in Korea; if you protest against President Obama's policies you're a terrorist, but if you burned an American flag or George Bush in effigy it was your 1st Amendment right.

You can have pornography on TV or the internet, but you better not put a nativity scene in a public park during Christmas; we have eliminated all criminals in America, they are now called sick people; we can use a human fetus for medical research, but it is wrong to use an animal.

We take money from those who work hard for it and give it to those who don't want to work; we all support the Constitution, but only when it supports our political ideology; we still have freedom of speech, but only if we are being politically correct; parenting has been replaced with Ritalin and video games; the land of opportunity is now the land of hand outs; the similarity between Hurricane Katrina and the gulf oil spill is that neither president did anything to help.

And how do we handle a major crisis today? The government appoints a committee to determine who's at fault, then threatens them, passes a law, raises our taxes; tells us the problem is solved so they can get back to their reelection campaign.

What has happened to the land of the free and home of the brave?

—Ken HuberTawas City, MI (6/910)

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— Ken Huber  
Tawas City

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reply by SteveB:

This letter, published June 9, 2010 and written to the editor of a small Michigan newspaper, is all over the web. I fail to see why this piece of nothing would even make the rounds, let alone resonate. Maybe that just shows how many vaguely disgruntled citizens are out there. But compounding errors and distortions does not produce truth. After quite a bit of searching, I finally found a posting that makes a start at debunking this piece of fake-bipartisan flim-flam. Maybe I can expand upon it a little. My comments to the original letter writer and to the debunker are bracketed [ ].

"Response to Ken Huber and 'What Has America Become?'" posted by dolphindentist

Oct. 25, 2010, , (<http://dolphindentist.blogspot.com/2010/10/response-to-ken-huber-and-what-has.html>)

This letter has been going around the right-wing email circuit, and I wanted to briefly address each of Mr. Huber's comments.

Ken Huber has some good points but his timeline seems to be confused...

[I would add that the letter is full of Right-wing innuendo, without much that can definitely be identified much more specifically. The exact meaning would depend upon what decade the author is referring to or stuck in. and what he has in mind—often a mystery, here. Vagueness is the watchword. —SteveB]

"Has America become the land of special interest and home of the double standard?"

Yes, when we seceded from the union (with Britain)... We have been such ever since, regardless of who has been paying attention.

[OK, we are the land of special interests, but many of us would define those special interests as the rich and powerful. I believe the author of this letter would define them as the poor and needy. The term "double standard", when applied to something as huge as decades of American government, becomes totally and completely devoid of meaning. --SteveB]

"Let's see, if we lie to the Congress, it's a felony and if the Congress lies to us it's just politics..."

Correct. This is because we don't require Congressmen to swear an oath every time they speak. Regular people lie all the time and it's not a felony. You're forgetting that Congressmen are just regular people going to work, and you seem to be under the impression that they were all completely truthful at one point..?

[In one of the last possibly bipartisan statements in the letter, the author attempts to call attention to the fact that Congressmen receive special treatment under and above their laws. So what else is new and how could you state the idea more poorly? --SteveB]

"If we dislike a black person, we're racist and if a black person dislikes whites, it's their 1st Amendment right."

Both of these things are racist and both of them are First Amendment rights. There wouldn't be a Constitution guaranteeing you the freedom to be a perfect person, this document would be unnecessary. BTW, if certain people give African Americans a pass for being racially ignorant, it's because the American double standard has shafted them historically harder than other groups, and perhaps they actually have a tiny reason to dislike us.

[Well, we now know the author of the letter is white. Notice the more subtle racism: "we" (the white people, plural) dislike "a black person" (singular), but the "black person" (singular) dislikes "whites" (plural, all whites). So the white person is made out to be a normal human in a group that might not like a particular person who happens to be black. How innocent! But then we are presented with one black person who is a total racist, as if these two examples are perfectly equal, representative, and somehow produce a "wrong" that has to be endured by innocent white people. This is not a representation of any truth except the truth that the author is a racist, in my view. --SteveB]

"The government spends millions to rehabilitate criminals and they do almost nothing for the victims."

My imagination isn't potent enough to fathom what it's like to have my life so far into the gutter that robbing a liquor store seems like a good idea... The sad truth of the matter is that we don't all share the same morals, intelligence, work ethic, education, psychological health, etc. etc. But if one of our worst hypocrisies as a nation is that we attempt to turn criminals into decent people.... I guess this doesn't enrage me as much as it should.

[Very well said by the unknown author of the rebuttal. I guess both authors are unknown, actually. I would argue that it's not like the government does "nothing" for victims, but how would the government get more money to do more in this deficit-doom scenario produced and enforced by the Right? Would the author really want the federal government to add a Department of Crime Victim Relief, even if that might not be a bad idea? I believe these are crocodile tears shed for the victims. And we all know that the efforts to rehabilitate criminals is so minimal as to be amazing, given that we have more people in prisons than any other nation. --SteveB]

"In public schools you can teach that homosexuality is OK, but you better not use the word God in the process."

But we teach that God is okay. In one form or another we all learned about the religious freedom of America, we're just not allowed to tell kids they have to believe in God anymore than we tell them they have to be homosexuals. How is this inconsistent?

[Are there really schools that teach that homosexuality is OK? I have my doubts. As to God in the schools and government, well, the majority of Americans decided long ago that they want freedom of religion and separation of government and religion = separation of education (public) and religion. Get used to it. Learn to appreciate your sacred-to-the-Right Constitution, literally written letter by letter by the Holy Spirit Himself. –SteveB]

"You can kill an unborn child, but it is wrong to execute a mass murderer."

I don't think mass murderers have as good of a reputation as you presume. [LOL! –SteveB] Also, unborn children are generally thought more highly of than "it's okay to kill them". But the reason it's LEGAL to kill them is one of the unfortunate results of a complicated society filled with contrasting world-views. You've had this discussion I'm sure.

[To me, the Constitution-worshipping Right are the ones who should be leading the charge against the death penalty. There's big, bad government again, intruding upon the rights of the individual, just like with (bang, bang) taking away guns. Don't they see the similarity? And what about the long history of mistakes, corruption, and abuse of the death penalty? Why should the government be permitted such uncorrectable finality? And, of course, "killing an unborn child" is about the most extreme way abortion could possibly be stated. Inflammatory and irrational. I don't even need to discuss morality because, as the debunker states, we live in a "complicated society filled with contrasting world-views." World views which, by the way, are not absolute, not even the letter writer's views, obviously. –SteveB]

"We don't burn books in America, we now rewrite them."

This is a somewhat alarming complaint, and I'm hoping it's just the poetic linguistics of a traditional-minded fellow. If not, let me address it quickly. Knowledge is a constantly evolving thing. What makes a book written in 1999 more valid than a similar book written in 2010? Because it was here first? If the most effective form of chemotherapy has changed over the last ten years, should the texts on chemo not be updated? And the reason we don't burn the old volumes is because they may be useful for reference. When it comes to knowledge, less is not more.

[I'm not sure which conspiracy theory is being referenced here, but somebody is being accused of something pretty vague...someone who maybe used to burn books (certainly not the Left), but now insidiously rewrites them. Socialists? Creationists? Sex-Educationists? Contraceptionists? Does he have "bras" mixed-up with books? Did this guy ever hear of saying what you mean instead of trying to disguise it? –SteveB]

"We got rid of communist and socialist threats by renaming them progressive."

The claim seems to be that language is being strategically used to affect attitudes. I can do that too. Progress is being slowed down by people renaming it the Socialist Threat. Congratulations, you're a politician.

[True, my fellow rebutter. I might further add that yet another conspiracy theory lies thinly veiled in this sentence. Also, "progressive" is a word you don't hear much in America anymore, so whoever those folks

are, trying to destroy America by renaming stuff, they aren't succeeding very well in the progressive department. Where's the threat from something no one will claim to be? –SteveB]

"We are unable to close our border with Mexico, but have no problem protecting the 38th parallel in Korea."

I agree that we're spending too much money on foreign defense, although I think this one has something to do with your Communist Threat.

[Could the letter writer be schizophrenic? Here, he's a righty before the comma, and a lefty after. –SteveB]

"If you protest against President Obama's policies you're a terrorist, but if you burned an American flag or George Bush in effigy it was your 1st Amendment right."

Seriously? You got called a terrorist for peacefully protesting? That seems extreme.

[The letter writer finally seems willing to show his true colors—red! The sentence is nothing but an elaborate deception, complaining about non-existent wrongs. Obviously, the letter writer seeks an extension of First Amendment rights (Here, here!), though he seems to resent people who exercise these rights. – SteveB]

"You can have pornography on TV or the internet, but you better not put a nativity scene in a public park during Christmas."

This is perfectly consistent: you can have a nativity scene at home and you can't have pornography in a public park. What's the argument here? And just a side note, there is such a thing as non-sexual pornography, and the idea of a living manger out-front the capitol building is probably certain peoples' little blue pill.

[A bit of marvelously confused logic, underlaid by pretty common Evangelical sentiments against both pornography and the separation of church and state. That pesky Constitution! –SteveB]

"We have eliminated all criminals in America, they are now called sick people."

Huh? I think this is more rhetorical gymnastics. If the core of this statement is that you don't like the empathy that is given to people who break the law, then I don't know what to tell ya. They still go to jail, and their lives are still probably more or less empty. If you're mad that they're still treated like human beings then I can't really help ya on this one.

[Amen. But it is also a complaint against the famously criminal-coddling Left. –SteveB]

"We can use a human fetus for medical research, but it is wrong to use an animal."

They're not live fetuses being used for research. Again, I can appreciate the anti-abortion sentiment, as I think many people can, but there's something not-so-sacred about incest-rape. Additionally, I don't think the average American has a problem with using rats to cure cancer. Certain folks don't want animals mutated to test our style products. Don't confuse a vocal minority for a majority.

[More apples and oranges logic. –SteveB]

"We take money from those who work hard for it and give it to those who don't want to work"

Literally speaking, this is probably way less common than you'd expect. Do you think the average beneficiary of unemployment really WANTS to pad their resume with years of welfare? Maybe some, but the bigger social issue here is that unexceptional people are having too many babies, creating large quantities of unexceptional citizens.

"We all support the Constitution, but only when it supports our political ideology."

Good point, this is also nothing new.

[And is much more true of the Right than of the Left, anyway. I swear, the Second Amendment is the only part most of the Right has ever read. They largely ignore the rest. –SteveB]

"We still have freedom of speech, but only if we are being politically correct."

False. Politically incorrect people still have freedom of speech, they just don't like having to deal with the legal and non-legal consequences of their words. You can lose your job for something you say, but you're forgetting that a job is a privilege, not a constitutional right.

"Parenting has been replaced with Ritalin and video games."

Once again, too many unexceptional parents.

"The land of opportunity is now the land of hand outs."

Vote.

"The similarity between Hurricane Katrina and the gulf oil spill is that neither president did anything to help."

Fair enough.

[Except, what about that \$10 billion fund President Obama made BP create? I don't remember Bush doing much except jawing. But yeh, his actions were pretty consistent with the Republican philosophy of making people stand (or swim) on their own. Why would another Republican knock it? Especially since the victims were mainly black, people which the letter writer may have a little problem with (see below.) –SteveB]

"And how do we handle a major crisis today? The government appoints a committee to determine who's at fault, then threatens them, passes a law, raises our taxes; tells us the problem is solved so they can get back to their reelection campaign."

Duh.

[This is why we so badly need election reform. Yet no lifeboat of solutions can be permitted in this sea of vague complaints, many of which have been voiced by the Right at certain times during the last 50 years, and by the Left at other times. Complaints, like beauty, are largely in the eye of the beholder. Vague complaints like these are largely in the mind of the complainer, since they remain unexplained and unresolved. –SteveB]

"What has happened to the land of the free and home of the brave?"

This is from a song. There are still brave people and free people living here. But the reason those lyrics are popular in song form instead of document form is because they're intended to get you emotive about a vague concept, rather than particular about specific concepts. To ask "What has happened to the land of the free and home of the brave?" is to ask a rhetorical question for the purpose of making a broad statement: "I don't like the way my country is behaving as of late". But the hypocrisies that you're dealing with here are remarkably consistent with the hypocrisies we've always had. The only difference LATELY is that your fellow voters have been disagreeing with you about the details. You're mad at your government but the folks you should really be mad at are the voters who have a different outlook than you.

What you're probably MOST upset about, is that non-religious people have different values than the faithful. You are unable to see religious dogma as subjective truth. And I don't blame you, because what use would religion be if it WAS seen as subjective? I don't know how to help you reconcile this, other than to tell you to keep on voting and hope for the best. Progress and entropy are more or less two sides to the same coin. One of these (entropy) is inevitable by definition. If that's the idiom you subscribe to, then we're already doomed. If you see social movement as progress, then this is NOT inevitable, and there's hope for you. Only problem becomes dealing with the reality that you're rooting against progress. You can look at the public moving away from religion, towards humanism and see it as entropy or progress. But you can't call it neither. Or, shouldn't.

My friend, you're a man without a nation, and this is going to sound odd and strangely anti-American to say, but if this stuff is really important to you, your best bet is to join the Tea Party and start planning which Mesoamerican states are going to be fenced off for the REAL America to begin. Only awkward thing is that you're going to lose the name America and the songs and flags... Can you reconcile fighting for your secession (which you WILL win, because if there's one thing your Tea Party friends will have, it's lots of guns--and if there's one thing godless neo-liberals don't have, it's willingness to fight and die for anything) when after the dust settles, you'll have your perfect set of small-government laws but a less traditional flag to wave, different songs to learn, and a whole new set of patriots to start idolizing? Boy it's gonna be wistful, but at least things will be back to the way they.... (were?)

[20120306-10](#) 17:46 Phil Re: What Has America Become? (reply to SteveB, above)

For a little clarification, African Americans have been shafted harder than some other groups, but if you want to compare being shafted, I would suggest you check with a few Native Americans.

[20120306-12](#) 18:03 SteveB Re: What Has America Become? (reply to Phil, above)

Man, ain't that the truth.

[20120306-13](#) 18:17 Art Re: What Has America Become? (reply to SteveB, above)

Steve, I admire your patience and resolve. The writer is obviously made up and has the mind of a fourth grader. Just more white right wing racism poorly wrapped in a flag.

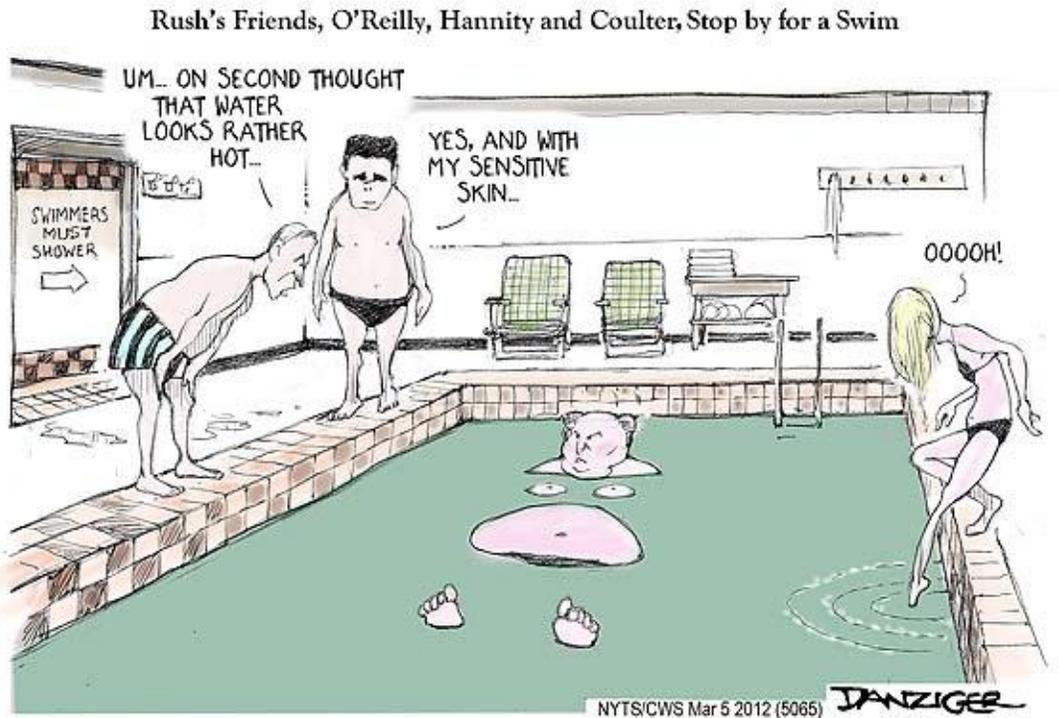
[20120306-01](#) 09:36 Art Re: Rush Limbaugh's Giant Lie (& Joke) of the Day (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #88)

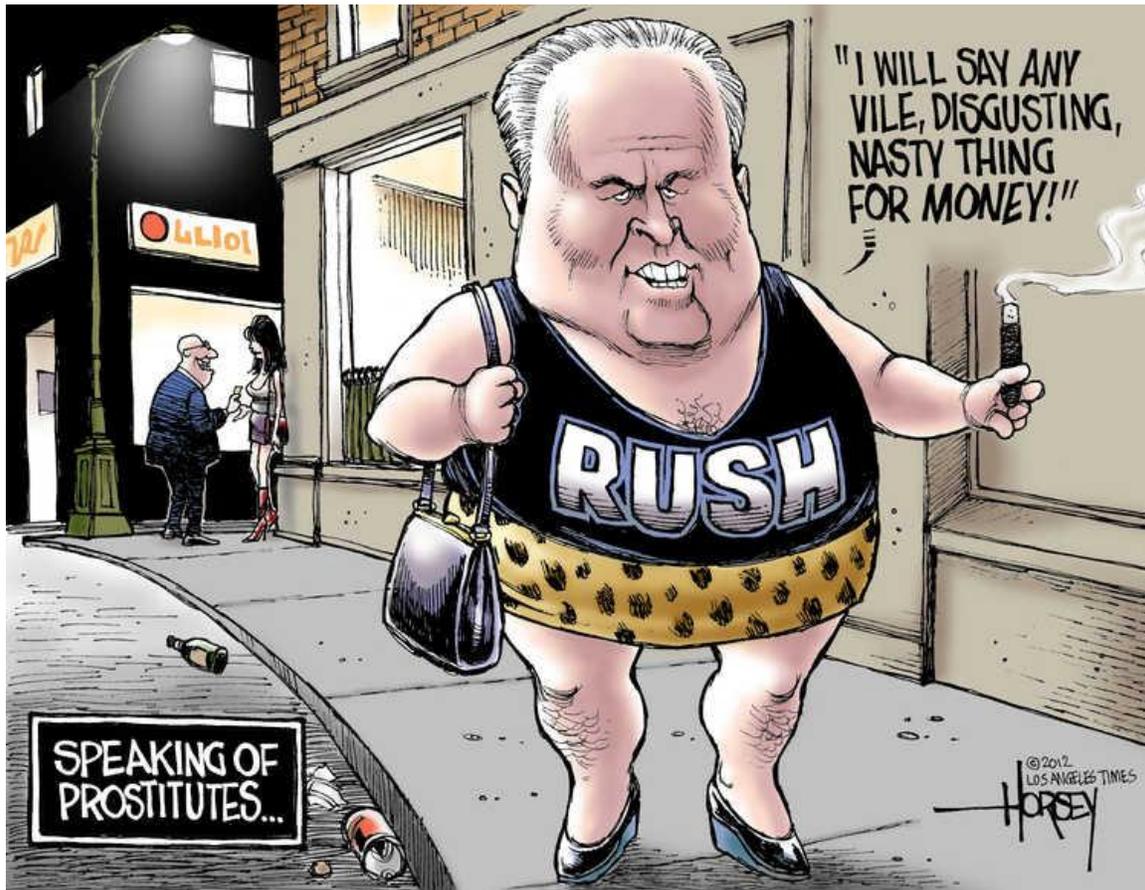
Unbelievable and some will buy this.

[20120306-02](#) 09:40 MarthaH Rush Limbaugh & Rick Santorum

How about Rush interview Santorum on aspirin stocks...just kidding/sarcastic! I might even have to listen to THAT show...Turn off the furnace with my blood pressure UP...With so many legitimate issues, how did my beloved country (yes, liberals are patriotic too!!!!) get into this "discourse." Maybe we shouldn't try to answer THAT...

20120306-05 10:12 Art Cartoons: Rush Limbaugh (A Prostitute in Hot Water)





20120306-03 10:04 SteveG Fw: The Occupied Amendment Petition: Corporations Are Not People!

from The Occupied Amendment:

Today is not Super Tuesday; it's Super PAC Tuesday! The polls may be open, but today's primary elections in Ohio, Georgia, and eight other states will unfortunately be determined by which Super PACs were flush with the most corporate cash. That's because Citizens United has turned our democracy upside down, giving corporations and their executives even more influence in our elections. While most Americans struggle to make ends meet, dozens of corporations and their CEO's have written checks of over \$100,000 and Super PACs have spent more than \$12 million alone in just the states voting today!

You signed my petition for the OCCUPIED Amendment (<http://www.theoccupiedamendment.org/>) because you understand that our elections should be determined by the voices of the many - not the dollars of the few. To reclaim our democracy, we must pass a 28th Amendment to our Constitution that makes clear that corporations are not people and that money spent in our elections is not a protected form of speech.

Thanks to your support, the OCCUPIED Amendment now has 43 cosponsors, making it the most widely supported constitutional remedy in Congress. Also, in the United States Senate, we have Senator Bernie Sanders championing the same Constitutional Amendment to save American democracy and outlaw corporate cash from our elections. You can help build momentum for the 28th amendment to our Constitution in several ways:

- Use the #SuperPACTuesday hashtag on Twitter today to raise awareness of our need to get money out of politics. Tweet now
- Write a status update on Facebook about your support for the OCCUPIED Amendment and share a link for <http://theoccupiedamendment.org>
- Find out if your Representative has cosponsored H.J. Res 90 and send them an email if they have not.
- Send 28 of your friends, relatives, and coworkers an email inviting them to join the movement by signing the petition.

Occupy Wall Street may have highlighted the economic challenges faced by the 99 percent, but our ability to achieve change is threatened by an electoral system determined by the 1 percent. To deliver progress on issues like long-term joblessness, financial industry abuses, and income inequality, we must overturn Citizens United by working together to make clear that democracy is not for sale.

Thank you for your support, Congressman Ted Deutch

20120306-04	10:10	SteveG	"Culture Wars Come To Two Super Tuesday States"
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"Culture Wars Come To Two Super Tuesday States" by Henry Decker, The National Memo

Mar. 5, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/article/culture-wars-come-two-super-tuesday-states>)

For months, both pundits and presidential candidates have repeatedly declared that the 2012 campaign would be all about the economy. In two major Super Tuesday battlegrounds, however, the local governments have instead been focusing on social issues.

Georgia, which has 76 delegates up for grabs on Tuesday, doesn't seem to be worried about the economy in its statehouse. Instead, local lawmakers have been busy unanimously passing a bill that would post a copy of the Ten Commandments in all Georgia schools and government buildings.

Supporters of the bill, which was introduced by Republican Rep. Tommy Benton, believe that it is appropriate because American law is largely based in the Christian and Jewish traditions. Opponents, such as Barry Lynn -- a Christian minister and the executive director of Americans United For Separation Of Church and State -- believe that the bill could violate the First Amendment.

"There's a faulty premise there and that is that The Ten Commandments has anything to do with the civil laws of the United States — it does not, of course," Lynn told the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. "We don't make it illegal to dishonor our mother and father. We don't have blasphemy laws."

Lynn predicts that the debate won't give way to a discussion of economic issues any time soon; rather, he believes that a legal battle is coming.

"This is the kind of thing that raises a gigantic red flag, and on that flag are the words, 'Sue us,'" he said.

The Georgia legislature's strange priorities pale in comparison to Oklahoma's. Oklahoma, which is worth 40 delegates -- and which Rick Santorum has called the "ground zero of the conservative movement" -- is currently preoccupied with abortion.

The "Personhood Bill," which was introduced by Republican State Senator Brian Crain, would grant legal personhood status to embryos from the moment of fertilization. The bill, which could have the unintended consequence of banning some forms of birth control, has led to massive protests which were highlighted by a state senator carrying a sign proclaiming "If I wanted the government in my womb, I'd f\*ck a Senator."

Another Oklahoma Senator, Constance Johnson, has responded to Crain's bill by attempting to add a "spilled semen" amendment in an effort to highlight the Personhood bill's absurdity and hypocrisy.

Oklahoma and Georgia have the 7th and 14th highest poverty rates in the nation, respectively. But instead of focusing their efforts on economic growth, both states' governments have chosen to zero in on social issues. With priorities like this, it's not surprising that just 26 percent of respondents to the latest NBC/ *Wall Street Journal* poll said that the Republican Party does a good job of reaching out to those who aren't hardcore supporters.

Comment posted by Floxyword:

Sharia Law, Bible Law, Cherokee law...no, I want to live under the laws of the United States, please. Every egg is a potential human being. Women should have all their eggs harvested, fertilized by the local Senator's sperm and raised in an incubator. Every mother could have at least 200 offspring during her life, and God would be happy, right? C'mon people, get real. You can't force people to have and raise children they don't want.

<a href="#">20120306-11</a>	17:58	Art	Re: "Culture Wars Come To Two Super Tuesday States" (reply to SteveG, above)
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If English was good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for me. Take that!

[A big AMEN to that, Art! -SteveB]

<a href="#">20120306-06</a>	11:14	Beth	Re: "Where Are the Progressive Christians?" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter # 88)
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Since I identify myself as a Christian, I feel I must weigh in on this issue. Mainstream Protestants (as opposed to evangelical Christians) do not generally advertise their faith. Many of us are "turned off" by the evangelicals, who we see as Pharisees proclaiming their "faith" in the marketplace for show. Also, most mainstream Christians feel strongly about the separation of church and state. Therefore, the political arena is not where we choose to discuss our faith. Of course the membership of mainstream Christian churches has declined for the past several years, as the membership of evangelical churches has risen.



John was in the fertilized egg business.

He had several hundred young layers (hens), called 'pullets,' and ten roosters to fertilize the eggs.

He kept records, and any rooster not performing went into the soup pot and was replaced.

This took a lot of time, so he bought some tiny bells and attached them to his roosters.

Each bell had a different tone, so he could tell from a distance, which rooster was performing.

Now, he could sit on the porch and fill out an efficiency report by just listening to the bells.

John's favorite rooster, old Butch, was a very fine specimen, but this morning he noticed old Butch's bell hadn't rung at all!

When he went to investigate, he saw the other roosters were busy chasing pullets, bells-a-ringing, but the pullets, hearing the roosters coming, would run for cover.

To John's amazement, old Butch had his bell in his beak, so it couldn't ring.

He'd sneak up on a pullet, do his job and walk on to the next one.

John was so proud of old Butch, he entered him in the Saint Lawrence County Fair and he became an overnight sensation among the judges.

The result was the judges not only awarded old Butch the "No Bell Piece Prize," but they also awarded him the "Pulletsurprise" as well.

Clearly old Butch was a politician in the making. Who else but a politician could figure out how to win two of the most coveted awards on our planet by being the best at sneaking up on the unsuspecting populace and screwing them when they weren't paying attention.

Vote carefully, the bells are not always audible.

20120306-09 16:32 SteveB Re: Old Butch (reply to Dale, above) & Henry the Rooster

Hey, good to hear from ya! I especially like the picture. (Looks like a fresh Henry.)

A farmer wanted to have his hens serviced, so he went to the market looking for a rooster. He was hoping he could get a special rooster - one that would service all of his many hens.

When he told this to the market vendor, the vendor replied, "I have just the rooster for you. Henry here is the horniest rooster you will ever see!"

So the farmer took Henry back to the farm. Before setting him loose in the hen house though, he gave Henry a little pep talk. "Henry", he said, "I'm counting on you to do your stuff." And without a word, Henry then strutted into the hen house.

Henry was as fast as he was furious, mounting each hen like a thunderbolt. There was much squawking and many feathers flying, till Henry had finished having his way with each hen. But Henry didn't stop there, he went in to the barn and mounted all the horses, one by one and still at the same frantic pace. Then he went to the pig house where he did the same.

The farmer, watching all of this with disbelief, cried out, "Stop, Henry, you'll kill yourself." But Henry continued, seeking out each farm animal in the same manner.

Well the next morning, the farmer looked out and saw Henry lying there on his lawn. His legs were up in the air, his eyes rolled back, and his long tongue hanging out. A buzzard was already circling above Henry.

The farmer walked up to Henry saying, "Oh you poor thing, look what you did, you've gone and killed yourself. I warned you big buddy."

"Shhhhh," Henry whispered, "The buzzard is getting closer."

20120306-08 13:26 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Petition: Cancel Rush Limbaugh!

from MoveOn:

Rush Limbaugh has gone too far with his attacks on Georgetown University student Sandra Fluke, calling her a "slut" and a "prostitute" and suggesting she post video tapes of herself online having sex.

Rush Limbaugh's radio show is a part of the Clear Channel lineup, and it's time that they no longer allow Rush Limbaugh to spew hateful and derogatory comments. That's why I created a petition to Clear Channel on SignOn.org, which says:

Sandra Fluke, a law student at Georgetown University who was advocating for health insurance plans to cover the cost of contraception, became the target of a series of attacks by Rush Limbaugh. Besides calling her a "slut," he also called her a "prostitute," said that he wanted her to make sex tapes and post them online, and speculated that she only had a problem paying for contraception because she was having "so much sex." We who support Ms. Fluke find that this is a serious offense committed by Mr. Limbaugh, and we ask that his radio show be terminated.

Will you sign the petition? Click here to add your name, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=272285&id=36711-20195165-0USiTx&t=2>

Thanks, D. Washington

<a href="#">20120306-14</a>	23:58	SteveB	Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 3
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We didn't really get a lot accomplished today. Marci did her lawyering, so I talked to the landlord, worked on the logs, and did a few little things.

Tomorrow we sign our lease (though it's a little more complicated than that) and file the paperwork for our business organization.

<a href="#">20120306-15</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Greencastle, Indiana
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[http://lloydkahn-ongoing.blogspot.com/2008\\_09\\_14\\_archive.html](http://lloydkahn-ongoing.blogspot.com/2008_09_14_archive.html)

1840s Pioneer Cabin in Robe Ann Park (Lloyd Kahn)



—Friends of the Middle,

Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #90 — MAR. 8, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Closing In on the 'God Particle'**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 8, 2012)

European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)'s Large Hadron Collider (LHC)



Finally! Some good news!

"US Physicists Confirm Higgs Finding Is Near" AFP

Mar. 7, 2012 (<http://news.yahoo.com/us-physicists-confirm-higgs-finding-near-095411592.html>)

US-based physicists said Wednesday that their experiments confirm those from a major European atom-smasher's that have narrowed the range where the elusive Higgs boson particle could be hiding.

The results come from the now-defunct Tevatron collider, which closed down in September after nearly a quarter century, though physicists continue to analyze its data in the hunt for the so-called "God particle."

The Higgs boson is the missing link in the standard model of physics and is believed to be what gives objects mass, though scientists have never been able to pin it down and it exists only in theory.

"The end game is approaching in the hunt for the Higgs boson," said Jim Siegrist, Department of Energy associate director of science for high energy physics.

"This is an important milestone for the Tevatron experiments, and demonstrates the continuing importance of independent measurements in the quest to understand the building blocks of nature."

Physicists from the CDF and DZero collaborations at Fermi National Acceleratory Laboratory in Illinois said in a statement that their data "might be interpreted as coming from a Higgs boson with a mass in the region of 115 to 135 GeV (gigaelectronvolts)."

That result includes the slightly more narrow constraints announced in Dec., 2011 by scientists at CERN's Large Hadron Collider -- the world's largest atom-smasher, located along the French-Swiss border.

The CERN (European Center for Nuclear Research) experiments, carried out by a consortium of 20 member nations, have shown a likely range for the Higgs boson between 115 to 127 GeV.

GeV is the standard measure for the mass of sub-atomic particles. One GeV is roughly equivalent to the mass of a proton.

However, none of the hints so far have been enough for physicists to announce that the particle has been "discovered," or to claim there is enough evidence to say for certain that it exists.

Fermilab director Pier Oddone said he was "thrilled with the pace of progress in the hunt for the Higgs boson," noting that scientists from around the world have combed through hundreds of trillions of proton-antiproton collisions.

"There is still much work ahead before the scientific community can say for sure whether the Higgs boson exists," added Dmitri Denisov, DZero co-spokesman and physicist at Fermilab.

"Based on these exciting hints, we are working as quickly as possible to further improve our analysis methods and squeeze the last ounce out of Tevatron data."

<a href="#">20120307-10</a> 23:42 Charis Happy International Women's Day!
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To all my awesome girl friends, today (Mar. 8) on International Women's Day, I hope you'll take a moment to celebrate yourselves. Having lived abroad most of my life, I've come to realize that no matter what our origins, culture, upbringing, or circumstances may be, human beings throughout the world are more similar than different. And though we use different means and languages to share of ourselves, our emotional expressions clearly signal that a common thread binds us all. We all know pain and joy, we all lose and search, forget and remember, struggle and achieve. In any language or culture, human beings are highly capable of self-evaluation and self-expression. Each of us is a living stanza in a universal poem. What you have to remember is that not all poems rhyme. Some of the most beautiful poems in the world don't. They flow on their own. Because each stanza has its own importance and reason for being.

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

<a href="#">20120307-01</a> 11:18 SteveG "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle"
--

We love our new official Hoosier rifle more than life itself...

Now that Indiana is getting some of the important issues out of the way, maybe they will start work on some economic issues to create jobs.

"Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" by Mary Beth Schneider, *Indianapolis Star*

Mar. 7, 2012, (<http://www.indystar.com/article/20120307/LOCAL/203070307/Indiana-sets-sights-naming-an-official-state-rifle?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|IndyStar.com>)

(Measure to designate Grouseland as official rifle awaits Daniels' OK.)

Indiana soon will have an official state rifle to go along with the state tree, state stone and state flower.

The Indiana House voted 78-2 on Tuesday to declare the Grouseland the state's official rifle. It is one of only six remaining long rifles made by famed Hoosier gunsmith John Small in the early 1800s.

The measure, earlier approved 48-2 by the Senate and headed to Gov. Mitch Daniels, makes Indiana only the third state with an official gun. Utah became the first in March 2011, when it honored the Browning M1911 automatic pistol, followed in April by Arizona, which chose the Colt Army revolver.

Sen. John Waterman, R-Shelburn, said he decided to pursue honoring the Grouseland Rifle, which is in President William Henry Harrison's Vincennes home, Grouseland, after hearing a few years ago that Pennsylvania was considering naming the long rifle its official gun.

Instead of filing a bill, Waterman got an amendment added to House Bill 1283, which mostly deals with libraries.

Tuesday, state Rep. Kathy Kreag Richardson, the Noblesville Republican who was the author of that bill, tried to keep a straight face as she asked the House to go along with the changes. Asked by one lawmaker how the rifle issue could be put into her bill in the Senate, Richardson noted that the bill pertains in part to the Indiana Historical Society, "and this is a very historic rifle."

Because the rifle issue was added by an amendment, there was no opportunity for proponents of other guns to make the case that their weapon should be Indiana's official big shot.

Waterman, though, said Small's rare guns are in a special class. Small, a Revolutionary War veteran who moved to Vincennes in 1785, was a man of many talents: tavern-keeper, ferry operator, gunsmith, woodworker, silversmith, Northwest Territory legislator, Indiana's first sheriff, Knox County surveyor and adjutant general of the territorial militia under Harrison.

Not to mention, Waterman said with a laugh, "he got shot in the butt" in a 1786 battle with American Indians.

Hoosiers who have never heard of Small likely are familiar with one of his artworks. Harrison -- who was governor of the Indiana Territory and later president for 32 days before dying of pneumonia -- commissioned him to design the seal of the Indiana Territory, which later became the state seal.

Dan Sarell, executive director of the Grouseland Foundation in Vincennes, said Grouseland acquired the long rifle, originally a flintlock that was converted to percussion cap, at an auction in 2004. He is hoping the official state designation for the rifle will not only attract visitors to Grouseland "but tell people the story of John Small."

The Indiana State Museum currently has two John Small rifles on display, along with a handgun that R. Dale Ogden, senior curator of cultural history at the museum, said is the only Small handgun known to exist.

"You don't have one for sale on every street corner," Waterman said.

If they ever are, Waterman hopes Grouseland will benefit. The bill specifies that any duplication, reproduction or sale of a reproduction must be authorized by the foundation.

<a href="#">20120307-04</a>	20:25	Bill	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to SteveG, above)
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At least it's not an assault rifle and doesn't involve any derogation of the Girl Scouts.

<a href="#">20120307-05</a>	21:04	SteveG	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to Bill, above)
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It just amazes me the crap that politicians waste their time and the taxpayers money on.

<a href="#">20120307-07</a>	21:32	Pam	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to SteveG, above)
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It's all their little pea brains can handle.

<a href="#">20120307-09</a>	22:25	SteveB	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to all, above)
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"...from these cold, dead cornfields!" —Charlton Heston (from Illinois, so he should know)

<a href="#">20120307-02</a>	12:30	MarthaH	"One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice"
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Cultural Chasm: Afghanistan...

"One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" by Tom A. Peter, USA TODAY

Mar. 7, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-03-06/afghan-justice/53392066/1>)

(PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan) Ahmad Jan lives just a few miles from the capital of this restive province and its government-sanctioned court.

Even so, if he or his neighbors have a legal matter, they prefer to go to the Taliban or tribal elders for a ruling.

"The Taliban courts don't disturb people and tell them to wait for a long time before hearing a case, or demand bribes," says Jan, an out-of-work laborer. "When you go to the Taliban and ask them for help, they tell you that they need a certain amount of time to study your case, and then they will tell you to come on a special day."

NATO and Afghan forces have had success this past year pushing Taliban forces out of rural areas, especially in southern Afghanistan. These military wins are considered key milestones on the long and daunting road out of Afghanistan — with a targeted withdrawal of U.S. combat forces by the end of 2013.

But the reluctance of everyday Afghans like Jan to embrace a pillar of the Western-backed government — its judiciary — shows the limits of a decade of U.S. nation-building efforts in a country with deeply rooted traditions and a citizenry with fluid allegiances.

"The limited, unresponsive, and unreliable nature of the Afghan justice system is a central source of Afghans' grievances with their government and has opened the door to Taliban shadow governance," according to the U.S.

State Department's Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy. "As long as the population views the government as weak or predatory, Taliban approaches to security and justice will continue to be accepted."

Establishing effective, impartial courts and other government services in rural areas like Paktika is considered critical to shifting Afghan loyalty to the U.S.-backed government of President Hamid Karzai. Coupled with the buildup of Afghan army and police forces, the Obama administration hopes that Afghans will be able to maintain security in regions cleared of Taliban by NATO troops in time for the U.S. exit.

But the uneven court system is just one of the many obstacles facing allied forces. Taliban loyalists remain in hide-outs and might be simply waiting out the U.S. withdrawal. Pakistan's military has not moved against militant groups, such as the Haqqani network, which is based on its soil and causing chaos south of Kabul. Doubts have risen about the vetting of Afghan security forces, some of whom killed NATO troops following the accidental burning of some Qurans that led to violent protests over the past couple of weeks.

Yet the justice system is still held out as perhaps the best hope for stabilizing the Afghanistan government while depriving the Taliban of a necessary road back to power.

### The Taliban's way

Afghanistan's court system had for centuries consisted of tribal elders hearing complaints and making swift decisions. The rulings were based partly in Islamic law and also Pashtunwali, a code of conduct developed by the indigenous people of Afghanistan known as the Pashtuns. The law became much harsher in the mid-1990s after a group of Pashtun clerics trained in fundamentalist Islamic schools in Pakistan emerged as victors in a civil war following the collapse of a Marxist government in Kabul. Known as the Taliban, the clerics brought order to strife-ridden parts of the country but under a mix of Pashtunwali and strict Islamic law, or *sharia*.

"We cannot change the Taliban," says Sami Yusufzai, an independent analyst in Islamabad, Pakistan. "The Taliban is a really religious force. They don't believe they can adjust with society."

The world first learned of the harshness of the Taliban's *sharia* system when a secret video was smuggled out of the country in 1999 showing a woman dragged before 30,000 people at a soccer match and shot in the head for adultery. Reports from Amnesty International and others said children were being forced to testify against their parents for moral crimes, and then made to witness their executions.

"Administration of justice was swift and harsh," according to the International Crisis Group, an independent organization that advises the United Nations on conflict resolution.

New crimes included not wearing a full burqa or a full beard, listening to music, sending girls to school and having sex outside of marriage — the penalty for which could be death by stoning.

Rights groups — having documented these abuses for years — saw the overthrow of the Taliban as an opportunity for an impartial and fair justice system. Indeed, the U.S. military's counterinsurgency doctrine called for the creation of institutions that would address people's grievances and thus turn their allegiance to the pro-Western government of Afghanistan.

Since the regime overthrow in 2001, the United States has spent \$70 billion on the reconstruction of Afghanistan and developing government institutions. Hundreds of millions of dollars have gone toward establishing provisional courts in cities and providing training for lawyers and judges. The fiscal year 2011 request alone set aside \$250 million to improve the justice system, but problems persist.

"Despite the significant resources devoted to the security sector and a greater focus on the police in recent years, the U.S. and its NATO allies have failed to help build a functioning justice system that can enforce the rule of law," according to a 2011 report by the International Crisis Group. "Strengthening formal judicial institutions is at least if not even more vital to restoring state legitimacy as building the national security forces."

### Where the U.S. can't lead

Paktika has fewer than 10 judges when it needs closer to 70, according to the International Security Assistance Force, the U.S.-led command that oversees military operations in Afghanistan. Efforts are underway to bring in more, but in their absence even locals not loyal to the Taliban will use its expedient but controversial courts.

"They've got to come up with a way that's acceptable to them to resolve conflict," said U.S. Army Maj. Eric Noble, the 172nd Infantry Brigade's judge advocate in Paktika province. "We're not looking for the U.S. solution to Afghan conflict resolution and rule of law. We're looking at what do they find as acceptable."

Many people in rural areas like Paktika have shunned government justice because they consider it unfair and corrupt. According to the State Department's strategy report, the Karzai government needs to create "predictable and fair dispute resolution mechanisms to eliminate the vacuum that the Taliban have exploited with their own brutal form of justice."

But half the Afghan population sees courts as the most corrupt government institution in the country, according to a 2010 Integrity Watch survey of Afghan perceptions of corruption. Only two-thirds of Afghans said they have access to courts, and a full quarter said they "felt deprived of justice" because of corruption and a system fed by bribes.

Mohammed Wali, a student in Kabul, says he wound up in the court system after he got into a fight with a cousin. He said his cousin took his case to the district courts and bribed the police to have Wali, his father, and one of his uncles arrested. The men then had to pay a \$250 bribe to be released, an enormous amount considering per capita income is \$502 per year.

"We cannot say that there is no corruption in the courts and justice system," said Abdul Wakail Omari, the head of public affairs for the Afghan Supreme Court. "We cannot deny it, but the problems are not as much as people are saying."

Over the past 10 years, Omari says, 50 to 60 judges have been arrested and disbarred for taking bribes, along with dozens of other court employees, prompting the formation of a special commission to investigate corruption.

The State Department agrees that courts in the capitals of many Afghanistan provinces have improved, with better-trained judges and lawyers who do not demand bribes.

But most of Afghan justice takes place not in the cities but in the hinterlands, where tribal elders oversee laws and where Taliban insurgents continue to mete out sentences in villages where Afghan and U.S. troops lack a strong presence. So the State Department has been focusing on improving these informal courts convened by tribal elders.

Even the most optimistic analysts won't dispute that after more than a decade in Afghanistan, the allied-directed court system is at best a work in progress. At worst, experts say, it's a serious impediment to the survival of the current government.

"You would not find any other example in Afghan history of a court system that is as corrupt and untrustworthy as the courts are right now," said Hassan Walasmal, an independent analyst in Kabul.

One obstacle to improving rural justice, though, is that well-educated lawyers and judges are seldom interested in moving to rural areas where Taliban justice has held sway. The pay is poor; running water and smooth dirt roads are rare. Lawyers who take the postings must often work with illiterate government officials and, in a place like Paktika, insecurity and violence.

Informal justice has often arisen as a concern for human rights groups. The United States Institute for Peace points out that judges sometimes settle matters by awarding women as compensation or forcing them to marry. Women are also excluded from decision-making. And justice is often not final, as shoddy record-keeping means the same disputes can resurface.

"Traditions control life in Afghanistan more than the laws or rules," says Rohullah Qarizada, head of Afghanistan's Bar Association. But locals say tribal justice is improving.

"There is a change in their decisions, and now tribal courts mostly fine people money," said Nadir Khan Katawazai, a member of parliament from Paktika province. "These tribal justice systems get good results, and it doesn't create problems that could last well into the future."

Amnesty International's Asia Pacific director, Sam Zarifi, said the Taliban is already taking advantage of power vacuums in areas like Kunduz province, with disturbing results.

A cellphone video last year in Kunduz showed a woman standing in a 4-foot hole in the ground, her face hidden by a blue burqa. A Taliban leader read off the charge of adultery, and men then rushed forward and pelted her with rocks. After a large rock hit her head she fell over, her burqa red with blood. A man then walked up and shot her with an AK-47.

"Anyone who knows about Islam knows that stoning is in the Quran, and that it is Islamic law," Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid explained at the time. "There are people who call it inhuman, but in doing so they insult the prophet. They want to bring foreign thinking to this country."

Also see:

"Tide Has Turned' in Taliban Zone Amid U.S. Troop Drawdown" by Jim Michaels, USA TODAY

Mar. 7, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-03-05/taliban-weak-afghanistan/53389636/1>)

<a href="#">20120307-03</a>	19:50	Art	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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This is so like Vietnam, it is really depressing. While my heart goes out to all those who will suffer, all Afghan women for one group, we need to get out of there ASAP. They are welcome to kill one another as they wish.

<a href="#">20120307-06</a>	21:30	Pam	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I lived in Afghanistan when I was a teenager, and I learned even then that it's a hopeless place when it comes to modernization. The mullahs controlled everything then, and they do now. It is a corrupt society by our standards and probably always will be. Bribes are part of the fabric, and justice is rough and harsh. Women do indeed have a terrible time there, but I don't think the West can do much to help them. It is a patriarchal society, and women have little or no status. You should watch the film "Osama" for a look at what conditions are like there. I am reading a novel by Zoe Ferraris, "City of Veils." It's about Saudi Arabia, but it depicts the same sort of strict Islamic society and shows what women's lives are like. It is so oppressive, I don't know how women stay sane under such a system. It's not that men never love their wives and daughters; it's just that the whole society demands that women be segregated, even within the household. I have always believed that a society without women is a male-driven, aggressive, brutal one, and these Islamic countries make my point every day. The Middle East is a complicated place, and we are not going to simplify it by imposing our values and practices on people who don't begin to understand the way we look at things. We really are trying to communicate across not just boundaries, but centuries. We are naive if we believe we can significantly alter things. They don't want us there, and we have no business doing anything but protecting ourselves, and I don't think that means preemptive strikes. We need detente more than we need democracy at this point. I've always been eager to help people, but I'm starting to think that I will have to accept that we can't always fix things. Good intentions are not enough, and you all know where they can lead.

<a href="#">20120307-08</a>	10:07	Tom	Video: "The Deal" with Jack Hunter: "Does Rush Want to 'Cut and Run?'" [in Afghanistan]
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"The Deal" with Jack Hunter: "Does Rush Want to 'Cut and Run?'"

Mar. 6, 2012, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LA1-usxdiA&feature=uploademail>)

[20120307-11](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Grand Canyon, Colorado

<http://www.superawesomepics.com/the-grand-canyon-colorado>

The River in a Chasm Makes a Turn, What Else Can It Do?



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #91 — MAR. 9, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or *Mierda*?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 9, 2012)

I thought that, since it's Friday, I would present a few quotes and tributes to women from the Great Man Himself. What a mouth!

Forget politics! Why don't they have a 'WORD'S BIGGEST A\*S-HOLE AWARD'? Could there be one any bigger than what you see below?

"The Dumbest Things Rush Limbaugh Has Ever Said" [Are you sure? –SteveB] by Daniel Kurtzman, About.com

updated Mar., 2012, (<http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/rushlimbaugh/a/limbaughquotes.htm>)

"It doesn't look like Michelle Obama follows her own nutritional dietary advice. And then we hear that she's out eating ribs at 1500 calories a serving with 141 grams of fat ... No, I'm trying to say that our first lady does not project the image of women that you might see on the cover of the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue or of a woman Alex Rodriguez might date every six months or what have you." –Rush Limbaugh, Feb. 21, 2011

"These were highly civil comments for crying out loud. I mean, people are going nuts. USA Today, the Politico. And some people were suggesting that my comments were below the belt. Well, take a look at some pictures. Given where she wears her belts. I mean, she wears them high up there around the bust line. Isn't just about everything about her below the belt when you look at the fashion sense she has?" –Rush Limbaugh, after being criticized for making derogatory comments about First Lady Michelle Obama's weight, Feb. 22, 2011

"What Mr. Loughner knows is that he has the full support of a major political party in this country . . . he knows that . . . the Democrat party is attempting to find anybody but him to blame. He knows if he plays his cards right, he's just a victim. . . . This guy clearly understands he's getting all the attention and he understands he's got a political party doing everything it can, plus a local sheriff doing everything that they can to make sure he's not convicted of murder — but something lesser." --Rush Limbaugh on Arizona shooter Jared Loughner, Jan. 11, 2011

"As far as the media's concerned, Mrs. Obama deserves this. Look at the sordid past. Look at our slave past, look at the discriminatory past. It's only fair that people of color get their taste of the wealth of America too." --Rush Limbaugh, claiming the media is allowing Michelle Obama to take a vacation as a form of reparations for "our slave past," Aug. 6, 2010

"That cracker made a lot of African-American millionaires." --Rush Limbaugh, on the death of longtime New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, July 13, 2010

"[Obama] wouldn't have been voted president if he weren't black. Somebody asked me over the weekend why does somebody earn a lot of money have a lot of money, because she's black. It was Oprah. No, it can't be. Yes, it is. There's a lot of guilt out there, show we're not racists, we'll make this person wealthy and big and famous and so forth.... If Obama weren't black he'd be a tour guide in Honolulu or he'd be teaching Saul Alinsky constitutional law or lecturing on it in Chicago." --Rush Limbaugh, July 6, 2010

"When do we ask the Sierra Club to pick up the tab for this leak?" --Rush Limbaugh, blaming the oil spill in the Gulf on the Sierra Club, arguing that the environmental group had driven oil producers off the land to more high-risk situations offshore, Rush Limbaugh, May 17, 2010

"The ocean will take care of this on its own if it was left alone and left out there. It's natural. It's as natural as the ocean water is." --Rush Limbaugh, on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, May 3, 2010

"Guess what? Faisal Shahzad is a registered Democrat. I wonder if his SUV had an Obama sticker on it." --Rush Limbaugh, lying about the failed Times Square car bomber, who is not registered to vote, May 4, 2010

"What better way to head off more oil drilling, nuclear plants, than by blowing up a rig? I'm just noting the timing, here." --Rush Limbaugh, suggesting that "environmentalist whackos" deliberately blew up the oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico that created one of the biggest environmental disasters in U.S. history to stop offshore oil drilling, April 29, 2010

"Our political correct society is acting like some giant insult's taken place by calling a bunch of people who are retards, retards...There's going to be a retard summit at the White House." --Rush Limbaugh, on his Feb. 3, 2010 radio show, referring to Chief of Staff Rham Emanuel's remark calling the idea of liberal groups running health care-related ads against Democratic lawmakers "f\*\*king retarded". Sarah Palin called on Emanuel to resign over the comment.

"I'm a huge supporter of women. What I'm not is a supporter of liberalism. Feminism is what I oppose. Feminism has led women astray. I love the women's movement — especially when walking behind it." --Rush Limbaugh, responding to criticism that he is sexist and defending his selection as one of the judges at the 2010 Miss America Pageant, "Fox News' Fox & Friends," February 3, 2010

"We've already donated to Haiti. It's called the U.S. income tax." --Rush Limbaugh, discouraging donations to relief efforts in Haiti after the devastating earthquake, Jan. 13, 2010

"This will play right into Obama's hands. He's humanitarian, compassionate. They'll use this to burnish their, shall we say, 'credibility' with the black community -- in the both light-skinned and dark-skinned black community in this country. It's made-to-order for them. That's why he couldn't wait to get out there, could not wait to get out there." --Rush Limbaugh, on Haiti earthquake relief, Jan. 13, 2010

"Obama's got a health care logo that's right out of Adolf Hitler's playbook ... Adolf Hitler, like Barack Obama, also ruled by dictate." --Rush Limbaugh, Aug. 6, 2009

"Exercise freaks ... are the ones putting stress on the health care system." --Rush Limbaugh, June 12, 2009

"The phony soldiers." --Rush Limbaugh, on U.S. service members who support withdrawal from Iraq (Source)

"He discusses his service in Iraq, the wounds he suffered there, and he says to me in this ad, 'Until you have the guts to call me a 'phony soldier' to my face, stop telling lies about my service.' You know, this is such a blatant use of a valiant combat veteran, lying to him about what I said, then strapping those lies to his belt, sending him out via the media in a TV ad to walk into as many people as he can walk into." --Rush Limbaugh, denouncing an ad by VoteVets.org featuring Iraq war veteran Brian McGough by likening him to a suicide bomber

"Look, let me put it to you this way: the NFL all too often looks like a game between the Bloods and the Crips without any weapons. There, I said it." --Rush Limbaugh, Jan. 19, 2007

"He is exaggerating the effects of the disease. He's moving all around and shaking and it's purely an act. ... This is really shameless of Michael J. Fox. Either he didn't take his medication or he's acting." --Rush Limbaugh, on an ad by Michael J. Fox endorsing Claire McCaskill for Senate for supporting embryonic stem cell research (Watch video)

"And don't forget, Sherrod Brown is black. There's a racial component here, too. And now, the newspaper that I'm reading all this from is The New York Times, and they, of course, don't mention that." --Rush Limbaugh, on the 2006 Ohio Senate primary race involving then-Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), who is white

"This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation...I'm talking about people having a good time, these people, you ever heard of emotional release? You ever heard of the need to blow some steam off?" --Rush Limbaugh, on the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal

"Too many whites are getting away with drug use...Too many whites are getting away with drug sales...The answer is to go out and find the ones who are getting away with it, convict them, and send them up the river, too." --Rush Limbaugh, in 1995

"I am addicted to prescription pain medication." --Rush Limbaugh, in 2003

"Feminism was established so as to allow unattractive women easier access to the mainstream of society." --Rush Limbaugh

"We're not sexists, we're chauvinists -- we're male chauvinist pigs, and we're happy to be because we think that's what men were destined to be. We think that's what women want." --Rush Limbaugh

"She comes to me when she wants to be fed. And after I feed her -- guess what -- she's off to wherever she wants to be in the house, until the next time she gets hungry. She's smart enough to know she can't feed herself. She's actually a very smart cat. She gets loved. She gets adoration. She gets petted. She gets fed. And she doesn't have to do anything for it, which is why I say this cat's taught me more about women, than anything my whole life." --Rush Limbaugh, on his cat

"She sounds like a screeching ex-wife." --Rush Limbaugh, on Sen. Hillary Clinton

"I've been racking my brain. I've been trying to figure out how Bob Dole's luggage got on my airplane...I told the doctor, I said, 'Look, I'm worried about the next election.' ... A misunderstanding." --Rush Limbaugh, after he was detained by custom officials for possessing Viagra with a prescription made out in someone else's name

"They oughtta change Black History Month to Black Progress Month and start measuring it." --Rush Limbaugh

"Sorry to say this, I don't think he's been that good from the get-go. I think what we've had here is a little social concern in the NFL. The media has been very desirous that a black quarterback do well. They're interested in black coaches and black quarterbacks doing well. I think there's a little hope invested in McNabb and he got a lot of credit for the performance of his team that he really didn't deserve." --on Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb, during a September 2003 broadcast of ESPN television's Sunday NFL Countdown program. The controversy generated by the remark prompted Limbaugh to resign from his position as a commentator on that show

"The only way to reduce the number of nuclear weapons is to use them."

"There are more acres of forestland in America today than when Columbus discovered the continent in 1492."

"I know these people like I know every square inch of my glorious naked body." --on Democrats

"Have you ever noticed how all composite pictures of wanted criminals resemble Jesse Jackson?"

"Take that bone out of your nose and call me back." –responding to a black caller he was having a hard time understanding in the 1970s when he worked under the name "Jeff Christie" on a top-40 music program in Pittsburgh, as quoted in Newsday, Oct, 8, 1990

"What does it say about the college co-ed Susan Fluke [sic] who goes before a congressional committee and essentially says that she must be paid to have sex -- what does that make her? It makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute. She wants to be paid to have sex. She's having so much sex she can't afford the contraception. She wants you and me and the taxpayers to pay her to have sex." -Rush Limbaugh, referring to Sandra Fluke, a student at Georgetown Law School who was denied the right to speak at a congressional hearing on contraception hearing, in which she planned to discuss a friend of hers who needed contraception to prevent the growth of cysts, February 29, 2012

"A Georgetown coed told Nancy Pelosi's hearing that the women in her law school program are having so much sex they're going broke, so you and I should have to pay for their birth control. So what would you call that? I called it what it is. So, I'm offering a compromise today: I will buy all of the women at Georgetown University as much aspirin to put between their knees as they want. ... So Miss Fluke and the rest of you feminazis, here's the deal. If we are going to pay for your contraceptives and thus pay for you to have sex, we want something. We want you to post the videos online so we can all watch." -Rush Limbaugh, March 1, 2012

There's a lot more, but one can only take so much idiocy, hatred, racism, and sexism. This man is seriously detrimental to the country! But I will defend to the death Limbaugh's God-given right to keep destroying any last vestige of positive image the American Right might have maintained. Go, Rush!

[20120308-01](#)

05:34

SteveB

Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #90)

from Art:

This is so like Vietnam, it is really depressing.

Art, I was just reading your comments and had a question. As you may remember, I missed Viet Nam by the skin of my teeth...very lucky, yet also unlucky...for a writer who might happen to live through it. An unfortunate unknown, of course.

Anyway, and please excuse my ignorance and admiration, but I always thought of Viet Nam as sort of matriarchal, that women are at least roughly equal to men. But maybe you didn't mean your comparison in that way.

In so many other ways (maybe even including this one) Afghanistan seems so amazingly like Viet Nam that you would think it would have made us fight a different kind of war there—one we could win! Or simply not go. Though I agree that something had to be done at that time, some a\*s had to be kicked. But...I thought we learned that you never fight a war with one arm tied behind your back and our best dying for nothing.

P.S. One of the things I missed was Vietnamese women, to my mind, some of the most lovely, graceful creatures on Earth. May they have a great International Women's Day! (I just hope Rush Limbaugh doesn't go marching behind them!)

[20120308-03](#)

11:16

Art

Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to SteveB, above)

You are correct, no comparison on treatment of women in Vietnam. Pretty much equals in most respects.

Comparison was us trying to win something, with a corrupt local government as our partner. It was never going to work. The Viet Cong were more just and more appealing to the locals. I think same with the Taliban, although I still think after destroying those statues at Banyan, they should all be exterminated. [SteveB, the Buddhist, agrees with this almost completely! –SteveB]

Bottom line is we simply cannot waltz into any country and expect them to instantly change their lives and fall in love with our ideas. I think problem may be compounded because we bring so much money with us. That in turn corrupts the folks on our side and loses whatever we might have gained morally in overturning some local dirtbags. Afghanistan may be classic. The Taliban were pretty much hated by a large portion of the population when we first arrived but now seem to be gaining the upper hand. We could still win if the Afghanistan Government was really concerned about the people and really manned by caring local officials. While I am sure there are some, the Taliban do their best as did the Viet Cong to eliminate them, leaving only the corrupt self serving ones in power. We are seeing the results.

And yes, the Vietnamese women in their traditional Ao Dai are lovely indeed.

20120308-02	11:04	Pam	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to all, above)
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*The Kite Runner* is another good book about Afghanistan. The plight of women in these hardcore Muslim countries is really quite appalling. Men rule everything, and religion is embedded in every corner of life. It's suffocating to someone like me who wants to be free at all costs. I do not believe we in the West can do anything to change the situation, except, as Art suggests, to provide a safe haven. I wonder what would happen if suddenly everyone who was unhappy where they are could move to another, more congenial place. Let the hardline religious traditionalists have their space to do what they will, but let everyone who doesn't want to live with those constraints leave. I've also imagined setting aside "drug camps" where people who want to be addicts could go and get all the drugs they want. They'd just have to stay away from everyone else. You want to be an addict? Here's a ticket to a ranch in Wyoming where the cocaine is abundant and free. It's always amazed me how certain countries lock their borders and prevent their citizens from leaving. That seems to me tantamount to admitting that your country is so awful people are desperate to get out. How can a government like that be any good at all?

And what is all this saber rattling about Israel and Iran? Are we on the brink of another middle-east war? I'm feeling very uneasy these days. I hope all the heated rhetoric is just bluster.

I heard a Jewish settler on NPR the other day who defended the rights of Jewish settlers to occupy the West Bank and Gaza because it belonged to Jews a millennium ago. With that kind of logic, we should give back most of the U.S. to Native Americans. Everyone knows we're not about to do that. Human populations are fluid. I wish there were some 21st c. way to accommodate that. I'm wandering all over the place here, but I've got a lot on my mind.

20120308-04

11:47 Phil

Re: The Strangest & Most Beautiful Streets/Roads in the World (reply to Bill)

I wonder how many "locals" drive those roads without giving a second thought to the beauty? I especially like the "round about" over the water.



[This is Bolivia's famous "Death Road".  
Said to be "the most dangerous road in the world", I loved driving it! -SteveB]





[20120308-05](#) 12:04 Phil Re: "Closing In on the 'God Particle'" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #90)

The article on the LHC reminded me of an incident that recently occurred. I was at this gathering with some of my friends when lo and behold in walks the spirit of Einstein. As I was nearest to the door when he arrived, he walked up to me and introduced himself and then asked, what's your IQ? So I accurately told him it was somewhere around 180. Einstein chose to converse and we discussed things like quarks and I updated him on things like CERN and the TEVATRON. After a few minutes he wandered on over and introduced himself to one of my friends and asked him, what's your IQ? He said it's about 140, so Einstein conversed with him for a few minutes about the economy, politics and other current events. After a few more minutes he wandered over to another guy that was at the gathering (I didn't know this gentleman), introduced himself and asked, what's your IQ? The guy told him, It's 60. Taken aback Einstein thought for a moment....., then asked, "What about those BOILERMAKERS!!"

[20120308-06](#) 12:26 SteveB Re: "Closing In on the 'God Particle'" (reply to Phil, above)

Phil, I swear you are trying to get on my bad side!!!

Won't happen. :-)

GO, PURDUE!

[20120308-07](#) 23:58 SteveB Our Cookie Business in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Day 6

Things have been moving slowly because Marci has been finishing up her lawyering to be able to work on the business full-time starting next week. We're planning on signing the contract with our landlords, who have been finishing the last construction details. We'll have our other legal papers in order soon.

[20120308-08](#)

23:59 SteveB

Photo: Grand Rapids, Michigan & "Whitecaps' 'Fifth Third Burger' Not for Faint of Heart"

Marci says, "This should be illegal!"

The Amazing Fifth Third Burger! Only 4800 calories and 300 grams of fat.



"Whitecaps' Fifth Third Burger Not for Faint of Heart" by Michael Zuidema, *The Grand Rapids Press*

Mar. 25, 2009, ([http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2009/03/whitecaps\\_fifth\\_third\\_burger\\_n.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2009/03/whitecaps_fifth_third_burger_n.html))

(COMSTOCK PARK) The next item the West Michigan Whitecaps might want to consider selling at Fifth Third Ballpark concession stands is antacids. Or cholesterol medication.

That is because their newest menu option is a 4,800-calorie mouthful.

The team's Fifth Third Burger recently garnered attention from ESPN's "SportsCenter" and NBC's "The Today Show," in addition to Web sites and blogs across the country.

"We always try to come up with something new and innovative," Whitecaps president Scott Lane said. "We believe it's very important to the overall experience."

Here's what fans can expect from the Fifth Third Burger:

- Start with an 8-inch sesame seed bun that requires 1 pound of dough and is made especially for the Whitecaps by Nantucket Baking Co. of Grand Rapids.
- Spoon on nearly a cup of chili and place five one-third pound hamburger patties on top of that. (Get it, 5/3 pounds of beef for the Fifth Third Burger?)
- Add five slices of American cheese and liberal doses of salsa, nacho cheese and Fritos.
- Top it off with lettuce, tomato and sour cream, and you have a burger that can be sliced with a pizza cutter and feed four people for \$20. Jalapenos are optional.

If a single person can consume the entire 4-pound finished product in one sitting, the team plans to give him or her a special T-shirt.

"Besides being unique and large and bizarre, it tastes good," Lane said. "I'm sure there are going to be crazies that come down and try to eat the entire thing."

This is not the Whitecaps' first unique menu option. In recent years, the team has offered everything from deep-fried Twinkies and deep-fried Pepsi to entire turkey drumsticks. Each offseason, team officials brainstorm ideas for their next culinary creation. Potential ingredients for this season included cactus, sausage gravy, Spam, fried eggs and grape jelly. Fortunately, not all on one sandwich.

Eventually, the Whitecaps settled on the Fifth Third Burger because it consisted mostly of items that easily can be found at a ballpark. Other new food options for the season are a Chicago-style hot dog cart and frozen bananas dipped in chocolate.

But what about those health implications?

In addition to more than 4,800 calories -- potentially the most caloric item ever offered at a ballpark -- the Fifth Third Burger contains nearly 300 grams of fat, 744 milligrams of cholesterol and more than 10,000 milligrams of sodium. The smell alone might be 25 calories.

Not to worry, Lane said. Fifth Third Ballpark has plenty of healthy options, including salads and wraps, although many fans enjoy indulging at sporting events.

"Why hide it?" he said. "At home, people eat healthy. When they come to a game, they might eat a hot dog."

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

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Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #92 — MAR. 12, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **My Papá Roger (Feb. 10, 1933 — Mar. 10, 2012)**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 12, 2012)

Early Saturday morning, when Roger Antonio Escalante Mansilla, Sr. took his last breath, I lost a friend and my second father. My wife, Marcela, and her five brothers and sisters lost their first father. Aquina, his bride of 55 years, became a widow, and the world is now a place with a little less light.

When I first came to Bolivia as a complete stranger, almost eight years ago, I was a Gringo who spoke hardly a word of Spanish, was living with the beautiful second daughter of a proud family (though we were soon to be married), and had probably every reason to be treated suspiciously, but Papá Roger--and therefore everyone else--welcomed me with warmth into the large, extended family circle that formed around Papá Roger and Mamá Aquina. They treated me as a son and, in a strange land, entering a new life, having lost so many of my own family, that was a very welcome gift.

Time passes more slowly in Bolivia. The rush is not so constant. There is time to sit and get to really know people, like I remember it used to be in the U.S. Time for just sittin', like I used to do as a kid with my Uncle Joe, while he'd sit and chew his tobacco and spit in his spittoon. People used to actually "make time" for that, for just sitting and talking, can you imagine? They still do that here.

The *siesta* brings the day to a screeching halt right in the middle, from about noon to three. Then there is "tea" which starts about 5:00—essentially just a social occasion where talk is of friends and family. Then, at night, there can be a languishing heat in the air that ripples slowly through the curtains on a cooler night breeze that must be sent from heaven. This is the perfect time to sit and sip a little whisky and talk of all manner of things, late into the long tropical night.

So I got to know Papá Roger in ways that, perhaps, I didn't even get to know my own father. My Bolivian second father was interested in absolutely everything, read a lot, knew some smart, famous people, and never lost his boyish curiosity. He would ask me questions about the U.S., and I could usually fill-in some details he didn't know, but the subjects were almost always things he already knew a lot about, had formed opinions on, and wanted to know mine and why. I never knew him to be dogmatic, though he could certainly be eccentric and even, at times, a little cantankerous. But he could change his mind. He could listen to reason. He could make you change your mind too.

He grew-up in, literally, another world. I will be honest with you, dear reader, the stories about his father, Sr. Juan de la Cruz Escalante, seem mythical, though I know they are true. He and his wife came from old Cruzeña families, his farm of legendary size. Though I have never seen that land, I know that it was big enough to divide into five large farms for his children. He also left each of them a big house in the heart of the city of Santa Cruz. In those

days, there were barely roads and few motorized vehicles. Horses and oxen ruled. Swollen rivers often prevented travel and this country is immense, even though it might seem small by U.S. standards (it's actually about the size of Alaska).

At one time, my wife's grandfather sort of "owned" his own entire tribe of Guarani Indians. See what I mean? Mythical in scope. I understand that they were migrating through his land and were captured or simply decided to stay, we're not sure of the details. The system was totally feudal in those days, not that long ago, and with some landowners, was out-and-out slavery. Papá Roger's father had a full-time blacksmith, a weaver, a baker, a cobbler, etc., who all worked on the farm. I think it sounds more like a small town than what we think of as a farm. They made just about everything from scratch.

Some of the unfairness of those days, unfortunately, still exists in parts of Bolivia, especially the Chaco, where ranches are entire counties, similar to the huge spreads in Texas or Montana.

On Papá Roger's farm things are still a little feudal, but no one is indentured, people commonly come and go and change jobs or go to make their way in the city, all the children go to school, wages are low but food, housing, medical care, transportation, and clothing are all provided. The work can be hard--milking by hand, riding herd on cattle, even catching a chicken for lunch can be tough in my estimation. If it were up to me, I think I'd just shoot one, but they never seem to resort to that. With all the work, though, as I mentioned above, there are many breaks in the Bolivian day, especially on the farm. It is a sweet, very social, relaxed lifestyle. A better life than the city, in many ways.

When I think of someone in the U.S. forced to work part-time at K-Mart because that's the only job they can get, with no benefits, minimum-wage doesn't apply, and even two people in a family working like this would have to live in the street and eat garbage, literally, it makes me think the trade Papá Roger makes for labor with his workers is one of the fairest on the planet. The workers seem very happy to me and say they are, and I've asked. The system provides productivity at a lower level of existence than a giant factory operation, something we may need to learn to do better in the future ourselves. To me, the most important part of what the workers are paid is the security and a life that has a good chance to bring happiness.

Papá Roger had a worker who, unfortunately, died not too long ago. His name was don Feliciano, but Marci and I always called him Tarzan. He lived off by himself, far into the jungle where he had a little house by a lovely little river. His job was to raise the fruit needed to feed everyone on the farm. He tended huge mango trees, papaya, pineapples, yuca, plantain, bananas, achachairú, oranges, lemons, limes, guayabas. He had a wife and family in town and would visit them once in a while, but he preferred living by himself, alone in the jungle. A couple of times a year troops of monkeys would migrate through. The river sometimes had fish. Tarzan would sit by his fire, listen and talk to the jungle. He trained bees to dance to his beat.

Papá Roger was so proud of everything on his farm...he loved to take me to his waterfalls, to visit Tarzan, to see the barns and how the cheese is made, his mountain, and the source of water for the farm way up on the mountainside, reachable only by hacking through thick jungle with machetes.

He went to the farm and worked a little the day before he died. He still hadn't retired at 79, though two of his sons have pretty much taken over most of the chores now. He was the boss until the end and all the work he did he loved and did with love. There can be no doubt about that.

Papá Roger had his unique way of looking at things. I guess you'd have to say he was Catholic, but he didn't care much for the authority and hierarchy of the Church. He didn't like anything made of plastic and didn't want plastic to touch his food. It turns out he might have been on to something. I thought it was cute anyway. He had his young children each drink a glass of raw cow's milk every day to make them strong. It doesn't seem to have hurt. He loved poetry. He cherished the Spanish language. He loved music all of his life. He nurtured those loves in his family and those he chose as friends.

Once, Papá Roger taught me to chew coca. We had had conversations about America's seemingly insatiable appetite for cocaine. Perhaps some of you know that leaves of the plant from which cocaine is made, the coca plant, are legal in Bolivia. Its leaves have been chewed by the Indians for centuries to cure altitude sickness, to

work hard in the silver mines, or to stay awake on a long trucking run (more recently). Chewing these leaves is not something Papá Roger would usually do, but he decided that I should learn. It's really quite a process and I can't figure out how it ever happened to be discovered. First of all, you have to chew the leaves, which though not awful are not that pleasant tasting. I suppose you get used to it. Did ancient Indians go around chewing every kind of leaf to see what would happen? And the thing is, nothing happens! Nothing. The cocaine cannot be released from the leaves by simply chewing or even eating them. To extract any cocaine at all, you first have to set-up a little, very specific chemical factory in your mouth. You have to add a little baking soda or grey wood ashes to the mix. Then the mouth becomes numb, any bad taste disappears, and you experience the sudden urge to work like a beaver. Many of the Indians from the *altiplano* chew the stuff all day long. They always have a big lump in one cheek. Baking soda is a controlled substance in Bolivia. Did ancient Indians chew everything in the jungle mixed with everything they could think of to see what would happen? Why? How many poisoned themselves? Did they trick the dumb kids in the tribe into doing it for them?

Anyway, we had some excellent conversation that day--with some help from my truly bilingual wife--and I treasure the memory. Just a month ago, we celebrated Papá Roger's 79th and last birthday. We decided we would take him and Aquina out for dinner and invite the whole immediate family for a little party. Papá Roger decided he wanted seafood, so we found a little place near us downtown that did a great job and we had wine and talked late and he was so happy and lively and alive, surrounded by his beloved family. Where he belonged and made others belong. Where we all belong.

The last gift the dying give the living is to cause them to think about the nature of death and life and love. Papá Roger became wise in his lifetime. And he shared his wisdom with generosity of spirit and love. He actually cared about everyone, most especially his beloved family, and everyone who knew him noticed, and what he gave was and will be returned a thousand fold, though it will take some time.

*Ciao, ciao*, my Papá Roger, may God bless you. Losing you makes me miss my own, first father that much more. You have reminded me so much of him and I thank you for that. I will miss you and many others will miss you even more, but we are all happy and proud that you lived your life and your death with honor and goodness. We thank you for touching us with your beautiful voice and spirit.

We're not going to be in as much of a hurry to get the cookie business going as I wished, but that's OK. I can work hard, but I certainly don't mind taking it easy, either. With our work, we haven't been able to travel as much as we like since we returned to Bolivia about eight month ago--just a couple of little weekend trips to San Javier and the farm near there. I think we'll take a trip to Tarija and maybe on to Buenos Aires via train. The *FotM Newsletter* might vanish for a few days, maybe later this week, but I hope you'll keep corresponding. I love hearing from you all.

Thank you and may your lives be as blessed as my Papá Roger's. All it takes is to let the love in your heart out, give it away freely, squander it like there is no tomorrow, because there are only so many wondrous tomorrows in this gift, in this life. Anything else after that will take care of itself. All we can know about death is that it certainly is not *this* life. *This* life is all we know and all we need to know. Be good. Love.

20120309-01	10:45	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #91)
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That death road is something else. It says a lot about you that you love driving on it. I don't even want to look at the pictures, let alone drive on the thing. I close my eyes and hold my breath when I go over the Golden Gate bridge.

I am astounded by Rush's comments. I never listen to AM radio or watch Fox News, so I'm spared most of his venom and only get a taste when someone quotes him. He's a horrible human being, getting rich by giving voice to the worst aspects of American society. He's worse than an embarrassment; he's evil. His selfishness and arrogance know no bounds. I don't find him amusing or ironic or anything redeeming. He's a bloviating (love that

word) blowhard with a heart like a lump of coal. I hope he loses ALL his sponsors. He makes me want to use the f-word.

<a href="#">20120309-03</a>	11:55	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above)
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But, gee, those pictures are the good, safe parts of the Death Road...it's when someone is passing on the inside and you have one wheel almost off the edge that it gets hairy...

<a href="#">20120309-02</a>	11:53	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above) & Fw: Daily Kos Action: Hit Rush's Advertisers
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I couldn't agree more about Rush Limbaugh. It looks like we're doing a little good, though. I just got this:

from Daily Kos:

Spurred on by more than 120,000 members of the Daily Kos community like you, this week over 50 companies and organizations pulled their advertisements from Rush Limbaugh's radio program.

Yesterday, the results of your action could be heard in the form of beautiful, long silences during the commercial breaks in the online streaming of Limbaugh's show on WABC, the flagship station for his broadcasts. Here are the amazing stats:

- A total of 86 ads aired during WABC's online streaming broadcast of The Rush Limbaugh Show yesterday.
- 77 of those ads were public service announcements donated free of charge by the Ad Council.
- Of the nine paid spots that ran, seven were from companies that have said they have taken steps to ensure their ads no longer air during the program.
- WABC's online feed included about 5:33 of dead air when ads would normally have run.

Click below to listen to the silence during the commercial breaks on Rush Limbaugh's program, and be sure to share it with friends over Facebook, Twitter, or something else. This is your accomplishment, so please be sure to savor it.

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/03/08/1072469/-Dead-air-flocks-to-advertise-on-Rush-Limbaugh-s-show?detail=hide>

<a href="#">20120309-04</a>	12:11	Pam	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to SteveB, above)
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Yesterday he said losing 28 (the count at that point) advertisers was like taking a drop out of the ocean, or some such metaphor. 80 has a bit more bite to it. I hope he gets his show cancelled. Then he can join Imus and Stern on a marginal station no one listens to. What a bunch of creeps.

<a href="#">20120309-05</a>	13:02	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above)
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It's been quite a while since I've seen or listened to any of the screamers of doom.

It seems people become immune to invective, so Limbaugh et al. have to constantly escalate.

The result to me is nearly as bad as yelling "Fire!" in a crowded theater. It could have a worse long-term effect.

The amazing thing to me is not so much Limbaugh, but that people eat this stuff up and he's some kind of king-maker or breaker in the Republican Party.

The jerk actually has power! Which I'm sure he never fails to use in an infantile manner.

(I want to take you for a ride on the "Death Road" someday and show you that it's not.)

[20120309-06](#) 15:06 SteveB FotM Announcement

AS OF TODAY, MAR. 9, 2012, FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE IS CEASING ALL ADVERTISING ON THE RUSH LIMBAUGH RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAMS.

WE THINK HIS ACTIONS TOTALLY SUCK AND WE'VE HAD ENOUGH. WE'RE PULLING THE PLUG. GOOD-BYE, RUSH!

Thank you.

[20120309-08](#) 20:06 Art Re: FotM Announcement (reply to SteveB, above)

Well done, Sir!

[20120309-07](#) 16:04 Charis Video: Risking It All in Bolivia

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZEN-qA0e94&feature=youtu.be>

[Pam and Ann will love this! –SteveB]

[20120310-01](#) 07:57 MarthaH "How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?"

FINALLY...an article I can depend on with the aspects neglected by the commercial ads for the politics of it all. *CSM* is a good source,, in my opinion.

"How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?" by Mark Clayton, *Christian Science Monitor*

Mar. 9, 2012, (<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2012/0309/Inside-the-Keystone-pipeline-How-much-would-it-really-help-US-consumers>) ([http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46689167/ns/us\\_news-christian\\_science\\_monitor/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46689167/ns/us_news-christian_science_monitor/))

(Canadian firms behind it say it will supply Gulf Coast export markets.)

Often lost in the political wrangling over the controversial Keystone XL pipeline – on hold after President Obama rejected TransCanada's initial construction proposal – are some key findings that run counter to the rosy picture of abundant supply and lower prices so often painted by U.S. politicians.

Canadian companies backing the Keystone XL – touted as enhancing U.S. energy security with a big new surge of imported Canadian oil – actually expect it to supply more lucrative Gulf Coast export markets as well as raise Midwest oil prices by reducing "oversupply" in that region.

These little-publicized findings are contained in the studies and testimony of experts working for TransCanada, the company that wants to build the pipeline from Alberta's tar sands across America's heartland to Gulf Coast refineries.

Some of these concerns popped up, albeit briefly, in U.S. congressional testimony last year on the pipeline project, and have given rise to a recent proposal to bar the sale of Keystone oil overseas.

In the latest round of Capitol Hill fighting over the pipeline, Senate Democrats on Thursday defeated a Republican amendment to the transportation bill that would have fast-tracked the project by stripping the State Department of its approval authority and giving it to Congress.

In February, legislation to force U.S. approval of the pipeline passed the House 237-187. That bill would strip the president of authority to block the project and give the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 30 days to approve the pipeline.

But most of the heated partisan rhetoric over job creation and gasoline prices glosses over what Keystone would or wouldn't do for the U.S.

### **TransCanada's case**

"Keystone will bring many benefits to the United States, but I believe the most important role that Keystone will play is to bring energy security to the United States during what has been recently some very unsettling times overseas," Alex Pourbaix, TransCanada's president for energy and oil pipelines, said in a congressional hearing in December.

So, would TransCanada support U.S. legislation requiring Canadian oil and products refined from it, such as diesel, to be sold only in the United States, asked Rep. Ed Markey (D) of Massachusetts, "so that this country realizes all of the energy security benefits your company and others have promised?"

"No, I can't do that," Mr. Pourbaix said.

In an e-mailed statement, TransCanada spokesman Terry Cunha writes that Keystone XL could help cut U.S. reliance on Mideast and Venezuelan imports "by up to 40 percent." He cites a 2010 U.S. Department of Energy study that he contends says more Canadian oil would "help reduce U.S. imports of foreign oil from sources outside of North America."

Most analysts agree that more Canadian oil flowing south would help reduce imports from other regions. Less obvious, however, is the fact that the Keystone XL pipeline is not actually needed to bring all that new Canadian oil to the U.S. – a flow now projected to rise to 1.7 million barrels per day by 2030, according to the same DOE study. Often characterized by proponents as validating the need for the pipeline, that study actually found that Canadian oil import growth will go on at "almost identical" levels through 2030 using existing and new pipeline capacity as well as rail shipments – whether or not Keystone XL is built.

### **Political backlash**

Even so, supporters in Congress continue to call Keystone XL "a no-brainer" from a U.S. energy-security standpoint, also arguing it would benefit consumers by lowering gas prices, too. Keystone XL's "supplies from reliable sources leads to lower costs, thereby putting downward pressure on prices," one study on TransCanada's website says.

According to this premise, Keystone XL would move up to 830,000 barrels of Canadian crude south each day, boosting economic activity by billions of dollars and creating thousands of new jobs – though their precise number is hotly disputed.

Yet in January, Mr. Obama, under pressure by Republicans, reiterated his previous decision to deny permission to build the Keystone XL – at least for now. The pipeline "would not serve the national interest at this time," Dr. Kerri-Ann Jones, an assistant secretary of State, subsequently told the House subcommittee on Energy and Power, citing "unresolved concerns" including energy security, economic effects and environmental impacts.

TransCanada replied to the denial by saying it would resubmit its construction proposal to address the environmental concerns, and on Tuesday a company executive reportedly said new plans that rerouted the pipeline away from the sensitive Nebraska Sandhills region would be ready in weeks.

But the president's denial unleashed a furor as GOP presidential candidates and oil industry backers lambasted the White House for denying the U.S. economy oil and jobs.

"The president demonstrates a lack of seriousness about bringing down unemployment, restoring economic growth, and achieving energy independence," GOP presidential hopeful Mitt Romney said in a statement.

Newt Gingrich said the decision "weakens America's national security and kills thousands of well-paying American jobs," while oil industry advocate Jack Gerard, president and CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, called the project "essential," and said, "It must be approved and built."

### **Higher oil prices in the Midwest?**

But others, including environmentalists who oppose the pipeline mainly because extracting oil from tar sands releases more greenhouse gases than other methods of harvesting oil, also argue the pipeline will do little or nothing to boost U.S. energy security and will actually lead to higher oil prices in the Midwest.

"Rather than providing the U.S. with more Canadian oil, Keystone XL will simply shift oil from the Midwest to the Gulf Coast, where much of it can be exported to international buyers – decreasing U.S. energy supply and increasing the cost of oil in the American Midwest," concludes a new study by the Natural Resources Defense Council, a New York-based environmental advocacy non-profit group, citing numerous TransCanada studies and the transcripts of Canadian federal hearings.

But it's not just environmentalists who are howling in the wilderness.

"The firms involved have asked the U.S. State Department to approve this project, even as they've told Canadian government officials how the pipeline can be used to add at least \$4 billion to the U.S. fuel bill," Philip K. Verleger, president of PKVerleger LLC, a Colorado consulting firm that specializes in research on oil market economics, wrote in a Minneapolis Star-Tribune commentary last March.

U.S. farmers who spent \$12.4 billion on fuel in 2009 could see those costs rise to \$15 billion or higher if the pipeline goes through, he projects. At least \$500 million of the added cost "would come from the Canadian market manipulation," he wrote.

"Millions of Americans will spend 10 to 20 cents more per gallon for gasoline and diesel fuel as tribute to our 'friendly' neighbors to the north," the highly respected Dr. Verleger wrote. "The Keystone XL pipeline will move production from Canadian oil sands to a deepwater port from where it can be exported."

But that is not merely Verleger's opinion. It's based on findings of the economic consultants hired by TransCanada – contained in their analyses of the pipeline's impact on Canadian oil producers and in official testimony before Canada's National Energy Board.

"Existing markets for Canadian heavy crude, principally [the U.S. Midwest], are currently oversupplied, resulting in price discounting for Canadian heavy crude oil," concludes a 2009 analysis on behalf of TransCanada by Purvin & Gertz, Inc., an oil economics firm based in Houston. "Access to the [U.S. Gulf Coast] via the Keystone XL Pipeline is expected to strengthen Canadian crude oil pricing in [the Midwest market] by removing this oversupply. This is expected to increase the price of heavy crude to the equivalent cost of imported crude."

### **Gulf link to global markets**

As a result of those increases in the price of heavy crude in the Midwest and sales of higher-margin refined products shipped out from Gulf Coast refineries to other markets, Canadian oil producers could be expected to reap \$2 billion to \$3.9 billion more each year, the analysis says.

"Shippers on the Keystone XL Pipeline have contracted for access to the [U.S. Gulf Coast] market for their oil sands production and refining needs," the Purvin & Gertz study concludes. "Not only will this directly benefit these shippers, it will also provide a benefit to all [Western Canadian] heavy crude producers by increasing the price they receive for their crude, as well as providing significant pipeline capacity to an alternative market" on the U.S. Gulf coast.

Why Canadian crude oil producers would choose Keystone XL when other pipelines to the U.S. are running well below capacity has much to do with diversifying away from the U.S. market to more lucrative markets in Europe, China, and other Asian countries, Verleger and others argue. Trends seem to support this thesis.

Over the past five years, exports from the U.S. Gulf Coast have soared as refiners sitting in tax-free zones near Port Arthur, Texas, have shifted production away from gasoline and toward higher-margin diesel. Since 2007, overall U.S. exports of diesel and other products have jumped 134 percent, the U.S. Energy Information Administration reports. Of U.S. exports, two-thirds is shipped abroad from Gulf Coast refineries – now more than 2 million barrels a day and up from just a quarter of today's level a decade ago.

That trend was captured in testimony Sept. 17, 2009, before Canada's National Energy Board. Seven Canadian companies were willing to pay higher pipeline tariff costs for using the Keystone XL pipeline, the testimony showed, in order to bypass Midwest refineries by sending 500,000 barrels per day, the lion's share of the pipeline's capacity, to Gulf refineries.

### **Valve to relieve Midwest oil "oversupply"**

In addition to winning higher prices for Canadian oil in the Gulf, the pipeline would boost revenues by shuttling existing oil supplies out of the Midwest – boosting prices, the Canadian study and testimony also show.

"So seven shippers or seven producers are, in your view, pursuing this strategy in order to increase the [Midwest oil market] and Ontario prices. Do I have it right?" D. Davies, a Canadian energy board examiner asked Thomas Wise, the Purvin & Gertz expert who authored the economic analysis for TransCanada.

"If a minority of the barrels were sold at the Gulf Coast at a Gulf Coast price, that would have the effect of raising the price not only in the Midwest and Ontario but in Western Canada," Mr. Wise responded.

In hearings last May and December, TransCanada officials admitted to U.S. legislators that the pipeline will indeed increase the price paid for Canadian oil in the Midwest – but suggested those higher crude oil prices would not necessarily mean higher gasoline prices in that region.

The pipeline would reduce the "discount on Canadian oil" currently paid by U.S. refiners – an oil price increase for U.S. refineries, Pourbaix said in a congressional hearing last May. Even so, "that crude will still remain the cheapest source of crude by a long shot that U.S. refineries have access to," he testified.

"If you add significant new supply to a static demand for a product in a market, you should see the price go down," Pourbaix explained. "So it is my absolute expectation, that over time, with incremental supplies of Canadian crude oil coming into the U.S. market, you will see downward pressure on refined products prices, throughout U.S. markets."

In his e-mailed response, TransCanada's Mr. Cunha cites a June 2011 report by IHS CERA, an energy economics firm that reached similar conclusions. "Prices at the pump will drop when America's largest refining region (the Gulf Coast) becomes less dependent on the world's highest priced crude (OPEC)," he wrote. "Foreign importers will have to cut their prices if they want to compete with the cheaper Canadian crude.... We would argue the overall U.S. price per barrel will drop as refiners pay less for foreign and domestic oil competing with a higher volume of cheap Canadian oil."

Testimony and supporting documents north of the border stating that Keystone XL would raise Canadian crude prices has set off alarm bells with several U.S. legislators – while leaving others unmoved.

## Legislators react to findings

Rep. Ed Whitfield (R) of Kentucky, who chaired two hearings into the Keystone XL, heard positive testimony about the pipeline – as well as contradicting testimony that it would do little or nothing for energy security while raising Midwest oil prices. He still likes the project, however.

“If our president decides that sending aircraft carrier strike groups to the Strait of Hormuz to defend oil flow is in the national interest, then one would also think a pipeline from Canada that would help eliminate our Middle East oil imports also serves the national interest,” Mr. Whitfield said in a prepared opening statement for the hearing he chaired.

In an e-mailed statement, Whitfield's press secretary adds that the pipeline “will help lower the price of gasoline by bringing more oil supply to the market” and says the Department of Energy “specifically states that gasoline prices in all connected markets would go down.”

But Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, was alarmed enough to call last year for a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) investigation into the matter based in part on the Canadian National Energy Board testimony.

“While the full nature of the arrangements agreed upon by the Canadian shippers is unclear, there is clear indication that there is a coordinated ‘strategy’ among Canadian suppliers to gain higher prices,” Senator Wyden wrote Jonathan Liebowitz, chairman of the FTC in an April 6, 2011, letter. “This will have the effect of manipulating supply levels allowing prices of oil refined in [the Midwest oil market] to rise and ultimately benefitting the Canadian companies with higher prices.”

On Thursday, it was Wyden who put forward an amendment to the transportation bill that would have prohibited the sale of the Keystone oil overseas and imposed other regulatory requirements. His amendment was defeated 64 to 34.

Reacting to Obama’s previous decision to bar approval for Keystone XL, TransCanada made it clear it considered the project too vital to delay for long.

“Until this pipeline is constructed, the U.S. will continue to import millions of barrels of conflict oil from the Middle East and Venezuela and other foreign countries who do not share democratic values Canadians and Americans are privileged to have,” Russ Girling, TransCanada's president and chief executive officer said in a statement.

“This project,” he continued, “is too important to the U.S. economy, the Canadian economy and the national interest of the United States for it not to proceed.”

<a href="#">20120310-02</a>	21:45	Pam	Re: “How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?” (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I heard an interview with a historian on NPR yesterday. I don't recall his name, but he's a professor somewhere who has written a book on the role of African Americans in the Civil War, including attitudes toward slavery, then and now. He drew a comparison between those Southerners who deplored slavery but were still part of an economic system that depended on their labor. As we know, most of them continued to go along with the "peculiar institution." It's like today when we all know that our use of fossil fuels is ruining our planet and endangering our future, yet we all still drive cars and fly to distant places. We're part of a system we can't imagine doing without-- just like the antebellum Southerners. I have a feeling that 100 years from now, the sight of a meat counter in a supermarket will make our descendants toss their cookies. If you really think about it, doesn't the idea of eating live flesh creep you out just a little? It does me, yet I continue to eat lamb shanks when I can get them. Something big enough to disrupt the system has to occur before change will happen. Boehner and his fellow oil investors will never give up oil so long as the pipelines continue to spout huge profits. I just asked myself whether it will take a war to bring on change, then I answered my own question. Yes, it will. We are engaged in it already. What else is the Middle East all about? We're sure not in Afghanistan because we want Afghan women to have the

right to go to school and vote. All the instability is a result of a struggle over oil money. The dictators want to hold onto their most valuable commodity, and the rest of the world wants it cheap. We're all driving off a cliff as fast as we can go.

<a href="#">20120310-03</a> 18:19 SteveG Fw: Change.org Petition: No More 'Pink Slime' or 'Mystery Meat'!
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3-4 petitions that follow each other – all worth signing.

from Change.org:

Pink slime is gross. It's connective tissues of cow and other beef trimmings, heavily treated with ammonia to kill pathogens like salmonella and E coli.

Experts say it's "a high risk product" that lacks nutritional benefit. Even fast food giants like McDonald's and Taco Bell dropped it years ago.

But the USDA is about to buy 7 million tons of pink slime to put in school lunches.

Bettina Siegel, a lawyer and mother to two school-aged kids, started a petition to get the USDA to cancel its order ASAP, and it's gaining national attention.

If tens of thousands of people sign, the media and lawmakers will take notice and pressure the USDA to cancel the order.

Click here to sign Bettina's petition asking the USDA to keep pink slime out of school lunches:

[http://www.change.org/petitions/tell-usda-to-stop-using-pink-slime-in-school-food?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=action\\_alert](http://www.change.org/petitions/tell-usda-to-stop-using-pink-slime-in-school-food?utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert)

Thanks for being a change-maker, Corinne and the Change.org team

Here's more information from Bettina:

"Pink slime" is the term used for a mixture of fatty meat scrap and connective tissue (formerly used only for pet food and rendering) that is treated with ammonia hydroxide to remove pathogens like salmonella and E coli. These so-called "Lean Beef Trimmings," are produced by Beef Products, Inc.

Two former government microbiologists claim that, for political reasons, pink slime was approved for human consumption by USDA over serious safety concerns.

Government and industry records obtained by The New York Times in 2009 showed that "in testing for the school lunch program, E. coli and salmonella pathogens have been found dozens of times in Beef Products meat, challenging claims by the company and the USDA about the effectiveness of the treatment. Since 2005, E. coli has been found 3 times and salmonella 48 times, including back-to-back incidents in August in which two 27,000-pound batches were found to be contaminated. The meat was caught before reaching lunch-rooms trays."

Even apart from safety concerns, it is simply wrong to feed our children connective tissues and beef scraps that were, in the past, destined for use in pet food and rendering and were not considered fit for human consumption.

Due to public outcry, fast food giants like McDonald's and Taco Bell have stopped using pink slime in their food. But the federal government continues to allow its use in school food and has just authorized the purchase of ground beef which collectively contains an additional 7 million pounds of pink slime for consumption by our nation's children.

Tell the USDA to STOP the use of ground beef containing pink slime in the National School Lunch Program!

[20120311-01](#) 05:56 SteveB Re: No More 'Pink Slime' or 'Mystery Meat!' (reply to SteveG, above)

I read this the other day and thought about putting it in the next FotM Newsletter, but I was so grossed out...

Then I found myself telling the story to a couple of people. Now you send a petition, which is better than just an article, because you can take action other than vomiting.

God, I hope I never run into any of this crap!

Thanks, hope you're having a great weekend

[20120310-04](#) 18:21 SteveG "Three Ways to Beat Corporate Giants"

"Three Ways to Beat Corporate Giants" by Jim Shultz, NationofChange

Mar. 10, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/three-ways-beat-corporate-giants-1331390970>)

From insurance companies lording over our health care to global conglomerates taking control of our water, corporate giants wield more and more influence over our lives and our environment. So how do we fight back? How do we take on corporate power and actually win?

The Democracy Center recently published a new citizen's resource that looks up close at the strategies that people and communities are using worldwide to successfully tackle corporate giants. We call it *Beating Goliath* and you can download a free copy here: <http://democracyctr.org/corporate/resources-for-action-2/3876-2/>.

As Occupy and other movements across the world take up anew the question of how to combat corporate power, here are three good lessons from the front lines.

### 1. Make it Personal: The Battle Against Bechtel

The global campaign against Bechtel's anti-Bolivia lawsuit was based on one key principle: Make life miserable for the corporation's namesake and CEO, Riley Bechtel, and other company officials. Corporations are designed to shield their top executives from accountability. Anti-Bechtel campaigners gave Mr. Bechtel no such luxury. They bombarded him with emails to his personal account. They lambasted him by name over and over again in the media. Protesters shut down access to his San Francisco headquarters and in Washington picketed the home of one of his subordinates.

In January 2006, Bechtel officials flew to Bolivia to sign an agreement dropping their case for a token payment of thirty cents, the first such capitulation ever by a major corporation in a global trade case. The lawyer who represented the Bolivian government in the negotiations, when asked by the Democracy Center why the company had capitulated, said, "The CEO told the lawyers to make the case go away." In the end the damage to Bechtel's reputation outweighed what it hoped to win from the Bolivian people.

### 2. Add Humor to Your Protests: Switching off Coal Plants in the UK

In 2006 E.On (a German energy company) announced plans to replace a coal-fired power station in Southeast England, with yet another climate-threatening coal-fired power station. A two-year campaign was waged by grassroots groups and climate activists to stop the company's plan. Campaigners took actions ranging from online pledges, to mass civil disobedience, and at one point completely shut down the existing power plant with protests. It was the addition of humor, however, to their protest actions, which helped gain the campaign widespread positive public attention. Activists dispatched a team of 'cleaners' to scrub coal

clean outside an E.On office (to call attention to the company's claims of 'clean coal') and invaded a company office with a posse of Santas delivering coal to "naughty" company officials. Finally, the campaign 'occupied' a company-sponsored replica of the coal plant at Legoland, unveiling a banner saying "STOP CLIMATE CHANGE" down the length of the tiny tower. In 2009, under mounting public pressure, E.On announced that they were shelving the plans for the new Kingsnorth power station. The UK government also announced that it would not approve the development of new coal-fired stations without 'Carbon Capture and Storage' (a promised future technology that has not yet been successfully implemented in any working power plant.)

### 3. Go After the Shareholders: Taking on Occidental Petroleum in Colombia

In the early 1990s Occidental Petroleum set its sights on developing a set of major oil fields in Colombia's biodiversity-rich cloud forest, home to the indigenous U'wa people. The indigenous community's opposition to Occidental's drilling plans was rooted in a spiritual belief that oil is the blood of mother earth, and the knowledge that oil infrastructure in their lands would become a magnet for armed violence and the country's FARC rebels. With the Colombian government eager to support the project, the U'wa, alongside international allies, undertook a global campaign to block Occidental's drilling plans. With dreams of vast profits dancing in their heads, Occidental executives seemed immovable, so Amazon Watch and others mobilized for a companion strategy—target the oil conglomerate's current and potential shareholders. Campaigners staged protest actions at Fidelity Investments, a major Occidental stockholder, and sponsored shareholder resolutions against the project at other companies. The targeting of investors coupled with the unshakable dedication and unity of the U'wa people helped convince the business community that Occidental's oil plans in the cloud forest faced too much opposition to be a good business investment.

The campaign eventually took its toll on Occidental. Fidelity, the target of 75 protests in just 6 months, withdrew \$400 million dollars of its investments in the oil firm. Eventually Occidental announced that it would return control of its main exploration site to the Colombian government, claiming that it had failed to find the oil deposits it had expected. Whether Occidental cared to admit it or not, the U'wa and their global allies had won.

(Jim Shultz wrote this article for YES! Magazine, a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions. Jim is the executive director of the Democracy Center, which works globally to help citizens become effective advocates on environmental and social justice issues. Read more about these anti-corporate advocacy campaigns and others in the Democracy Center's new campaigner's resource, *Beating Goliath*.)

<http://www.worldmostamazingthings.com/2011/04/amazing-hedgehog-hedgehogs-facts-photos.html>



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #93 — MAR. 13, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Rush Limbaugh Is a Victim**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 13, 2012)

I thought maybe we needed a little longer break from the southern-fried strategies of the Republican candidates. In Alabama and Mississippi, there is no such thing as global warming, the budget will be balanced when a Republican is elected President, America is the greatest warrior nation since toast, President Obama is a foreign Muslim who has single-handedly caused all of America's present and future problems, a pipeline delivering no oil to the U.S. will reduce gasoline prices to \$2.50/gallon, and the vaginas of American women must be closely monitored by the government.

"Rush Limbaugh, Media Victim" by Mary Elizabeth Williams, Salon

Mar. 9, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/03/09/rush\\_limbaugh\\_media\\_victim/](http://www.salon.com/2012/03/09/rush_limbaugh_media_victim/))

(A *Washington Post* writer apologizes to Rush for an error. Because Limbaugh takes nothing more seriously than truth!)

Don't you just hate it when someone in the media reports something about you without checking the facts first? Isn't it a cheap shot when you're inaccurately depicted as some kind of opportunistic jerk? My God, isn't that just the worst? No wonder poor, misunderstood Rush Limbaugh is upset. No wonder he had no recourse but to take to what's left of his airwaves Thursday to clear his name after *Washington Post* writer Alexandra Petri erroneously stated that his show "targets jerks." And did you see how the guy with a bit of an image problem with the ladies was forced to bust out the "B word"?

Writing about the way advertisers have been dumping Limbaugh's show like it's toxic waste – exactly like it's toxic waste, really – Petri had reported that among his new sponsors, "So far, he's picked up AshleyMadison.com, the site where you go to cheat on your wife, and another web site that is explicitly for sugar-daddy matchmaking." Except that Limbaugh had done no such thing. Why, it's as if Petri thought Limbaugh had no integrity or something.

So horrified was Limbaugh at this besmirching of his character that he addressed it at length on his show Thursday, explaining, "We do not sponsor companies that help people cheat on their spouses." He then added, "It's an out and out lie complete with your b-i-itchy opinion in it and it is untrue." He then condemned Petri's "snarky, lying, full-of-holes" reporting by vowing, "I guarantee you, she'll run another story tomorrow saying I made this all up." He guaranteed it! In a totally non-snarky, non-lying, non-full of holes way.

On Friday, Petri did not, in fact, accuse Limbaugh of making things up. Instead, she penned a mea culpa to the noted Viagra aficionado, saying, "In the age of instant deadlines, when the correct time to have written about something is yesterday at 3 a.m., it's easy to make mistakes, and the thing to do is admit them, fix them and do better." She even offered to buy Limbaugh a conciliatory sandwich, which proves she may just have the strongest stomach in the Beltway.

What a harrowing ordeal it must have been for Limbaugh — a man who prides himself on being "huge on personal responsibility and accountability" — to have his reputation so falsely tainted. What an awful thing for a human being to endure. It'd be like, oh I don't know, being called a slut and a whore and prostitute from some whimsical blowhard's personal sniper tower for three days in a row. It'd be like having someone declare that you'd testified before Congress that you were "having so much sex" that you were "going broke buying birth control," that you "must be paid to have sex," and that you "want to be paid to have sex," even when, of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Isn't it disgusting when people use their platform to spread misinformation? Isn't it vile when they brag about their blatant character assassination, and then try to act like it never happened? Keep calling it like you see it, Rush, and don't let the b-i-itches get you down. We'd hate for anybody to get the idea that you're some kind of whiny, dish-it-out-but-can't-take-it dirtbag.

<a href="#">20120312-02</a>	17:22	Dennis	Video: When Bank of America Takes Your House...
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Answer: Ya gotta find a new place to live, don't ya?

Mar. 12, 2012, by OccupyTVNY, ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUzMLu4K\\_2o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUzMLu4K_2o))

A crew of occupiers makes a home of a Bank of America lobby with a couch, a coffee table, a rug and a potted plant. "Bank of America took our homes so we thought we'd move in here!" Join them March 15 as America turns the tables on the nation's largest bank!

<a href="#">20120312-03</a>	17:26	Dennis	"What If the 'Broken Windows' Theory Were Applied to Wall Street?"
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Applying a theory on blue collar crime to Wall Street...

"What If the 'Broken Windows' Theory Were Applied to Wall Street?" by William K. Black, New Economic Perspectives/Alternet

Mar. 6, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/154426/>)

James Q. Wilson, who died recently, was a political scientist who often studied the government response to blue collar crime. The public knows him best for his theory called "broken windows." The metaphor explains what happens to a vacant building when broken windows are not promptly repaired. Soon, most of the windows in the abandoned building are broken. The criminals feel little compunction against petty destruction because the building's owners evince no concern for the integrity of their building. Wilson took social norms, community, and ethics seriously. He argued that as community broke down, fewer honest citizens were active in monitoring and policing behavior. The breakdown in community led to widespread serious blue collar crime. Wilson urged us to take even minor blue collar crimes and breaches of civility seriously and to demand that they be contained through social pressure and policing.

New York City's police strategy embraced "broken windows," making it a priority to respond to even minor offenses that upset the community — like "squeegee men," graffiti, and street prostitution. Reported blue collar crime fell. It also fell sharply in most other cities, which did not implement "broken windows" programs, but Wilson and the NYPD got the credit and popular fame. Wilson became one of the most famous blue collar criminologists in the world.

Wilson's broken window theory remains controversial among many blue collar criminologists. As a celebration of his life and research, I offer this discussion of applying "broken windows" theory and policies to elite white-collar crime.

Wilson was strongly conservative, and his research focus in criminology was almost exclusively blue collar crime. That was a shame, because "broken windows" theory is most compelling in the context of elite white-collar crime. Such an application, however, would have been outside Wilson's comfort zone. Wilson tended to use the word "crime" to refer exclusively to blue collar crime and his emphasis was on very low status criminals. In *Thinking About Crime*, Wilson argued that criminology should focus overwhelmingly on low-status blue collar criminals.

This book [does not deal] with "white collar crimes".... Partly this reflects the limits of my own knowledge, but it also reflects my conviction, which I believe is the conviction of most citizens, that predatory street crime is a far more serious matter than consumer fraud [or] antitrust violations ... because predatory crime ... makes difficult or impossible maintenance of meaningful human communities (1975: xx).

I am rather tolerant of some forms of civic corruption (if a good mayor can stay in office and govern effectively only by making a few deals with highway contractors and insurance agents, I do not get overly alarmed)...." (1975: xix)

Notice that Wilson's explanation is antithetical to his "broken windows" reasoning. There are, of course, relatively minor white-collar crimes. Wilson emphasized that it was the willingness of society to tolerate relatively minor blue collar crimes that led to social disintegration and epidemics of severe blue collar crimes, but he engaged in the same willingness to tolerate and excuse less severe white collar crimes. He predicted in his work on "broken windows" that tolerating widespread smaller crimes would lead to epidemic levels of larger crimes because it undermined community and social restraints. The epidemics of elite white collar crime that have driven our recurrent, intensifying financial crises have proven this point. Similarly, corruption that is excused and tolerated by elites is unlikely to remain at the level of "a few deals." Corruption is likely to spread in incidence and severity precisely because it undermines community and the rule of law. It is likely to grow more pervasive and harmful the more we tolerate it.

"Broken windows" theory, in the white collar crime context, would lead us to make the prevention and deterrence of consumer frauds and anti-trust violations through prosecutions a high priority because of their tendency to produce a "Gresham's" dynamic in which businesses or CEOs that cheat gain a competitive advantage and bad ethics drives good ethics out of the markets. These offenses degrade ethics and erode peer restraints on misconduct.

The ongoing crisis demonstrates that anti-consumer frauds are a direct assault on community. Mortgage fraud – and it was overwhelmingly the lenders and their agents who put the lies in millions of liar's loans – physically and socially destroy community by producing mass defaults, homelessness, and vacant homes.

Taking Wilson's "broken windows" reasoning seriously in the elite white collar crime context would require us to take a series of prophylactic measures to restore integrity and strengthen peer pressures against misconduct. Indeed, we have implicitly tested the applicability of "broken windows" reasoning in that context by adopting policies that acted directly contrary to Wilson's reasoning. We have adopted executive and professional compensation systems that are exceptionally criminogenic. We have excused and ignored the endemic "earnings management" that is the inherent result of these compensation policies and the inherent degradation of professionalism that results from allowing CEOs to create a Gresham's dynamic among appraisers, auditors, credit rating agencies, and stock analysts. The intellectual father of modern executive compensation, Michael Jensen, now warns about his Frankenstein creation. He argues that one of our problems is dishonesty about the results. Surveys indicate that the great bulk of CFOs claim that it is essential to manipulate earnings. Jensen explains that the manipulation inherently reduces shareholder value and insists that it be called "lying." I have seen Mary Jo White, the former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, who now defends senior managers, lecture that there is "good" "earnings management."

Fiduciary duties are critical means of preventing broken windows from occurring and making it likely that any broken windows in corporate governance will soon be remedied, yet we have steadily weakened fiduciary duties. For example, Delaware now allows the elimination of the fiduciary duty of care as long as the shareholders approve.

Court decisions have increasingly weakened the fiduciary duties of loyalty and care. The Chamber of Commerce's most recent priorities have been to weaken Sarbanes-Oxley and the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. We have made it exceptionally difficult for shareholders who are victims of securities fraud to bring civil suits against the officers and entities that led or aided and abetted the securities fraud. The Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 (PSLRA) has achieved its true intended purpose – making it exceptionally difficult for shareholders who are the victims of securities fraud to bring even the most meritorious securities fraud action.

The Supreme Court has held that banks and other entities that aid and abet securities fraud are immune from suit by the victims of securities fraud. Only the federal government may sue those that aid and abet fraud. The federal government has cut the number of financial fraud prosecutions by over one-half over the last twenty years even as financial fraud has grown massively. No elite CEO leading a control fraud that helped drive the current crisis has even been indicted. Elite CEOs can defraud with near impunity and become wealthy. Elite white collar fraud is a "sure thing" – the only strategy likely to make a mediocre CEO wealthy and famous.

Because Wilson did not research elite white collar crimes, he did not direct his formidable intellectual energies and expertise to the study of who could prevent the breaking of corporate windows and repair those that were broken. This was a great loss because his studies of varieties of police behavior in response to blue collar crime are justly famous among criminologists. The central truth he would have quickly recognized had he thought of seeking to reduce elite white collar crimes is that only the financial regulators can serve as the "regulatory cops on the beat." The police do not deal with elite white collar crimes. A small cadre of FBI special agents works on elite white collar crimes. There are roughly three special agents assigned to white collar crime investigations per industry in the U.S., so they never "patrol a beat." They investigate only when someone brings a possible white collar crime to their attention. That means whistleblowers, but it overwhelmingly means criminal referrals from the federal financial regulators. Financial institutions may make criminal referrals against their customers, but they will virtually never make them against their CEOs. Only the regulators can make the thousands of criminal referrals against elite white collar criminals essential to a successful prosecutorial effort against the epidemics of accounting control fraud that drive our worst financial crises. In the lead up to the ongoing crisis we gutted the federal regulators, preempted the state regulators, and appointed anti-regulators to head the agencies. A majority of the U.S. House of Representatives is trying to further gut the Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). If we want to stop the criminals who are destroying our economy and our communities by breaking windows on an epic scale the first step is to rebuild a regulatory force committed to serving as the essential "cops on the beat."

I listened in stunned amazement to the presentations of law professors who specialize in white collar crime and securities law at the two annual meetings that followed the ongoing financial crisis. Virtually every speaker presented arguments calling for reducing white collar criminal liability and liability for securities fraud. At the time they were speaking, the Justice Department had already ceased prosecuting major firms and the SEC brought a pathetically high percentage of its small number of enforcement actions against tiny firms with fewer than 10 employees.

We have systematically reduced effective peer restraints in our most important controls against financial fraud. Law firms, audit firms, and investment banks used to be professional partnerships. Each partner was potentially liable for any firm misconduct, which maximized the incentive to insist on higher levels of integrity. These firms are now virtually all corporations or limited liability partnerships. The incentive of partners to monitor other partners' actions to ensure their integrity has largely been lost.

In the elite white collar crime context we have been following the opposite strategy of that recommended under "broken windows" theory. We have been breaking windows. We have excused those who break the windows. Indeed, we have praised them and their misconduct. The problem with allowing broken windows is far greater in the elite white collar crime context than the blue collar crime context. The squeegee guys make tiny amounts of money and are hated and politically powerless. The mediocre financial CEO who engages in accounting control fraud because it is a "sure thing" causes the bank to report record (albeit fictional) profits and becomes wealthy and politically powerful. He uses his wealth to make charitable and political contributions that make him far harder to sanction. He claims that any crackdown on him is "class warfare" by "neo-Bolsheviks." Incredibly, the *Wall Street Journal* continues to serve as the cheerleader and apologist for those who become wealthy by breaking windows, communities, and economies.

Wilson warned of blue collar "super predators." He called them "feral" – wild animals. These criminals are in fact dangerous, but they are odd candidates for the title of "super predators." Wilson noted that they were disproportionately black and that they were confined almost entirely to the poorest neighborhoods in America where their pickings are poor. Accounting control frauds occupy Wall Street and other financial centers – the richest neighborhoods in the world. Their "take" from fraud is extraordinary. The blue collar criminals that occupied Wilson's attention late in his career were politically and socially powerless. The fraudulent CEOs that drive our recurrent, intensifying financial crises are wealthy and socially and politically dominant.

Wilson had a fabulous career and added greatly to the policy debate about how to respond to blue collar crime. Our most fitting tribute to him and contribution to his legacy would be to apply his "broken window" theory to the elite white collar crimes and criminals that drive our financial crises. The troubling paradox is that the strongest proponents of "broken windows" theory and policies in the blue collar crime context are the strongest opponents of applying analogous policies in the elite white collar crime context. The *Wall Street Journal* is the most prominent example of this class-based incoherence.

(Bill Black is the author of *The Best Way to Rob a Bank is to Own One* and an associate professor of economics and law at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He spent years working on regulatory policy and fraud prevention as Executive Director of the Institute for Fraud Prevention, Litigation Director of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, and Deputy Director of the National Commission on Financial Institution Reform, Recovery and Enforcement, among other positions. Bill writes a column for Benzinga every Monday. His other academic articles, congressional testimony, and musings about the financial crisis can be found at his Social Science Research Network author page and at the blog New Economic Perspectives.)

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<a href="#">20120312-01</a> 06:58 Tom Laura Ingraham & the War on Women
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A great Conservative newsletter that can give our "FotM" a different perspective (Please note call of the day w/ Karen). Enjoy.

about Laura Ingraham:

Laura Ingraham is the most listened-to woman in political talk radio in the United States. "The Laura Ingraham Show" is heard on hundreds of stations nationwide and has been addicting legions of listeners since its launch in 2001. Always smart and entertaining, Laura is a regular Fox News contributor and the principal substitute host on The O'Reilly Factor. She is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of five books: *The Hillary Trap*, *Shut Up & Sing*, *Power to the People*, *The Obama Diaries*, and new smash hit *Of Thee I Zing: America's Cultural Decline from Muffin Tops to Body Shots*. A former litigator and Supreme Court law clerk, Laura is a graduate of University of Virginia School of law and Dartmouth College. She is also an avid supporter of our troops and a variety of military organizations. Laura lives in the Washington, D.C. area with her three children.

Audio: "Karen on the Real War on Women" – Mar. 12, 2012,  
([http://fetch.noxsolutions.com/laura/mp3/031212\\_cotd.mp3](http://fetch.noxsolutions.com/laura/mp3/031212_cotd.mp3))

<http://www.lauraingraham.com/calloftheday?pid=12511>

<a href="#">20120312-04</a> 20:35 SteveB "Steve Jobs & American Jobs"
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"Steve Jobs and American Jobs" posted by Robert Kuttner, Huffington Post

Mar. 11, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-kuttner/american-jobs-apple-foxconn\\_b\\_1338144.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-kuttner/american-jobs-apple-foxconn_b_1338144.html))

(The agony and the ecstasy of Steve Jobs: How manufacturing jobs could be restored.)

The economy added another 227,000 jobs in February, the Labor Department reported Friday. That's good news, sort of. It means that the recovery is slowly progressing. At this rate, we will be back to pre-recession employment levels sometime around 2018.

However, this growth in jobs was not enough for wages to keep pace with inflation; nor did the unemployment rate drop, but stayed stuck at 8.3 percent. Why? Because folks who had given up have started entering the labor force again, but the percentage of people in the labor force is still two points lower than it was before the recession began. A new study by the Economic Policy Institute reports that earnings declined over the past decade even for college graduates -- so much for the education cure.

In short, the recession made a bad problem worse, but the economy on the eve of the recession was nothing to be proud of. Throughout the first decade of the new century, before the recession hit, wages lagged behind living costs for the vast majority of Americans -- because those in the top one percent were capturing such a large share of the economy's total productivity gains.

Some of this trend was the result of globalization undercutting the bargaining power of U.S. workers; some of it resulted from weakened trade unions and minimum wage laws lagging behind inflation.

Flat or declining wages did not result from declining average productivity. So when we finally climb out of this jobs recession, perhaps we can belatedly confront these deeper trends.

I have been writing about the hotel workers union in New York City.

Thanks to an extraordinarily effective union, Local 6 of the hotel and restaurant workers union, nearly every large hotel in Manhattan is unionized, and everyone who works in these hotels, from dishwashers to room cleaners to doormen to banquet waiters earns a middle class wage. The union recently signed a seven year contract giving workers a 27 percent wage.

Local 6 is an exceptionally effective union, and New York is a unique tourist destination. But since the vast majority of jobs in America will soon be service sector jobs, not vulnerable to global competition, there is no good economic reason why they can't all be middle class jobs. The challenge is political. We as a society simply need to decide, as President Obama famously told "Joe the Plumber," that we want to "spread the wealth around" rather than having it concentrate at the very top. All service jobs could pay a living wage. How to do that? Unions, wage regulation, progressive taxation, and government using existing powers over contractors that it seldom exercises.

But what about manufacturing? This brings me to the other Jobs of my title, the late Steve Jobs.

The *New York Times*, in a two part series earlier this year on Apple's Chinese contractor, Foxconn, finally made front page news and added some telling detail to what was already fairly well known. The cool, must-have iPads, iPhones, and iPods to which we are increasingly addicted are manufactured with brutal sweatshop labor in Shenzhen, China, where 230,000 employees are making an average of less than \$2 an hour work in a single factory complex. Foxconn's dormitories now have nets outside to prevent suicides.

I recently saw a one-man show, Mike Daisey's amazing "The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs," in which Daisey, a spellbinding monologue artist, recounts his own conversations with the workers of Foxconn in Shenzhen.

<http://mikedaisey.blogspot.com/p/monologues.html>

[http://mikedaisey.com/Mike\\_Daisey\\_TATESJ\\_transcript.pdf](http://mikedaisey.com/Mike_Daisey_TATESJ_transcript.pdf)

Daisey was on to Foxconn long before the *Times*. If you get a chance to see this show, which runs for one more week at New York's Public Theater and which will be on tour in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere later this year, don't miss it. Two weeks ago, Daisey made the stunning decision to put his script in the public domain, so that other performances could go viral.

Daisey wonders out loud: what if everyone who buys these products began upping the pressure on Apple to do right by its workers?

I would add: What if Apple made a decision to bring this work home, and to pay decent wages for it, say \$20 an hour. Right now, this is literally impossible, because the production facilities to make such products no longer exist in the United States. But the Pentagon has insisted that America hang on to production capacity for certain other sensitive micro-electronics products. And if hostilities escalated between the U.S. and Beijing, you can bet that we would see a crash program to restore more micro-electronics output at home.

Apple earns about \$600,000 per year per employee. It can well afford to share a little more of that with its workers.

The *New York Times* calculated that it would add only about \$65 to the cost of an iPad or iPhone to produce it at home at good wages. And over time, it would tend to cost less, since higher-paid workers lead the company to redouble its investment in automation.

Apple can certainly afford this transition. It is now the richest company in the world, sitting on a pile of nearly a hundred billion dollars in cash. If Apple led, it would become bad form for America's other prestigious companies to manufacture for U.S. markets in foreign sweatshops.

Ralph Nader recently published the most improbable of books, a novel titled *Only the Super-Rich Can Save Us*. Nader, looking at the grotesque economic and political power imbalance in the U.S., imagined that a cabal of billionaires led by Warren Buffet and Ted Turner have an outbreak of conscience and become crusaders for progressive reform. It's Nader's way of both laying out a reform agenda and spotlighting where the real power lies.

It's a lovely fantasy, but it's not going to happen -- any more than Apple, out of the goodness of its corporate heart, is about to decide to phase out its high-tech Asian sweatshops in favor of decently compensated production jobs in the United States.

But what could perhaps happen is a mass movement of Apple consumers, declaring that it's not cool to treat the people who build these products like beasts of burden or like expendable non-human parts.

Alternatively, as incomes keep falling further behind the cost of living for most Americans, we can comfort ourselves with the thought that we enjoy the coolest of gadgets and that others are even poorer than we are.

(Robert Kuttner is co-editor of *The American Prospect* and a senior fellow at Demos. His latest book is *A Presidency in Peril*.)

<http://columbusgvteam.com/journeys/bolivia08/living-in-tarija.html>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #94 — MAR. 14, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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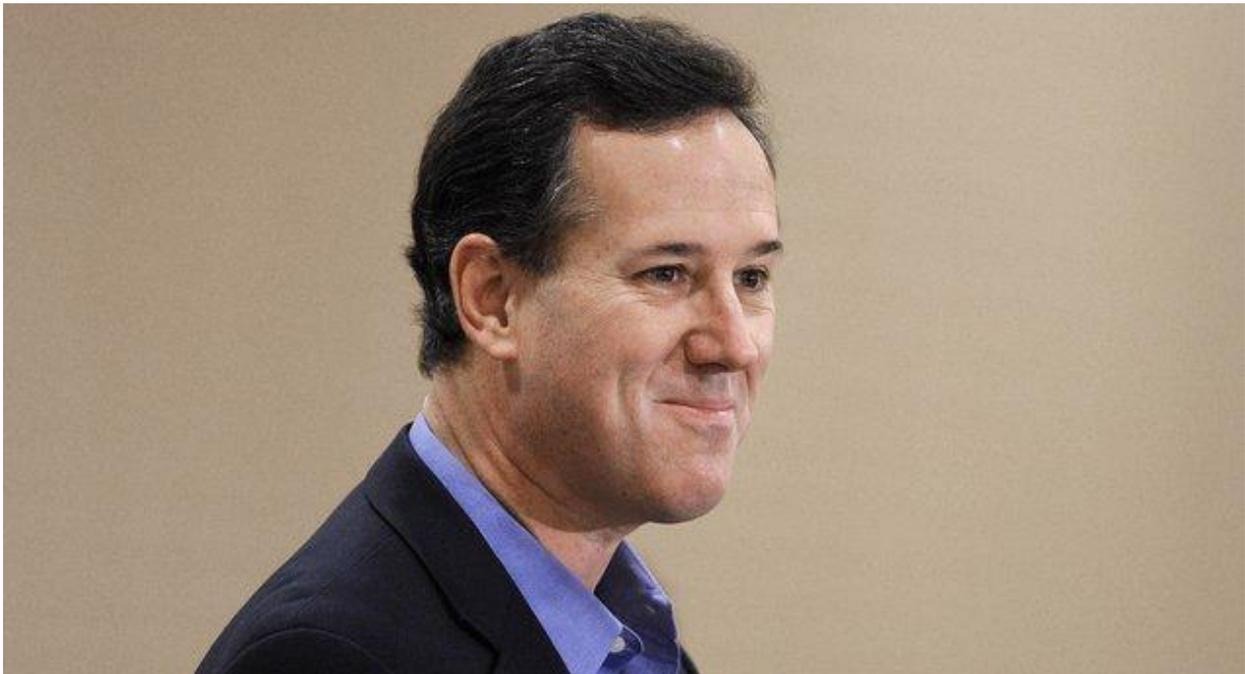
**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **Santorum Still a Zombie, R0mney Still a Zero**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 14, 2012)

["Rick Santorum Relieved No One Has Asked Him About Interracial Marriage Yet" by The Onion](#)

Mar. 13, 2012, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/rick-santorum-relieved-no-one-has-asked-him-about,27630/>)



(LAFAYETTE, La) Saying his campaign has "really dodged a bullet so far," Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum told reporters today that, much to his relief, no one has asked his opinion on interracial marriage. "No question about it, what I'd have to say about the topic would absolutely terrify anyone with a conscience," said Santorum, adding that his longstanding and carefully thought-through views on whether two individuals of different races should be allowed to marry would put him so far out of the mainstream that it'd be "hilarious how insane [he]d sound." "The truth is, if anyone decided to ask me flat out if I approve of marriages between black men and white women, for example, the flood gates would open, and the bile I would spew would sink this campaign in 10

seconds, tops." As of press time, reports of Santorum's mere reference to his incendiary views had caused his favorability ratings in Alabama and Mississippi to skyrocket.

[20120313-01](#) 09:05 SteveB Solar System Scale Model

<http://www.phrenopolis.com/perspective/solarsystem/>

This page shows a scale model of the solar system, shrunken down to the point where the Sun, normally more than eight hundred thousand miles across, is the size you see it here. The planets are shown in corresponding scale. Unlike most models, which are compressed for viewing convenience, the planets here are also shown at their true-to-scale average distances from the Sun. That makes this page rather large - on an ordinary 72 dpi monitor it's just over half a mile wide, making it possibly one of the largest pages on the web. This means you'll have to do a bit of scrolling if you want to find the planets, but don't despair. They are reasonably bright and labeled, so you can probably catch them flashing by in the blackness even if you are scrolling fairly fast.

[20120313-02](#) 12:08 Ben Fw: Will I Live to See 90?

Worthy of reflection!

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

"Will I Live to See 90?" Here's something to think about...

I recently picked a new primary care doctor.

After two visits and exhaustive lab tests, he said I was doing "fairly well" for my age. (I just turned 70.)

A little concerned about that comment, I couldn't resist asking him, "Do you think I'll live to be 90?"

He asked, "Do you drink beer or wine?"

"Oh no," I replied.. "I'm not doing drugs, either!"

Then he asked, "Do you eat rib-eye steaks and barbecued ribs?"

I said, "Not much... My former doctor said that all red meat is very unhealthy!"

"Do you spend a lot of time in the sun, like playing golf, sailing, hiking, or bicycling?"

"No, I don't," I said.

He asked, "Do you gamble, drive fast cars, or have a lot of sex?"

"No," I said.

He looked at me and said,... "Then, why do you even give a sh\*t?"

[20120313-03](#) 12:30 SteveG Fw: Consumers Union Petition: Uphold the Affordable Care Act

from Consumers Union:

Our statement to our leaders and the swarming media is simple: Stop insurance company abuses: Uphold the Affordable Care Act!"

Sign your name, and we'll add it to our banner on the steps of the Supreme Court:

[https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/SPageNavigator/Rx\\_Supreme\\_Court\\_banner\\_petition.html?JServSessionIdr004=wi0kt3r743.app244a](https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/SPageNavigator/Rx_Supreme_Court_banner_petition.html?JServSessionIdr004=wi0kt3r743.app244a).

Two weeks from today, health care opponents will stream off buses at the Supreme Court shouting falsehoods about 'death panels' and 'sending grandma to an early grave' as the new health care law goes on trial.

Once again, they'll try to drown out the rest of us who are sick and tired of skyrocketing insurance premiums, unfair coverage denials and rejections for pre-existing conditions. We don't think that's right.

So we're showing up at the Supreme Court that day to give a voice to those of you who want to KEEP your new rights that stop insurance company abuses. And we want you to 'virtually' join us. Add your name to the tens of thousands virtually joining us on the Court steps!

Why is this moment in time so important?

If the Court strikes down the law, gone will be our right to get a refund when insurers spend too much of our money on their CEO salaries and overhead. Gone will be our right to get decent coverage even if we have a pre-existing condition. Gone will be coverage for young adults on their parents' policy. Gone will be equal premium rates for women and men.

Opponents will be shouting falsehoods at the Court in hopes of scaring consumers into quietly giving up our new rights. We won't be intimidated, because too many of you have been abused by the giant insurance companies. We will move forward, not back.

Sign on, and your name will join others on a giant banner before the Supreme Court. Let's show opponents we won't give in!

Thank you for acting, and please forward this to friends and family so they can virtually join you at the Court that day.

Sincerely, DeAnn Friedholm, <http://www.YourHealthSecurity.org>, a project of Consumers Union Policy and Action from Consumer Reports, 1101 17th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036

20120313-04	13:50	SteveB	"The Audacity of Bonuses at MF Global"
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It's bonuses, not jail, for white (collar) crime...

"The Audacity of Bonuses at MF Global" by Nomi Prins, NationofChange

Mar. 13, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/audacity-bonuses-mf-global-1331647564>)

In the spirit of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* commandment: "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" comes the galling news that bankruptcy trustee, Louis Freeh, could approve the defunct, MF Global to pay bonuses to certain senior executives. This, despite the fact that nearly \$1.6 billion of customer funds remains "missing" or otherwise partially accounted for, yet beyond the reach of those customers, perhaps forever, since before the firm declared bankruptcy on October 31, 2011.

Another commonality between the MF Global incident and *Animal Farm* is the abject rewriting, or re-interpretation, of rules. At the farm, the rule 'No animal shall drink alcohol' was ultimately 're-remembered' as 'No animal shall drink alcohol *to excess*.' Absent opposition to this particular fact alteration, the pigs got drunk. It wasn't pretty.

The Orwellian nature of finance is spiraling out of control. It was acutely demonstrated during the fall 2008, merge-and-be-bailed period, and subsequently, through mainstream acceptance that "too big to fail" validates the subsidization of reckless banking practices (bail first, ask questions or consider tepid regulation later), and the European debacle.

Three wrinkles of audacity underscore the potential MF Global bonus approvals. First, there is the moral responsibility layer. MF Global, classified as a broker-dealer wasn't *specifically* subject to the investment-advisor fiduciary rule that requires 'systemic safety and soundness' with respect to retail customers. But, comingling customers' funds inappropriately with the firm's, as former chief, Jon Corzine's European bets were blowing up, was an abject misinterpretation of the rule's intent.

Aside from that, MF Global *lied* about funds segregation to its customers, which constitutes fraud. The final page of the firm's brochure touts "the strict physical separation of clients' assets from MF Global accounts."

Separately, MF Global broker-dealer activities were subject to SEC oversight and restrictions on its use of client funds. During any normal investigation, like say for embezzlement, funds should be frozen until issues are resolved. Releasing any bonus pay until this matter is settled is just plain wrong.

The reason for possibly allowing bonuses for MF Global chief operating officer, Bradley I. Abelow, finance chief, Henri J. Steenkamp, and general counsel, Laurie R. Ferber follows the same twisted logic pervading Wall Street: no one else can do the job as well.

These people are apparently so special that despite incompetence, negligence or potential malfeasance in diverting customers' funds away from their rightful spots, their expertise is critical to the bankruptcy proceeding. In that realm, their 'job performance' will help Freeh "maximize value for creditors of the company". Translation: it will ensure banks like JPM Chase keep their cut, since customers are not creditors. Again, plain wrong.

But forget simple matters of right and wrong for a moment. After all, this is Big Finance: what's most important is not necessarily what's legal or illegal, but more practically, what you can get away with and what you can't. In that regard, the sheer impotence of regulators, the Department of Justice, and the FBI are enabling factors in perpetuating financial crimes.

In early 1933, during the Depression that followed the 1929 Stock market Crash, Democratic president, FDR and Republican Treasury Secretary, William Woodin, declared a bank holiday, during which Treasury Department agents examined banks' (which included at the time, broker-dealers) books to determine solidity and solvency.

Today, our regulatory bodies are incapable, or simply don't want to be bothered with, tracing money and returning it to the public customers to whom it belongs. The inability to independently examine MF Global's books, without its executive involved, reveals the sorry state of our financial system. In this post-Glass-Steagall-repeal world, the mixing of customer money and speculative betting – whether at a super-market bank or broker-dealer, whether involving subprime loans packages or European Sovereign debt, poses too dangerous a level of complexity. If regulatory bodies can't, or won't, diminish the related risk, more concrete Glass-Steagall boundaries throughout the financial framework should be resurrected.

Meanwhile, two Senators have taken on the bonus-pay fight. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D., Minn.), member of the Senate Agriculture Committee investigating MF Global, wrote to Freeh that the plan is "unacceptable." Senator Jon Tester (D., Mont.), whose constituency includes a number of farmers with funds in the 'missing' category, called it "outrageous."

On Sunday, Freeh's spokesperson released a statement saying the senators' concerns were 'noted' and a final decision on the bonuses hadn't been made. But to the extent that the money trails shrouding MF Global's final

moments remain more apparent to its former employees than external examiners, it's likely the people involved in the wreckage, will be paid extra for sorting thru it. And, that's an expensive, outrageous, shame.

20120313-08 18:38 Dennis "Carlyle Owners Took \$398.5 Million Payout with Debt Before IPO"

Financial scammers...

Sometimes financial newsletters come clean on the machinations of capitalism, such as the following as it pertains to how a certain presidential candidate managed to enrich himself while being "unemployed." No political spin here.

It's good that Mitt Romney's fame has shone a new light on private equity. It's one of the great, ongoing financial scams of all time. Private equity is essentially a scheme for taking control of corporations and paying yourself hundreds of millions of dollars by borrowing against the business' assets.

Six months after private-equity firms Carlyle and Clayton Dubilier & Rice took Hertz Corp. private, they borrowed \$1 billion and paid themselves a fat dividend, according to the Bloomberg story, below. Quite simply, they exposed their clients to additional debt risk to pay themselves a fortune.

The transaction is called a "dividend recap," and it's standard practice...

In 2010, Dunkin' Brands Group – the company that owns Dunkin' Donuts – borrowed \$1.25 billion... so it could pay Carlyle, Bain Capital, and Thomas Lee Partners a \$500 million dividend. Dunkin' went public last year with nearly \$1.9 billion in debt. Dunkin' Brands shareholders got stuck with more risk so Carlyle, Bain Capital, and Lee could make obscene amounts of money.

"Carlyle Owners Took \$398.5 Million Payout With Debt Before IPO" by Cristina Alesci, Miles Weiss and Devin Banerjee, Bloomberg

Mar 13, 2012, (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-13/carlyle-owners-took-400-million-tax-deferred-payout-before-ipo-with-debt.html>)

Carlyle Group LP (CG), in a transaction nine months before it filed to go public, saddled itself with debt to pay owners including William Conway, Daniel D'Aniello and David Rubenstein a \$398.5 million tax-deferred dividend.

The private equity firm borrowed \$500 million from Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Development Co. in December 2010, saying it would use part of that to expand investment products. Instead, it paid out almost 80 percent of the money to existing owners, according to regulatory filings. Separately, the Washington- based firm negotiated bank credit giving it the option to distribute an additional \$400 million prior to its initial public offering, lending agreements filed last month show.

The deals, which echo the dividend recapitalization private equity managers use to extract cash from the companies they acquire, leave Carlyle's future shareholders with the cost of servicing the debt. Assuming Carlyle holds its IPO by the end of June, Mubadala will have earned a return in excess of 50 percent, including a \$200 million equity stake the owners gave away to obtain a loan that lasted about a year and a half.

"It begs the question, 'Why would you do that?' " said Matthew Pieniazek, the president of Darling Consulting Group, an adviser to banks in Newburyport, Massachusetts. "IPOs are not guaranteed. They were willing to give up some of the upside for the certainty of" a distribution.

Chris Ullman, a spokesman for Carlyle, declined to comment.

By financing the dividends with debt, Carlyle's founders can receive the full amount without facing an immediate tax bill, and without having to sell shares in the IPO. Under Internal Revenue Code regulations for partnerships, the

owners can defer paying taxes on the distribution until the debt is retired, said Allan Weiner, a partner in the Washington office of the law firm Kelley Drye & Warren LLP.

### Dividend Recaps

"They are essentially creating a distribution without paying taxes," Weiner said. "Presumably, because it is debt, they are burdening the existing entity."

Carlyle has taken advantage of borrowed money in the past to pay its fund investors dividends before taking holdings public. So-called dividend recaps were used when Dunkin' Brands Group Inc. borrowed \$1.25 billion in 2010 to pay \$500 million to owners Carlyle, Bain Capital LLC and Thomas H. Lee Partners LP. Dunkin' went public last year in a \$486 million share sale.

Six months after the buyout of Hertz Corp. in 2005, the car rental company used a \$1 billion loan to pay a dividend to its new owners, Carlyle and Clayton Dubilier & Rice LLC.

### First Investors

Carlyle, founded in 1987, is the second-biggest private equity firm, with \$148 billion in assets as of Sept. 30, including stakes in companies such as Dunkin' Brands and Nielsen Holdings N.V. Its three founders received a combined \$413 million last year, mostly from distributions. Apart from the founders and Mubadala, its owners include the California Public Employees' Retirement System, or Calpers.

The firm found some of its first investors in the Middle East, including the Saudi royal family and owners of the Saudi Binladin Group, the Jeddah-based construction company founded by Osama bin Laden's father, Mohammed. Carlyle returned the family's money after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The firm has weighed an IPO since at least 2007 when larger competitor Blackstone (BX) Group LP went public. As financial markets started to collapse, Carlyle instead agreed to sell a 7.5 percent stake to Mubadala, an investment vehicle owned by the Abu Dhabi government, for \$1.35 billion in September 2007. Mubadala got a 10 percent discount and received protection against a drop in the value of its holdings.

### Mubadala's Stake

Mubadala made the second investment in Carlyle in December 2010, buying \$500 million in debt convertible into Carlyle stock at a 7.5 percent discount to the IPO price. Carlyle agreed to pay an interest rate of 7.25 percent and give Mubadala a 2 percent equity stake valued at about \$200 million, an expense booked as an "upfront cost" to secure the debt financing, according to the firm's registration statement with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

Carlyle refinanced half of that debt in October, a month after filing to go public and securing a bigger credit line from its banks. Carlyle borrowed \$265.5 million under the expanded credit agreement to retire \$250 million face amount of the notes. Carlyle paid Mubadala a \$10 million premium, a fee that is often assessed when bonds are retired ahead of time, and \$5.5 million of accrued interest.

The private equity firm may repay the balance of Mubadala's debt before the IPO, according to a person familiar with Carlyle's plans who asked not to be identified because the matter is private. If it doesn't, Mubadala would be entitled to convert the debt into Carlyle stock at a 7.5 percent discount to the IPO price.

### 'Big Win'

Private companies typically pay interest rates of about 13 percent to 14 percent when taking out so-called mezzanine loans that rank behind senior debt, such as bank loans, when it comes time to being repaid, according to James Hill, who heads the private equity practice of the law firm Benesch LLP in Cleveland.

While the interest Carlyle is paying is low in comparison, the equity stake makes it expensive for current owners. Carlyle has about 100 partners who own a piece of the company. The three founders own more than half.

"As long as Carlyle goes public, it is a pretty big win for" Mubadala, Hill said in an interview. "If they hadn't gone public, it wouldn't have been as big a win because you own two percent of a privately owned management company and who knows what that is worth over time."

### IPO Setback

The sale was subject to Calpers waiving pre-emptive rights that it received under a February 2001 agreement to invest in Carlyle, according to a Feb. 14 SEC filing. Calpers also had to consent to the deal between Carlyle and Mubadala, the filing shows.

Carlyle's previous IPO plans had been set back in 2007 when a publicly traded credit fund sponsored by the firm fell victim to the housing crisis. Carlyle, which unsuccessfully tried to rescue the fund, had obtained an \$875 million credit line at that time from a banking consortium led by Citigroup.

Carlyle has agreed to pledge 70 percent of the firm's quarterly management fees, along with the carried interest of its partners, as collateral, according to the most recent version of the loan agreement, filed with the SEC last month.

Carlyle entered into additional collateral agreements in December 2008, involving U.S. and U.K. bank accounts under the name of Carlyle Investment Management LLC. The firm reported a net loss of \$514 million that year, according to the IPO filing.

### Founders' Commitments

After Carlyle filed to go public in September of last year, its lenders -- Citigroup Inc., Credit Suisse Group AG and JPMorgan Chase & Co. -- agreed to increase the revolving credit line to \$750 million from a prior limit of \$150 million. According to a copy of the borrowing agreement, revised again in December, the banks will no longer require the management and carried interest fees that Carlyle and its partners pledged as collateral once the IPO is completed and Mubadala is repaid.

All three banks were awarded top roles managing Carlyle's share sale. Officials for the banks declined to comment.

The Mubadala financing in 2010 helped Carlyle distribute \$787.8 million in cash to its top executives that year, up from \$215.6 million in 2009 and \$253.9 million in 2008, according to regulatory filings.

Carlyle didn't give a reason for the dividend payout. Its founders were among senior professionals who had committed to contributing \$1.2 billion to the firm's buyout and other funds as of Sept. 30, according to the IPO documents. Such commitments can sometimes prove burdensome for private equity executives, said David Miller, a tax attorney at Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP in New York.

### 'Managing Cash'

"It was not infrequent during the recession that private equity managers had to draw on credit lines because they had commitments," Miller said.

In addition, when Carlyle's buyout funds sell portfolio companies, either through direct sales to another suitor or through IPOs, the firm's partners must recognize income for tax purposes, even though they may not get any of the actual cash. Instead they must wait until outside investors in Carlyle funds have gotten all of their capital back plus a preferred return of 8 to 9 percent, according to the firm's IPO filing.

"Managing the cash in a private equity arrangement is a little more of a challenge than in a typical hedge fund that has liquid assets," said Jim Browne, a partner at Strasburger & Price LLP, a Dallas-based law firm that specializes in general tax planning.

## 'Little Kicker'

The stock grant that Mubadala received when it bought subordinated notes from Carlyle in 2010 raised its holdings to 9.5 percent. Carlyle's valuation of the 2 percent equity stake assumed that the buyout company was worth \$10 billion, according to the filing. The purchase price Mubadala paid for its initial investment in 2007 implied a valuation of about \$20 billion for Carlyle at the time.

The terms for Mubadala's 2010 investment "could simply be a way of giving them a little kicker for what both parties knew was an overvalued equity infusion three years earlier," said Pieniazek.

Shares of Blackstone, which is based in New York, have lost half of their value since they were first sold in the 2007 initial offering at \$31 each.

Following Carlyle's offering, Mubadala will be restricted from selling parts of its stake for 12 to 24 months, according to Carlyle's registration statement. The Abu Dhabi company, the second-largest Carlyle owner after the founders, is also restricted from holding a stake bigger than 19.9 percent.

<a href="#">20120313-09</a>	19:35	Pam	Re: "Carlyle Owners Took \$398.5 Million Payout with Debt Before IPO" (reply to Dennis, above)
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This is the scandal of our time. I am so disgusted by the hypocrisy, greed, and self-righteousness of all the rich fat cats who think they deserve the world. The fact that what they do is legal only makes it more disgusting. Congress has become a trough for all the pigs to gorge themselves, and the rest of us pick up the tab. Golly, I think I'm becoming a little bitter.

<a href="#">20120313-05</a>	13:51	SteveB	"Why We Need a Surtax on the Super Wealthy"
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Even better: Also coerce them into investing in America or pay even more!

"Why We Need a Surtax on the Super Wealthy" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Mar. 13, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-we-need-surtax-super-wealthy-1331644474>)

Let Santorum and Romney duke it out for who will cut taxes on the wealthy the most and shred the public services everyone else depends on.

The rest of us ought to be having a serious discussion about a wealth tax. Because if you really want to know what's happening to the American economy you need to look at household wealth — not just incomes.

The Fed just reported that household wealth increased from October through December. That's the first gain in three quarters.

Good news? Take closer look. The entire gain came from increases in stock prices. Those increases in stock values more than made up for continued losses in home values.

But the vast majority of Americans don't have their wealth in the stock market. Over 90 percent of the nation's financial assets — including stocks and pension-fund holdings — are owned by the richest 10 percent of Americans. The top 1 percent owns 38 percent.

Most Americans have their wealth in their homes — whose prices continue to drop. Housing prices are down by a third from their 2006 peak.

So as the value of financial assets held by American households increased by \$1.46 trillion in the fourth quarter, the wealthiest 10 percent of Americans became \$1.3 trillion richer, and the wealthiest 1 percent became \$554.8 billion richer.

But at the same time, as the value of household real estate fell by \$367.4 billion in the fourth quarter, homeowners – mostly middle class – lost over \$141 billion (owners' equity is 38.4 percent of total household real estate).

Presto. America's wealth gap – already wider than the nation's income gap – has become even wider. The 400 richest Americans have more wealth than the bottom 150 million Americans put together.

Given this unprecedented concentration of wealth – and considering what the nation needs to do to rebuild our schools and infrastructure while at the same time saving Medicare and reducing the long-term budget deficit – shouldn't we be aiming higher than a "Buffet tax" on the incomes of millionaires?

There should also be a surtax on the super rich.

Yale Professor Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott have proposed a 2 percent surtax on the wealth of the richest one-half of 1 percent of Americans owning more than \$7.2 million of assets. They figure it would generate \$70 billion a year, or \$750 billion over the decade. That's half the savings Congress's now defunct Supercommittee was aiming for.

Instead of standing empty-handed while Santorum and Romney dominate the airwaves with their regressive Social Darwinism, Democrats need to be reminding Americans of what's happening in the real economy – and what needs to happen.

The wealth gap is widening into a chasm. A surtax on the super rich is fair — and it's necessary.

<a href="#">20120313-06</a>	15:11	Dennis	"Fox News on Gas Prices & the President in 2008"
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Exposed: The great Republican gasoline price lie of 2012...

Just read a newsletter from an energy guru who says America will be self-sufficient in energy within ten years. However, gas prices will be higher then, due to the high cost of extracting all the new energy sources (from shale et al.).

Meanwhile, at Fox News, the party line seems to have changed 180 degrees from a few years ago when gas prices were also nearing \$4 a gallon. Could this be something political?

"Fox News on Gas Prices & the President in 2008" by Eric Byler, The Coffee Party USA

Mar. 11, 2012, (<http://www.coffeepartyusa.com/fox-gas-prices>)

First it came from Rep. Michelle Bachmann, and then again today from Gov. Bob McDonnell on Meet the Press. "Gas prices have doubled since President Obama took office." That would mean that gas prices were under \$2.00 during the Bush years, and that's not what I recall. But, as with most Republican talking points, if you've heard it once, you know it's been echoed a thousand times in One Percent Media outlets and hundreds of times on more journalistic programs like "Meet the Press".

The Fox News video montage, below, compiled by Media Matters, seems to argue that gas prices and electioneering do not go hand-in-hand, but that was 2008:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=UzEnKdBABo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=UzEnKdBABo)

In 2012, the very same media giant, Fox News, is blaming the Obama Administration for rising gas prices, perhaps feeling forced into this tactic by the fact that the economy and jobs numbers have been improving. But if we watch this video from 2008, when the relationship between Fox's hyper-partisan agenda and the White House was otherwise aligned, we see it's very easy to make the argument that a President cannot be blamed for gas prices if accuracy and integrity are as important to you crudely as disguised electioneering.

Can there be any explanation for the 180 degree about-face on Fox "News" other than a change in who occupies the White House? How stupid do they think we are?

from Jessica English:

The video above was the lead-off subject for a fascinating show on March 11, during which I hosted Coffee Party leaders Don Manning, Egberto Willies, David Matarasso, and Eric Byler. Please give it a listen.

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/coffeepartyusa/2012/03/11/the-bottom-line-new-talk-radio-show-w-annabel-on-sundays>

<a href="#">20120313-07</a>	17:36	SteveB	Fw: Feminist Majority Foundation Petition: Stop the War on Women!
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from the Feminist Majority Foundation:

Thanks to your outrage and that of millions of women and men, advertisers have delivered a strong message to the syndicator of the Rush Limbaugh Show, Premier Radio Network. Premier announced yesterday it will suspend national advertising on the Rush Limbaugh Show for two weeks on local stations.

Now it's time for radio stations, especially large ones, to say enough is enough and drop Rush:

[http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1400/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=9861](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1400/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=9861)

Premiere is also circulating a list of 98 national advertisers to radio stations asking that commercials for these companies be scheduled "in day parts or programs free of content that you know are deemed to be offensive or controversial (for example, Mark Levin, Rush Limbaugh, Tom Leykis, Michael Savage, Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity)."

Now that advertisers have said enough is enough, it's time for radio stations to say the same and drop the Rush Limbaugh show. Let the large local stations in New York City, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Chicago, and the Armed Forces Radio Network know you believe it's time to drop Rush and his extreme disrespect of women. Sexism is not OK.

We will stop the War on Women!

For Equality, Ellie Smeal, President

<http://www.photographyblogger.net/17-magical-mountain-lake-pictures/>

View of Lake Titicaca from the *Isla del Sol* (Sun Island). (Pedro Szekely)



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #95 — MAR. 15, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **What Is a Woman to Do?**

(posted by Pam McRae, Mar. 15, 2012)

It seems to me, today at least, that we have about covered the waterfront re. the Republican candidates. All that's left is for the fat lady to sing. I love how no one wants Romney, yet everyone assumes he's to be the anointed one. I'm more concerned about what's going on abroad, in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq to be specific.

When I lived in Afghanistan, Genghis Khan was very much a presence, sort of the way George Washington is here, only not in such a positive way. Genghis rained terror on the people who happened to be in his way. His reputation held that when he took over a village, he killed everything alive, even the rats. I don't believe the "day of Genghis" is over, despite its being the 21st c. Assad in Syria and that horrible Kony fellow in Africa are as blood-thirsty as any ancient warlord. When I taught Western Civ. I used to tell my students that war was the wallpaper of ancient Athens. (I highly recommend Victor Davis Hansen on ancient warfare.) It's hard to remember sometimes that human history is a long, tragic tale of violence and unbridled cruelty, living as we do in a relatively peaceful time and place. I hate to say it, but when you look at the most violent societies, they are societies in which women are sequestered or marginalized. Afghanistan is a prime example. For thousands of years Afghan women have been essentially the property of men, either fathers, husbands, or brothers. The rationale for this, if you can call it that, is sex.

I don't want to paint with too broad a brush, but whenever men feel dominion over women (even in abusive relationships in the U.S.), violence is almost always sure to follow, if not against women themselves, then against men who at some level are seen as competitors. Women are the great prize. It's when Agamemnon takes Achilles' captive woman for himself that Achilles' rage is unleashed. *Cherchez la femme*, as the French say. This is why I believe more fervently than ever that a healthy society is one in which men and women are on an equal footing. Obviously, justice demands that women get equal treatment under the law, but there is more at stake than fairness. Look at images of Michelle Obama and the Stepford wives of the Republican candidates. There is something chilling about those plastic, smiling, silent helpmeets standing beside their sabre-rattling men. Obama, who appears to have a more equal relationship with his wife, is the one who counts the costs of war first and foremost.

I'm reading Howard Zinn's *History of the United States*, and he talks about the women who came to the new world in the earliest years--both white and black. Zinn points out the obvious omission of women in all our founding documents, to say nothing of slaves and Native Americans. One chronicle states that a woman is like a stream, with her own course and name, but when she marries it's as if she were subsumed into the Thames or the Rhine. No one remembers her name then; in fact, she has no separate identity anymore than the stream does. Zinn also notes the intimacy of oppression, and this is an idea that intrigues me. The most dangerous place for a woman in a traditional society is her own home, her potential enemies those closest to her. I had a professor in college who

told us one day, It's not your enemies you have to fear, it's the people who love you. Men are beasts. (You've gotta love 'em; I'm just saying.) What is scarier than a gang of young men, pumped up on testosterone? It's a wonderful thing that we have sports to siphon some of that energy off, soccer hooligans notwithstanding. But the greatest calming force of all is women. C.S. Lewis defined chivalry as one of the greatest contributions of the Middle Ages to civilization, for it combines the fierceness of male aggression, which is often necessary, with the gentility required in the drawing room when ladies are present.

The invisibility of women in Afghanistan is perhaps the most salient feature of that troubled culture. Without the need to become tame, the men retain their violent ways and glory in them. The Afghans are a fierce people who will fight to the death to protect their land and laws. They've done it before, every time a foreign power has had the hubris and audacity to think that advanced civilizations (Britain, the Soviet Union, the U.S.A.) can overpower them. It is precisely because advanced societies are "civilized" that they are doomed to fail when confronted with the wildness of a more elemental one. It's an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and that's just for starters. This latest disaster in Afghanistan is, I would say, catastrophic for us. We have put ourselves beyond understanding, mercy, or reconciliation, and the fact that a one deranged soldier can wreak such havoc is a clarion call for us to get the hell out of a country that doesn't want us there and was never, ever going to accept us.

[20120314-04](#) 15:52 SteveB Re: What Is a Woman to Do? (reply to Pam, above)

I am so saddened that the sweetness of women is so often used against them. I don't know what is wrong with us men, but I am not very proud of us. I have always found life to be much more pleasant when women use force against me than when I use force against them, but that's just me. And I want our people home from that awful country.

[20120314-06](#) 16:18 Pam Re: What Is a Woman to Do? (reply to SteveB, above)

I do appreciate men who appreciate women, aren't afraid of them, and find them interesting for more than their body parts, though I don't expect perfection there. Some things never change. I worry that the country is shifting backwards re. women's rights, gay rights, and a predilection for compassion rather than hard core "justice." People are so easily swayed. That the polls can shift so much so rapidly indicates just how fickle the public is. The defect of democracy is that we depend on that public to choose the right path, and often it doesn't. People believe what they believe, then fit the world around that. Maybe liberals do that too, but at least we don't want to force anyone into or out of anything. Conservatives say, "Live right or suffer the consequences." Liberals say, "It's your life, you choose." One is punitive and certain, one is compassionate and self-doubting. God protect me from people who absolutely know what is RIGHT for everyone and never question themselves.

[20120314-01](#) 10:30 Art "Israel Will Not Attack"

Good article on Israel/Iran.

from Walter:

As the Reps beat the war drums again, at least there are some voices of reason coming out of Israel.

from Reinhard:

At least there is one adult in the room – Uri Avnery. What will we, what will Israel ever do without him? He is getting on in years and we can only hope that he will be around for many more.

Of course he is absolutely correct: There must not be a war. And I do hope that he is correct in his assessment. We and even Israel can live with a nuclear armed Iran. What Avnery didn't mention, our soldiers and all foreigners in Afghanistan will be trapped. They cannot get out through Pakistan, much less Iran and I doubt that the Muslim Republics North of Afghanistan will be too eager to help us. That means they have to fight their way out. Even flying out will take planes over hostile territory and who knows what the Afghans will do?

We are fortunate to have a President who, with all his faults and mistakes he has made is not trigger happy. Let's hope that he can withstand the pressure from the Israeli government, Congress and AIPAC and not fold. Unless I am reading the tea leaves wrong, Obama will have the American people behind him when he decides to not attack Iran. And I understand that even most Israelis are against an attack. So why are some people in powerful positions so eager to go to war?

"Israel Will Not Attack" by Uri Avnery, *Haaretz*

Mar. 12, 2012, ([http://www.palestinechronicle.com/view\\_article\\_details.php?id=19158](http://www.palestinechronicle.com/view_article_details.php?id=19158))

Israel will not attack Iran. Period.

The United States will not attack Iran. Period.

The United States will not attack. Not this year, nor in years to come. For a reason far more important than electoral considerations or military limitations. The United States will not attack, because an attack would spell a national disaster for itself and a sweeping disaster for the whole world.

"If you want to understand the policy of a country, take a look at the map," said Napoleon. Minutes after an attack is launched, Iran will close the Strait of Hormuz, through which passes almost all the oil exported by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq and Iran - 40% of the world's sea-borne oil passes through the strait. A few minutes after that, oil prices will rise, will double, triple or quadruple - and the U.S. and global economy will collapse.

Such small issues do not cross the minds of generals, military commentators and other wise guys who look at the world between narrow "security" blinkers.

Closing the Strait would be the most easy of military operations. A few missiles, launched from either the sea or the land, would do it. To reopen it, it would not be enough to send the US Navy's mighty aircraft carriers on show cruises. The United States would have to conquer large parts of Iran, so as to put the Strait out of range of the Iranian missiles. Iran is larger than Germany, France, Spain and Italy combined. It would be a long war, something on the scale of the Vietnam War.

For Iran, there is no difference between an Israeli attack and an American attack. They would be treated as one and the same. In both cases, the consequence will be the blocking of the Strait and a large scale war.

All of which is more than enough for the United States not to attack, and to forbid Israel from attacking.

It's 56 years since Israel went to war without giving notice to the Americans and getting their consent. When Israel did this in 1956, President Eisenhower took away all the achievements of victory, to the last millimeter. Before the Six Day War and on the eve of the First Lebanon War, the government of Israel sent special envoys to Washington to ensure unequivocal consent. If this time it did attack against the Americans' will, who would restock the IDF armories? Who would protect the cities of Israel, which would be exposed to many tens of thousands of missiles from Iran and its proxies? Not to mention the wave of anti-Semitism which can be expected to burst out once the American public finds out that it was Israel, and Israel alone, which brought upon them a national disaster.

American diplomatic and economic pressure might be sufficient to stop the ayatollahs' gallop towards the Bomb. It worked in Gaddafi's Libya and is now happening in North Korea. The Persians are a nation of merchants, and it might be possible to formulate a deal which would be worth their while.

This is questionable, because a few years ago the Neo-Conservatives in Washington engaged in glib talk about how easy it would be to occupy Iran, which surely convinced the Iranians that they must acquire the ultimate weapon of deterrence. What would we have done in their place? Or rather, what did we actually do (according to foreign reports, etc.) when we were in their position?

So what is going to happen? If no deal is reached, Iran will develop nuclear weapons. That's not the end of the world. As has been pointed out by some of our more courageous security chiefs, this is not an existential threat. We'll live in a situation of a balance of terror. Like America and Russia during the Cold War. Like India and Pakistan now. Not pleasant, but not too terrible, either.

Iran has not attacked any other country in a thousand years. Ahmadinejad talks like a wild demagogue, but the Iranian leadership actually treads very carefully. Israel does not threaten any Iranian interest. Joint national suicide is not an option.

Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar boasted, and rightly, that Netanyahu had managed to distract the whole world's attention, away from the Palestinians and to the Iranian problem. A fantastic success, indeed. Obama in effect tells him: OK, go and play with settlements as much as you want, but please leave Iran for the adults.

<a href="#">20120314-02</a>	12:04	Pam	Re: "Israel Will Not Attack" (reply to Art, above)
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Very interesting indeed. I don't understand Netanyahu's "reasoning." Like all world leaders, he undoubtedly has issues, daddy issues almost certainly. These days I always look for the hidden psychological agenda when any politician struts his stuff. Surely, surely there will be no war with Iran. I hadn't even thought about our soldiers being trapped in Afghanistan, but of course they would be. If we can tolerate a nuclear Iran, we should be able to tolerate the Taliban. I deplore their medieval ways, but Afghanistan is not really our responsibility. We need to get out asap and let diplomacy do what it can. I am optimistic enough to believe that Obama will be re-elected, and I hope the Repubs are just using rhetoric to whip up the masses without any real intent to start launching bombs, but all their war talk does nothing to calm Iranian nerves. These egoists are so irresponsible. It's appalling.

Also, is that thing about Santorum being against interracial marriage true? I want to be sure before I start dumping all over him. [Sorry, not known to be truetrue. -SteveB]

<a href="#">20120314-03</a>	14:49	Dennis	"Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America"
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The importance of public discourse...

We need to state a vision of what the country can be. The politicians won't do it, so we need to do it ourselves.

"Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America" by George Lakoff, AlterNet

Mar. 12, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/154516/>)

The Republican presidential campaign is not just about the presidential race. It is about using conservative language to strengthen conservative values in the brains of voters.

The Santorum Strategy is not just about Santorum. It is about pounding the most radical conservative ideas into the public mind by constant repetition during the Republican presidential campaign, whether by Santorum himself, by Gingrich or Ron Paul, by an intimidated Romney, or by the Republican House majority. The Republican presidential campaign is about a lot more than the campaign for the presidency. It is about guaranteeing a radical conservative future for America.

I am old enough to remember how liberals (me included) made fun of Ronald Reagan as a not-too-bright mediocre actor who could not possibly be elected president. I remember liberals making fun of George W. Bush as so ignorant and ill-spoken that Americans couldn't possibly take him seriously. Both turned out to be clever politicians who changed America much for the worse. And among the things they and their fellow conservatives managed to do was change public discourse, and with it, change how a great many Americans thought.

The Republican presidential campaign has to be seen in this light.

Liberals tend to underestimate the importance of public discourse and its effect on the brains of our citizens. All thought is physical. You think with your brain. You have no alternative. Brain circuitry strengthens with repeated activation. And language, far from being neutral, activates complex brain circuitry that is rooted in conservative and liberal moral systems. Conservative language, even when argued against, activates and strengthens conservative brain circuitry. This is extremely important for so-called "independents," who actually have both conservative and liberal moral systems in their brains and can shift back and forth. The more they hear conservative language over the next eight months, the more their conservative brain circuitry will be strengthened.

This point is being missed by Democrats and by the media, and yet it is the most vital issue for our future in what is now being discussed. No matter who gets the Republican nomination for president, the Santorum Strategy will have succeeded unless Democrats dramatically change their communication strategy as soon as possible. Even if President Obama is re-elected, he will have very little power if the Republicans keep the House, and a great deal less if they take the Senate. And if they keep and take more state houses and local offices around the country, there will be less and less possibility of a liberal future.

The Republican presidential campaign is not just about the presidential race. It is about using conservative language to strengthen conservative values in the brains of voters -- in campaigns at all levels from Congress to school boards. Part of the Republican strategy is to get liberals to argue against them, repeating conservative language. There is a reason I wrote a book called *Don't Think of an Elephant!* When you negate conservative language, you activate conservative ideas and, hence, automatically and unconsciously strengthen the brain circuitry that characterizes conservative values.

As I was writing the paragraphs above, the mail came. In it was material from Public Citizen (an organization I admire) promoting Single Payer Health Care (which I agree with) by arguing against right-wing lies about it. In big, bold type the lies were listed: Single payer is socialized medicine. Single payer will lead to rationing, like in Canada. Costs will skyrocket under single Payer. And so on. After each one, came the negative: Wrong. And then in small, unbolded type, the laundry lists of policy truths. Public Citizen was unconsciously promoting the conservative lies by repeating them in boldface and then negating them.

The same naiveté about messaging, public discourse, and effects on brains is now showing up in liberal discussions of the Republican presidential race. Many Democrats are reacting either with glee ("their field is so ridiculously weak and wacky." -- Maureen Dowd), with outrage (their deficit-reduction proposals would actually raise the deficit -- Paul Krugman), or with incredulity ("Why we're debating a woman's access to birth control is beyond me." -- Debbie Wasserman Schultz). Hendrik Hertzberg dismissed the ultra-conservatives as "a kick line of clowns, knaves, and zealots." Joe Nocera wrote that he hopes Santorum would be the Republican candidate, claiming that he is so far to the right that he would be "crushed" -- an "epic defeat," "shock therapy" that would bring back moderate Republicans. Democrats even voted for Santorum in the Michigan primary on the grounds that he would be the weaker candidate and that it would be to the Democrats' advantage if the Republican race dragged on for a long time.

I mention these liberals by name because they are all people I admire and largely agree with. I hope that they are right. And I hope that the liberal discourse of glee, scorn, outrage, incredulity, and support for the most radical conservative will actually win the day for Democrats at all levels. But, frankly, I have my doubts. I think Democrats need much better positive messaging, expressing and repeating liberal moral values -- not just policies-- uniformly across the party. That is not happening.

One of the reasons that it is not happening is that there is a failure to understand the difference between policy and morality, that morality beats policy, and that moral discourse is absolutely necessary. This is a major reason why the Democrats lost the House in 2010. Consider how conservatives got a majority of Americans to be against the Obama health care plan. The president had polled the provisions, and each had strong public support: No preconditions, no caps, no loss of coverage if you get sick, ability to keep your college-age child on your policy, and so on. These are policy details, and they matter. The conservatives never argued against any of them. Instead, they re-framed; they made a moral case against "Obamacare." Their moral principles were freedom and life, and they had language to go with them. Freedom: "government takeover." Life: "death panels." Republicans at all levels repeated them over and over, and convinced millions of people who were for the policy provisions of the Obama plan to be against the plan as a whole. They changed the public discourse, changed the brains of the electorate -- especially the "independents" -- and won in 2010.

The radical conservative discourse of the Republican presidential race has the same purpose, and conservative Republicans are luring Democrats into making the same mistakes. Santorum, the purest radical conservative, is the best example. From the perspective of conservative moral values, he is making sense and arguing logically, making his moral values clear and coming across as straightforward and authentic, as Reagan did.

The basic moral values in the progressive moral system are empathy and responsibility, both for oneself and others. This leads to a view of government as having certain moral obligations: providing protection and empowerment for everyone equally. This requires a vibrant commitment to the public -- public infrastructure (roads, buildings, sewers), public education, public health, and so on. No private business can prosper at all without such public provisions. The private depends on the public.

These values follow from certain ideal progressive family values, as projected to larger institutions. The progressive family has parents of equal authority. Their central moral role requires empathy with each other and their children, it requires self-responsibility, and responsibility for the well-being of other family members. This means open communication, transparency about family rules, shared decision-making, and need-based fairness.

This is an idealized view. Because our first acquaintance with being governed is in our families, we come to understand ideal versions of governing institutions (e.g., churches, schools, teams, and nations) in terms of idealizations of families.

The idealized conservative family is structured around a strict father who is the natural leader of the family, who is assumed to know right from wrong, whose authority is absolute and unchallengeable, who is masculine, makes decisions about reproduction, and who sets the rules - in short, the Decider. Children must be taught right from wrong through strict discipline, which is required to be moral. This maps onto the nation. To be prosperous in a free market, one must be fiscally disciplined. If you are not prosperous, you must not be disciplined, and if you are not disciplined, you cannot be moral, and so you deserve your poverty.

When this idealized family model is projected onto various governing institutions, we get conservative versions of them: conservative religion with a strict father God; a view of the market as Decider with no external authority over the market from government, unions, or the courts; and strictness in other institutions, like education, prisons, businesses, sports teams, romantic relationships, and the world community. Control over reproduction ought to be in the hands of male authorities.

For conservatives, democracy is about liberty, individual responsibility and self-reliance -- the freedom to seek one's own self-interest with minimal or no commitment to the interests of others. This implies a minimal public and a maximal private.

We can now see why the Santorum Strategy is so concerned with family values. Strict father family values are the model for radical conservative values. Conservative populism -- in which poor conservatives vote against their financial interests -- depends on those poor conservatives having strict father family values, defining themselves in terms of those values, and voting on the basis of those values, thus selecting strict fathers as their political leaders.

The repetition of language expressing those values leads to more and more working people becoming political and accepting those values in their politics. As long as the Democrats have no positive moral messaging of their own,

repeated over and over, the Santorum Strategy will go unchallenged and conservative populism will expand. Moreover, repeating the Santorum language by mocking it or arguing against it using that language will only help radical conservatives in propagating their views.

Democrats are concentrating on the presidential race, hoping that if Obama wins, as it looks like he will, all will be fine. They are missing the bigger picture. The Democratic strategy of getting the independent women's vote for Obama is not sufficient, because independent women may still vote for their local conservative leaders as the strict fathers they want to see in office.

Democrats have been gleeful about the Santorum birth control strategy, taken up by conservatives in the House as a moral position that if you want to use birth control, you should pay for it yourself. Democrats see this as irrational Republican self-destruction, assuming that it will help all Democrats to frame it as a "war against women." I hope they are right, but I have doubts.

This is anything but an irrational position for radically conservative Republicans. Quite the contrary. It fits conservative moral logic -- the logic used by conservative populists, male for sure and for many women as well. In some respects it embodies the most powerful aspects of conservative moral logic, strengthening conservative moral logic in the minds not only of conservatives, but also of independents who have both conservative and progressive world views and swing between them.

Here's how that logic goes:

- The strict father determines what happens in the family, including reproduction. Thus reproduction is the province of male authority.
- The strict father does not condone moral weakness and self-indulgence without moral consequences. Sex without reproductive consequences is thus seen as immoral.
- If the nation supports birth control for unmarried women, then the nation supports immoral behavior.
- The conservative stress on individual responsibility means that you and no one else should have to pay for your birth control -- not your employer, your HMO, or the taxpayers.
- Having to pay for your birth control also has a metaphorical religious value -- paying for your sins.
- This is a classical slippery slope narrative. If no one else should have to pay for your birth control, the next step is that no one else should have to pay for any of your health care.
- And the step after that is that no one else should be forced to pay for anyone else. This is, everything should be privatized -- no public education, safety nets, parks, or any public institutions or services.

That is what makes conservative moral logic into such a powerful instrument. And conservative and independent women can be pragmatic about the birth control details, while accepting the moral logic as a whole.

Incidentally, Rush Limbaugh's "slut" and "prostitute" remarks, while even more extreme than Santorum, make sense to conservatives in terms of the same conservative moral logic. Limbaugh apologized for those two words, but not for the logic behind them. Even after the apology for the two words, the logic lingers.

All moral logic in politics, whether progressive or conservative, is based on metaphorical thought processes, applying family moral values to political moral values. Republicans understand this and Santorum carries it out masterfully for the benefit of all conservative Republican office seekers at all levels, today and in the future.

The Santorum Strategy does not end with this election. It is part of a permanent campaign that has been going on since the Gingrich revolution of 1994, and will continue into the indefinite future.

Democrats tend to be literalists, assuming that the presidential campaign is only about the presidential campaign and that birth control is only about birth control. In 2010, they thought that health policy was only about health policy, even as conservatives were metaphorically making it about freedom ("government takeover") and life ("death panels").

It is vital that Democrats not make that mistake again.

(George Lakoff is the author of *Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (Chelsea Green). He is Professor of Linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley and a Senior Fellow of the Rockridge Institute.)

<a href="#">20120314-05</a>	16:02	Pam	Re: "Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America" (reply to Dennis, above)
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**From Pam (Mar. 14, 2012, 4:02 pm)—reply to Dennis, above, ref: The Importance of Public Discourse**

Excellent article, and I fear true. There is a "conservative conspiracy" and it's so close we can't even see it. Remember the 'sixties, when Make Love, Not War was on everyone's lips? Flower power. Do your own thing, man. That was the struggle against the conservative, Mad Men view of the family, just as Lakoff says. I'm part of the first generation of feminists, and by now we are all pretty comfortable with the changes the last 40 years have brought. I was a reluctant feminist. I like men and don't want a battle between the sexes, but all over the world and throughout history men have been trying to put women in boxes and shut the lids tight. Santorum, Gingrich, and Romney are all male in their values and their strategies. The silent women at their sides simply underscore the obvious. Liberals have been slinking around long enough; we've been complacent long enough. We MUST NOT allow the conservative agenda to prevail.

<a href="#">20120314-07</a>	18:10	Dennis	"Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs"
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A look at the cost of Obamneycare.

"Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs" by Rick Ungar, *Forbes*

Mar. 12, 2012, (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/rickungar/2012/03/12/early-signs-that-obamacare-is-on-the-right-track-to-reduce-costs/>)

While anyone who tries to tell you that the Affordable Care Act has already had some significant impact on either lowering or raising healthcare costs is being considerably less than honest—as the provisions that will do one or the other do not come into play for a few more years—there are some positive signs that the law might be on the right track when it comes to long-term cost savings.

One of the more controversial aspects of Obamacare is the expansion of the Medicaid program that is expected to bring some 16 million more people into the program. Of course, such an increase comes at a price—presently estimated by the CBO to raise the federal portion of Medicaid from the current 1.7 percent of GDP to 2.5 percent in the year 2022.

If you understand *why* the ACA has embarked on this approach, you know that the expansion is based on the notion that getting more people access to the healthcare system when 'small' illnesses can be treated before they become more complicated and dramatically more expensive, we will save considerably more money than we spend in the long term.

A new study conducted by The University Of California Irvine and the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System, has produced some results that indicate that the approach taken by the ACA may be very much on the right track.

The study involved giving health insurance to some 26,000 previously uninsured people in Richmond, Virginia, allowing them to access primary care services in the area. The demographics of those participating in the program were designed to match the demographics of those who will be affected by the expansion of the Medicaid program in 2014.

Similar to Medicaid, participants were responsible to re-enroll in the program proactively for subsequent years.

To date, the study reveals that primary-care visits, for patients who continued to participate in the program for three years, rose from 1.06 in the first year to 1.60 visits annualized over the three years of the study. Not surprisingly, the emergency room visitation rate fell from 1.02 for these folks in the first year to .74 by the end of year three.

The pay-off?

When measuring the change in health care costs for those participants who increased their visits to a primary care physician during the three year period while decreasing the number of visits to the emergency room, the study reveals that, on average, the total annual health care costs per enrollee fell from \$8,899 in year one, to a startling \$4,569 in year three—an almost 50 percent decline in the cost of health care per individual.

That's a pretty huge savings.

When all participants, including those who did not stay in the program for the full three years, are added into the numbers, the total health care costs per patient declined from \$7604 to \$4,726.

So, what does this tell us?

According to study co-author, David Neumark, UC Irvine Chancellor's Professor of economics and director of UCI's Center for Economics & Public Policy study:

A lot of the debate about healthcare reform surrounds the issue of whether we're setting up something that's going to cost us more by increasing use of medical services or something that will cut costs through more appropriate and timely use of medical services. Our research shows that, over time, costs can be reduced through increased use of primary care and reductions in emergency-department visits and hospital admissions, but it may take several years of coverage for substantive savings to occur.

While the benefits of bringing more people into the healthcare system, by opening the Medicaid program up to more participants, are not going to be readily apparent overnight, this study does indicate the—in the long-term—we will end up saving a lot of money.

The study reveals one additional thing that is highly relevant to the intent of the ACA—when people use the services of primary care physicians rather than waiting for a full blown emergency that takes them to the ER because they do not have health care coverage, we save a bunch of money. As there appears to be a growing meme on the part of Obamacare opponents that there is no proof that preventative care pays off in cost savings, this study should help in putting that particular line of attack to rest.

One additional caveat worth noting—if the states, who operate the Medicaid programs, continue to make it difficult or inconvenient for potential beneficiaries to sign up, we will not gain the cost savings that we see are possible. There is an inherent conflict between states looking to save money by lowering the number of enrollees to their Medicaid programs and the benefits this type of study reveals are possible when we sign up and retain everyone who qualifies.

[20120314-08](#)

19:35

SteveB

Re: "Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs"  
(reply to Dennis, above)

It's not perfect, but Obamacare is much better than Republican Care ("Sorry, we can't help you.").

And the main reason it was passed, if I recall correctly, was to reduce costs nationwide.

[20120314-09](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Tortola, British Virgin Islands

<http://tortolacharters.com/excursions/private-charters/tortola-highlights/>

Sopers Hole, West End of Tortola



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #96 — MAR. 16, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **The Betrayal at Goldman Sachs**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 16, 2012)

We know now that deregulation of the banking, financial, and insurance industries was harmful to America. But re-regulation doesn't seem to be going very well. America's enemies are rich and powerful. Goldman Sachs is merely one example of how greed infects our institutions. Something must be done to ensure long-term goals are made as important as short-term bonuses. And who else can solve this problem except the government? You don't really believe the Fairy Tale, do you? That big money can regulate itself? LOL!

"The Truth About Goldman Sachs" by Wallace Turbeville, *The American Prospect*

Mar. 15, 2012, (<http://prospect.org/article/truth-about-goldman-sachs>)

(Wallace Turbeville is a former vice president of Goldman Sachs and a fellow at Dēmos.)

(The investment firm headed south as soon as it started prioritizing short-term gain over its long-term interests.)

Former Goldman Sachs employee Greg Smith wrote an op-ed in yesterday's *New York Times* that simmers with pathos. Smith describes the devolution of the culture at Goldman: Whereas in the past, the company worked in the interests of its clients, they are now seen merely as the source of transactional profit, to be manipulated for the benefit of the firm. His story emerges in the midst of a huge effort by Wall Street to eviscerate and delay the implementation of the Volcker Rule, which limits bank traders to running a client-service businesses by prohibiting trading for the bank's own account.

Having spent 12 years at Goldman prior to 1997, I sympathize with Smith's feelings of loss and betrayal. I left just at the beginning of the institution's evolution into its current form and have observed the process with despair—not only for the organization but for the loss suffered by the nation. Some context might provide greater meaning to Mr. Smith's story.

At its best, Wall Street serves an important function. Historically, it provided the wherewithal for growth in industries as varied as rail and information technology; by bankrolling productive growth of industries that provided jobs and products to sell around the world, it vastly increased the well-being of all Americans. In times of crisis, bankers worked to preserve economic stability. Sometimes, they were genuine altruists, accepting the moral responsibilities that go along with their positions of wealth and power. More often, they were simply pursuing their own self-interest. Was J.P. Morgan a robber baron or the man who almost single-handedly saved the economy in the panic of 1907? The answer is both. But altruistic or not, bankers understood their enormous stake in the long-

term vitality of the economy. Preserving the health of the economy was good for business this year and for decades to come. That was the contract between Main Street and Wall Street.

When I arrived at Goldman Sachs, John Weinberg headed the firm. It was a partnership of professionals then, not a publicly traded corporation, and the partners' wealth was largely invested in the firm. I saw Weinberg, a Marine veteran of the Pacific campaigns, many mornings on the elevator with a muffin perched on a Styrofoam coffee cup, his briefcase in his other hand. He had just arrived at 85 Broad Street in his Ford (Ford was a longtime personal client). His appearance was closer to the guy behind the counter at the deli than the titan of Wall Street that he was. When he spoke, he was incisive and wise. His motto for Goldman Sachs (coined by his predecessor Gus Levy) was, "Be long-term greedy, not short-term greedy."

He believed these words. The firm promulgated "Our Business Principles," and the bankers bought into it. We included these in every presentation and were convinced that clients and potential clients would be persuaded of the firm's trustworthiness given its fine principles. Like the Marines of Weinberg's youth, we were convinced that we were the best of the best. But, wisely, the company's culture was structured to tamp down arrogance and hubris. Peer reviews became a ritual in which working with a team and serving clients well were key metrics of success. The firm installed co-heads of many groups, demanding that the two cooperate. (Younger bankers predictably referred to them as "cone heads.") The practice included the heads of the firm. Weinberg, in fact, initially served as co-head with John Whitehead, who retired just after I arrived.

Goldman Sachs was almost a cult. I worshipped it and was by no means unique. We all wanted to make a profit, and, inevitably, the ever-present temptation of greed led to a fair number of scandals and investigations. But principle was generally the trump card. Weinberg forbade participation in hostile takeovers, an immensely lucrative business. When the market crashed in 1987, he refused to take advantage of an "out" in an underwriting for the government of Great Britain, knowing that it cost the partners \$100 million, and his loss was by far the largest. He blocked every suggestion to take the firm public. It was impossible to know whether his motives were based on principle or on the knowledge that the accumulated goodwill would return profits beyond imagination. For Weinberg, they were inseparable.

The parade of Goldman leadership after Weinberg's departure in 1990 is truly remarkable: Bob Rubin and Steve Friedman, as co-heads; Jon Corzine; Hank Paulson; and Lloyd Blankfein. As the leadership evolved from the greatest generation to the baby boomers, the underpinnings of the culture decayed. "Our Business Principles" were always featured in the annual report and handed out to new recruits. But everyone could see that the firm's view of its clients was changing. They became a source of transactions, the success of which was measured by the payday, not the enhancement of a long-term relationship. Professional retreats became dominated by speeches about how Goldman had to change to survive. For some of us, the time to move on had arrived, and it was a deeply emotional process.

Trading was always part of Goldman (and all of Wall Street), the counterpoint to investment banking. Investment bankers advise clients on capital raising and mergers and acquisitions. These activities are collaborative and essentially serve the client's interest. As a result, long-term relationships and service to the client are essential to success in investment banking. In contrast, traders each have a book of long and short positions. Trader successes and failures are far more individual and immediate. The goal is not to help a client but to strike a favorable deal with a counterparty. Through the years, there were legendary struggles between bankers and traders for leadership of Wall Street firms. For the most part, however, the bankers ran the firms.

The world shifted. Trading exploded, largely fueled by information technology. It seemed that every number on earth could be divided by every other number, all in real time. Everything could be priced, and, once priced, could be traded. Markets were deregulated and carved into pieces, each representing a trading opportunity. The Wall Street firms, and Goldman in particular, with their enormous capital resources, could dominate more and more of the price points in the American economy, extracting value from the producers and consumers. Software programs could be written to access electronic trading platforms so that the enormous force of the trading houses could be brought to bear without the inefficiency of human intervention. It seemed that a business model relying on dispassionate exploitation of immediate opportunity had been perfected.

The golden rule kicked in—"He who has the gold makes the rules." The predominance of trading profits reversed the balance of influence in favor of the traders. Clients were no longer just clients; instead, they were counterparties to be dealt with at arm's length. In the end, the traders achieved Nirvana—using asset pools, they were able to synthesize their own clients as sources of securities to trade. The business of trading, focused on short-term profits, became dominant at Goldman Sachs, and every firm on Wall Street tried to emulate it.

Lloyd Blankfein's rise at Goldman Sachs parallels this process. He started as a metals trader at J. Aaron, which was acquired by Goldman during the Weinberg years. A brilliant trader, he completed the conversion of Goldman Sachs that is described by Greg Smith. In a dramatic Senate hearing just before the Dodd-Frank Act was passed, Blankfein was questioned relentlessly by Senator Carl Levin about the conflicts of interest in the Goldman business model. He seemed genuinely perplexed that his responses weren't persuasive. It is probably true that he believes his people did the right thing. After all, he is a trader, not a banker. He is constitutionally committed to the transaction.

Traders, like Blankfein, have a code of ethics. They always stand by their word when a deal is struck. It is just that they are unconcerned about long-term relationships. What troubles Greg Smith is the disingenuous lip service to Goldman's commitment to clients. It is too bad that he had to learn the truth so harshly.

The American economy has lost something in all of this. Wall Street's capital-markets business serves us best when it is aligned with the long-term growth of the economy. We need more Weinbergs (and maybe even more J.P. Morgans) and fewer trade bots.

This Wall Street metamorphosis was a response to the new environment and will persist until outside forces intervene. Recalling the value of Wall Street's historic interest in long-term economic growth is not just an exercise in nostalgia for a lost era. Advanced trading practices constitute a relentlessly efficient means to deploy capital in great quantity instantaneously. If the premises behind trading strategies are flawed, however, the consequences are magnified. It is relatively easy to hire quantitative geniuses to construct algorithms and measure conditions with great precision. The decision of what to measure and the prudent use of the results is another matter. Short-term mentality is a problem. When things go wrong, and they will, this mentality assures that the damage is immediate and devastating.

The only rational choice for the economy as a whole is to curb trading practices and to align the interests of Wall Street and the public. Bankers would be wise to see that this realignment is ultimately in their interest, even if it adversely impacts immediate profits. They may be able to deploy sufficient lobbying resources to blunt and delay the financial reform effort. But a viable contract with the American people in which they support the long-term health of the economy is the only way to preserve their business for decades to come.

A word of advice: Be long-term greedy, not short-term greedy.

20120315-01	07:06	MarthaH	"In Reactions to Two Incidents, a U.S.-Afghan Disconnect"
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Afghanistan is not the U.S....

Quite a piece.

"In Reactions to Two Incidents, a U.S.-Afghan Disconnect" by Rod Norland, *New York Times*

Mar. 14, 2012 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/world/asia/disconnect-clear-in-us-bafflement-over-2-afghan-responses.html? r=1>)

(KABUL, Afghanistan) The mullah was astounded and a little angered to be asked why the accidental burning of Korans last month could provoke violence nationwide, while an intentional mass murder that included nine children last Sunday did not.

"How can you compare the dishonoring of the Holy Koran with the martyrdom of innocent civilians?" said an incredulous Mullah Khaliq Dad, a member of the council of religious leaders who investigated the Koran burnings. "The whole goal of our life is religion."

That many Americans are just as surprised that what appears to be the massacre of 16 people at the hands of an American soldier has not led to mass protests or revenge killings speaks volumes about a fundamental disconnect with their Afghan partners, one that has undermined a longstanding objective to win the hearts and minds of the population. After more than 10 years, many deaths and billions of dollars invested, Americans still fail to grasp the Afghans' basic values. Faith is paramount and a death can be compensated with blood money.

"To Muslims, and especially to Afghans, religion is much higher a concern than civilian or human casualties," said Hafez Abdul Qayoom, a member of Afghanistan's highest clerical body, the Ulema Council. "When something happens to their religion, they are much more sensitive and have much stronger reaction to it."

The attack by a still unidentified United States Army soldier near his base in the Panjwai district, in southern Kandahar Province, has certainly infuriated Afghans and added to already strained relations. But the anger has been more polemical than violent — at least so far.

"We have to hold our breath here — people are jumping too fast on this idea that Afghans don't care about 16 people being killed, compared to, say, the Koran-burning episode," said Haseeb Humayoon, a social scientist here who has studied the phenomenon of mass protests.

There have been delayed reactions to past foreign offenses, like when a Florida evangelist deliberately destroyed a Koran last year. And Friday Prayers, which often touch off mass protests, have yet to take place this week. Still, the contrast with the reaction to the Feb. 20 Koran burnings is striking. Within a day of the burnings, violent protests outside NATO bases broke out, and apologies from top officials did little to stem two weeks of violence that took at least 29 lives.

In the case of the massacre in Kandahar, prompt apologies and condemnations from not only Gen. John R. Allen, the commander of the international force, but also President Obama — along with quick action by local leaders — seemed to head off violence and contain the blowback.

In Kandahar, villagers at first wanted to take the bodies of their victims into the city, but elders persuaded them that displaying them to crowds would lead to mass violence, and they desisted. Instead, they expressed their anguish to top officials who rushed there from Kabul, and in phone calls with President Hamid Karzai. In Jalalabad, university students organized a demonstration, burning Mr. Obama and a Christian cross in effigy, but despite strident demands that the Americans leave, the protest remained peaceful and disbanded without incident.

Partly, many observers say, the Americans have had a lot of practice at apologizing for carnage, accidental and otherwise, and have gotten better at doing it quickly and convincingly.

"The statement coming from President Obama, saying the killing of Afghan children felt the same as if they were American children, was reported widely by the local press," Mr. Humayoon said. "Previously you would have a bland apology."

The Ulema Council, which is heavily influenced by the presidential palace, had immediately issued a passionate denunciation, saying of the Americans, "The human rights violators of the 21st century once more committed a wild, inhuman and shameful act and relentlessly martyred innocent children, women and men." But Mullah Qayoom said the quick reaction and prompt apology helped tamp down fury.

Afghan officials helped, too, by quickly paying compensation to the victims' relatives, who are very poor and are part of a culture where "blood money" is regularly paid for even accidental deaths. A high-level delegation brought the money on Tuesday to the village in Panjwai where the massacre happened, drawing an attack by Taliban insurgents.

Still, the speed of the official response does not explain everything. Military officials quickly apologized for the Koran burnings as well, but it seemed to do little to quiet matters.

Mullah Qayoom is surprised that anyone is surprised.

"Humans were sent here to worship and protect religion," he said. "That is what the purpose of a Muslim's life is."

Also, Afghans were very much aware that burning a Koran under American law normally would not be a crime, any more than burning a Bible would be — so those responsible were not going to suffer anything that Afghans would view as appropriate punishment.

In the case of murder, the military does have capital punishment, at least in theory — though no American soldier has ever been sentenced to death for acts committed in Afghanistan, including murders.

"In your laws there is the death penalty, so we are hopeful," Mullah Qayoom said. "With the Koran burning, your people do not even respect your own books, so in the end they will say 'sorry' and the person will be released."

That Afghans find Koran desecration more distressing does not mean they have been indifferent to the murders, particularly of the children. By now, any Afghan with a computer has seen the victims' cherubic but lifeless visages on Facebook, and the images have been passed around on cellphones. Wrapped in blankets, some look as if they had just fallen asleep — the coverings hide gaping forehead wounds. A toddler in a blood-stained pinafore looks alive at first glance.

The Taliban certainly did their best to instigate a reaction to the Kandahar killings, issuing a broadside within hours calling on local residents to pour into the streets and attack NATO bases.

So far, at least, nothing of the sort has happened. Afghans are quick to recall a proverb: "You give your money away for your life, but you give your life away for your religion." Ahmad Nader Nadery, a human rights activist, said that when the heat of the moment settled, many Afghans would be ready to see the Kandahar massacre as the criminal act of a single individual, particularly because it did not come as part of a military operation.

Perhaps most important, however, is that civilian casualties have long since stopped being the particular province of foreign military forces, who were once responsible for 75 percent of them. Now the Taliban commit 75 percent of them, according to figures by the United Nations and Afghan rights groups. As one American military official said, "When have the Taliban ever apologized for killing?"

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<a href="#">20120315-02</a>	08:59	Pam	Re: "Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #95)
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Isn't there something in journalism called, Burying the lead? This article, useful though it is, demonstrates what that earlier article said about liberals' failure to maximize their impact. I agree with Obamacare (though it doesn't go far enough), but even I got bored before I got to the nitty gritty of just how much money is saved. Don't start with boring background. Jump right in with the big idea and the easy numbers (nothing with decimal points) and fill in the background later. Duh.

<a href="#">20120315-07</a>	14:36	SteveB	Re: "Early Signs That Obamacare Is on the Right Track to Reduce Costs" (reply to Pam, above & Dennis, FotM Newsletter #95)
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The Right seems to have a different "take" on the subject of healthcare costs, though much detail is missing:

"ObamaCare: Twice as Expensive as Promised, and Getting Worse" by John Hayward, Human Events

Mar. 15, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=50220>)

(The sharp pain in your wallet will not subside.)

The big ObamaCare news this week isn't really "news" to anyone who was smart enough to see through the President's obfuscations and fraudulent accounting when ObamaCare was being rammed down our throats. No group has ever been more utterly vindicated than ObamaCare critics, who were right about absolutely everything they said.

One of Obama's sleaziest tricks was front-loading revenue into ObamaCare, while deferring expenses for as long as possible. This made it look like it would cost a lot less than it actually would. How much less? Oh, about half as much as the true cost... and that's according to estimates from a government agency known for its extreme caution and static analysis methods.

The Congressional Budget Office does 10-year forecasts, so now that it's 2012, they're looking out to 2022, when some of the biggest fiscal damage from ObamaCare reveals itself. What they found is very ugly indeed, as Fox News reports:

In a largely overlooked segment of the CBO's update to the budget outlook released Tuesday, the independent arm of Congress found that the bill will cost \$1.76 trillion between now and 2022.

That only counts the cost of coverage, not implementation costs and other changes.

The bill spends more than the president promised, it covers fewer people -- probably 2 million fewer people -- and it taxes more than was expected," said Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., ranking member on the Senate Budget Committee.

What if we throw in those implementation costs? Where does that leave us, Senator Sessions?

The full accounting of the bill is \$2.6 trillion. That's a fair and accurate analysis of what the bill would cost, according to CBO," Sessions said, noting how the cost dwarfs the fight over the 10-year debt reduction plan debated last year.

We spent a whole summer fighting over a way to reduce spending by \$2.1 trillion and here this bill is going add \$2.6 trillion more in spending.

Politics often involves crazy sales tactics, but the spectacle of Obama and his Party pretending to be even *slightly* concerned about the national debt is insane-asylum material.

The lunatics are still trying to claim that all this wild spending and exploding cost will somehow reduce the deficit, by which they mean "make it grow a little slower than it otherwise would have." This assertion is based, in part, on the huge amount of money ObamaCare will suck out of the private sector through taxes, and of course the unique quantum tax/fine of the "individual mandate," which is either a tax or a fine, depending on which member of the Administration is speaking, and who is asking the question.

Since the Obama economy is getting ready to go into a nose dive, with less than 2 percent annual GDP growth, but the number of living human beings required to fork over ObamaCare taxes, fines, and quantum tax/fines continues to increase, ObamaCare becomes a more stable and reliable source of revenue. No matter how awful the economy gets, the ObamaCare needle will never budge from America's veins.

When you hear a Democrat boast of the revenue ObamaCare is projected to bring in, understand that what they're *really* saying is that they've crushed the economy so thoroughly that Big Government now survives on a tax you pay for the privilege of being alive.

By far the craziest quote in this story comes from Democrat Representative Jim Cooper of Tennessee, who flies over the cuckoo's nest to assure us that even though ObamaCare has thus far caused health care costs to rise substantially, it will soon reverse that trend, because "there are no public options. There's no big new government health plan being offered. It's all private sector options, and we hope they compete against each other to get prices down."

Sane people look at the many surveys take of terrified employers and understand reality is the precise opposite of what Cooper claims: it's becoming increasingly attractive for businesses to terminate insurance coverage, to escape from the ObamaCare disaster, dumping their employees into the "public exchanges" or Medicaid. The Obama Administration wants military veterans thrown in those exchanges, too. As if Obama's grinding unemployment and collapsing workforce weren't already depriving too many Americans of private-sector health insurance!

We're still two years away from the "full implementation" of ObamaCare, and the Congressional Budget Office has a poor track record of predicting the true cost of legislation while it's still unfolding. Also, the collapse of private insurance can come very quickly, as businesses decide on fairly short notice that it makes more sense to pay the quantum tax/fine for non-compliance than to comply with a disaster. Wait until you see the ten-year projections that cover 2024. That will be right about the time you hear Democrats begin muttering that single-payer socialized medicine is the only possible escape from the ObamaCare nightmare they created.

[20120315-03](#) 09:56 Pam My Nightmare Scenario for the 2012 Primaries & Elections

Here's my nightmare scenario: Santorum for Pres., Newt for VP. Newt's already lumping them together. I know that's what's on his mind. He's not going to drop out of the race because he figures VP is better than no P. I'm beginning to think Romney isn't going to make it. I think the ticket will be Santorum/Newt, and the tea baggers will go nuts. There will be vicious, libelous attacks on Obama, but he will squeak through in Nov. I hope. I won't bet anyone \$10,000, but I'd go a dollar.

[20120315-04](#) 11:15 Pam Re: "Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #95)

Can anyone explain to me our Afghanistan strategy? Pannetta (sp?) goes on TV and tells America that "our strategy is working." What strategy? Working how? Things go from bad to worse, and we talk about the long haul. To where? Some things are impossible, and we as a nation should learn to accept that and not think that just because we want something to happen we can bring it about. The Taliban may be cruel and ruthless by our standards, but Afghanistan has been ruled by this sort of thing forever. If the Afghan government were more popular with the people, it wouldn't have so much trouble putting together an effective army. I don't see the Taliban depending on foreigners to train them. Afghans have always known how to fight. They are a fierce and tenacious people, not to be underestimated. If their army is weak and ineffective, there is a reason that goes beyond lack of training. We don't need an "exit strategy" in Afghanistan; we need to haul a\*s out of there now.

[20120315-05](#) 11:22 Art Re: "Why the GOP Campaign for the Presidency Is About Guaranteeing a Radical Conservative Future for America" (reply to Pam, above)

Sounds like a pretty good "exit strategy" to me.

[20120315-06](#) 13:22 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Bravo NPR!

[from Daily Kos:](#)

Click here to sign the petition thanking National Public Radio for formally disavowing "he said, she said" journalism in favor of journalism that is fair to the truth:

[http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=78](http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=78)

Too many news outlets seem to consider it their job to tell the competing sides of any given story, instead of focusing on reporting the truth. No matter how unsupported by the facts one side may be, this widespread "he said, she said" journalism is how, for example, climate change deniers are treated seriously in the media.

In a positive move, National Public Radio recently issued new editorial guidelines rejecting this false balance. Disavowing the worst excesses of "he said, she said" journalism, NPR's new code of ethics states that "if the balance of evidence in a matter of controversy weighs heavily on one side, we acknowledge it in our reports." This is an important step to curing what has become an endemic plague of false "fairness" in American journalism.

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers, Daily Kos

20120315-08	16:02	SteveB	"Special Weapons for Fighting Giants"
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Holding giant corporations accountable...

"Special Weapons for Fighting Giants" by Robert Weissman, NationofChange

Mar. 15, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/special-weapons-fighting-giants-1331822032>)

("Revoke their charters, and other legal tools to hold corporations accountable to our laws.")

The last few years have seen a series of corporate catastrophes, for which the perpetrator companies have escaped any meaningful accountability. Big banks and giant Wall Street firms tricked and ripped off homeowners and investors, and crashed the national and global economy. BP's reckless operations poisoned the Gulf of Mexico in one of the worst oil disasters in history. Massey Energy's cost-cutting led to the Upper Big Branch coal mine collapse that killed 29 workers.

There have been virtually no criminal prosecutions for Wall Street wrongdoing related to the crash, and precious few civil actions. Criminal charges are likely to be filed against BP, but the company already has been granted new permits to drill for oil in the Gulf. Massey Energy—now owned by Alpha Natural Resources—was forced to pay \$200 million in penalties but avoided any criminal prosecution.

This history notwithstanding, We the People, and our government representatives, do have the power to hold companies accountable for the wrongs they commit. The challenge is to mobilize sufficient political pressure to demand that available tools be used and new mechanisms of accountability be created.

One powerful way to hold companies accountable is through debarment—denying corporate wrongdoers the right to obtain government contracts. Almost every major company does significant business with the government, so debarment is a penalty with teeth. Similarly, federal, state, and local governments should deny other government benefits to corporate criminals and wrongdoers. Denying BP the right to drill in the Gulf is a penalty that would sting. Drug companies that can't sell to Medicare, Medicaid, and the Department of Veterans Affairs are deprived of more than a third of their market. The Federal Communications Commission has the authority to deny broadcast licenses to media corporations that do not exhibit "good character." Federal and state governments do frequently debar companies, but typically only smaller firms that engage in massive fraud or operate as criminal enterprises.

A second tool to discipline corporate wrongdoers is charter revocation. Establishing a new corporation requires that a state government grant a charter to operate. (This is typically a perfunctory requirement, as evidenced by the state of Virginia's grant of a charter to Licensed to Kill, Inc., a company whose articles of incorporation state that it will engage in "manufactur[ing] and marketing of tobacco products in a way that each year kills over 400,000 Americans and 4.5 million other persons worldwide.") State governments have the right to revoke charters from companies that do not serve the public interest. Free Speech for People has petitioned Delaware to revoke the

charter of Massey Energy. Charter revocation effectively constitutes the death penalty for a corporation. Even occasional use against large corporations would be a major deterrent to corporate wrongdoing.

A third form of control on corporate wrongdoing is civil litigation. Lawsuits against corporate wrongdoers not only afford victims an opportunity to receive some compensation for the harms they have suffered, they work to strip corporations of ill-gotten gains. The civil justice system is a vital deterrent to corporate misconduct, because it means corporations will at least sometimes be forced to pay for the harms they cause. And lawsuits provide direct justice to victims of corporate wrongdoing, without the need to persuade government officials to act. In many ways, the U.S. civil justice system is the most important form of corporate accountability we have.

It's for exactly these reasons that corporations have worked for decades to undermine the functioning of the civil justice system, making it harder to file cases, interfering with the ability of victims to join together in class actions, making it harder for victims to obtain evidence, capping the damages that victims may recover, limiting punitive damages, and forcing victims out of the civil justice system (real courts) and into arbitration tribunals biased to favor giant corporations.

In recent years, organizations like EarthRights International and the Center for Constitutional Rights have innovated new ways to hold corporations accountable in U.S. courts for harms perpetrated overseas, relying especially on a law passed in 1789 called the Alien Tort Claims Act. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has responded with a campaign to foreclose such litigation.

In addition to using these and other corporate accountability tools already at our disposal, we need more. Among other things, we need to significantly strengthen the penalties for corporate endangerment of people's lives and well-being. In many instances, there is no criminal penalty applicable for recklessly putting consumers' or workers' lives at risk by knowingly selling dangerous pharmaceuticals or defective cars or by exposing workers to deadly toxic chemicals or other hazards. A law that would make it a felony to recklessly endanger consumers or workers, with stiff fines and sanctions for companies and jail time for responsible corporate management, would make our world safer and restrain corporate misconduct.

We live in a time of massive disparity between penalties for street criminals and corporate wrongdoers. Corporations, which claim all the rights of "persons," are subjected to much weaker punishments than real people. It doesn't have to be.

[20120315-09](#)

19:38

SteveG

Fw: Furious: The Republican War on Women (from Washington Sen. Maria Cantwell)

Ignore the contribution thing, thought you would enjoy a Washington senator's view.

from Democratic U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (WA):

Every time I think Republicans have gone too far in their war on women, they find a way to go even farther.

Between Rush Limbaugh's disgusting smears and Mitt Romney's plan to "get rid of" Planned Parenthood, it's clear that the right wing will stop at nothing to advance their anti-women agenda.

But now, the *New York Times* is reporting that Republicans plan to OPPOSE a critical extension of the Violence Against Women Act.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) -- which helps survivors of domestic violence -- will come to the floor for extension in the next few days. When VAWA first made its way through Congress in 1994, it enjoyed broad bipartisan support. Yet last week, not one Republican voted in favor of the extension in committee. Not one. And reports now say that Republicans are planning to oppose passage.

I refuse to allow Republicans to get away with this. And I'm asking you to stand with me. The Republican war on women must stop NOW and we're gearing up!

I'm angry. No -- I'm absolutely furious. The audacity of Republicans in waging their relentless war on women is beyond the pale. They are content to let the middle class crumble, leave unemployment untouched, just so they can accomplish their Senate leader's goal of making President Obama "a one term President." And if that means attacking women -- even if those women are the victims of domestic violence -- than so be it.

Well, I came to the Senate to give a voice to those who don't have one in Washington, D.C., and I will not stand idly by while Republicans try to destroy vital programs that help hundreds of thousands of women escape dangerous, often life-threatening situations and start new, healthy lives.

Not on my watch. Not while I'm in the Senate. I am taking a stand -- and with supporters like you standing behind me, we will prevail.

Thanks for standing with me, and standing up for women's rights. --Maria

<http://www.cantwell.com/splash/>

<a href="#">20120315-10</a>	10:05	Pam	Re: Furious: The Republican War on Women (reply to SteveG, above)
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Well, I don't know if "enjoy" is the word, but I'm glad you sent this. I read an article in the New Yorker today that talks about how the U.S. has the only long-term, surviving Presidential democracy in the world, and how dysfunctional it's become. The original idea, apparently, was to set up a system where there would be a balance of powers--we're all familiar with that--so as to discourage the formation of parties. We see how that worked out. Now we have zero-sum politics. If you win, I lose. The old-style liberal to moderate Republicans--like Nelson Rockefeller and George Romney--are no more. Everything is polarized, so no one can give an inch. Party leaders control Senate votes, and no one can budge. I think it's time we rethink both capitalism and our brand of democracy. I don't want to do away with either. I still think they are the best systems human beings have yet come up with, but they've both gone so far to their logical conclusions that, as with everything, too much of something becomes detrimental--be it vitamins, or sunshine, or the two-party system of governance. Barry Goldwater, who has a lot to answer for, said, "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice." Well, yes, it is. Of course, it all depends on what you mean by "extremism" and "liberty," and I daresay his definitions were different from mine. The Right seems to crank out catchy slogans left and right (so to speak). Liberals need to articulate their ideas in phrases that linger on everyone's lips. Nuance is for smart people who think things through. The American public is not big on nuance.

Atty is doing much better. He's now scooting around on his bottom, so he's liberated from the couch. It's also easier to pick him up. He doesn't cringe in pain anymore. He goes back tomorrow for another X-ray to monitor his progress. Hopefully, there will be some. He's such a sweetie. He's really a delightful little boy. It's fun to have conversations with him--about things like using the potty after his "boo boo leg" gets better and giving up his "mee mee" because big boys don't go around with a plastic plug in their mouths. He's a real love.

<a href="#">20120315-11</a>	22:41	SteveG	"Southern Miss Band Chants 'Where's Your Green Card?' to Puerto Rican Kansas State Player"
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Racism in Mississippi? No!

Geography knowledge? American history knowledge? Just plain stupid!!

["Southern Miss Band Chants 'Where's Your Green Card?' to Puerto Rican Kansas State Player" by Chris Chase, The Dagger Yahoo! Sports Blog](#)

Mar. 15, 2012, (<http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/ncaab-the-dagger/southern-miss-band-chants-where-green-card-puerto-205326741.html>)

Members of the University of Southern Mississippi band chanted racist taunts at a hispanic Kansas State player during the schools' NCAA tournament game on Thursday.

After point guard Angel Rodriguez was fouled late in the first half of the second-round game, a few band members showered the freshman with cries of "where's your green card?"

The chant and those who participated don't warrant any civilized dialogue. Both are an embarrassment to the university.

Southern Miss president Martha Saunders quickly apologized for the incident.

"We deeply regret the remarks made by a few students at today's game," she wrote in a statement issued two hours after the game. "The words of these individuals do not represent the sentiments of our pep band, athletic department or university. We apologize to Mr. Rodriguez (sic) and will take quick and appropriate disciplinary action against the students involved in this isolated incident."

Rodriguez was spelled incorrectly in the original draft.

As if things could get any more ignorant, the basis for the band's racism was itself misguided. Rodriguez was born in Puerto Rico, a commonwealth of the United States. Even if he hadn't grown up in Miami and starred for a high school basketball team in that city, he'd still be an American citizen and have no need for a green card. Ignorant ignorance; it's the best kind.

Rodriguez and K-State had the last laugh. The Wildcats defeated Southern Miss, 70-64.

<http://fatelfemme.buzznet.com/user/journal/>

Yep! That's What It Is, Alright!



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #97 — MAR. 19, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **Game Change: Women in Power**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 19, 2012)

Sometimes, there are things that need to be said. Three glimpses, now, that shed light on possible futures, when women hold sway in American politics, and one look at business as usual. Four comments in advance:

1. I love the sound and idea of a "zone of civility" in Congress.
2. I do not like Sarah Palin, not even one little bit!
3. Women clearly have: "The right to life. The right to privacy. The right to freedom. The right to bodily integrity. The right to decide when and how [they] reproduce."
4. Men traditionally often seem to prefer "holier than thou" and a "zone of exploitation".

And one more thing, we can't let a bunch of ignorant fools make us forget or lose our history. FIGHT THE LIES! FIGHT TO MAINTAIN THE PROGRESS WE MADE IN MORE THAN 100 YEARS AT THE COST OF MANY LIVES! Do not allow the Right to drag us back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century!

#### **1. "Mikulski Makes History While Creating 'Zone of Civility' for Senate Women" by Dana Bash, CNN**

Mar. 16, 2012, (<http://us.cnn.com/2012/03/16/politics/mikulski-history/index.html>)

(WASHINGTON) On the walls of Barbara Mikulski's Capitol hideaway are some of her most prized possessions -- portraits taken every two years of all the women in the Senate.

The first picture from 1988 is Mikulski, a Democrat, and one other female senator, Republican Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas.

"The hemline's a little different, the hair color," Mikulski mused, staring at the photograph. "That's when there were two."

The two forged a bond across party lines.

The most recent picture, taken last year, features 17 female senators -- five Republicans and 12 Democrats.

Mikulski remarks that there are more women in that photograph than had served in the Senate in all of American history when she arrived some three decades ago.

The Maryland senator knows a lot about the history of female lawmakers, and she should. She has made a lot of it herself: the first Democratic woman ever elected to the Senate in her own right; the first woman in the Senate Democratic leadership; and in late 2010 she became the longest-serving woman ever in the Senate.

On Saturday she will top that, becoming the longest-serving woman ever in the history of the U.S. Congress, surpassing Rep. Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts, who represented Massachusetts from 1925 to 1960.

To mark the milestone, she invited three other women senators who span parties and generations, to talk about what Senate women call their "zone of civility."

Democrat Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Republicans Olympia Snowe of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska joined Mikulski to sit at a table that came from her childhood home and explained how hard the women of the Senate work to maintain a lost dynamic in Congress these days: comity.

Ironically, it is a relic of the old boys network that doesn't really exist anymore in today's era of partisanship: Get to know each other personally, so they can work better together professionally.

Regular dinners across party lines

It starts with regular dinners organized by Mikulski, whom some call the "Dean," others call "Coach Barb."

"When the day's over, let's kick back and put our lipstick on and have a glass of wine, and keep the institution and America going," Mikulski said.

Though the dinners are strictly off the record, the senators spilled a few details.

"We talk about our families, our concerns in our lives. Sometimes we talk about what we are working on but it's a very collegial setting where we are trying to cultivate friendship first and foremost," said Gillibrand, who jokes they "rarely get nights off anyway, so that's our big night out."

Snowe, a moderate Republican who recently made a surprise announcement that she is retiring because she is fed up with the polarization in Congress, said, "We made the commitment to do it on a monthly basis, and to get together because it's critical, and we naturally bond, and we have an opportunity to let our hair down."

Murkowski said when her husband sees one of the Senate women dinners on the calendar, he knows it's non-negotiable.

"He doesn't say, 'My gosh, why are you at work so late tonight?' He knows that that is a time that I value because I derive so much from the conversation, from the camaraderie that we have in the hour and a half at the end of a very long day, so I make it a priority when the dinners are scheduled to be there and enjoy that conversation with friends," Murkowski said.

Mikulski notes that the Senate can be a "lonely place," so the dinners are a refuge with "no agenda, nothing to prove [except] finding common ground where we're going to talk about what we're going to work on in other committees or circumstances."

"I think it's a place that gives us energy, gives us a sense of our own community and we all really do know we can count on each other if something comes up we would be the first there," Mikulski said.

A bipartisan sisterhood

But does this bipartisan sisterhood translate into bipartisan legislative action?

Murkowski replied that just this past week she was able to work out differences in the highway bill with Barbara Boxer, the Democrat overseeing it, primarily because of their personal friendship.

Gillibrand recalled getting tremendous help from Snowe and Murkowski on the 9/11 first responders legislation.

"I remember when I was trying to so hard to pass the 9/11 health bill, both Lisa and Olympia were encouraging me. They said we're not going to be name sponsors in the bill for instance, but we believe in what you are doing, and I think that if you approach it a, b and c, you'll be more effective," Gillibrand remembered.

"I think we're just natural allies and we trust each other. It's almost instinctive," Snowe said, turning to Gillibrand, "I can remember the conversations that we had. She was eliciting ideas about how to advance the bill, and so we trust another to give solid advice and to take that advice."

"We are all a team as women. We may not agree on every issue but that's not the point," Snowe continued. "We know how to work together in the give and take of it and achieve results."

Murkowski offered another explanation for what makes Senate women different from the men: ego.

"I don't think that we have as much ego attached with who's getting the credit," said Murkowski, who noted that oftentimes with the men, it's "my way or the highway."

"We're all pretty competitive or we wouldn't have gotten here in the first place, but in order to achieve the results that we are looking for, I think there is less personal ego on the line," she said.

There is also another female trait that factors in here. They all say they instinctively know how to listen.

"I think it is how we communicate the message and how we listen to what is being communicated. And I think that the listening part of it is an important part of how we get the results," Murkowski said.

Four generally agree on women's issues

Though they differ on everything from taxes to energy policy, they generally agree on women's issues.

But Lisa Murkowski recently voted with fellow Republicans against free access to contraception. Women back home in Alaska got upset, and she said she regretted her vote.

Asked if any of her female colleagues went to her and urged her not to side with her party on this one, Murkowski made clear the answer was no.

"I wish that we had had that discussion, I can honestly tell you that," she said, and then ripped into the GOP on the issue.

"I think that my party is in an unfortunate place right now as viewed by many women in this country who are feeling very anxious about what they believe to be attacks on women's health," she said.

In a bitterly partisan era, Senate women cherish this cross-party sisterhood.

Columnist Margaret Carlson wrote recently in the Daily Beast that Senate men complain they no longer have time to forge such relationships. She joked that Senate women somehow do it, and it's certainly not like they get more time in the day from their extra X chromosome.

"If anything, these women have more demands upon them," said Mikulski, who notes Gillibrand has two young sons and Murkowski is the mother of teenagers.

"I had to make school lunch this morning," Gillibrand chimed in, laughing.

They talk surrounded by Mikulski's female-oriented memorabilia adorning her walls: a poster of Geraldine Ferraro, the first female vice presidential candidate; a photograph with Madeleine Albright before she was appointed the first female secretary of state; even a picture of the Girl Scouts.

Mikulski's female colleagues credit her with cultivating and maintaining these relationships, and say she starts by mentoring new Senate arrivals.

"I remember when I first got appointed, she was one of the first to ask me to visit her, gave me guidance on how things work, how to pass legislation," Gillibrand recalled.

After 12,858 days of service, that makes her the longest-serving woman in congressional history, it's abundantly clear that creating a collegial oasis for women inside the intensely partisan atmosphere is one of her proudest accomplishments.

"I won't always be here, but I hope the legacy of civility, that I've worked with the other women to create will remain," she said.

(CNN producers Laurie Ure and Ted Barrett contributed to this report.)

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## **2. "God's Will?": Sarah Palin's Secret Plot to Capture the White House in 2012" by Geoffrey Dunn, Huffington Post**

Mar. 16, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/geoffrey-dunn/sarah-palin-2012\\_b\\_1351763.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/geoffrey-dunn/sarah-palin-2012_b_1351763.html))

Anyone who has watched Sarah Palin closely in recent months can only marvel at the "magical thinking" she embraces with respect to the potential outcome of the Republican Party primary for president. It's clear that Palin still has her sights set on the White House for 2012.

In an interview with Sean Hannity in February, she declared:

[A] brokered convention, I wouldn't be afraid of that. The electorate shouldn't be afraid of that. That's a continuation of the process, and competition that perhaps would be, in the end, very good for our party, and good for the cause of defending our republic.

In her widely reported interview with CNN on Super Tuesday, she openly stated that she would consider accepting the nomination at a brokered GOP convention:

Anything is possible. I don't close any doors that perhaps would be open out there, so, no, I wouldn't close that door. My plan is to be at that convention.

It's a line she has uttered repeatedly ever since her ill-fated candidacy as John McCain's running mate in 2008. To most casual observers of the American political process, even Republicans, this would seem to border on the delusional. Her favorability rating among the general populace is now staggeringly low. In many circles, she is a laughingstock or a punch line. She didn't even bother to enter the primaries. Even Ann Coulter has now turned against her.

But a close look at Palin's recent activities and statements -- and, most significantly, the writings of her acolytes -- reveals that she is still plotting to take the White House in 2012. Take a look at the video she released last month on her website entitled "Chords of Memory," which links Palin's image with those of Lincoln and Reagan.

Palin has been consistent about four things since she announced her decision not to enter the Republican primaries last October:

1. She has strongly and vociferously attacked GOP frontrunner Mitt Romney.

2. She has embraced the idea of an endless primary season and has encouraged all four of the remaining candidates to stay in the race -- her sole purpose being the outcome of a brokered GOP convention in Tampa.
3. She has continued with her obsessive assault on Barack Obama, positioning herself as the "anti-Obama" among the conservative Republican base.
4. And, as noted above, she has made it clear now on several occasions that she is "open" to accepting the GOP nomination in Tampa.

At least one source close to the Palin family in Wasilla, Alaska, has confirmed that Palin "still believes it is God's will" that she serve as president, if not in 2012 then perhaps in 2016. Every move she has made in recent months -- every attack on Romney and Obama, every push for an elongated primary, every speculation about an open convention -- has been issued with this political calculation in mind.

In the aftermath of the devastating portrayal of Palin in HBO's *Game Change*, Palin's once-close political associate in Alaska, the good-government activist Andree McLeod, told me yesterday:

People can laugh all they want, but she ain't done. She's only developed a tougher skin through all 'this' and, out of desperation, has to inflict more damage for reasons only Sarah and her constantly-changing set of patrons knows. She has become even more dangerous and desperate.

Skeptics may argue that all of this is really Palin's feeble attempt to keep the spotlight on her and to boost her brand as a talking head on Fox News and as a highly paid celebrity speaker. Perhaps. But the lengthy interview she gave CNN on Election Day was no accident and her follow-up interviews since then on Fox News were certainly calculated as well. There's now even a Facebook page entitled "Palin -- Our Brokered Convention Selection."

Most significantly, the Palin-centric website Conservatives4Palin (C4P) -- with which Palin's inner-circle still maintains direct contact -- provides considerable evidence of Palin's political intentions and long-term national strategy.

Conservatives4Palin was co-founded by Rebecca Mansour, the controversial Palin sycophant who remains on Palin's SarahPAC payroll (as Aries Petra Consulting) but has apparently been sent to the Palin penalty box for comments she made last spring mocking Bristol Palin. The site, however, remains the primary Internet locale where Palin's acolytes openly push Palin's personal and political agenda. It is the site where Palin's Republican "enemies" -- everyone from Karl Rove to Romney and, now, even the likes of Coulter and Bill O'Reilly -- are repeatedly trashed or derided. Most importantly, C4P continues to represent an accurate reflection of the Palin political outlook in advance of the 2012 elections.

When Palin, for instance, went on Fox with Greta Van Susteren, and declared, "We need to replace Barack Obama with someone who understands... energy security," the minions at Conservatives4Palin made sure that everyone understood that the candidate Palin was actually referencing was -- ta da! -- none other than *Sarah Palin*.

But the most openly articulated playbook for Palin's presidential aspirations was submitted in late February by C4P contributor Nancy Labonete, entitled "In the Event of a Brokered Convention, All Bets are Off." It provides a fascinating glimpse into the Palin mindset and connects all the dots in Palin's seemingly zig-zag political strategy in advance of the 2012 election.

It begins with a hyperbolic argument that Palin is the only Republican capable of beating Obama:

If Sarah Palin's most electrifying speech at the CPAC did not convince that only she can articulate Americans' concerns and vision for our nation, then Obama has just been handed his second term. The CPAC event proved that only she can rouse the unexcited base to their feet. Only she can energize and move voters to go out to the polls. Only she can unite us to defeat Barack Obama.

Labonete's polemic continues by arguing that Palin is the only candidate who can withstand the "Alinsky attacks" during the election; Palin, she argues, is the lone Republican who has "the smarts to throw the media into a convulsive tizzy and still have her message ring out loudly and win the argument." Palin is the only candidate with "the fortitude and fire in the belly to defeat Obama." Only, only, only.

What's fascinating about the Labonete posting is that it does not focus merely on the hypothetical; it urges Palin supporters to become delegates to the GOP convention in Tampa and provides a link for doing so. "Even if Governor Palin is not a candidate (yet)," Labonete argues, "let your county GOP official know that you will vote for the best candidate at that time, but in the event of a brokered convention, you will be voting for Sarah Palin."

Labonete concludes, "*We must coalesce around a patriot whose message is ingrained in her conservative character.*"

This is precisely the type of right-wing groundswell and organizing that Palin is fostering with her recent rhetoric about "open doors" at Tampa. "Lots of prayers can make this happen," replied one commentator on the C4P blogsite. "*God is listening. Let's make sure He hears us.*"

In recent weeks, Palin has used the unflattering portrait of her in HBO's *Game Change* as a way to advance herself as a victim of the "liberal media" -- (C4P posted no fewer than 40 attacks on the film.) While *Game Change* has likely hurt her favorability with the general populace, it has raised the ante with her conservative Republican base, who now command a significant majority in the Republican party. Palin remains the base's superstar and is the only Republican -- Romney included -- who claims a rock-star status on the hustings.

Palin never could have survived the scrutiny of a prolonged primary season and the reality-television string of debates it encumbered. In a recent appearance on "Morning Joe," former McCain senior strategist Steve Schmidt was asked by Andrea Mitchell if he thought Palin had a "future" as "a national leader" in the Republican Party.

I hope not. And the reason I say that is because if you look at, over the last four years, all of the deficiencies in knowledge, all the deficiencies in preparedness, she's done not one thing to rectify them, to correct them. She has become a person who I think is filled with grievance, filled with anger who has a divisive message for the national stage when we need leaders in both parties to have a unifying message.... The lack of preparedness was a bad thing and the total disinterest in being more prepared and rectifying that is something that disqualifies.

But in the bubble of the Republican Convention, those deficiencies would never even come close to the surface. Even without the Palinista's organizing efforts, GOP delegates are most heavily weighted toward the conservative base -- and Palin remains their darling. She might very well capture the emotional narrative of the convention like Romney and Santorum could only imagine.

Moreover, the Republican establishment has lost control of both the party and the process in Tampa. Establishment leaders were not able to solidify Romney's nomination during the so-called "silent primary" in the year leading up to the Iowa caucuses; the establishment will have little control over the majority of delegates in Tampa. Palin remains a formidable force with the party base. On the campaign trail, Palin would draw crowds the likes of which have never been seen before by a Republican Party candidate for president.

As the film *Game Change* revealed to a broad American audience, Sarah Palin is many things: vain, anger-driven, intellectually lazy, polarizing and dysfunctional. But as I also discovered in researching my book *The Lies of Sarah Palin: The Untold Story Behind Her Relentless Quest for Power*, she is equally ambitious, calculating, and sly as a fox. She has no intention of going gently into that political goodnight.

Pay close attention: Palin's rhetoric between now and Tampa will continue to be critical of both Romney and Obama; it will continue to push for a contested primary; and it will continue to signal Palin's willingness to accept the nomination of a brokered convention. Palin knows that Romney will never pack her star power with the base -- and that neither Rick Santorum nor Newt Gingrich will either.

In the aftermath of Santorum's sweep of Alabama and Mississippi on Tuesday, a brokered GOP convention is a very real possibility. The Republican Party has become a fractured mosaic of fringe constituencies -- from Tea Partiers to evangelical anti-abortion activists, from libertarians who support Ron Paul to white supremacists who despise the fact that there is a black man in the White House. It is an unruly lot. The days of a GOP elite framing the presidential selection process are over. Charisma trumps experience; celebrity trumps substance; and, perhaps most disturbingly, anger trumps reason. Mama grizzlies, especially those who have been wounded, don't go down easy.

(Award-winning writer and filmmaker Geoffrey Dunn's best-selling *The Lies of Sarah Palin: The Untold Story Behind Her Relentless Quest for Power* was published by Macmillan/St. Martin's in May, 2011 and will be published in paperback this May.)

### **3. "10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts" by Soraya Chemaly, Huffington Post**

Mar. 15, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/soraya-chemaly/womens-reproductive-rights\\_b\\_1345214.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/soraya-chemaly/womens-reproductive-rights_b_1345214.html))

This week the Georgia State legislature debated a bill in the House, that would make it necessary for a woman to carry a stillborn baby until she 'naturally' goes into labor just as, according to Representative Terry England, pregnant cows and pigs do.

I have a question for Terry Edwards, Sam Brownback, Rick Santorum, Rick Perry and too many others: I have three daughters, two of them twins. If one of my twins had been stillborn would you have made me carry her to term, thereby endangering both the other twin and me? Or, would you have insisted that the state order a mandatory fetal extraction of the living twin fetus from my womb so that I could continue to carry the stillborn one to term and possibly die myself? My family is curious and since you believe my uterus is your public property, I am, too.

Mr. England, unlike the calves and pigs for which you expressed so much empathy, I am not a beast of burden. **I am a woman and I have these human rights:**

- The right to life.
- The right to privacy.
- The right to freedom.
- The right to bodily integrity.
- The right to decide when and how I reproduce.

Mr. England, you and your friends do not get to trade these rights, while "dog and hog hunting," in return for a young man's chickens.

My human rights outweigh any you or the state corruptly and cynically seek to assign to a mass of dividing cells that will eventually turn into a 'natural' person. Personhood-for-zygote based bills and related legislation, like Georgia's and hundreds of others, bills and laws that criminalize pregnancy and abortion and penalize women for being women, violate my human rights.

Just because you cannot get pregnant does not mean I cannot think clearly, ethically, morally, rationally about my body, human life or the consequences of my actions. Just because you cannot get pregnant does not mean that I do not have rights when I *am* pregnant. I have responsibility but am powerless. You have power but are irresponsible with my rights.

By not trusting me, you force me to trust you. **And YOU are not trustworthy.**

I gestate humans, you do not. I know how it feels to be pregnant. You do not. I know what happens to a fetus in a womb. You do not. I have carried three fetuses to term. You have not. What I experience when I am pregnant is not empathy. It is permeability. The fetus is me. And the state is you, apparently. But, no matter what you say or do I have fundamental human rights. What makes you think that you, who cannot have this fully human

experience, can tell me anything about gestation or how I experience it? **Especially when you compare my existence and experience to that of brutish animals.**

The rest of the civilized world thinks this country has lost its mind. It's no wonder. Look at this list of frenzied misogyny:

**1. Making women carry still-born fetuses to full term because cows and pigs do.** This week, Mr. Edwards, you supported a bill requiring just this, because of just that. It has passed the House in Georgia and might very well pass the Senate. Women are different from farm animals, Mr. England, and this bill, requiring a woman to carry a dead or dying fetus, with no possibility of abortion, even when the she is in danger of dying, is inhumane and unethical. By forcing a woman to do this, you are violating her right not to be subjected to inhuman treatment and tortured. And, yes, involuntarily carrying a dead fetus to term, although not torture to you or to a pig, is torture for a woman. It is also a violation of her bodily integrity and a threat to her life and as such violates her right to life.

**2. Consigning women to death to save a fetus.** Abortions save women's lives. "Let women die" bills are happening all over the country. There is no simple or pretty way to put this. Every day, all over the world, women die because they do not have access to safe abortions. Yet, here we are, returning to the dark ages of maternal sacrifice. Do really have to type this sentence: this is a violation of women's fundamental right to life.

**3. Criminalizing pregnancy and miscarriages and arresting, imprisoning and charging women** who miscarry with murder, like Rennie Gibbs in Mississippi or at least 40 other similar cases in Alabama or like Bei Bei Shuai, a mentally ill person, who is currently imprisoned and charged with murder after trying to commit suicide while pregnant. Pregnant women are becoming a special class subject to "special" laws that infringe on their fundamental rights.

**4. Forcing women to undergo involuntary vaginal penetration (otherwise called rape)** with a condom-covered, six- to eight-inch ultrasound probe. Pennsylvania is currently considering that option along with eleven other states. Trans-vaginal ultrasounds undertaken with out a woman's consent are rape according the legal definition of the word. This violates a woman's bodily integrity and also constitutes torture when used, as states are suggesting, as a form of control and oppression. Women have the right not to be raped by the state.

**5. Disabling women or sacrificing their lives** by either withholding medical treatment or forcing women to undergo involuntary medical procedures. We impose an unequal obligation on women to sacrifice their bodily integrity for another. For example, as in *Tysiac v. Poland*, in which a mother of two, became blind after her doctor refused to perform an abortion that she wanted that would have halted the course of a degenerative eye disease. If my newborn baby is in need of a kidney and you have a spare matching one, can I enact legislation that says the state can take yours and give it to her? No. We do not force people to donate their organs to benefit others, even those who have already been born. One of the most fundamental of all human rights is that humans be treated equally before the law. Denying a woman this right is a violation of her equal right to this protection.

**6. Giving zygotes "personhood" rights while systematically stripping women of their fundamental rights.** There is too much to say about the danger of personhood ideas creeping into health policy to do it here. But, consider what happens to a woman whose womb is not considered the "best" environment for a gestating fetus in a world of personhood-for-zygote legislation: who decides the best environment -- the state, her insurance company, her employer, her rapist who decides he really, really wants to be a father? Anyone but a woman.

**7. Inhibiting, humiliating and punishing women for their choices to have an abortion for any reason** by levying taxes specifically on abortion, including abortions sought by rape victims to end their involuntary insemination, imposing restrictive requirements like 24 hour wait periods and empowering doctors to lie to female patients about their fetuses in order to avoid prosecution. In Arizona, Kansas, Texas,

Virginia, Colorado, Arkansas and other states around the country bills that make women "pay" for their choices are abounding.

**8. Allowing employers to delve women's private lives and only pay for insurance when they agree, for religious reasons, with how she chooses to use birth control.** In Arizona, which introduced such a bill this week, this means covering payment for birth control as a benefit only when a woman has proven that she will not use it to control her own reproduction (i.e., as birth control). As much as I am worried about women and families in Arizona though, I am more worried about those in Alabama. You see, as recently revealed in a public policy poll in Alabama, conservative, evangelicals who support "personhood" related "pro-life" legislation and are fighting for their "religious liberty" -- 21 percent think interracial marriage should be illegal. So, what if they decide that an employee involved in an interracial marriage should not, by divine mandate, reproduce? Do they switch and provide birth control for this employee? Do they make contraception a necessary term of employment for people in interracial marriages? This violates a woman's right to privacy. My womb is one million times more private than your bedrooms, gentlemen.

**9. Sacrificing women's overall health** and the well-being of their families in order to stop them from exercising their fundamental human right to control their own bodies and reproduction. Texas just did that when it turned down \$35million dollars in federal funds thereby ensuring that 300,000 low-income and uninsured Texas women will have no or greatly-reduced access to basic preventive and reproductive health care.

**10. Depriving women of their ability to earn a living and support themselves and their families.** Bills, like this one in Arizona, allow employers to fire women for using contraception. Women like these are being fired for not.

You presume to consign my daughters and yours to function as reproductive animals.

**This is about sex and property, not life and morality.** Sex because when women have sex and want to control their reproduction that threatens powerful social structures that rely on patriarchal access to and control over women as reproductive engines. Which brings us to property: control of reproduction was vital when the agricultural revolution took place and we, as a species, stopped meandering around plains in search of food. Reproduction and control of it ensured that a man could possess and consolidate wealth-building and food-producing land and then make sure it wasn't disaggregated by passing it on to one son he knew was his -- largely by claiming a woman and her gestation capability as property, too.

**This is not about freedom of religion.** If it were, we would, for example, allow Christian Scientists to refuse to pay for coverage of life-saving blood transfusions for employees. Religious freedom means I get to chose whether or not to be religious and if so, how. It does not mean that I get to impose my religion on others. Paying for insurance is part of the way we compensate employees, even when they use their insurance in ways we don't agree with and are in contravention of our own personal beliefs. I think that it is stupid, dangerous and immoral to chain smoke, especially around children whose lungs it irreparably harms. But, I still have to pay for an employee to have access to lung scans, nicotine patches and oxygen tanks. I do not get to say that my religious beliefs, which include keeping bodies as healthy as possible, make it possible for me to withhold payment of this employee's insurance. Guaranteed coverage of contraception and reproductive health care has overwhelming benefits for society, including reducing unwanted pregnancies and abortions. By inserting your religious beliefs so egregiously into government legislation and my life, you are imposing your religious beliefs on me. You don't like mandated insurance coverage for basic reproductive health humans with two X chromosomes? I don't like being bred by state compulsion like Mr. England's farm animals. **I have a MORAL OBJECTION to being treated like an animal and not a human.** You do not have to use contraception, you do not have to use birth control. **But, that does not mean you have any right to tell me that I cannot if I chose. That is my right.**

Property, control, sex, reproduction, morality, defining what is human. Sounds a lot like issues surrounding slavery 170 years ago. It is no surprise that of the 16 states that never repealed their anti-miscegenation laws, but rather had them overturned by the Supreme Court in 1967 more than half have introduced personhood bills. Like anti-miscegenation laws, anti-choice laws and bills that humiliate women, that treat them like beasts, that violate their

bodily autonomy, are based on ignorance, entitlement and arrogance. These laws are not about "personhood" but "humanity." That women of color are massively, disproportionately affected by these assaults on their bodies and rights should also come as no surprise - their rights and their bodies have always been the most vulnerable assault.

This is about keeping women's wombs public and in other people's control -- the exact opposite of private and in their own control.

And, yes, I do know how complicated the ethics, bioethics and legal arguments related to these decisions are. You, apparently, do not. If you were truly concerned with sustaining life and improving its quality or in protecting innocent children, you would begin by having compassion and empathy for living, born people that require and deserve your attention. You feed them, educate them, lift them from poverty and misery. You do not compound these problems as you are with twisted interpretations of divine will. Only after that do you have the moral legitimacy to entertain the notion of talking to me about *my* uterus and what I do with it. By then, fully functional artificial wombs should be available and you can implant your own, since you are so fond of animal analogies, as was completed with this male mouse. What you are doing is disgraceful, hypocritical and morally corrupt.

And, no, I am not crazy. I am angry.

Mr. Santorum, Mr. England and Mr. Brownback and Mr. Perry you should consider not clinging so dangerously and perversely to the Agrarian Revolution ideas. Birth control and safe abortions are life-saving technologies. These archaic bills and laws, wasteful of time, money and lives, obscure an enduring and unchangeable truth: **safe and effective family planning is the transformative social justice accomplishment of the 20th century.** They will not go away. This is a revolution, too.

In a 1851 speech in which she argued for equal rights for women, Sojourner Truth said the following: "The poor men seems to be all in confusion, and don't know what to do. Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they won't be so much trouble."

Do you, Terry England, Sam Brownback, Rick Santorum and friends even *know* who Sojourner Truth is?

[She said this, "**Religion without humanity is very poor human stuff.**" —Sojourner Truth. —SteveB]

#### **4. "Did Robert Downey Jr. Really Just Accuse Kirk Douglas of a Brutal Rape?" by Ryan Tate, Gawker**

Mar. 15, 2012, (<http://gawker.com/5893793/did-robert-downey-jr-really-just-accuse-kirk-douglas-of-a-brutal-rape>)

Deep in the weeds of show business blogging, in the comments under a blind gossip item, the actor Robert Downey Jr. may have just laid a venomous bite on Kirk Douglas, accusing the legendary actor of raping actress Natalie Wood.

Either that or hundreds of people have just been conned by a massive fraud who wants us to believe famous screen stars obsess over anonymous blog comments (as, in fairness, some have been known to do). The purported Downey commenter did provide the correct home phone number of Wood's daughter as evidence of his own authenticity, for whatever that's worth.

Here's how things unfolded: Over on the Hollywood blog Crazy Days and Nights, mysterious longtime commenter "Himmmm" today posted repeatedly under a blind item about a longtime actor who slept with an underage teenager, abused women, and pressured them into getting abortions. Himmmm, who online gossipers recently decided was Downey Jr, claimed actor Ryan O'Neal was the one who did those things, and went on to out another purported woman abusing scumbag, claiming Kirk Douglas repeatedly raped actress Natalie Wood in a hotel room decades ago, then laughed at and mocked her.

Rumors about Douglas raping Wood have been around for years , but Himmmm's cred within the blog as a Hollywood insider , the level of detail in his story, and his insinuation that he is Downey Jr. all lent his claim a certain standing, at least on the site.

Himmm started with O'Neal, lamenting "the HELL he's caused me and so many other" (O'Neal and Downey Jr. co-starred in a 1989 movie) and claiming O'Neal had managed "to piss off Steven Spielberg, Aaron Spelling, Tippi Hedren, Brian DePalma, Robert Evans, Charlie Bludhorn, Lew Wasserman, and about 90% of the then-powerful William Morris Agency."

Himmm's initial comment was well received by other commenters. As his stuff usually is: Not only does Himmm often seem to have inside details, he has insinuated in the past that his account is shared between a "movie star," "rock star" and two "true creative geniuses."

Today he was clearly in movie star mode. After lashing O'Neal, Himmm promised "later on I'm going to share with all of you a story (or two) I promise will make your heads explode."

### The Kirk Douglas rape accusation

He delivered, laying out three long postings in page three of the comments (part 1, part 2, part 3.) This was the purported Kirk Douglas-Natalie Wood story. It begins with an introduction describing how Wood, wanting edgier roles as a rebellious teenager, had a consensual affair with a married, older director to win a part. Other actors then thought she would sleep with anyone for a part. One such actor, Douglas, allegedly went well beyond trying to barter for sex:

[This story] concerns one of the biggest male stars ever, and one of the most beloved female stars to ever live...

One day she was invited to meet with this movie star about an upcoming major role. This man was a legend already, and was very powerful. ... Thinking [s]he herself was powerful and savvy, she accepted the invite. In his hotel room. She never saw it coming.

Without even discussing the film, this actor — drunk already — began making a pass at her. She politely declined, and excused herself. He wouldn't have it. He literally threw her down, slapped the hell out of her, and ripped her clothes off. He shouted obscenities at her, continually punched and held her arms so tight he left scars and bruises.

He raped her repeatedly, spitting on her, and did permanent damage to her body. She was bleeding everywhere, with a battered face. She passed out. When she came to, the actor was still in the room gloating, and told her to come see him tomorrow night and he might give her the role. He laughed at her as she fell down, her legs so wobbly and weak. She gathered her torn clothes, and tried to walk out of the hotel and to her car - blood and semen running down her legs and bruises already forming on her face.

She could barely make it back home in her car. She wanted to kill herself, so ashamed of what happened. The damage to her psyche was permanent, and haunted her forever.

...Her mom said she must have made the actor mad and offended him. They called a doctor, who took her to the hospital secretly to have her treated... The studio knew, and did nothing. After all, the star actor was a money machine. ... She grew into an amazing woman with a legendary career. But she never forgot, or forgave, and never got over what happened.

She never named the star actor publicly, but her friends and family knew the truth. Even after marriage and kids, if she saw this actor anywhere - she would almost convulse and cry. And worst of all, Hollywood and the world continued to honor him, pay him, and treat him like a king.

Himmm went on to name the actor in question:

Today, he's still alive and barely holding on. But those who know the truth are still hoping and praying he will rot in hell for eternity. That all his good deeds and donations will never mask the truth...

So when the time comes, and the now 95-year-old Kirk Douglas, the superstar actor, finally dies, there will be tributes and honors about him. Just remember that he is a monster who never repented, apologized, nor showed any sorrow for destroying the lives of others. Especially the life of that young beloved actress named Natalie Wood.

#### Accuser claims to be Robert Downey Jr. (basically)

Our sister site Jezebel this week speculated and relayed the speculation of others that Himmmm might be Downey Jr. In these new postings, he seemed to confirm this, inasmuch as an anonymous blog commenter can confirm anything, giving clues that amount to an outright claim he is Downey Jr.. These included Wood's daughter's home phone number.

This is the money paragraph where Himmmm attempts to out himself as Downey Jr. (from part 2):

I worked with Natalie's daughter on a film in the late 90s. Like her mother, Natasha is an amazing woman and amazing actress who is a great person in every way.

I know a lot of you have speculated that I'm some nobody nut-case pretending to be someone else. Pretending to be a movie star when in fact I'm not. I think that's kind of hilarious. But if you want to call Natasha and ask her the name of the male actor she co-starred with in a movie with Heather Graham, then go for it. Call her at home if you want to but be polite. Her number is: ac 310 Four [last six digits redacted]. And remember, she's NOT in on this so don't blame or interrogate her.

The movie Himmmm mentions is almost certainly *Two Girls and a Guy*, the only 1990s film by Wood's daughter Natsha Gregson Wagner in which the actress co-starred with Heather Graham. The film's other co-star was Downey Jr. Recall how Himmmm claimed Wood's "friends and family knew the truth" about the rape. So the idea is Wagner knew about the attack on her mom and grew close enough to Downey Jr. after working with him to vent about it.

The number Himmmm provided for Gregson Wagner does, in fact, belong to a person in Malibu matching her name and age, according to a public records database. (The person with Wagner's name and age who owns that number and a related cell phone number did not return calls to both numbers seeking comment.)

Of course, the number also appears in a few stray internet white pages searches under the name "Natasha Wagner."

Which is to say, this could all be some sort of elaborate hoax by someone with an axe to grind, a knack for sounding authoritative about Hollywood, and way too much time on his hands. Someone who wants us to believe, as Himmmm put it, that "you'd be surprised how many actors, filmmakers, and musicians read this blog. Some even comment." And someone smart enough to pin his impulsive, reckless, obsessive comments on an impulsive, reckless, obsessive actor like Downey Jr.

Either way, the Crazy Days and Nights crowd is going bananas. Not only did we receive two different tips about this within one hour of Himmmm's comment going up, the comments' associated thread has grown to 827 postings, from around 600 when Himmmm first posted his Douglas allegations, and less than 200 when he posted his comments on O'Neal.

Most of the comments about Himmmm's Douglas allegation are supportive, along the lines of this one, which read in part, "To Himmmm... you rock dude. SO SO SO SO SO much utter respect for you and your cojones to say what you've said." Or this one, reading, "All I can say is a big THANK YOU ... I can only speculate on your identity, but if you are who most people think you are, I am happy that you have chosen to be one of us here at this site.

Others were more skeptical, like this one, which read, "The Kirk Douglas/Natalie Wood story is well known. It's described in multiple biographies of Natalie Wood, without naming the actor, but it's not a secret. Let's not pretend that Himmmm just revealed something spectacular."

Whether "Himmm just revealed something spectacular" depends, in the end, on whether he really is Downey Jr., and whether he really did get his information, as he implies but never quite says, from Natalie Wood's daughter after co-starring with her in a movie 15 years ago. For all the hubub, it seems unlikely a star - even Robert Downey Jr. - would make accusations this recklessly after having his real name associated with his anonymous handle. Himmm concluded his allegations by signing off from Crazy Days and Nights forever, but, ludicrous as it may seem, something tells us the real-life Downey Jr. is going to have to answer questions about these comments with more than an internet kiss off.

Update: Himmm's comments about Douglas specifically were "removed by the author" within an hour and a half of this post going up.

20120316-01	08:05	SteveB	"Andrew Breitbart: Big Deal, Big Coronary, Big Corpse"
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The truth about Andrew Breitbart, R.I.P....

"Andrew Breitbart: Big Deal, Big Coronary, Big Corpse" by Mobutu & Gen. Ze'Evi, Gawker

Mar. 6, 2012, (<http://gawker.com/5890660/andrew-breitbart-big-deal-big-coronary-big-corpse?tag=america.s-screaming-conscience>)

Provocateur, website founder and collector of America's largest wads of spittle Andrew Breitbart died last Thursday morning, when some sentient shred of his cardiac organ kamikazed out of an exhausted sense of justice.

The invertebrate response from journalists was exactly to be expected. Breitbart said, like, *bad stuff* in his lifetime, but he also married someone and fathered people; once he even objected to anti-gay GOP rhetoric. A malicious career and two milquetoast mitigating facts: It all balanced out, really, at least for the purposes of forced, quailing objectivity. To borrow a gross analogy lustily employed on Breitbart's own websites, if today's mainstream media was penning obits on May 1, 1945, they would have summed up with, "Despite initiating the Second World War, the German leader was fond of public architecture and is survived by his beloved dachshunds."

But nothing so generic could be the money quote of this squeamish grudging esteem-a-thon. For that, we have to go to *Slate's* Dave Weigel, who quoted Breitbart thus: "'Feeding the media is like training a dog,' he wrote. 'You can't throw an entire steak at a dog to train it to sit. You have to give it little bits of steak over and over again until it learns.'" This is just the carrot part of the metaphor. Nobody mentioned the stick.

Breitbart knew the shtick all too well: Accuse journalists of contrived groupthink, partisan deception and indoctrination to needle them professionally, while transmitting that rote accusation to your audience. Insult and demonize them on any available level until they strike back like cornered animals, and—suddenly—there's America's proof: these liberal journo thugs want to silence an honest voice, and, golly, are they ever mad when they try to.

Breitbart trained the media like dogs, and he was still doing so, on Thursday morning, from beyond the grave. People joked that they didn't know if his death was a hoax, and it's a certainty that some asked because they were afraid of telling the truth about someone by then literally incapable of hurting them. It was like watching a sick rerun of a Stalinist apparatchik sitcom, where one functionary was unwilling to believe another that The Leader is really dead, each presuming the announcement might be a trap.

If you beat a dog long enough, it learns to cower before you reach for a switch.

The anemic response wasn't all wariness. Numerous journalists, even ones on the other side of the ideological fence, were quick to note that Breitbart was generous and warm in private. But Breitbart also destroyed a woman's career in public. He destroyed an institution that helps poor minorities in public. He called Occupiers rapists in public. He screamed at strangers and loved to talk about kicking their a\*s'es in public. Outside of books written by

the Aqua Net-shellacked c-minus *Sturmabteilung* of FOX News, his stamp on history in 20 years will be a Coughlin-esque paragraph about race-baiting and fraud.

Besides, those latter anecdotes won't ever have much traction for anyone but beltway raconteurs. The middle-class-and-sinking Tea Party that Breitbart claimed to speak for has little idea who he was sucking scallops with in Georgetown and would likely deny that he did it. Even if they could be persuaded that it happened, it would take the same role as his CPAC story of dining with Weather Underground wash-up Bill Ayers, a tale that elicited a concerned hush when he began it but soon resulted in smug smirking from the clone audience: "Ahahaha, I get it. He ate their good food, but he was trolling them and gathering intel for the coming mission to Galt's Gulch/RAHOWA/etc.!"

But this cynical gadfly behavior presents no aberrancy. What his biggest fans have never confronted, and what the obits omitted, perhaps out of embarrassment, is that Andrew Breitbart was always a creature of the left, accepted by the establishment, nurtured by the American elite. They made him from cradle to grave. He was banal troll indistinguishable from any gin-blossomed paunch of resentment occupying a neighboring barstool and nursing his own sense of denied grandeur—save for the glorious intervention of two cultures he so loudly claimed to hate: The Hollywood madding crowd and, later, the Beltway water cooler.

### The Sorrows of Young Breitbart

If, as the Dean from *Animal House* said, "fat, drunk, and stupid is no way to go through life," Breitbart's is an inspiring story of persistence in spite of the odds.

Andrew James Breitbart was born to hippie parents in the middle of the last American century's prosperous liberal period, then adopted by upper-middle-class restaurateurs in one of the nicer neighborhoods in our nation's blue states. Breitbart, aware that "scion to a Santa Monica steakhouse" does not a man of the people make, attempted to downplay his family's success, allowing only that "My parents granted me a brilliant middle-class life, one that didn't overwhelm and lavish spoils on me to the point of absurdity." Like a great many of the personal-responsibility sh\*tkickers of the right wing's social-Darwinian moshpit, he didn't have to do much bootstrapping to go from a zygote, to Brentwood, to a place like Tulane, where people can drink a lot of beer and wake up seven years later as attorneys.

So far, Breitbart's story lacks an essential tragedy, the sense of loss that conservatism mourns. Horatio Alger never wrote the story of a well-heeled Californian nearly failing out of his American Studies program because he tried to drink the Southern Comfort equivalent of Lake Ponchartrain. And so like Rick Santorum, who transformed the dull meathead reality of his Penn State days into an epic, dark struggle against the oppressive forces of cultural studies, Tulane provided Breitbart a key thing: An excuse to break from the vague liberalism of his youth. His later accounts of the fateful moment of realization varied; historians will determine whether it was indeed during a concert by The Cure at the Hollywood Bowl, or while watching the public grilling on C-SPAN of a "dignified" Clarence Thomas, America's pube-bequeather.

What is beyond question is the critical role his Tulane professors played in crafting "Breitbart: Bubba Avenger." Their attempts at "brainwashing" had, instead, created a fighter. Repudiating liberal indoctrination by failing to meet even the shabby standards of the apparently predictable and sclerotic left is a familiar hero's journey for the right. Breitbart slouched, eked out a pathetic GPA as an *American Studies major*, then tried to exonerate his failure via a baseless indictment of "Marxist" scholarship: He didn't fare poorly because of innate failures but because he rejected the school's terms. ("Dude, I woulda done waaay better on the SATs, but I took 'em drunk, because f\*ck that.")

It's a familiar conservative refrain, and a familiar origin story, because nothing propels you toward the modern GOP's welcoming counterfactual bosom like finding your mediocrity disdained by institutions relying on historicity, evidence and peer review. Conservatives know why conservatives test badly: The tests are rigged commie bullsh\*t. Conservatives know how conservatives are smart: They agree with other conservatives. There's even a publishing structure for this.

### He Is Heavy, He's My Brother: Drudging His Way To The Top

From Tulane, Breitbart took the well-worn route of many a conservative before him: To Hollywood, where he took a job with E! Entertainment Television, helping to develop their online presence. But as vital as were Breitbart's efforts in writing synopses for last week's episode of *Party of Five*, he was still destined for bigger and better things.

The 1990s were a very special time for conservatives. Due in no small part to Breitbart's efforts, during the Clinton years, the right wing merry-go-round broke the sound barrier. Breitbart made friends fast, introducing himself in 1995 to bilgewater Beltway rainmaker Matt Drudge, for whom he came to work as assistant and night editor. In 1997 he began working as a researcher for union-busting gadfly Arianna Huffington; it was Breitbart who helped break the story of chickenhawk Clinton donor Larry Lawrence's improper burial in Arlington. Nevertheless, as late as 2007, Breitbart remained relatively unknown-his own independent website functioning as little more than a Drudge clone, a drab link aggregator. It took the rise of Obama for Breitbart to spread his wings and fly.

### The Bully Pulpit

ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, was a community-based nonprofit founded in 1970 devoted to issues of poverty, housing, wages, voter registration, education, labor and social justice. Very active against predatory lending, ACORN consistently delivered a commodity liberal groups generally eschew: victory.

But in 2009, "whey-faced little sh\*t" James O'Keefe and Florida dumbbelle dropout Hannah Giles went around the country to ACORN offices, playing dress-up, and talking with low-level representatives about their plans for illegal behavior, mostly relating to prostitution and sex trafficking. The videos, released on Breitbart's new website, *Big Government*, were heavily edited, and O'Keefe never appeared on camera, raising questions as to the veracity of Breitbart's claim that ACORN was facilitating crime in poor communities.

O'Keefe further fostered the idea that he was dressed as a fanciful, 1970s-era pimp in the meetings, appearing on cable news in the get-up and playacting as Iceberg Slime. This was a lie, confirmed several times by Giles herself, but elided by Breitbart as he pushed his dittohead rendition of *Harlan County USA*. His article was definitively debunked on factual grounds several times over.

But when it was all over, ACORN was bankrupted, targeted by Congress, roasted by the talking heads. A good organization was taken under by a massive series of lies given life by a media that, rather than interrogate the obviously baseless accusations made against them, uncritically accepted them.

It was the first major hit in Breitbart's short but brutal career, and the media's reaction was pure delight. The right-wing blogosphere and FOX News unsurprisingly went balls-to-the-wall about the perfidious black slavers at ACORN. But if Breitbart's most-consuming hatred was that of the irredeemably corrupt, exclusionary media, the reaction to his ACORN muckraking presented a quandary: The drive-by media ate it up. As the story brewed and steamed in the echo chamber, Politico's Mike Allen, a Drudge-baiter afforded remarkable influence among the DC villagers, whined that ACORN's purported crimes weren't being covered *enough* in the media. As it became a bigger and bigger story, media outlets were accused of bias for not covering it. And so it was that no less a "liberal" media titan like the *New York Times* itself laughed alongside Breitbart several times over. Upon pushback, the *Times* refused to retract their incredibly flawed reportage, even though a series of successive investigations had found ACORN a largely innocent party to a malicious, fabricated hoax.

The fact was, there was no "there" there, as the *New Yorker* documented:

The hidden-camera footage, which Breitbart has called "the Abu Ghraib of the Great Society," did not expose endemic corruption at Acorn: though O'Keefe and Giles induced employees to coöperate with an appalling scenario, they did not dig up evidence of any actual wrongdoing by those employees.

In anything other than a thoroughly besh\*tted republic, Breitbart's shamelessly pimping a false exposé like this would have seen him broken on a rack. That same magical land of justice and proper incredulity would at least have addressed itself to the quality of investigation brought by an accuser, rather than running like pageload mercenaries and buzz merchants to update their sites' banner headlines. Instead, Breitbart's allegedly sworn

enemies did his work for him. They weren't his antagonists: They were his accomplices. When Andrew Breitbart mounted the head of a community organization onto his wall, it was the liberal media that had hoisted it into place.

### Mr. Breitbart's America

Breitbart is another sign of American decline. He's what happens when even the ratf\*ckers have lost all subtlety to their art. When the far-right is bad at dirty tricks, and can't even frame up some black activists without a messy, drawn-out pushback, it's time to fear for the state of the union, because their every success is indication that they've had help. Donald Segretti and G. Gordon Liddy plotted to kill Jack Anderson and firebomb the Brookings Institute. Breitbart's "Little Rascals" targeted mid-level black female USDA officials and got arrested playing "Plumbers" in Mary Landrieu's office. Nixon couldn't have used these punks as anything but Cambodian cannon fodder.

It was not any remarkable skills on Breitbart's part that got him where we was, beyond a certain animal cunning about the currents of new media. And for all his whining about the corrupt, decadent, "Democrat Media," it was those same outlets that made him. For all the posthumous tributes to his "fearlessness," it remains unclear what exactly he needed to fear. He was accepted! As labor journalist Mike Elk recalled, having crashed a fancy DC cocktail party, he was shocked to find Breitbart "chatting up some black woman, making her laugh, and I was in a state of shock. Here was this man who had done so much to flame racial hatred, hitting on a black woman... hanging out with fancy liberals instead of poor, redneck Tea Party guys." How was Breitbart able to inflict a critical hit on ACORN? A truly subversive journalist diagnosed the means years ago: "It was the built-in blind spots of the Objective rules and dogma that allowed Nixon to slither into the White House in the first place." Breitbart snorted out those blind spots like a truffle pig.

The Beltway Village is a dull place, full of boring people. Breitbart stood out, and in an elite culture that worships savvy and confidence, he was destined for stardom. Sure, he'd play rabblouser to the Tea Party cheap seats, but he always remained insecure enough to drop terms like "the Frankfurt School" or "cultural Marxism." He wanted to be taken seriously by those liberals, a weakness that might have been endearing, were his unregenerate viciousness not routinely employed in racist whistleblowing and character assassination.

An Atlantic article published in the wake of his wake commemorated him as a "punk rock Republican." Please—George Wallace was more punk than Breitbart. He wore his execrable racism pinned through his nostril, a DIY fascist scaring all the straights in America, hissing tribal exhortations as low and fast as a two minute Black Flag song. Breitbart craved that liberal respect, wanted to still go to the White House Correspondents' Dinner, and so angrily denied the obvious truth: That he relied on the dog whistle as his go-to mobilizing cry. Such race-baiting constituted some of Breitbart's last writings, alleging Obama marched with the Black Panthers in 2007, with black militants constituting the driving force behind an Obama Administration settlement with black farmers for decades of financial deprivation. Nope, no racial tropes here.

Breitbart, like that acid-filled tear duct Glen Beck, knew that the blatant, unconcealed racism of Wallace was now beyond the pale, and both devoted themselves to the same project—appropriating the mantle of "civil rights" for white conservatives, and labeling blacks, Muslims and liberals as the bigots and aggressors. And in spite of his professed hatred for the media, it was the mainstream's myopic acceptance of buzz that allowed such McCarthyite fairy tales to gain traction. So it was with ACORN, and its black staffers: A race-baiting frame job receives mainstream suction and puts a tough-minded advocate of social justice into Chapter 11. And USDA official Shirley Sherrod, whose speech to the NAACP about overcoming bias and helping indigent white farmers save their livelihoods was twisted into "video evidence of racism coming from a federal appointee and NAACP award recipient." The accusation was obviously false, but the NAACP, the Department of Agriculture and the Obama White House all threw her under the bus. Sherrod lost her job, and was well on her way to winning a defamation lawsuit against Breitbart before he croaked.

There are more crimes—his incoherent defense of Tea Partiers caught shouting "nigger" at civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis and "faggot" at Rep. Barney Frank, his repeated assaults on working people and labor unions, his final appearance at CPAC 2012, which the thoroughly sh\*tfaced bullfrog concluded with the pre-coronary warm-up of hollering at the "rapists" of Occupy Wall Street.

Hell, for all his machismo, he was a cold sweating skink when trapped in a corner. Blogger Mike Stark bent Breitbart into a stuttering wreck over the ACORN vids, leaving the clam belly to sputter that he couldn't "legally" discuss his starmaking moment, like some mob snitch bombing on the stand. Even a milquetoast like George Stephanopoulos shamed him on air like a tongue-tied toddler over the Sherrod story. His crew of flunkies is a menagerie of some of the most hideous political detritus collected around a political figure since the Gaddafi family fled into the four winds.

### Inherit the Windbag

Who will be heir to Breitbart's proud legacy? James O'Keefe is by now an oft-arrested Alfalfa lookalike who still lives with his parents, was brutally humiliated at Columbia University *in the middle of his own ambush*, and was most recently accused of drugging and sexually harassing a female blogger. One wonders if Andy ever yelled "stop raping people" at him. Ex-*Saturday Night Live* star Victoria Jackson has shown an impressive capacity for producing music that even the most die-hard Bircher might find cause for involuntary detention in a state-funded facility. The two leading lights of the anti-Muslim movement, Robert Spencer and Pamela Geller, can only improve upon their records of inspiring mass murder in Scandinavia. Then there's *Big Journalism* editor-in-chief Dana Loesch, reliable dispenser of Nazi analogies and state-mandated rape apologetics, who got punked by Roland Martin on the confrontation-allergic CNN and whose husband is accomplished at rapping a word that sounds like "n\*gger."

Regardless, whoever replaces him will work with the same gamed system that made him. Breitbart rode to prominence on the toadying of a media wary of being called liberal and petrified by conservative outrage. It was his winning formula: Keep beating the dogs until they start preemptively terrorizing themselves. Like any good bully, Breitbart picked his targets well, exploiting the existing insecurities of an institution that could be beaten further to the right by its own complaisance. After a decade of keeping his foot on the throats of fellow journalists, it never occurred to them to kick his bloated wineskin around the Beltway the moment they learned he'd died. Instead, they warily asked one another, "Is it for real? Is he really dead? Can the creature come back? *Can he hear us talking about him?*"

There's a more generous interpretation, one echoed by a lot of comments made in hasty obituaries, that a wife has been widowed and four children left fatherless. And perhaps for some that's enough reason to whitewash a career richly studded with racism, hatred, and contempt. Perhaps that's enough to turn honest evaluations of a life riven with opportunistic malice into mealy-mouthed encomia about "a provocateur" and a "punk rock journalist."

Of course, nobody was asking fretful hand-wringing questions about children when it was time to throw a sop to conservatives and pillory ACORN and Shirley Sherrod. Nobody asked how many children had been given a better life for having their parents rescued from predatory lending. Nobody asked how many children's lives were improved by the good offices of Shirley Sherrod. In the last few days, nobody's asked how many lives will not be affected for the better because we've lost their contributions. And for all the talk of his children, nobody's asked what kind of America they stand to inherit from their father—whether black kids on the playground with them will endure a wider world of fear, wary of a country so easily whipped into a furor of suspicion of them, their motives, their peer groups, their voices.

There wasn't time to ask those questions, not when one needed to labor to find a plausible compliment for someone who luxuriated in poisoning the racial discourse and raining abuse down on colleagues in a crass endless hump for pageloads and ad revenue. There wasn't time, and in any event, they were still afraid—checking the thesaurus for words of praise that seemed acceptably sincere, instead of taking up a spade to help bury him deep in the earth, not merely to put greater distance between him and humanity but so that Hell does not have to reach so high to claim him.

[20120316-03](#)

11:49

Beth

Re: My Nightmare Scenario for the 2012 Primaries & Elections (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #96)

In response to Pam's comment about a Santorum/Gingrich ticket. That would frighten me so much that I would be unable to sleep or breathe from the convention to election day. Someone said to me the other day that Santorum is how fascism comes to America. I just read the definition of "fascism" on Wikipedia, and Santorum is pretty close.

I do not believe he is electable, but I have been horrified by the success he has had in the primaries. I certainly would not stay in this country if he were elected.

<a href="#">20120316-04</a>	14:41	Ben	"Gasoline Lifts Inflation, Dents Confidence"
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Election year conspiracy?

I don't have time to dig through statistics and past election years, but, hey! You're retired!

I figure that the Republicans are far more in control of refined gasoline prices than the Democrats, but, hey: I see conspiracies everywhere.

But if they can't find anything better to nail on the incumbent, there's always a rising price of gasoline, isn't there? Record profits breaking the records of last quarter's record profits, again and again, and... who's paying that dividend? Joe Consumer - the voter - of course!

"Gasoline Lifts Inflation, Dents Confidence" by Lucia Mutikani, Reuters

Mar. 16, 2012, (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/16/us-cpi-idUSBRE82F0N220120316>)

(WASHINGTON) Consumer prices rose the most in 10 months in February as the cost of gasoline spiked, but there was little sign that underlying inflation pressures were building up.

Surging gasoline prices put a small dent in consumer confidence early this month, other data showed on Friday. Still, Americans do not believe the sharp run-up in prices will last.

The Labor Department said the Consumer Price Index rose 0.4 percent in February after advancing 0.2 percent in January. Gasoline accounted for more than 80 percent of the rise.

Stripping out volatile food and energy costs, the so-called core CPI edged up just 0.1 percent.

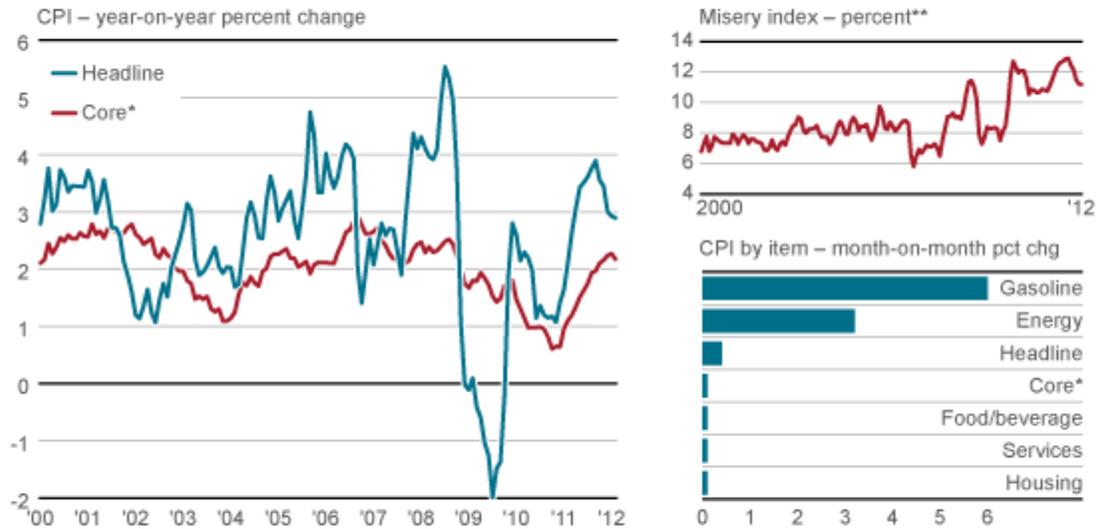
"Consumer purchasing power, at least for the next few months, is going to remain pressured by rising gasoline prices," said Sam Bullard, a senior economist at Well Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina. However, he said a trend toward lower inflation was still in place.

Consumer prices rose 2.9 percent last month from a year-ago, unchanged from January but down from a peak of 3.9 percent in September. The core index was up 2.2 percent over the 12 months through February, slowing from 2.3 percent in January.

The Federal Reserve said on Tuesday the recent spike in energy costs would likely lift inflation only temporarily. Over a longer horizon, it said inflation was poised to run at or below its 2 percent target.

# U.S. consumer prices

U.S. consumer prices rose the most in ten months in February as the price of gasoline spiked.



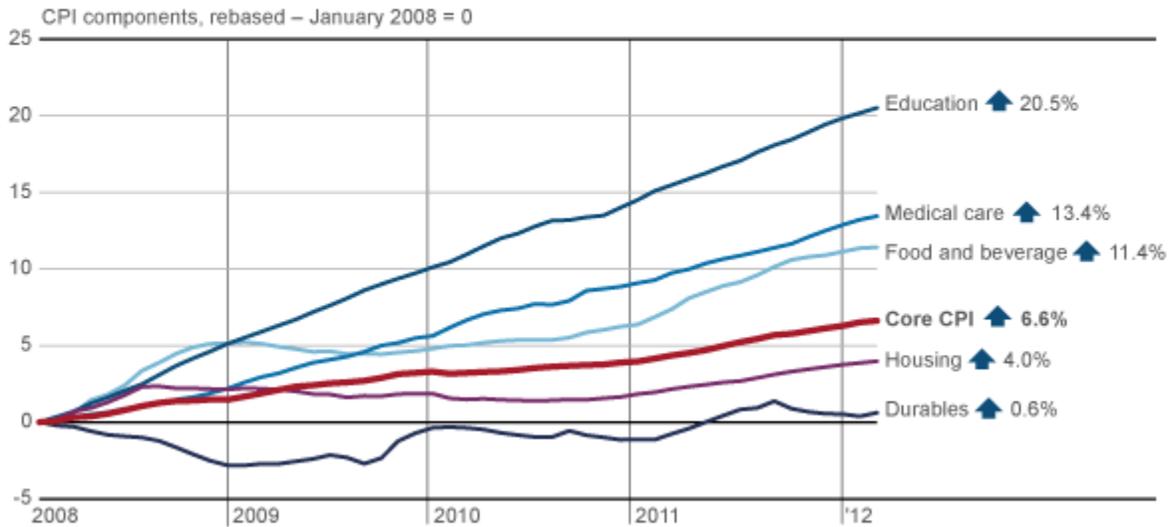
\* Excludes food and energy      \*\* The unemployment rate plus year-on-year headline CPI  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



Reuters graphic/Stephen Culp      16/03/12

# U.S. inflation

Core CPI (which excludes food and energy) rose 0.1 percent in February. Since the onset of the recession, education, medical care and food/beverage costs have risen faster than core CPI. The price of housing and durable goods, however, have lagged core CPI.



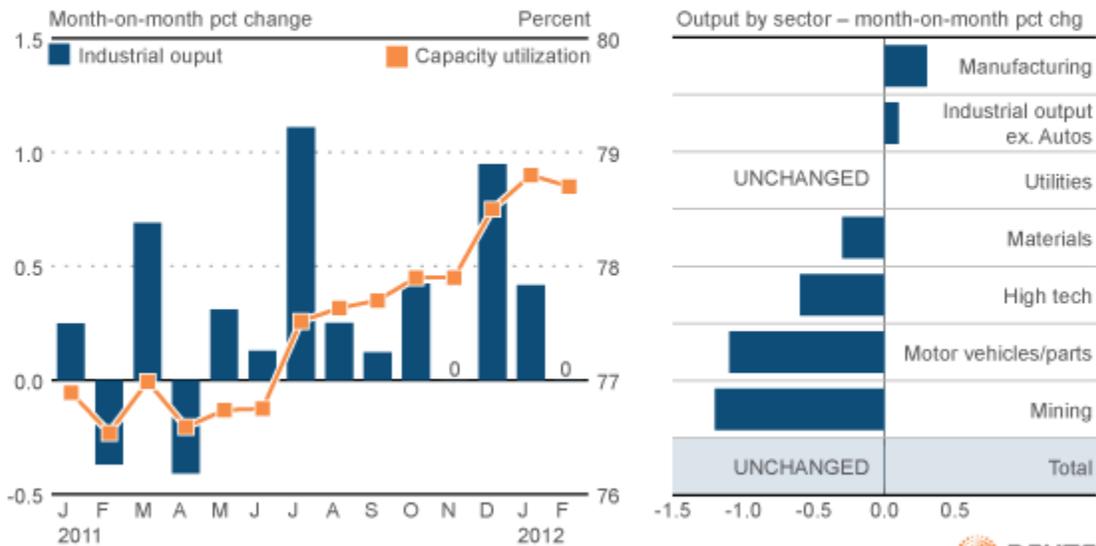
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



Reuters graphic/Stephen Culp      16/03/12

# U.S. industrial output, capacity utilization

Industrial production was unchanged in February as a sharp drop in mining output offset a third straight monthly gain in factory production.



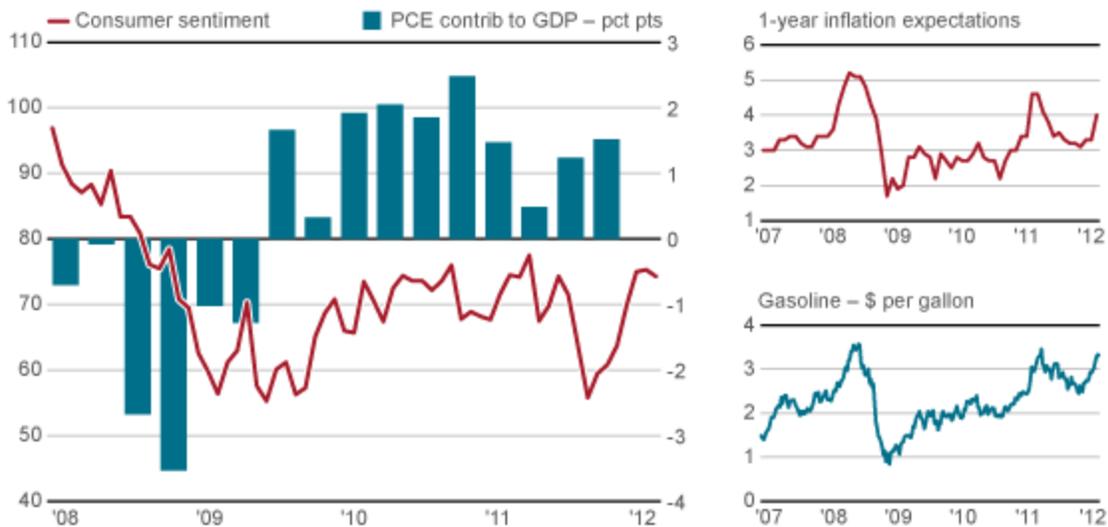
Source: U.S. Federal Reserve



Reuters graphic/Stephen Culp 16/03/12

# U.S. consumer sentiment

Consumer sentiment dipped in early March due as rising gasoline prices pushed American's inflation expectations for the next year higher.



Source: University of Michigan, U.S. Commerce Department



Reuters graphic/Stephen Culp 16/03/12

## GASOLINE HURTS SENTIMENT

Gasoline prices have increased 53 cents since the start of the year to an average of \$3.88 a gallon in the week to Monday.

That helped pull the Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan index on consumer sentiment down to 74.3 early this month from 75.3 in February.

Consumer expectations for inflation one year ahead jumped to 4 percent from 3.3 percent, but the five-year reading rose only slightly to 3 percent, and the survey's director said Americans do not expect the steep climb in gasoline costs to last.

"Overall, the data indicate that \$4 gasoline has lost its shock value, although the drain on discretionary income will still affect spending, mostly among lower-income households," survey director Richard Curtin said.

Inflation expectations among investors, as signaled by spreads in the bond market, have also been on the rise, supported by a stream of relatively upbeat economic data. Inflation expectations, however, as measured in the U.S. Treasuries debt market, fell back a bit after the CPI report.

Tensions over Iran's nuclear program have kept alive fears of oil supply disruptions and have pushed prices higher.

With gasoline weighing on the economy's recovery, President Barack Obama, who faces re-election in November, has been considering tapping strategic oil stocks to ease the price pressure.

Other data on Friday showed the economy continues to expand moderately. Production at the nation's mines, factories and utilities held steady last month after a 0.4 percent gain in January, the Federal Reserve said.

Manufacturing output rose 0.3 percent, even as automakers cut production by 1.1 percent after two big monthly gains. Carmakers had raised production to meet pent-up demand for popular models in short supply.

"While higher energy prices and the euro zone recession are headwinds for manufacturers, an expanding U.S. economy, propelled by strengthening job market gains, should keep factory activity strong this year," said Paul Edelstein, an economist at IHS Global Insight in Lexington, Massachusetts.

#### INFLATION OUT PACES WAGES

On Wall Street, the Standard & Poor's 500 index [finance/markets/index?symbol=us%21spx">.SPX](#) edged up to wrap up its best week in three months. It gained 2.4 percent for the week as it topped 1,400 to reach its highest level since May 2008.

U.S. Treasury debt prices fell for an eighth straight day, with benchmark yields touching four-month highs. The dollar weakened broadly.

The CPI report showed gasoline prices soared 6 percent last month, the largest increase since December 2010. They had risen 0.9 percent in January. While the strengthening jobs market is providing some cushion against rising gas prices at the pump, salaries are not keeping up.

Average weekly earnings, adjusted for inflation, fell 0.3 percent last month after slipping 0.1 percent in January, the Labor Department said. Compared with February last year, weekly earnings were down 0.4 percent.

But there was some price relief for households. Food costs held steady in February, marking the first time in 1-1/2 years they did not rise, and apparel prices dropped by the most since July 2006.

There were also declines in the prices of tobacco, airline tickets and used cars and trucks. Recreation costs also fell. But new motor vehicle prices recorded their first increase in nine months, reflecting rising domestic demand for autos.

A measure of the amount homeowners would pay to rent or would earn from renting their property - one of the largest single components of the CPI - rose at the slowest pace since April. Rents have risen as Americans have moved away from ownership in the face of persistent declines in house prices.

"The downward trajectory for consumer price inflation remains largely intact," said Millan Mulraine, a senior macro strategist at TD Securities in New York.

(Additional reporting by Mark Felsenthal and Leah Schnurr; Editing by Neil Stempleman and Leslie Adler)

[20120316-02](#) 10:17 SteveB Friends of the Middle Website

I have "finished" the FotM Website (for now) by adding a page about our group (mainly from Issue #1) and working on the Links page (nearly 150, for now).

Please let me know of any errors or omissions. I've tried to include most of the sources mentioned by group members, but expect to be continually adding more. I particularly need (Pam, Beth, MarthaH) your recommendations of books and movies! I included Group Member businesses I knew about. If there are any I left out, or you don't wish to be listed, please let me know.

**Home:** <http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/>

**Blog:** <http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/blog/>

**Links:** <http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/links.html>

**About:** <http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/about.html>

[20120316-05](#) 15:32 Pam Re: Friends of the Middle Website (reply to SteveB, above)

This is starting to look all slick and professional, which is impressive. I hope, though, that we will maintain our spontaneous, unrehearsed, sometimes outrageous commentary. I have come to think of FotM's readers as a community of friends. I'd like to hold onto that.

[20120316-06](#) 15:43 SteveB "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" [& Anything having to Do with S-E-X]

Ya gotta love the poor, sick, misguided b\*stard!

"Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" by Leigh Owens, Huffington Post

Mar. 16, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/16/rick-santorum-war-on-porn\\_n\\_1353383.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/16/rick-santorum-war-on-porn_n_1353383.html))

Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum has promised to initiate a war on porn if elected.

"America is suffering a pandemic of harm from pornography. It contributes to misogyny and violence against women. It is a contributing factor to prostitution and sex trafficking. **All that may give me a big lump in the pants, but I know what's right and wrong, and sex, especially with underwear still on is very kinky and just not Christian. Everybody knows that, and most of us were beaten as children until we admitted we knew exactly that, and a lot more.**" the former Pennsylvania senator wrote in a statement posted on his campaign website.

Santorum has chosen the porn industry as his latest target in his effort to be viewed as the most conservative candidate in the GOP primary, ahead of opponent Mitt Romney. He believes that current obscenity laws should be more stringently enforced.

"Current federal 'obscenity' laws prohibit distribution of hardcore (obscene) pornography on the Internet, on cable/satellite TV, on hotel/motel TV, in retail sex shops, houses of prostitution, Congress, and through the mail or by common carrier," Santorum wrote in the statement, adding that these laws should be "**vigorously enforced with whips, if necessary.**"

The statement also took the opportunity to slam the Obama administration and its handling of the issue so far, stating that the president has "refused to enforce obscenity laws" and that the Department of Justice "seems to favor pornographers over children and families. **In fact, Obama is one of the biggest child pornographers on the planet and a big snob about it too. So there!**"

Not everyone agrees with Santorum's analysis of how the industry affects Americans. Steve Chapman, a writer for the *Chicago Tribune* took issue with Santorum's claims, which he describes as "just wrong."

"Santorum doesn't seem to notice that as porn has become ever-more available via the Internet, the prevalence of rape has plunged. Since 1991, the national rate has fallen by 86 percent -- compared to a decline in overall violent crime of 65 percent," Chapman wrote.

The porn industry is a billion-dollar-a-year business nationwide, and with the rise of the internet and technology it has become one of highest-grossing industries in the world, **as well as one of the grossest industries, at times.**

(For more of Santorum's past comments on sex, see the slideshow on this website:  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/16/rick-santorum-war-on-porn\\_n\\_1353383.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/16/rick-santorum-war-on-porn_n_1353383.html).)

<a href="#">20120316-07</a>	15:59	Pam	Re: "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Oh! Rick just goes from absurdity to absurdity. And this country does too.

It's virtually summer here already. I wonder what the real summer will be like. We'll probably have to start growing palm trees soon. I don't like palm trees.

<a href="#">20120318-01</a>	06:57	SteveB	Re: "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" (reply to Pam, above)
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Nothing invokes my flaming youth in my memory like palm trees. I love `em and, yes, I guess you will have them soon.

Well, you have so much talking and discovering to do. What a true adventure, and one you are ideally suited for. I think if I needed you to take a night watch on patrol or sailing, I might be in trouble, but if I needed words, empathy, and understanding, you are among the very best. Your son is lucky to have found you. And we don't care what his politics are, he's always welcome here. Friends and relatives of our other friends here are always the most welcome. Maybe especially if he's a conservative Republican! :-)

<a href="#">20120316-08</a>	16:01	Ben	Re: "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" (reply to SteveB, above)
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"...most of us were beaten as children until we admitted we knew exactly that..."

Really? Rick, your parents beat you until you conceded that sex while wearing underwear is "very kinky and just not Christian"???

This dude has some grave personal issues that exceed his understanding of what religion actually is...

<a href="#">20120316-10</a>	17:48	Art	Re: "Rick Santorum Promises War on Porn Industry" (reply to SteveB, above)
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**From Art (Mar. 16, 2012, 5:48 pm)—reply to SteveB, above, ref: Rick Santorum's War on Pornography & Anything Having to Do With Sex**

Well, on the other hand this is something that Santorium can probably grasp. Much more important than climate change, the fiscal deficit, or the growing Middle East issues. This guy is certifiable wacko.

[20120316-09](#) 17:39 SteveB Re: Cartoon (reply to MarthaH)

Cartoon not received. Maybe try again, Martha. Thanks.

[20120316-13](#) 19:35 Pam Re: Cartoon (reply to MarthaH)

Sometimes I think this (the Primaries) is all just a show put on to keep us distracted from the really important things that are happening in the world. Santorum comes out against porn, and the Internet lights up. Massacres occur in places we've never heard of, and no one lifts an eyebrow.

[20120316-11](#) 17:58 SteveG "George Clooney Arrested for Protesting at Sudanese Embassy" & "Facing Recall, Wisconsin Senator Pam Galloway Will Resign" & "130,000 Texas Women Lose Health Care Just So Texas Can Prove How Anti-Abortion It Is"

"George Clooney Arrested for Protesting at Sudanese Embassy" by David Edwards, Raw Story/AlterNet

Mar. 16, 2012,

([http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/859367/george\\_clooney\\_arrested\\_for\\_protesting\\_at\\_sudanese\\_embassy/#paragraph5](http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/859367/george_clooney_arrested_for_protesting_at_sudanese_embassy/#paragraph5))

"Facing Recall, Wisconsin Senator Pam Galloway Will Resign" by David Nir, Daily Kos/AlterNet

Mar. 16, 2012,

([http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/859160/facing\\_recall%2C\\_wi\\_senator\\_pam\\_galloway\\_will\\_resign/#paragraph7](http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/859160/facing_recall%2C_wi_senator_pam_galloway_will_resign/#paragraph7))

"130,000 Texas Women Lose Health Care Just So TX Can Prove How Anti-Abortion It Is" by Amanda Peterson Beadle, Think Progress/AlterNet, Mar. 16, 2012,

([http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/859168/130%2C000\\_texas\\_women\\_lose\\_health\\_care\\_just\\_so\\_tx\\_can\\_prove\\_how\\_anti-abortion\\_it\\_is](http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/859168/130%2C000_texas_women_lose_health_care_just_so_tx_can_prove_how_anti-abortion_it_is))

The Obama administration notified Texas yesterday that it was officially stopping funds to the Texas Women's Health Program because of the state's decision to block abortion providers, including Planned Parenthood, from participating in the program. About half of the participating clinics were cut off by the new state rule that went into effect this week, affecting 130,000 women in the health program:

Twenty-nine states participate in the Medicaid's Women Health Program, which extends Medicaid coverage for reproductive health services to lower-income women who do not qualify for the rest of the entitlement program's benefits.

"We very much regret the state's decision to implement this rule, which will prevent women enrolled in the program from receiving services from the trusted health care providers they have chosen and relied on for their care," Medicaid director Cindy Mann wrote in a Thursday letter to Texas officials.

While nine states have passed legislation to end abortion provider's government funding, Texas is the first to lose federal dollars over it. Other states' laws have only affected state spending, or have been held up by court challenges.

Federal law prevents states from banning specific providers from Medicaid programs, leading to the Women's Health Program showdown. Mann said that while they try to give as much flexibility as possible, "on this case, federal law precludes us from doing so."

Last year, the federal government gave \$39 million for the program. The state pays \$1 for every \$9 Medicaid puts into the program, but Gov. Rick Perry (R) has insisted the state will fill the gap to keep the program going without including Planned Parenthood. Texas Democrats are seeking alternate federal funds to continue the program through a different route.

A poll earlier this month showed that a majority of Texans disagreed with the Republican push to cut off Women's Health Program funds to clinics simply because they also provide abortions. Fifty-nine percent of voters opposed the new rule, while 38 percent agreed with it.

UPDATE: Perry reacted angrily to the news that federal officials were cutting off funds. He tweeted, "Obama Admin ends #WHP via media conference call; @GovernorPerry pledges state will keep pgm going" and "This is how Obama Admin works? Notifying press before the state administrators? Purely political. #WHP."

**20120316-12 18:02 SteveG "Senate Bill Could Roll Back Consumers' Health Insurance Savings"**

Somebody is protecting the health insurance companies here...

I bet you didn't know about this rebate. Almost nobody does, except the health insurers. They know and they don't like it.

"Senate Bill Could Roll Back Consumers' Health Insurance Savings" by Lena Groeger, ProPublica

Mar. 16, 2012, (<http://www.propublica.org/article/senate-bill-could-roll-back-consumers-health-insurance-savings>)

This summer, health insurance companies may have to pay more than a billion dollars back to their own customers. The rebate requirements were introduced as part of the 2010 health-care reform law and are meant to benefit consumers. But now an insurer-supported Senate bill aims to roll back the rebate requirements.

Known as the medical loss ratio rule, it's actually pretty simple. Under the health-care law provision, 80 to 85 cents of every dollar insurers collect in premiums must be spent on medical care or activities that improve the quality of that care. If not, they must send their customers a rebate for the difference. The goal, according to the Department of Health and Human Services, is to limit the money insurers spend on administrative costs and profit.

"It essentially ensures that consumers receive value for every dollar they spend on health care," HHS spokesman Brian Chiglinisky told ProPublica.

Last month, Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., introduced a bill that would change what costs companies can include in the 15 to 20 percent they are allotted for overhead, salaries and marketing. The bill, similar to a House bill introduced in March 2011 that has yet to come up for a vote, focuses on payments to insurance agents and brokers. Traditionally, these commissions are bundled into the administrative costs when making the final calculation. But insurance regulators have argued that fees paid to insurance agents and brokers shouldn't count.

Such a change could mean big savings for insurance companies — and much smaller rebates for consumers.

This is the first year that companies are required to send out rebates. According to a report by state insurance commissioners, if rebates had been handed out last year, insurers would have had to pay consumers almost \$2 billion. If they had carved out the broker fees, as proposed in the two current bills, consumers would have gotten only about \$800 million.

Landrieu's office did not immediately respond to our call for comment.

"[The bills] would water down the standard to a point where it becomes ineffective," said Sondra Roberto, a spokeswoman for the nonprofit advocacy group Consumers Union. The group, which also publishes Consumer Reports, recently urged members to oppose the bill.

The rebates have gotten relatively modest attention. Only 38 percent of the public is even aware of the rule's existence, according to a Kaiser poll.

Insurance companies have supported the two bills, claiming that the rebate rule, as it stands now, stifles jobs and actually drives up insurance premiums. A 2011 government report found that most insurance companies were, in fact, lowering their premiums to meet the requirements, as the administration had hoped.

While most insurance companies hit the 80 to 85 percent target, the few that didn't may be required to send out rebates this year.

"Some insurance companies pay an inordinate amount, as much as 40 percent, on administration and profit and not health care," Roberto said.

The rules on rebates differ slightly depending on whether the insurance comes from a large-group plan (employers with more than 100 employees), or a small-group or individual plan. In each case, insurance companies will be required to make all their costs publicly available so consumers can see how their premium dollars are spent.

The government granted insurance companies in seven states extra time to meet the requirements. Insurers that serve states with more rural populations, for example, tend to have higher overhead costs and cannot meet the requirement as easily, according to Eric Fader, a New York health-care lawyer. But the government decided that for all other states, enforcing the requirement wouldn't pose any risk to the market, and that the federal government didn't "need to coddle an inefficient insurance company," Fader said.

<a href="#">20120317-01</a>	11:25	SteveG	Fw: Somebody Else's Opinion: 2012 Republican Primaries
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Below is an email I recently received – author unknown.

I think the Republicans are in great shape really. Nothing but an obverse "love fest" going on here. Newt is horrified with jealousy because He thinks Santorum and Romney may end up in bed together. Santorum is gloating with malicious gratification directed down toward Newt, declaring He's already copped a feel, but won't tell Newt from whom. Romney, meanwhile is piling up delegates, and has lost interest in both Newt and Rick. He's confused and looking for substance. Feels like a well used prostitute who was paid with worthless checks, and has yet to experience orgasm. Then too, there is the proverbial Dr. Ron Paul, who now grows impatient with the feeble efforts of the confederate states strategy in winning the American Civil war. All this is pure typical Republicanism.

<a href="#">20120317-02</a>	12:41	Art	Re: Somebody Else's Opinion: 2012 Republican Primaries (reply to SteveG, above)
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Do I note a hint of irony here?

<a href="#">20120317-03</a>	13:23	Pam	Re: Somebody Else's Opinion: 2012 Republican Primaries (reply to Art, above)
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Just a smidge, I'd say.

<a href="#">20120317-04</a>	16:12	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: Don't Let the Bullies Win
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from Change.org:

I was bullied a lot in middle school. Five years ago, it got so bad that four guys came up behind me, called me awful names and slammed my hand in my locker, breaking my finger. The worst part is, I felt so terrified and alone that I couldn't even tell my parents the truth about what happened.

So when I saw the new documentary *Bully*, which was produced to stop bullying, it felt so good to know that the filmmakers were telling the stories of kids like me. I think that every kid should see *Bully*. That's why I was shocked to learn that it was given an "R" rating because some of the bullies in the film use bad words.

Two weeks ago, I started a petition on Change.org asking the Motion Picture Association of America to change *Bully's* rating to PG-13. More than 300,000 people have joined me.

The past two weeks have been incredible. I've been on CNN, MSNBC, FOX News, CBS, and The Ellen Show. Celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres, Meryl Streep, Johnny Depp, Justin Bieber, Randy Jackson, Demi Lovato, and Drew Brees -- as well as 29 members of Congress, led by Rep. Mike Honda -- have said publicly that they agree with my campaign.

But even after all that, the MPAA hasn't budged. I got to meet with one of their executives last week, and she told me that they have to keep things "consistent." Maybe she thought that I would give up, or that I'm just 17, so how much can I really change anyway? But I know that if we keep up the pressure, the MPAA will have no choice but to admit that being "consistent" isn't as important as letting kids see a movie that could literally save lives.

Thanks for your help. Knowing that all these people are standing with me, I don't feel alone or afraid anymore.

--Katy

Click here to sign my petition to tell the MPAA to change *Bully's* rating to PG-13:

[http://www.change.org/petitions/mpaa-don-t-let-the-bullies-win-give-bully-a-pg-13-instead-of-an-r-rating?utm\\_campaign=HIWYvitjgM&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=action\\_alert](http://www.change.org/petitions/mpaa-don-t-let-the-bullies-win-give-bully-a-pg-13-instead-of-an-r-rating?utm_campaign=HIWYvitjgM&utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert)

<a href="#">20120317-05</a> 16:14 SteveG "The Power of Recalls in Wisconsin"
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"The Power of Recalls in Wisconsin" by John Nichols, *The Nation*/NationofChange

Mar. 17, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/power-recalls-wisconsin-1331997712>)

With Wisconsin recall elections looming against four Republican state Senators -- as well as Governor Scott Walker and Lieutenant Governor Rebecca Kleefisch -- the state's politics was thrown for another loop Friday when a targeted senator up and quit.

State Senator Pam Galloway, a Tea Party favorite and one of Walker's steadiest backers in the legislature, announced her immediate resignation from the legislature and her decision not to contest the recall election.

The move had dramatic repercussions:

1. Republicans have lost the complete control of state government that allowed the governor to advance an austerity agenda that was defined by attacks on unions and deep cuts in public education and public services funding -- along with the harshest Voter ID law in the nation, a rigidly partisan redistricting of legislative districts and what critics complain has been a battering of the state's open-government tradition.
2. State Senate Majority Leader Jeff Fitzgerald, a Walker ally who is targeted for recall, has lost his position as the dominant player in the legislature. He now must enter into a power-sharing agreement with Minority

Leader Mark Miller, a progressive Democrat who led a historic walkout by his caucus during last year's struggle over Walker's labor law changes. Committee assignments will be redone to reflect what is now a 16-16 split in the Senate.

3. Governor Walker, who has threatened to call special sessions of the legislature to deal with pet projects, will now only be able to do so if he can work with the Democrats -- something he has not done up to this point.

4. If, as expected, the federal courts reject the state's redistricting plan, it could be sent back to a legislature where Democrats can now play a critical role in drawing the maps. That could result in a significant upturn in their fortunes going into this fall's elections.

5. Republicans have lost their premier candidate in one of four state Senate recall elections that are now scheduled for May 8 primaries and a June 5 election. Galloway had raised major money and organized a campaign of consequence before announcing that family health concerns had led her to exit the legislature. Now, Democrat Donna Seidel, a popular former county official in the Wausau-area district and the assistant minority leader in the state Assembly, emerges as a clear frontrunner for a seat that -- if she wins -- would tip the Senate to full Democratic control.

All of these changes were made possible by the recall power, which allows citizens to petition for new elections. This old progressive tool of accountability was used last summer to force a number of Republican senators who supported the Walker agenda to defend their seats.

Going into last summer's recall votes, Republicans held a 19-14 advantage in the Senate. Two Republicans were defeated, leaving the GOP with a narrow 17-16 advantage -- and giving moderate Republican Senator Dale Schultz the power to temper his party's excesses. Now, with Galloway's exit, the chamber goes to the 16-16 split.

After the next round of recalls, it is possible that Democrats could end up with full control of the Senate, potentially by a margin of up to 19-14 -- or, if Fitzgerald is defeated by upstart challenger Lori Compas, 20-13.

Additionally, a new Democratic Senate could sit with a new Democratic governor, as Walker's recall is now all but certain to take place on the same day as the senators.

What has happened is remarkable. What could happen is historic. And the people, using the recall power afforded them by progressive reformers of a century ago, are making it happen.

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20120317-06	17:24	Pam	Poem: "The Necklace" by Osip Mandelstam
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I read this poem by Osip Mandelstam in the April *Atlantic* magazine. I think it lovely, and I wanted to share it.

"The Necklace"

Take, from my palms, for joy, for ease,  
A little honey, a little sun,  
That we may obey Persephone's bees.

You can't untie a boat unmoored.  
Fur-shod shadows can't be heard,  
Nor terror, in this life, mastered.

Love, what's left for us, and of us, in this  
Living remnant, loving revenant, brief kiss  
Like a bee flying completed dying hiveless

To find in the forest's heart a home,  
Night's never-ending hum,  
Thriving on meadowsweet, mint, and time.

Take, for all that is good, for all that is gone,  
That it may lie rough and real against your collarbone,  
This string of bees, that once turned honey into sun.

Translated from the Russian by Christian Wiman

Mandelstam is considered the greatest Russian poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was persecuted by Stalin and committed suicide.

20120318-02 13:33 SteveG "Scientists Warn EPA Over Monsanto's GMO Crop Failures, Dangers"

"Scientists Warn EPA Over Monsanto's GMO Crop Failures, Dangers" by Anthony Gucciardi, Natural News/NationofChange

Mar. 18, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/scientists-warn-epa-over-monsanto-s-gmo-crop-failures-dangers-1332083780>)

A group of scientists is calling for major federal action in order to deal with the threat posed by Monsanto's GMO crops, now petitioning the EPA to address the issue head on. The groups of 22 academic corn experts are drawing attention to the immense failure of Monsanto's genetically modified corn, which is developing mutated and resistant insects as a result of its widespread usage. Corn is critical not only as a food staple, but is heavily used in ethanol production, animal feed, and much more. As GM corn becomes the norm, currently taking over 94 percent of the supply, these scientists are seriously concerned about the future of corn production.

Joseph Spencer is one outspoken member of the group, a corn entomologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey, part of the University of Illinois. Spencer states that what is happening is no surprise, instead it is something that needs to be addressed. Warning the EPA over the dangers, the experts sent a letter on March 5th to the agency explaining their worries regarding long-term corn production prospects in light of GMO crops failures. Specifically, the experts are worried about the lack of protection presented by GMO crops against rootworms.

The EPA has already acknowledged that Monsanto's GMO crops are creating resistant rootworms, which are now ravaging the GMO crops as they mutate to the bio pesticide used known as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT). The EPA found that the resistant rootworms, which are evolving to resist the insecticide, are currently found Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, and Nebraska. After the EPA evaluated documented cases of severe crop damage as well as reports from entomologists, the EPA stated "Monsanto's program for monitoring suspected cases of resistance is 'inadequate'".

Essentially, the GMO crops are doing the opposite of their supposed purpose — leading to more damage from rootworms as they become mutated to resist the defense of the crops. And Monsanto has answered by simply further genetically modifying the Bt, which research shows is extremely ineffective.

"When insecticides overlay transgenic technology, the economic and environmental advantages of rootworm-protected corn quickly disappear," the scientists wrote.

It's time for the EPA and other agencies to address the serious threats to nature and human health presented by Monsanto's genetically modified creations.

20120318-03 17:20 Pam Tony Judt R.I.P.

**From Pam (Mar. 18, 2012, 5:20 pm)—Tony Judt R.I.P.**

from "On Intellectuals and Democracy" by Tony Judt, *New York Review of Books*, March 22, 2012  
(<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/mar/22/intellectuals-and-democracy/?pagination=false>):

Democracy bears the same relationship to a well-ordered liberal society as an excessively free market does to a successful, well-regulated capitalism.

...our chief task is not to imagine better worlds but rather to think how to prevent worse ones.

The Greeks knew that democracy is not likely to fall to the charms of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, or oligarchy; it's much more likely to fall to a corrupted version of itself.

The only way for democracy to survive, or even to exist, is to have an educated, law-abiding, trust-worthy populace that can be counted on to mostly do the right thing and take an active part in civic life, even if that's only to vote. Our mistake for the past 10 years and more has been to assume that democracy is the solution, the start of something good. That's like saying fixing the schools is the beginning of a solution rather than alleviating poverty. Democracy is a luxury that depends on special circumstances, ie., an educated, engaged populace. It is irrelevant in a country like Afghanistan, where upwards of 80% of the people are illiterate, rural and urban areas are worlds apart, and what we call corruption is merely the Afghan way of doing business. People in a democracy must be loyal to an idea. When tribal loyalty, family ties, and revenge are paramount, democracy doesn't stand much of a chance.

I keep reading the phrase "nation building" when I read about Afghanistan. Is that really what we are trying to do there? If so, it's a fool's errand. Are we after al Qaeda? I thought it had moved on to Pakistan. Are we trying to liberate women? A worthy goal, but unachievable even in the medium-term future. We're trying to do the equivalent of building air-conditioned schools with state-of-the-art equipment, when what Afghan school children need right now are pencils and a blackboard. If we still had a draft, we would have exited Afghanistan years ago. I don't want to bring back the draft, but this war is being fought by private corporations, not a determined, Stateside population, willing to do whatever it takes. Most Americans aren't willing to do anything at all, and why should they? Afghanistan is no threat to us. I just read an article about a successful mercenary (former military officer) who has built an incredibly lucrative business providing security for Americans in Afghanistan. If the war ends, so does his business. The war is costing the nation billions of dollars, but a few enterprising souls are getting rich off it. Why do we let this happen? Why isn't the war a major issue in the election campaigns, the way Viet Nam was? Our military is being asked to do too much (the troops on the ground), and the American people aren't even asked to think about what's happening.

I know a major argument for continuing to do something is that quitting would mean you'd been wrong up till that point. For example, it would be difficult for the Pope to suddenly condone birth control. How would he answer all those good Catholics who last year or twenty years ago denied themselves access to it? It's embarrassing to lose a war, but is that what we're doing? Trying to avoid embarrassment? George Orwell wrote a wonderful essay about his time as a policeman in Burma, "Shooting an Elephant." An elephant went "must," which is to say berserk, and it demolished a bunch of open-air shops, which was bad. But then it trampled a man to death, and that was insupportable. Orwell, as the white man in charge with the only weapon, was expected by the crowd that gathered to kill the elephant. He didn't want to, but he knew that the reputation of every British soldier in the country depended on his not looking weak in the face of the howling mob. By the time he reached the elephant, the must had gone off and the elephant was peacefully eating some straw. He was no longer dangerous, and he was valuable to his owner, but the crowd wanted a spectacle, so Orwell shot the elephant. Only it didn't die right away. He had to pour round after round into its pink throat until finally, after half an hour or so, the poor beast expired. It's a wonderful essay about a sickening experience, and I think it carries a lesson we would do well to consider.

Finished Tony Judt's magnum opus, *Postwar*, earlier in the year. It was a long slog, but worth it, and I can only marvel at the enormity of the man's learning and scholarship. He's probably also right about the unfortunate attractions of a faux-democracy, and he's definitely on target with respect to democracy performing better when well ordered rather than wild and woolly. Still, Churchill may have the greater wisdom in saying that democracy is the worst form of government—except for all the others. That may resonate in people's minds along with Judt's exhortation about preventing worse worlds.

Nevertheless, I can only agree with your doubts about nation building in Afghanistan. The societal structure there simply isn't built for anything remotely like western democracy. The place is too tribal, too Muslim, too corrupt, and too ignorant to be fertile soil for anything like western democracy. I'm sure there are those in our government who believe that something like western democracy can be transplanted. I doubt it. Who would not agree that it's time for the U. S. and its allies to get out of a very backward place? They don't want democracy or anything western or Christian.

Sojourner Truth, born Isabella Baumfree, died in 1883. I wonder if 1883 is far enough back in time for these Republicans? Or is their goal something even further back? 1848? 1019? Interesting what Sojourner Truth had to say about their **Sacred Constitution**. (Be assured I'm saying that in ominous tones with my right hand over my heart, deep in prayer blessing the Founding Fathers for following God's one true, divine plan. Why is no one except Rick Santorum listening to God now?) **"Dere is a little weasel in it."**

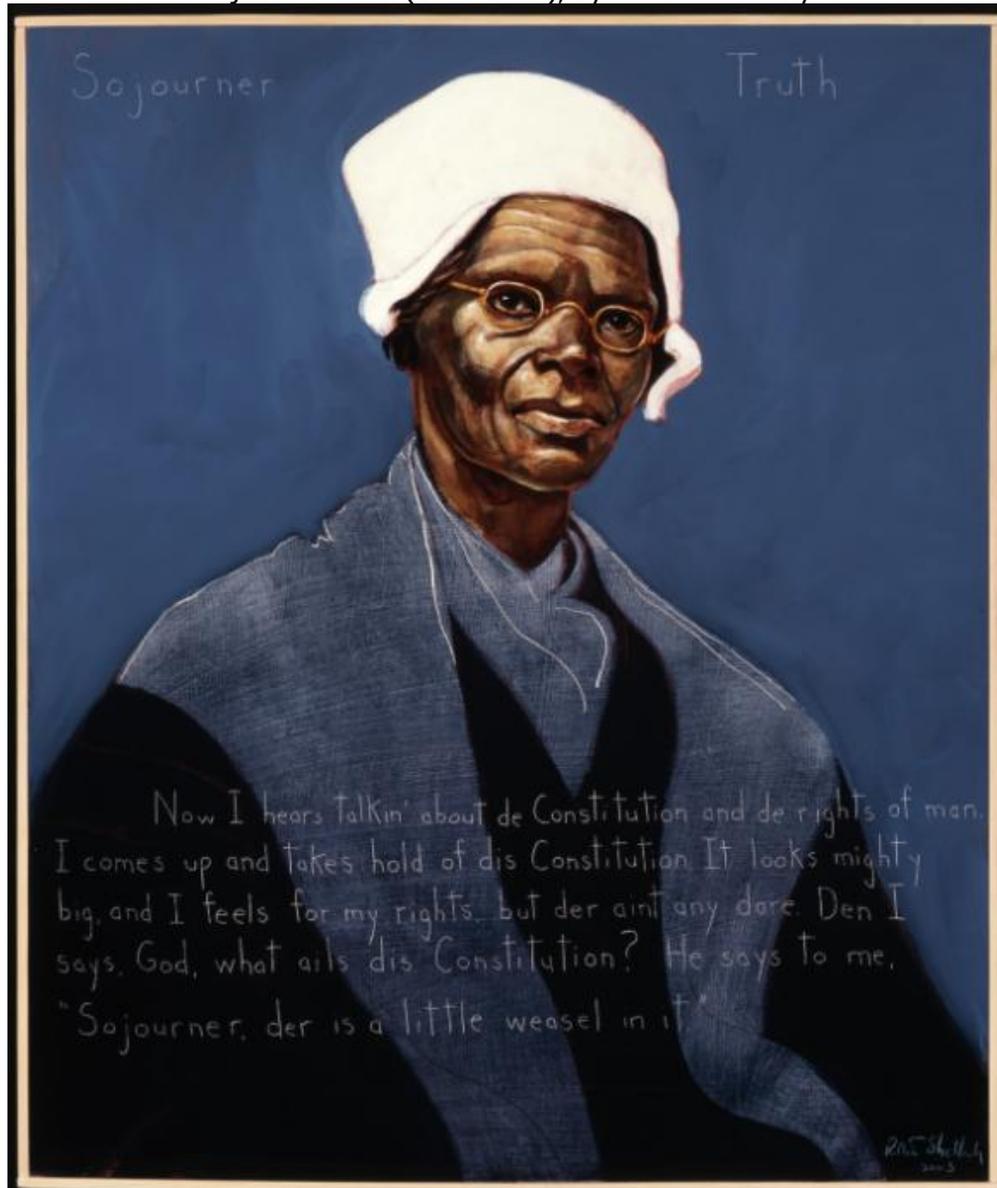
[http://myhero.com/go/gallery/open.asp?art=sojourner\\_truth\\_2010](http://myhero.com/go/gallery/open.asp?art=sojourner_truth_2010)

from Americans Who Tell The Truth - portraits and quotes by Robert Shetterly

"Now I hears talkin' about de Constitution and de rights of man. I comes up and I takes hold of dis Constitution. It looks mighty big, and I feels for my rights, but der ain't any dare. Den I says, God, what ails dis Constitution? He says to me, 'Sojourner, dere is a little weasel in it.'" —Sojourner Truth

With no formal education, Truth would become one of America's great orators, speaking out against racial oppression and later for the suffrage movement.

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), by Robert Shetterly



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #98 — MAR. 20, 2012

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### **How to Talk Like a Republican**

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

"5 Words and Phrases Democrats Should Never Say Again" by Jill W. Klausen, DailyKos/AlterNet

Mar. 19, 2012,

([http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/863927/5\\_words\\_and\\_phrases\\_democrats\\_should\\_never\\_say\\_again](http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/863927/5_words_and_phrases_democrats_should_never_say_again))

We talk about the "Death Tax" and not the proper term, "Estate Tax." Two little words—"Death Panels"—were capable of nearly derailing the best thing that's happened to health insurance in this country in decades. Harvard-educated President Obama is universally considered "elite," while Yale-educated George W. Bush is considered "down home."

Many Democrats buy into the old saw that the Democratic party has had a history of "tax and spend" policies that needs to change or be lived down somehow. Until the Occupy movement brought the topic front and center, even most Democrats accepted the notion that businesses were "job creators" and worried more about distracting the opposition from this "fact" than debunking it for the lie it actually is.

Unfortunately, this is because Democrats have failed to speak in a language strong enough to rebut Republicans who have defined who we are and what we want, in a way that doesn't even remotely reflect an iota of the truth, and instantly conjures up the negative in the mind of the listener.

#### HOW TO TALK LIKE A REPUBLICAN

Professional media strategist Frank Luntz has been providing Republicans with a detailed handbook on exactly what language to use and not to use for decades. He has built up a lexicon that is not only far-reaching and deeply ingrained, but also very, very successful. As Progressive Democratic linguist George Lakoff explains it, this "framing" is crucial to how they've managed to win so much of the debate.

Here are some examples from Luntz's handbooks, of how the Republican party has been taught to frame the way they talk:

- Don't say "bonus!" Luntz advised that if [corporations] give their employees an income boost during the holiday season, they should never refer to it as a "bonus." If you give out a bonus at a time of financial hardship, you're going to make people angry. It's "pay for performance."

- Don't say that the government "taxes the rich." Instead, tell [people] that the government "takes from the rich." "If you talk about raising taxes on the rich, the public responds favorably," Luntz cautioned. But "if you talk about government taking the money from hardworking Americans, the public says no."

This sleight-of-tongue has managed to manipulate at least half the country into believing things that simply are not true. And this type of language mash-up has been so successfully drilled into the vernacular, that Democrats have been hard-pressed to come up with a simple and just-as-effective way to expose the lies beneath them

## DEMOCRATS NEED A HANDBOOK OF OUR OWN

How can Democrats and Progressives fix this? Start by never saying any of the following five words or phrases again.

### 1. Never say "Entitlements."

Instead, say "Earned Benefits."

While the word "entitlement" was originally coined by Democrats as a way to illustrate that the receiver of the attached benefits was entitled to them by having worked to earn them, or having been taxed to support them, it has been re-defined by the right as akin to a spoiled child who acts as if they're "entitled" even though they are not.

"Earned benefits," on the other hand, cannot be twisted or misconstrued to mean anything other than what what they are: something the recipient has actually earned, as opposed to something they are being given. Social Security and Medicare are paid into through taxes deducted from employees' paychecks, or the paychecks of one's spouse or parent. No one who hasn't either personally paid into these programs, or been the spouse or child of someone who has paid into these programs, or, in the case of Medicare Part B, paid a monthly premium in order to receive them, can extract benefits from these programs.

Here is a perfect example of how the right wing uses the word "entitled" as a pejorative associated with Democrats (emphasis mine):

Fluke is an entitled liberal, which is both emblematically typical and essentially required for one to be a liberal in today's American political landscape ... Her talking points represent a very real attitude quickly manifesting itself into mainstream American thought process: that a person literally deserves the resources of another. This, of course, is the entitlement and dependency culture on which the Democratic Party has rallied around, encouraged, campaigned, and insisted.

Democrats have done nothing of the sort. Recall that the subject at hand is insured individuals. That means that they have paid into the pool in order to be able to take resources out later when needed. Even if the check was dispersed by their employer, it's still their benefit as employees, paid out in the form of insurance coverage in lieu of cash compensation. Not to mention any shared responsibility the employee, or in Sandra Fluke's case, the student, may have in paying the monthly premium. (For the record, students at Georgetown University where Sandra Fluke is a student, pay 100% of their own premium toward their student health insurance.)

Do not allow the right wing to frame this issue in their terms. These are Earned Benefits. Say that.

### 2. Never say "Redistribution of Wealth."

Instead, say "Fair Wages For Work."

When we hear "redistribution," we think in terms of simply moving things around, not something earned by someone. And when you tack the word "wealth" onto it, everybody's hackles immediately go up. "What do you mean, redistribute my wealth? You don't get to take something from me and give it to someone else! I work hard for what I get; let other people work for their own money, not mine!"

But when we hear "fair wages for work," we know instantly that we are talking about paying working people a fair wage for the work they're doing, not giving them something they haven't actually earned. Since at least 1965, Republican policies have created a corporate culture that only rewards those at the very, very, very top of the pyramid. While the average "hourly wage" equivalent for CEOs has gone from \$490.31 to \$5,419.97 (\$11,273,537.00 per year), the average hourly wage for workers has stagnated at \$19.71. That's just \$40,997.00 per year. The same \$40,997.00 that we were earning in 1965. At 2012 inflation. We need fair wages for our work\*—in today's dollars. Say that.

### 3. Never say "Employer Paid Health Insurance."

Instead, say "Employee Earned Health Insurance."

When we say "employer paid," we immediately think of it as something that's given to the employee by their employer. But as I pointed out in my blog post, "It's Not About Who Writes The Check—Stop The Republican Lie About Who Pays For Contraceptives," all employee health insurance is earned by virtue of the employee's labor. That makes it "paid for" by the employee, even if they aren't the ones writing the checks to the insurance companies themselves. Employee health insurance is just one of several forms of compensation in exchange for labor, that include cash, retirement funds, long- and short-term disability coverage, etc.

Employee health insurance is not a "gift," it is compensation in exchange for labor. Cease the labor and the compensation ceases right along with it. Employees earn their insurance. Say that.

### 4. Never say "Government Spending."

Instead, say "The People Are Investing."

When we hear "spending," we automatically think of going shopping and whipping out the credit card. And while government at every level often leverages their ability to borrow at low interest rates to fund their spending, it's hardly the same thing as going out and buying a dress you're only going to wear once and then hanging in the closet until it's out of style.

What governments actually do is invest in our cities, states, country and our people. Government invests in infrastructure that affords us the ability to move around freely. It invests in programs that train people with job skills. It invests in research that cures diseases. There is an actual benefit to "spending" when a government does it, which actually makes it an investment in all our futures.

And who is "the government"? We, The People. It's a Constitutional phrase that evokes strong support for whatever follows. Democrats need to take Constitutional language back from the Republican party and make it ours again, since Democratic principles of equality and liberty were the driving forces behind the creation of this great nation in the first place.

We, The People, are investing in our future. Say it that way. Every time.

### 5. Never say "Corporate America."

Instead, say "Unelected Corporate Government."

Calling businesses "Corporate America" gives the impression that somehow corporations are the same as human Americans. But in spite of what the current Supreme Court would have you believe, they aren't.

In fact, in many ways in our daily lives, we are governed far more by corporations than we are by governments. Corporations govern where we shop, what we pay for goods and services, who gets access and who doesn't, how we communicate and what we pay for that privilege, and so on.

But more importantly, Corporations govern us by buying our legislators to do their bidding with campaign donations, and by actually writing legislation that makes it into our law books. Corporations govern when they privatize formerly-public, taxpayer-funded institutions, like schools, prisons and military operations. And unlike actual governments, they do it solely for their benefit and profits, not those of real American citizens.

And if there's one thing we know the right wing zealots claim not to like the most, it's "government interference in our lives." So what's worse than the government we actually elect to make our laws "interfering in our lives"? It's a government structure that we didn't even elect interfering in our lives.

Corporations are not "Corporate America," they are Unelected Corporate Government. Describe them that way and people will come to resent their presence in our public policy-making.

In closing, turning once again to Professor Lakoff, "Unfortunately, Luntz is still ahead of most progressives responding to him. Progressives need to learn how framing works. Bashing Luntz, bashing Fox News, bashing the right-wing pundits and leaders using their frames and arguing against their positions just keeps their frames in play. ... Progressives have magnificent stories of their own to tell. They need to be telling them nonstop. Let's lure the right into using OUR frames in public discourse."

Let's start doing that by never saying any of the above five words and phrases again.

#### REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING

- ▶ "Framing the Issues: UC Berkeley Professor George Lakoff Tells How Conservatives Use Language to Dominate Politics" by Bonnie Azab Powell, NewsCenter ([http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/10/27\\_lakoff.shtml](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/10/27_lakoff.shtml)).
- ▶ "Words That Don't Work" by George Lakoff (If you read nothing else from the below list, this article and the one immediately above are Must Reads.) (<http://georgelakoff.com/2011/12/11/words-that-dont-work/>).
- ▶ *The New American Lexicon* (2006) by Frank I. Luntz (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/70467439/Leaked-Luntz-Republican-Playbook>).
- ▶ "The Language Police: Gettin' Jiggy with Frank Luntz" by Nancy Snow at Common Dreams (<http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0226-27.htm>).
- ▶ "Frank Luntz Teaches GOP Governors How to Lie More Effectively" By Charles Johnson at Little Green Footballs ([http://littlegreenfootballs.com/article/39525\\_Frank\\_Luntz\\_Teaches\\_GOP\\_Governors\\_How\\_to\\_Lie\\_More\\_Effectively](http://littlegreenfootballs.com/article/39525_Frank_Luntz_Teaches_GOP_Governors_How_to_Lie_More_Effectively)).
- ▶ "How Republicans Are Being Taught to Talk About Occupy Wall Street" by Chris Moody at The Ticket (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/republicans-being-taught-talk-occupy-wall-street-133707949.html>).
- ▶ Frank Luntz: *New American Lexicon* (2006) from Political Cortex - Brain Food For The Body Politic (<http://images.dailykos.com/images/user/3/Luntz.pdf>) ([http://www.politicalcortex.com/special/Luntz\\_NAL\\_Introduction](http://www.politicalcortex.com/special/Luntz_NAL_Introduction)).
- ▶ "The Worst Political Failure of the Obama Administration" by Joe Weisenthal at *Business Insider* (Trust me, it's relevant—and not what you think it is. Great article.) (<http://www.businessinsider.com/the-worst-political-failure-of-the-obama-administration-2012-1>).
- ▶ "Raise Taxes on Rich to Reward True Job Creators" by Nick Hanauer at Bloomberg *Businessweek* (<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-12-07/raise-taxes-on-rich-to-reward-true-job-creators-nick-hanauer.html>).

- ▶ "Koch, Exxon Mobil Among Corporations Helping Write State Laws" by Alison Fitzgerald at Bloomberg (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-21/koch-exxon-mobil-among-corporations-helping-write-state-laws.html>).
- ▶ "FAQ: How to Qualify for Medicare" by the Social Security Administration. ([http://ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/400/~how-to-qualify-for-medicare](http://ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/400/~how-to-qualify-for-medicare)).

(This post originally appeared at Reelect Democrats. Please visit my blog for more of my posts.)

("How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." --Anne Frank)

20120319-01	07:48	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Stop Tuna Plunder in the Pacific!
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from [Avaaz.org](http://Avaaz.org):

Pacific tuna are being fished out of existence, but in just a few days, key countries will decide on bold measures to save them. Powerful fishing lobbies are looking to weaken any outcome, so it's up to us to push for a tuna-saving deal!

The Western Pacific is the world's largest tuna fishery and a vital breeding ground for a variety of ocean life, but it's also a goldmine for giant fishing corporations, driving some species close to collapse. Next week Pacific countries are meeting to discuss extending and strengthening tuna protections. At stake is a continuation and expansion of the no-fishing zones in the Pacific commons marine reserves, new science-based targets to prevent 'bigeye' tuna from extinction, and a ban on the use of so called FADs -- deadly lures which attract fish and other marine life with devastating results.

Pacific Island nations are championing a bold deal, but they need the support of the US, Taiwan, South Korea and the Philippines to face down the multi-billion dollar fishing industry. Sign the petition below, urging these key Pacific countries to support the islands to protect our oceans for everyone, not the narrow interests of the tuna fishing industry! Sign now and forward -- Avaaz and Greenpeace will deliver the signatures via a massive virtual aquarium in the lobby of the hotel where the meeting is taking place!

[http://www.avaaz.org/en/save\\_pacific\\_tuna/?v](http://www.avaaz.org/en/save_pacific_tuna/?v)

Today, tuna profits are controlled by a very small high-tech fishing elite, who are destroying the livelihoods of small coastal fishing communities like the Pacific Islands. Foreign ships -- from Japan, China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, the US and the EU -- are taking 80% of the tuna catches back home. They're plundering the Pacific and leaving nothing for the islanders who only get between 5-6% of the value of the fish caught in their waters.

This plundering affects all of us. Current fishing techniques are laying waste to marine life such as sharks, turtles, other fish and juvenile tuna. Removing top predators affects the entire web of life in oceans and the declines can set off a domino effect with dire consequences. If overfishing is not halted our oceans will turn into deserts filled with just jelly fish and other simple organisms.

It's why the Pacific Island nations have taken steps to enable a more sustainable future by closing large areas of ocean to purse seine fishing -- the technique of setting giant nets over a mile long, that trap tuna, sharks, rays and turtles. But Island countries are under tremendous pressure to give up these protections, which is why they need our support.

The US Taiwan, South Korea and the Phillipines are important power brokers in the Pacific. If they stand behind the Islands we can win on protections for tuna and measures to stop the Pacific plunder. Sign the petition to stop devastating overfishing for the sake of the world's tuna, Pacific ocean life and the future of coastal communities. Sign now and forward widely:

[http://www.avaaz.org/en/save\\_pacific\\_tuna/?v](http://www.avaaz.org/en/save_pacific_tuna/?v)

Tuna are amazing fish. Some species can reach up to 700 kilograms and can accelerate quicker than Porsches. They're also a vital source of food for tens of millions of people in the world. If we continue to allow greedy corporations to over fish them for short-sighted profit, there will be none left for current and future generations to appreciate. Fortunately, a more sustainable fishing future is possible, and today we can take one step closer to it.

With hope, Iain, Alice, Paul, Kya, Wen-hua, and the rest of the Avaaz team

More information:

Pew: The Issues on Agenda for Fisheries Commission Conference on Guam March 26-30:  
[http://www.pacificnewscenter.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=21538:fishires-commission-conference-march-26-30&catid=45:guam-news&Itemid=156](http://www.pacificnewscenter.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21538:fishires-commission-conference-march-26-30&catid=45:guam-news&Itemid=156).

Greenpeace's Pacific Tuna campaign: <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/savepacifictuna/>.

[http://www.biocentroguembe.com/eng\\_index.html](http://www.biocentroguembe.com/eng_index.html)

Biocentro Güembé



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #99 — MAR. 21, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 21, 2012)

What's worse? Not paying taxes, of course!

This article provides further reasons why I support dropping all business income taxes (all income tax should be personal), taxing all income of the rich instead (at a higher rate).

The businesses don't end-up paying cr\*p under the current scheme (see article below). And then, their customers end up actually paying the tax. Why bother with the tax in the first place?

"What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

Mar. 19, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/what-s-worse-paying-taxes-1332171239>)

The other day I helped my son with his taxes. He was doing them for the first time, after spending a year with his new college degree looking for a job and managing his student loan account. We found out that he would be paying more in federal taxes than a hedge fund manager who made \$5 billion. We calculated that he wouldn't be getting a state refund, because Illinois raised the state tax rate from 3% to 5% in 2011. He would have to pay the full 5% state tax. The top 20 corporations in Illinois paid 2.2% from 2008 to 2010, when the corporate rate was 7.3%.

Having ruined my son's day with this information, I made myself feel even worse by digging deeper into the details of tax avoidance by the wealthy. To get into the 1% club, it takes about \$400,000 in salary. Members of the club can make up to 10,000 times MORE than this and pay ZERO taxes because they don't call their income 'income' like we do. They call it "carried interest," which means they can defer taxes almost indefinitely.

Then I went back a few years, to the 1970s, when soon-to-be-in-power Republicans became convinced that lowering taxes on the rich would generate more revenue. It didn't work. Federal revenues are currently at their lowest level in 60 years. The average federal tax rate has gone way down for the richest 1%. Yet remarkably it's gone UP for everyone in the 40th to 95th percentiles of taxpayers, which includes most of the rest of us.

How do wealthy individuals respond? They pout, and avoid taxes even further with clever strategies, such as hiring "full service tax evasion advisers" to help them elude the Internal Revenue Service.

It got worse when I compared my son's taxes to those of corporations. In the 1950s, for every dollar of payroll tax paid by workers, corporations paid three dollars. Now they pay 16 cents.

From 2008 to 2010, the top 100 U.S. corporations paid only 12.2% of their income in taxes, and thirty of them paid nothing at all.

At the state level, a study of 265 large companies revealed that an average of 3% was paid in state taxes, less than half the average state tax rate of 6.2%. The 265 companies avoided a total of \$42.7 billion in state corporate income taxes over the three years.

How do corporations respond? They pout, and complain about the corporate tax rate in the U.S., even though the percentage actually paid is very low relative to other OECD countries. Then they look for tax havens. Citizens for Tax Justice reports that the 280 most profitable U.S. corporations sheltered half their profits from taxes between 2008 and 2010.

The rest of us pay a variety of taxes that can consume over 40% of our incomes, such as state and local taxes, payroll taxes, property taxes, sales taxes, and excise taxes. These taxes are regressive and steadily rising. In my hometown of Chicago, the city with the highest sales tax in the country, where the state tax rate was recently increased by 66% and property taxes went up \$300 per homeowner, and where 2012 state education spending was cut by a greater percentage than in any other state, a tax break of \$85 million per year was given to a company (CME) that has a profit margin higher than any of the top 100 companies in the nation.

When my son's in a better mood I'll tell him about all this. I'll try to convince him that despite all the unfairness, paying taxes is still the best way for many of us to show our patriotism. The more benefits one has received from society, the more he or she should return to our country to keep it productive and well-maintained.

Worse than paying taxes, I'll tell him, is NOT paying taxes. Tax avoiders are cheating millions of people who have contributed to America's productivity over the years and would like to share in some of the resulting benefits.

And then I'll advise him not to stand too close when I start my own taxes.

[20120320-01](#)

11:05

SteveG

Fw: Consumers Union Petition: Push the Supreme Court Toward a Fair Healthcare Decision!

from Consumers Union:

As of right now, 65,000 other Americans added their names alongside yours on the giant banner we'll unfurl at the Supreme Court as it debates the new healthcare law.

But we're not done yet. We want 100,000 names to fill up every inch of that banner and show opponents and the insurance industry exactly who they are up against.

Write a short note at the top of this email and forward it to five of your friends and family. Have them 'virtually' join you at the Supreme Court that day!

Next week the media will focus on the shouting, chanting opponents of the law as they try to intimidate the Court. But these angry crowds don't represent the millions of Americans fed-up with skyrocketing premiums and industry tricks that keep us from getting the affordable medical care we deserve.

Signing our banner shows our leaders you want to keep your new rights under the law:

- The right to a cash refund or lower premiums if your insurance company spends too much on their overhead and excess profits, and not enough on your actual care.
- The right to coverage if you have a pre-existing condition, and an end to getting dropped or your treatment cut off if you get cancer or other serious illnesses.

- The right to keep children on your policy until they're 26, and an end to getting charged more based on your gender.
- Making members of Congress get the same health coverage as the rest of us!

If you want these rights and more, add your name to our banner now! Show our leaders you won't give up your new rights!

[https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/SPageNavigator/Rx\\_Supreme\\_Court\\_banner\\_petition.html?JServSessionIdr004=0p2fhf7902.app243a](https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/SPageNavigator/Rx_Supreme_Court_banner_petition.html?JServSessionIdr004=0p2fhf7902.app243a)

Watch your email in the coming days as we update our progress and post video of our virtual rally at the Court. Thank you for helping us reach our goal!

Sincerely, DeAnn Friedholm, YourHealthSecurity.org, Consumers Union, Policy and Action from Consumer Reports, 1101 17th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036

P.S. Want to have an even bigger impact? Take a moment to send your local newspaper a quick letter to the editor in support of healthcare rights. We did the work, you just need to click a few buttons and personalize it!

[https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/LteUser?lte.user=lte\\_resolve\\_zip&lte\\_id=6001](https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/LteUser?lte.user=lte_resolve_zip&lte_id=6001)

<a href="#">20120320-02</a>	11:29	Pam	Why There Are Monsters
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I had an insight this morning. Want to hear it? OK, then, here it is.

For months now I have been focusing on politics and the general state of things. It's hard not to, with politicians, talking heads, and opinion polls coming at us from every direction. I've also been disturbed by our military adventures and the precarious "balance of terror" we are trying to maintain. It's all been pretty negative, and I have not been the happiest camper.

But this morning I read a book review of a new work that examines the role, presence, and function of monsters in western literature, including Corneille, Racine, and Montaigne, as well as Shakespeare (Othello's stories that so impress Desdemona). I was reminded that human beings have been dealing with the monstrous for as long as we've been sentient. Classical literature is filled with monsters, which are symbolic of the dark, dangerous, irrational aspects of the human mind. Western religion begins with the clash of the Titans, after all. I got so excited intellectually as I was reading this article, and I remembered that I used to feel like that practically every day. When I was studying or teaching literature, I did not escape from harsh reality, rather I was able to allow literature to work its magic, i.e., to soothe the soul. Horace, one of our earliest literary critics, said the purpose of literature is to instruct and delight. The world's great literature contains many catalogues of horrors. It's the stories we tell about them that enable us to cope. I really don't know how people who don't read manage to stay sane. I know I couldn't. Who was it who said, "Nothing human is foreign to me."? Assad, the Taliban, violent oppression, and uncertainty are manifestations of a truth the ancients understood. Life can be brutal, but it can also be beautiful. We need the one in order to endure the other.

<a href="#">20120320-03</a>	12:15	Art	"10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts"
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Islamic Fundamentalists = Christian Evangelists?

I don't know about the rest of you but as I watch the Republican nomination process continue to lurch its way to some disastrous completion or another, I am beginning to wonder just what sort of country we might become. In Wisconsin recently a State legislator has proposed a bill that would penalize women who become pregnant if they are not married. He does not, however, support birth control because that is against God. No mention of men's role or responsibility in the bill. In Indiana some State legislator has introduced a bill to condemn the girl scouts because they cite women role model examples who are progressive or not to his Christian liking. In Virginia, where

I live we have passed a bill requiring mandatory sonograms before a woman can have an abortion (in the first trimester that will require a vaginal insertion (I thought that was rape???) and we have another bill in session that would say a fetus from day one is a person. Santorum has publicly stated that if a woman is raped by her father, local pastor or priest or just a friendly neighbor, well, while it is not good, she just has to make the best of it. That is almost a direct quote. And it just goes on.

To me this is approaching the same level of intrusion into my freedom and right to my own beliefs as the Islamic Fundamentals want and largely have for many of their people. If you want to see real repression, soon, you will not have to go abroad, just look around. I always thought we stood for freedom of the individual and the right to lead our own life in the way we wanted, as long as it did not infringe on others. Apparently not. Do we really want to resemble Afghanistan or Saudi society? That certainly seems the way we are headed. I know some good Christians will say, that is not what we want, but these same folks are electing these whackadoos who apparently do want that.

The below article [see FotM Newsletter #97] is pretty good and better articulates the outrage, thankfully, some people are feeling. I think each of us individuals need to take a close look in our individual mirrors and ask ourselves, is this really what we want?

"10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts" by Soraya Chemaly, Huffington Post

Mar. 15, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/soraya-chemaly/womens-reproductive-rights\\_b\\_1345214.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/soraya-chemaly/womens-reproductive-rights_b_1345214.html))

<a href="#">20120320-07</a>	14:47	Pam	Re: "10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts" (reply to Art, above)
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One more thing. As most of you know by now, I had a baby in 1968. It was a disaster at the time, but only because I didn't fit within the parameters of what was acceptable in our society. It was a disaster in name only, because creating another human being is a gift, a privilege, and an imperative for many women--like me. Because of the circumstances I might have considered abortion if it had been legal. I'm glad I didn't, and it didn't take long for me to realize that was not the route I would have chosen even given the choice. You might think that, because of my experience, I would oppose abortion. My feelings about this are complicated, but it all boils down to a woman's right to choose for HERSELF, not for her parents, her husband, or some self-righteous politician. Simple people want simple rules to live by, but life is rarely simple. Difficult choices have to be made, without the benefit of a one-size-fits-all morality. There is no such thing. The society I came of age in was as wrong as Hester Prynne's in the 17th c. Hester Prynne was the only moral character in *The Scarlet Letter*, a novel we assign students to read, with some irony, I might add.

I can't believe we're still discussing contraception and abortion. These are issues we settled long ago. It's bad enough that women's health is prey to some males' proclivities, but when behavior becomes the subject of scrutiny we have returned to Old Salem and the burning of witches. Punishing women for their sexuality has been sport for men for eons, but it is not civilized and it is not right. The laws that some state legislatures are considering would be ludicrous if they weren't so pernicious. There is nothing noble about any religion that treats women like breeders of livestock. I am not religious, but there are religious people I admire: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Elaine Pagels, the Dalai Lama, the minister at my best friend's church. I do not admire sanctimonious Santorum or grab-the-main-chance Newt, or politicians who hear god speaking to them and always saying--wouldn't you know?--exactly what they want to hear. I am embarrassed and ashamed that our country has smoothed a path for what are essentially charlatans. I can't believe we'll return to the bad old days, but I have enough doubt about that to make me worry at 2 a.m. I've valued the truth all my life, and I've had to keep secrets and tell lies in order to fit the social paradigm. I have felt like a fraud and a hypocrite. I believe the only moral thing I can do now is to tell the truth about my experience and argue as forcefully as I can for my ideas.

<a href="#">20120320-04</a>	13:06	SteveB	Fw: Get a Cool, Free, NationofChange Canvas Bag (for a Donation)
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from NationofChange:

<https://secure.nationofchange.org/bags/?ref=email>

20120320-05	13:22	Tom	"National Defense Resources Preparedness Executive Order"
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FREEDOM LOCKDOWN!

Please check this out, it is one of many EO's that President Obama and the regime put out every month! These "Globalists" (Republican & Democrat) have been planning this for over 80 years.

Let me know what your take is on this.

I have concluded, we do not have a representative form of government in our "Republic" anymore!

This is TOTAL Government Control of Commerce/Trade, Health, Defense, Safety, & "you name it!" I implore you to print it out, get out your highlighter, take notes, and then ask questions of our Czars 'come 'Rulers!

"Enabling Act" by Ed Asimus, ThunderTales Blogspot

Mar. 18, 2012, (<http://thundertales.blogspot.com/2012/03/enabling-act.html?m=1>)

This is long and detailed, but if you read with just the slightest bit of paranoia lurking in the back of your mind it should scare the hell out of you. If you put the language in context with review of the incumbents who fill those empowered positions, it will terrify you. If you view it historically\* and can smell a whiff of smoke from a burning Reichstag, you might not sleep well at night. If you take a literary perspective and consider Ayn Rand, you might be digging out a map of Colorado and looking for that secluded valley.

**The spin will be that this is merely a periodic update of a long-standing policy. The rationale will be that such authority must be in place before it is necessary. The terror will be that this sword will be hovering just above our society and the government is not as benevolent as we might wish to believe.**

[I thought this was important enough to our Freedom to reprint the entire document this time around. -SteveB]

The "ENABLING ACT" — "National Defense Resources Preparedness"

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/03/16/executive-order-national-defense-resources-preparedness>:

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
March 16, 2012  
Executive Order -- National Defense Resources Preparedness

EXECUTIVE ORDER  
NATIONAL DEFENSE RESOURCES PREPAREDNESS

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended (50 U.S.C. App. 2061 *et seq.*), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, it is hereby ordered as follows:

## PART I - PURPOSE, POLICY, AND IMPLEMENTATION

Section 101. Purpose. This order delegates authorities and addresses national defense resource policies and programs under the Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended (the "Act").

Sec. 102. Policy. The United States must have an industrial and technological base capable of meeting national defense requirements and capable of contributing to the technological superiority of its national defense equipment in peacetime and in times of national emergency. The domestic industrial and technological base is the foundation for national defense preparedness. The authorities provided in the Act shall be used to strengthen this base and to ensure it is capable of responding to the national defense needs of the United States.

Sec. 103. General Functions. Executive departments and agencies (agencies) responsible for plans and programs relating to national defense (as defined in section 801(j) of this order), or for resources and services needed to support such plans and programs, shall:

- (a) identify requirements for the full spectrum of emergencies, including essential military and civilian demand;
- (b) assess on an ongoing basis the capability of the domestic industrial and technological base to satisfy requirements in peacetime and times of national emergency, specifically evaluating the availability of the most critical resource and production sources, including subcontractors and suppliers, materials, skilled labor, and professional and technical personnel;
- (c) be prepared, in the event of a potential threat to the security of the United States, to take actions necessary to ensure the availability of adequate resources and production capability, including services and critical technology, for national defense requirements;
- (d) improve the efficiency and responsiveness of the domestic industrial base to support national defense requirements; and
- (e) foster cooperation between the defense and commercial sectors for research and development and for acquisition of materials, services, components, and equipment to enhance industrial base efficiency and responsiveness.

Sec. 104. Implementation.

- (a) The National Security Council and Homeland Security Council, in conjunction with the National Economic Council, shall serve as the integrated policymaking forum for consideration and formulation of national defense resource preparedness policy and shall make recommendations to the President on the use of authorities under the Act.
- (b) The Secretary of Homeland Security shall:
  - (1) advise the President on issues of national defense resource preparedness and on the use of the authorities and functions delegated by this order;
  - (2) provide for the central coordination of the plans and programs incident to authorities and functions delegated under this order, and provide guidance to agencies assigned functions under this order, developed in consultation with such agencies; and
  - (3) report to the President periodically concerning all program activities conducted pursuant to this order.
- (c) The Defense Production Act Committee, described in section 701 of this order, shall:
  - (1) in a manner consistent with section 2(b) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2062(b), advise the President through the Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor, the Assistant to the

President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, and the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy on the effective use of the authorities under the Act; and  
(2) prepare and coordinate an annual report to the Congress pursuant to section 722(d) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2171(d).

(d) The Secretary of Commerce, in cooperation with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and other agencies, shall:

- (1) analyze potential effects of national emergencies on actual production capability, taking into account the entire production system, including shortages of resources, and develop recommended preparedness measures to strengthen capabilities for production increases in national emergencies; and
- (2) perform industry analyses to assess capabilities of the industrial base to support the national defense, and develop policy recommendations to improve the international competitiveness of specific domestic industries and their abilities to meet national defense program needs.

## PART II - PRIORITIES AND ALLOCATIONS

### Sec. 201. Priorities and Allocations Authorities.

(a) The authority of the President conferred by section 101 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2071, to require acceptance and priority performance of contracts or orders (other than contracts of employment) to promote the national defense over performance of any other contracts or orders, and to allocate materials, services, and facilities as deemed necessary or appropriate to promote the national defense, is delegated to the following agency heads:

- (1) the Secretary of Agriculture with respect to food resources, food resource facilities, livestock resources, veterinary resources, plant health resources, and the domestic distribution of farm equipment and commercial fertilizer;
- (2) the Secretary of Energy with respect to all forms of energy;
- (3) the Secretary of Health and Human Services with respect to health resources;
- (4) the Secretary of Transportation with respect to all forms of civil transportation;
- (5) the Secretary of Defense with respect to water resources; and
- (6) the Secretary of Commerce with respect to all other materials, services, and facilities, including construction materials.

(b) The Secretary of each agency delegated authority under subsection (a) of this section (resource departments) shall plan for and issue regulations to prioritize and allocate resources and establish standards and procedures by which the authority shall be used to promote the national defense, under both emergency and non-emergency conditions. Each Secretary shall authorize the heads of other agencies, as appropriate, to place priority ratings on contracts and orders for materials, services, and facilities needed in support of programs approved under section 202 of this order.

(c) Each resource department shall act, as necessary and appropriate, upon requests for special priorities assistance, as defined by section 801(l) of this order, in a time frame consistent with the urgency of the need at hand. In situations where there are competing program requirements for limited resources, the resource department shall consult with the Secretary who made the required determination under section 202 of this order. Such Secretary shall coordinate with and identify for the resource department which program requirements to prioritize on the basis of operational urgency. In situations involving more than one Secretary making such a required determination under section 202 of this order, the Secretaries shall coordinate with and identify for the resource department which program requirements should receive priority on the basis of operational urgency.

(d) If agreement cannot be reached between two such Secretaries, then the issue shall be referred to the President through the Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

(e) The Secretary of each resource department, when necessary, shall make the finding required under section 101(b) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2071(b). This finding shall be submitted for the President's approval through the Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism. Upon such approval, the Secretary of the resource department that made the finding may use the authority of section 101(a) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2071(a), to control the general distribution of any material (including applicable services) in the civilian market.

Sec. 202. Determinations. Except as provided in section 201(e) of this order, the authority delegated by section 201 of this order may be used only to support programs that have been determined in writing as necessary or appropriate to promote the national defense:

- (a) by the Secretary of Defense with respect to military production and construction, military assistance to foreign nations, military use of civil transportation, stockpiles managed by the Department of Defense, space, and directly related activities;
- (b) by the Secretary of Energy with respect to energy production and construction, distribution and use, and directly related activities; and
- (c) by the Secretary of Homeland Security with respect to all other national defense programs, including civil defense and continuity of Government.

Sec. 203. Maximizing Domestic Energy Supplies. The authorities of the President under section 101(c)(1) (2) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2071(c)(1) (2), are delegated to the Secretary of Commerce, with the exception that the authority to make findings that materials (including equipment), services, and facilities are critical and essential, as described in section 101(c)(2)(A) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2071(c)(2)(A), is delegated to the Secretary of Energy.

Sec. 204. Chemical and Biological Warfare. The authority of the President conferred by section 104(b) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2074(b), is delegated to the Secretary of Defense. This authority may not be further delegated by the Secretary.

### PART III - EXPANSION OF PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY AND SUPPLY

Sec. 301. Loan Guarantees.

(a) To reduce current or projected shortfalls of resources, critical technology items, or materials essential for the national defense, the head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense, as defined in section 801(h) of this order, is authorized pursuant to section 301 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2091, to guarantee loans by private institutions.

(b) Each guaranteeing agency is designated and authorized to:

- (1) act as fiscal agent in the making of its own guarantee contracts and in otherwise carrying out the purposes of section 301 of the Act; and
- (2) contract with any Federal Reserve Bank to assist the agency in serving as fiscal agent.

(c) Terms and conditions of guarantees under this authority shall be determined in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The guaranteeing agency is authorized, following such consultation, to prescribe: (1) either specifically or by maximum limits or otherwise, rates of interest, guarantee and commitment fees, and other charges which may be made in connection with such guarantee contracts; and (2) regulations governing the forms and procedures (which shall be uniform to the extent practicable) to be utilized in connection therewith.

Sec. 302. Loans. To reduce current or projected shortfalls of resources, critical technology items, or materials essential for the national defense, the head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority of the President under section 302 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2092, to make loans thereunder. Terms and conditions of loans under this authority shall be determined in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Director of OMB.

Sec. 303. Additional Authorities.

(a) To create, maintain, protect, expand, or restore domestic industrial base capabilities essential for the national defense, the head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority of the President under section 303 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2093, to make provision for purchases of, or commitments to purchase, an industrial resource or a critical technology item for Government use or resale, and to make provision for the development of production capabilities, and for the increased use of emerging technologies in security program applications, and to enable rapid transition of emerging technologies.

(b) Materials acquired under section 303 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2093, that exceed the needs of the programs under the Act may be transferred to the National Defense Stockpile, if, in the judgment of the Secretary of Defense as the National Defense Stockpile Manager, such transfers are in the public interest.

Sec. 304. Subsidy Payments. To ensure the supply of raw or nonprocessed materials from high cost sources, or to ensure maximum production or supply in any area at stable prices of any materials in light of a temporary increase in transportation cost, the head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority of the President under section 303(c) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2093(c), to make subsidy payments, after consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Director of OMB.

Sec. 305. Determinations and Findings.

(a) Pursuant to budget authority provided by an appropriations act in advance for credit assistance under section 301 or 302 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2091, 2092, and consistent with the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990, as amended (FCRA), 2 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*, the head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority to make the determinations set forth in sections 301(a)(2) and 302(b)(2) of the Act, in consultation with the Secretary making the required determination under section 202 of this order; provided, that such determinations shall be made after due consideration of the provisions of OMB Circular A 129 and the credit subsidy score for the relevant loan or loan guarantee as approved by OMB pursuant to FCRA.

(b) Other than any determination by the President under section 303(a)(7)(b) of the Act, the head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority to make the required determinations, judgments, certifications, findings, and notifications defined under section 303 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2093, in consultation with the Secretary making the required determination under section 202 of this order.

Sec. 306. Strategic and Critical Materials. The Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with the Secretary of Defense as the National Defense Stockpile Manager, are each delegated the authority of the President under section 303(a)(1)(B) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2093(a)(1)(B), to encourage the exploration, development, and mining of strategic and critical materials and other materials.

Sec. 307. Substitutes. The head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority of the President under section 303(g) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2093(g), to make provision for the development of substitutes for strategic and critical materials, critical components, critical technology items, and other resources to aid the national defense.

Sec. 308. Government-Owned Equipment. The head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority of the President under section 303(e) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2093(e), to:

(a) procure and install additional equipment, facilities, processes, or improvements to plants, factories, and other industrial facilities owned by the Federal Government and to procure and install Government owned equipment in plants, factories, or other industrial facilities owned by private persons;

(b) provide for the modification or expansion of privately owned facilities, including the modification or improvement of production processes, when taking actions under sections 301, 302, or 303 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2091, 2092, 2093; and

(c) sell or otherwise transfer equipment owned by the Federal Government and installed under section 303(e) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2093(e), to the owners of such plants, factories, or other industrial facilities.

Sec. 309. Defense Production Act Fund. The Secretary of Defense is designated the Defense Production Act Fund Manager, in accordance with section 304(f) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2094(f), and shall carry out the duties specified in section 304 of the Act, in consultation with the agency heads having approved, and appropriated funds for, projects under title III of the Act.

Sec. 310. Critical Items. The head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority of the President under section 107(b)(1) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2077(b)(1), to take appropriate action to ensure that critical components, critical technology items, essential materials, and industrial resources are available from reliable sources when needed to meet defense requirements during peacetime, graduated mobilization, and national emergency. Appropriate action may include restricting contract solicitations to reliable sources, restricting contract solicitations to domestic sources (pursuant to statutory authority), stockpiling critical components, and developing substitutes for critical components or critical technology items.

Sec. 311. Strengthening Domestic Capability. The head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense is delegated the authority of the President under section 107(a) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2077(a), to utilize the authority of title III of the Act or any other provision of law to provide appropriate incentives to develop, maintain, modernize, restore, and expand the productive capacities of domestic sources for critical components, critical technology items, materials, and industrial resources essential for the execution of the national security strategy of the United States.

Sec. 312. Modernization of Equipment. The head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense, in accordance with section 108(b) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2078(b), may utilize the authority of title III of the Act to guarantee the purchase or lease of advance manufacturing equipment, and any related services with respect to any such equipment for purposes of the Act. In considering title III projects, the head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense shall provide a strong preference for proposals submitted by a small business supplier or subcontractor in accordance with section 108(b)(2) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2078(b)(2).

#### PART IV - VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Sec. 401. Delegations. The authority of the President under sections 708(c) and (d) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2158(c), (d), is delegated to the heads of agencies otherwise delegated authority under this order. The status of the use of such delegations shall be furnished to the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Sec. 402. Advisory Committees. The authority of the President under section 708(d) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2158(d), and delegated in section 401 of this order (relating to establishment of advisory committees) shall be exercised only after consultation with, and in accordance with, guidelines and procedures established by the Administrator of General Services.

Sec. 403. Regulations. The Secretary of Homeland Security, after approval of the Attorney General, and after consultation by the Attorney General with the Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, shall promulgate rules pursuant to section 708(e) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2158(e), incorporating standards and procedures by which voluntary agreements and plans of action may be developed and carried out. Such rules may be adopted by other agencies to fulfill the rulemaking requirement of section 708(e) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2158(e).

## PART V - EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL

### Sec. 501. National Defense Executive Reserve.

(a) In accordance with section 710(e) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2160(e), there is established in the executive branch a National Defense Executive Reserve (NDER) composed of persons of recognized expertise from various segments of the private sector and from Government (except full time Federal employees) for training for employment in executive positions in the Federal Government in the event of a national defense emergency.

(b) The Secretary of Homeland Security shall issue necessary guidance for the NDER program, including appropriate guidance for establishment, recruitment, training, monitoring, and activation of NDER units and shall be responsible for the overall coordination of the NDER program. The authority of the President under section 710(e) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2160(e), to determine periods of national defense emergency is delegated to the Secretary of Homeland Security.

(c) The head of any agency may implement section 501(a) of this order with respect to NDER operations in such agency.

(d) The head of each agency with an NDER unit may exercise the authority under section 703 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2153, to employ civilian personnel when activating all or a part of its NDER unit. The exercise of this authority shall be subject to the provisions of sections 501(e) and (f) of this order and shall not be redelegated.

(e) The head of an agency may activate an NDER unit, in whole or in part, upon the written determination of the Secretary of Homeland Security that an emergency affecting the national defense exists and that the activation of the unit is necessary to carry out the emergency program functions of the agency.

(f) Prior to activating the NDER unit, the head of the agency shall notify, in writing, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism of the impending activation.

Sec. 502. Consultants. The head of each agency otherwise delegated functions under this order is delegated the authority of the President under sections 710(b) and (c) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2160(b), (c), to employ persons of outstanding experience and ability without compensation and to employ experts, consultants, or organizations. The authority delegated by this section may not be redelegated.

## PART VI - LABOR REQUIREMENTS

### Sec. 601. Secretary of Labor.

(a) The Secretary of Labor, in coordination with the Secretary of Defense and the heads of other agencies, as deemed appropriate by the Secretary of Labor, shall:

- (1) collect and maintain data necessary to make a continuing appraisal of the Nation's workforce needs for purposes of national defense;
- (2) upon request by the Director of Selective Service, and in coordination with the Secretary of Defense, assist the Director of Selective Service in development of policies regulating the induction and deferment of persons for duty in the armed services;
- (3) upon request from the head of an agency with authority under this order, consult with that agency with respect to: (i) the effect of contemplated actions on labor demand and utilization; (ii) the relation of labor demand to materials and facilities requirements; and (iii) such other matters as will assist in making the exercise of priority and allocations functions consistent with effective utilization and distribution of labor;

- (4) upon request from the head of an agency with authority under this order: (i) formulate plans, programs, and policies for meeting the labor requirements of actions to be taken for national defense purposes; and (ii) estimate training needs to help address national defense requirements and promote necessary and appropriate training programs; and
- (5) develop and implement an effective labor management relations policy to support the activities and programs under this order, with the cooperation of other agencies as deemed appropriate by the Secretary of Labor, including the National Labor Relations Board, the Federal Labor Relations Authority, the National Mediation Board, and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

(b) All agencies shall cooperate with the Secretary of Labor, upon request, for the purposes of this section, to the extent permitted by law.

## PART VII - DEFENSE PRODUCTION ACT COMMITTEE

### Sec. 701. The Defense Production Act Committee.

(a) The Defense Production Act Committee (Committee) shall be composed of the following members, in accordance with section 722(b) of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2171(b):

- (1) The Secretary of State;
- (2) The Secretary of the Treasury;
- (3) The Secretary of Defense;
- (4) The Attorney General;
- (5) The Secretary of the Interior;
- (6) The Secretary of Agriculture;
- (7) The Secretary of Commerce;
- (8) The Secretary of Labor;
- (9) The Secretary of Health and Human Services;
- (10) The Secretary of Transportation;
- (11) The Secretary of Energy;
- (12) The Secretary of Homeland Security;
- (13) The Director of National Intelligence;
- (14) The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency;
- (15) The Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers;
- (16) The Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; and
- (17) The Administrator of General Services.

(b) The Director of OMB and the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall be invited to participate in all Committee meetings and activities in an advisory role. The Chairperson, as designated by the President pursuant to section 722 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2171, may invite the heads of other agencies or offices to participate in Committee meetings and activities in an advisory role, as appropriate.

Sec. 702. Offsets. The Secretary of Commerce shall prepare and submit to the Congress the annual report required by section 723 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2172, in consultation with the Secretaries of State, the Treasury, Defense, and Labor, the United States Trade Representative, the Director of National Intelligence, and the heads of other agencies as appropriate. The heads of agencies shall provide the Secretary of Commerce with such information as may be necessary for the effective performance of this function.

## PART VIII - GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 801. Definitions. In addition to the definitions in section 702 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2152, the following definitions apply throughout this order:

(a) "Civil transportation" includes movement of persons and property by all modes of transportation in interstate, intrastate, or foreign commerce within the United States, its territories and possessions, and the District of Columbia, and related public storage and warehousing, ports, services, equipment and facilities, such as transportation carrier shop and repair facilities. "Civil transportation" also shall include direction, control, and coordination of civil transportation capacity regardless of ownership. "Civil transportation" shall not include transportation owned or controlled by the Department of Defense, use of petroleum and gas pipelines, and coal slurry pipelines used only to supply energy production facilities directly.

(b) "Energy" means all forms of energy including petroleum, gas (both natural and manufactured), electricity, solid fuels (including all forms of coal, coke, coal chemicals, coal liquification, and coal gasification), solar, wind, other types of renewable energy, atomic energy, and the production, conservation, use, control, and distribution (including pipelines) of all of these forms of energy.

(c) "Farm equipment" means equipment, machinery, and repair parts manufactured for use on farms in connection with the production or preparation for market use of food resources.

(d) "Fertilizer" means any product or combination of products that contain one or more of the elements nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium for use as a plant nutrient.

(e) "Food resources" means all commodities and products, (simple, mixed, or compound), or complements to such commodities or products, that are capable of being ingested by either human beings or animals, irrespective of other uses to which such commodities or products may be put, at all stages of processing from the raw commodity to the products thereof in vendible form for human or animal consumption. "Food resources" also means potable water packaged in commercially marketable containers, all starches, sugars, vegetable and animal or marine fats and oils, seed, cotton, hemp, and flax fiber, but does not mean any such material after it loses its identity as an agricultural commodity or agricultural product.

(f) "Food resource facilities" means plants, machinery, vehicles (including on farm), and other facilities required for the production, processing, distribution, and storage (including cold storage) of food resources, and for the domestic distribution of farm equipment and fertilizer (excluding transportation thereof).

(g) "Functions" include powers, duties, authority, responsibilities, and discretion.

(h) "Head of each agency engaged in procurement for the national defense" means the heads of the Departments of State, Justice, the Interior, and Homeland Security, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the General Services Administration, and all other agencies with authority delegated under section 201 of this order.

(i) "Health resources" means drugs, biological products, medical devices, materials, facilities, health supplies, services and equipment required to diagnose, mitigate or prevent the impairment of, improve, treat, cure, or restore the physical or mental health conditions of the population.

(j) "National defense" means programs for military and energy production or construction, military or critical infrastructure assistance to any foreign nation, homeland security, stockpiling, space, and any directly related activity. Such term includes emergency preparedness activities conducted pursuant to title VI of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5195 *et seq.*, and critical infrastructure protection and restoration.

(k) "Offsets" means compensation practices required as a condition of purchase in either government to government or commercial sales of defense articles and/or defense services as defined by the Arms Export Control Act, 22 U.S.C. 2751 *et seq.*, and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations, 22 C.F.R. 120.1 130.17.

(l) "Special priorities assistance" means action by resource departments to assist with expediting deliveries, placing rated orders, locating suppliers, resolving production or delivery conflicts between various rated

orders, addressing problems that arise in the fulfillment of a rated order or other action authorized by a delegated agency, and determining the validity of rated orders.

(m) "Strategic and critical materials" means materials (including energy) that

- (1) would be needed to supply the military, industrial, and essential civilian needs of the United States during a national emergency, and
- (2) are not found or produced in the United States in sufficient quantities to meet such need and are vulnerable to the termination or reduction of the availability of the material.

(n) "Water resources" means all usable water, from all sources, within the jurisdiction of the United States, that can be managed, controlled, and allocated to meet emergency requirements, except "water resources" does not include usable water that qualifies as "food resources."

#### Sec. 802. General.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in section 802(c) of this order, the authorities vested in the President by title VII of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2151 *et seq.*, are delegated to the head of each agency in carrying out the delegated authorities under the Act and this order, by the Secretary of Labor in carrying out part VI of this order, and by the Secretary of the Treasury in exercising the functions assigned in Executive Order 11858, as amended.

(b) The authorities that may be exercised and performed pursuant to section 802(a) of this order shall include:

- (1) the power to redelegate authorities, and to authorize the successive redelegation of authorities to agencies, officers, and employees of the Government; and
- (2) the power of subpoena under section 705 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2155, with respect to (i) authorities delegated in parts II, III, and section 702 of this order, and (ii) the functions assigned to the Secretary of the Treasury in Executive Order 11858, as amended, provided that the subpoena power referenced in subsections (i) and (ii) shall be utilized only after the scope and purpose of the investigation, inspection, or inquiry to which the subpoena relates have been defined either by the appropriate officer identified in section 802(a) of this order or by such other person or persons as the officer shall designate.

(c) Excluded from the authorities delegated by section 802(a) of this order are authorities delegated by parts IV and V of this order, authorities in section 721 and 722 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2170 2171, and the authority with respect to fixing compensation under section 703 of the Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 2153.

#### Sec. 803. Authority.

(a) Executive Order 12919 of June 3, 1994, and sections 401(3) (4) of Executive Order 12656 of November 18, 1988, are revoked. All other previously issued orders, regulations, rulings, certificates, directives, and other actions relating to any function affected by this order shall remain in effect except as they are inconsistent with this order or are subsequently amended or revoked under proper authority. Nothing in this order shall affect the validity or force of anything done under previous delegations or other assignment of authority under the Act.

(b) Nothing in this order shall affect the authorities assigned under Executive Order 11858 of May 7, 1975, as amended, except as provided in section 802 of this order.

(c) Nothing in this order shall affect the authorities assigned under Executive Order 12472 of April 3, 1984, as amended.

#### Sec. 804. General Provisions.

(a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect functions of the Director of OMB relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
March 16, 2012.

<a href="#">20120320-06</a>	13:36	Tom	"International Pressure on Bolivarian Countries: A Hopeful Sign"
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Freedom of the press in Ecuador...

"International Pressure on Bolivarian Countries: A Hopeful Sign" by Luis Fleischman, The Americas Report

Mar. 19, 2012, (<http://www.theamericasreport.com/2012/03/19/international-pressure-on-bolivarian-countries-a-hopeful-sign/>)

After a decade of silence and an apologetic attitude towards the countries of the Bolivarian alliance (ALBA), the international community finally protested attacks against freedom of the press in Ecuador, forcing the Ecuadorian president to back off.

For years the Organization of American States and countries of the region have been enablers and thus passive accomplices of the anti-democratic wave that has penetrated Latin America. Under the pretext of helping the poor and the disenfranchised, Bolivarian regimes led by Venezuela and including Nicaragua, Cuba, Ecuador and Bolivia have violated civil, political and human rights, freedom of the press and judicial autonomy.

Finally, the OAS Inter-American Court of Human Rights challenged an Ecuadorian Supreme Court decision upholding President Rafael Correa's lawsuit against a leading opposition newspaper. The charge against the newspaper was based on an opinion article calling Correa a dictator and accusing him of giving troops permission to fire on a hospital full of people during the September, 2010 police uprising.

The defendants were sentenced to three years in prison and also fined. However, after the Inter American Court challenged the Ecuadorian ruling, international pressure was unleashed. Papers protesting the verdict included the New York Times, the Washington Post and the San Francisco Chronicle and other international publications.

This case shows how effective international pressure can be if important voices speak up.

In all of the Bolivarian Alliance countries there are and have been myriad examples of human rights abuses. In countries like Venezuela there is now political violence aimed at undermining the candidacy of the head of the political opposition, Mr. Henrique Capriles Radonski. A few days ago, Chavez opened fire on Capriles Radonski's supporters, wounding the son of a congressman who happens to be a disenchanted former supporter of Chavez. Capriles Radonski is also the victim of virulent anti-Semitism, a campaign instigated by Chavez. In Venezuela there are political prisoners including judges who are incarcerated for rendering verdicts the President disapproves, who continue to languish in Chavez's jails because nobody has demanded their liberty. (See our article on this subject here)

Even the U.S Government continues to apply its policy of not upsetting these countries in order not to exacerbate their anti-Americanism, which by the way, will never change under these regimes. The current U.S. Administration

needs to understand that the Bolivarian regimes are no different than the Iranian or Syrian regimes in so far as their policies are repressive, inflexible, and consistently violate the human rights and press freedoms of their own citizens.

To speak up on behalf of the human rights of these populations is the right thing to do. Looking the other way and trying to appease these regimes will only embolden them to continue with more abuses.

Latin America does not occupy the minds of too many people in America or in Europe. The Chinese and the Russians are glad to see this happen. Both have been the main supporters of the arch-repressive Assad regime in Syria and are now delighted to see Western indifference towards the Western Hemisphere. When the Bolivarian regimes become stronger and more oppressive (this is a very likely situation since Chavez or his successors will probably refuse to give up their power and a civil war will possibly ensue), both powers will be there to publicly defend them while the U.S, its Western allies, and Latin American democracies will continue to watch the carnage afraid of interfering in their internal affairs.

The Syrian example speaks for itself. The Syrian people stand now alone, helpless and asking for some assistance from the West. The West hesitates while the Russians are actively arming Assad.

We cannot help but see a similar future in our own backyard.

<a href="#">20120320-08</a>	15:49	Ben	"South Carolina Teacher Suspended for Reading Ender's Game to Middle School Students"
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It's almost a call-to-arms. Main article is below, but also see:

<http://news.slashdot.org/story/12/03/20/1749236/teacher-suspended-for-reading-enders-game-to-students>

I liked this comment: "I don't want to live on this pl- no. I don't want THESE people to live on my planet anymore."

I read this book to my children while they were still in the middle grades of elementary school. They got it, they loved it -- and so did my wife.

"South Carolina Teacher Suspended for Reading *Ender's Game* to Middle School Students" by Erik Kain, *Forbes*

Mar. 19, 2012, (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2012/03/19/south-carolina-teacher-suspended-for-reading-enders-game-to-middle-school-students/>)

In South Carolina a teacher has been placed on administrative leave for reading excerpts of Orson Scott Card's science fiction classic *Ender's Game* to his middle school students.

"The parent that reported him to the school district complained that the book was pornographic," Tod Kelly writes. "[T]hat same parent also asked the local police to file criminal charges against the teacher. As of today, the police have not yet decided whether or not to file charges (which is probably a good sign that they won't). The school district, however, appears to agree with the parent, is considering firing the teacher and will be eliminating the book from the school.

"Commonsense Media does say that the book has some violence and should be read by children over 12\*," he continues, "but the children in this class were 14."

A film adaptation of *Ender's Game* is hitting movie theaters in 2013. I imagine it will be no more 'pornographic' than the book, which was written decades ago for teenagers and has, to my knowledge, never been described as pornography before now.

Orson Scott Card is a conservative Mormon and an icon in the science fiction and fantasy universe. He writes occasionally at the conservative magazine National Review where he sometimes offers up really good recommendations on fantasy novels.

I'm sure that if he's heard about this controversy he's as surprised as the unfortunate teacher.

We've heard plenty of cases of fantasy novels being banned. Certainly Harry Potter has met with plenty of resistance from some groups for its inclusion of magic (even though it has been described by its author as at least partly a Christian story.) Anything with magic and witches is subject to a swift censorship in American schools, even though the pillars of fantasy such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and the *Narnia* books by C.S. Lewis are all rooted in Christianity.

But *Ender's Game* is a science fiction classic that blends video games with futuristic war-for-survival. And it's written specifically with young readers in mind. It's a tiny bit violent, but not anything even close to something like *The Hunger Games*. To be fair, I'm not sure I'd want a teacher reading those books to students, but they're much, much more violent than anything in *Ender's Game*. (I'm still not sure how the movie avoids an R rating, honestly.)

Either way, I think one of our most precious freedoms is the freedom of speech, and I think it's pretty unsettling when our public institutions of learning at whatever level start firing or suspending teachers for this sort of thing, or banning Mark Twain or Roald Dahl books. It's *Inherit the Wind* all over again.

There's not a lot we can do, of course. Education is local. It always has been and it always will be. That's a curse and a blessing. Bad decisions are less public and more likely to happen at the local level, but they're also more contained than decisions made at the federal level.

Anyways, I'd suggest that the officials in this teacher's school district do a bit more science fiction reading before they make a final decision. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* should do the trick.

Censorship is a slippery slope.

Update: See my follow-up post to this which discusses the other two books the teacher read to students...

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2012/03/20/south-carolina-teacher-suspended-for-enders-game-also-read-students-agatha-christie/>

Update 2: According to an update at io9:

According to a news report by local station WRDW, the police incident report in the case claims that the teacher read "pornographic material from the Internet to the students in class. One of the stories was about prostitutes having their faces covered with ejaculation." But according to the WRDW report, the school is still maintaining that the offending material was just three books that the teacher read to class, which were primarily offensive due to swear words. (Thanks to AJRimmer for pointing us to this.)

We've got calls out to the school, the police, and the school district. We'll post an update when we learn anything else.

A couple thoughts: first off, it's a little odd that the school would maintain it was just the books if this wasn't the case. It's also odd that only one student would complain of something so egregious. I guess it's impossible to know anything until this is cleared up.

Update 3: Orson Scott Card has commented on this saying that he believes other material was being read off the internet that has nothing to do with his or the other books involved in the suspension of the teacher:

The teacher was reading Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*, which the parent said, was pornographic. But Card told the Doug Wright Show, the way he understands it, the teacher had also been reading

inappropriate material off the Internet to the class. Card believes the parent must have looked at the reading list, saw *Ender's Game*, and got upset.

"*Ender's Game* has been on an evangelical hit list for a long time, for no other reason, but that I'm Mormon," Card said.

Card said he wrote the dialogue in 1984 based on what he was hearing children say to each other when they thought no adults were around, so the book would not have shocked the South Carolina class. He said there is nothing pornographic in the book.

"There's nothing in *Ender's Game* that they are not completely familiar with," Card said. "These kids are 14 year olds in South Carolina. I know for a fact it is impossible that they aren't hearing those words at least once a week, if not every day."

Card said his book should have nothing to do with the suspension of the teacher. It was the inappropriate material from the Internet that would have contributed to the suspension.

"The other things that the teacher was reading included things that were simply out of place," Card said. "I'm not leaping to the defense of the teacher; he showed very poor judgment. Should he lose his job? Oh c'mon. People should have room to learn."

Obviously this goes beyond what initial reports and the statement from the school led us to believe.

Update 4: Alyssa Rosenberg is worth reading on the issue of school policy here:

But more to the point, it's worrisome that a teacher could be suspended for exercising discretion in trying to enrich his class. The key point here, I think, is whether he would have been suspended had he gone through the required preview process and a parent complained afterwards. A review process isn't an utterly unreasonable thing to ask, but I'd hate to think the school might have still thrown him under the bus after approving his decision.

Schools have an obligation to make sure their students aren't exposed to inappropriate material prematurely. But they also have a responsibility to steer a course that moderates between parents who want their children exposed to nothing and parents who aren't paying any attention at all. The classroom is an interim step between the closed environment of the home and the wide-open, unprotected real world. By the standards of that world, *Ender's Game* isn't anything close to pornography, and it's perfectly appropriate reading for 14-year-olds.

So far, all we know is what the school maintains is their reason for suspending the teacher. Until more comes out, the rest appears to be little better than rumor.



from Health Care for America Now:

The House Republicans' plan to end Medicare as we know it is coming back this week. Please take this opportunity to share information about this reckless plan with your friends and family.

<https://secure.healthcareforamericanow.org/page/share/2012-ryan-budget>

The House GOP budget would fundamentally change Medicare from a single-payer plan that provides guaranteed benefits and coverage into a voucher plan designed to pay a portion of premiums to private insurance companies.

Representative Paul Ryan's budget plan would so drastically change the way America's seniors are provided health care coverage that it becomes a completely unrecognizable, inferior and dangerous program.

The Ryan plan essentially would revoke the guarantees that provide seniors and people with disabilities a specific set of benefits and services, replacing it with vouchers covering a portion of premiums to private insurance companies. If Republicans get rid of the guarantees to benefits and services, it will destroy the Medicare program that seniors have relied on for nearly 50 years. They talk about providing a traditional Medicare option at first, but the way they designed this guarantees it will soon fail and have to be eliminated.

We have paid into the Medicare system our entire working lives. Under the GOP's plan, guaranteed coverage would be phased out over time. When we retire, whether that's in 10 years or 40, we would be enrolling in a Medicare system based solely on private insurance companies.

Private insurers seek to maximize profits while minimizing costs. This leads to a health care system that wasn't designed to ensure that seniors get quality care, but instead is designed to line the pockets of insurance company executives.

In the coming weeks we will send you more information about this attack on Medicare.

While walking down the street one day a Corrupt Senator (that may be redundant) was tragically hit by a car and died.

His soul arrives in heaven and is greeted by Peter at the entrance.

"Welcome to heaven," says St. Peter. "Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in," says the Senator.

"Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from the higher ups. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity."

"Really?, I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven," says the Senator.

"I'm sorry, but we have our rules."

And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell.

The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course.

In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him.

Everyone is very happy and in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people.

They play a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and the finest champagne.

Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly guy who is having a good time dancing and telling jokes.

They are all having such a good time that before the Senator realizes it, it is time to go.

Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises.

The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens in heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him, "Now it's time to visit heaven..."

So, 24 hours passed with the Senator joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns.

"Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity."

The Senator reflects for a minute, then he answers: "Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell."

So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell...

Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage.

He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls to the ground.

The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulders.

"I don't understand," stammers the Senator. "Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable. What happened?"

The devil smiles at him and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning. Today, you voted.."

Vote wisely on November 2, 2012

[20120320-12](#) 20:17 Pam Re: Heaven or Hell? (reply to MarthaH, above)

I love it!

[20120320-13](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Portland, Maine

<http://people.maine.com/publius/almanac/encycweb/htm/portland.htm>

Ram Island Ledge Lighthouse, Portland Harbor, Maine (*USA Today*)



—Friends of the Middle,

Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #100 — MAR. 22, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **It Is Simply NOT Going to Happen!**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 22, 2012)

Paul Ryan and the rest of the Republicans might as well understand once and for all—DEMOCRATS AND A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS ARE NOT GOING TO ALLOW THE GOP TO RETURN THE U.S. TO THE 19TH CENTURY! It is simply NOT going to happen! There would be much less of a political disaster for Republicans if they would just recognize this simple fact and work in a bipartisan way to help fix things instead of panicking. But, unfortunately for America and for Republicans most particularly, that's simply not going to happen either. Bye, bye, self-destructive GOP, it's been nice knowin' ya! LOL!

"The Republicans' Social-Darwinist Budget Plan" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Mar. 21, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/republican-s-social-darwinist-budget-plan-1332336007>)

In announcing the Republicans' new budget and tax plan Tuesday, House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan said "We are sharpening the contrast between the path that we're proposing and the path of debt and decline the president has placed us upon."

Ryan is right about sharpening the contrast. But the plan doesn't do much to reduce the debt. Even by its own estimate the deficit would drop to \$166 billion in 2018 and then begin growing again.

The real contrast is over what the plan does for the rich and what it does to everyone else. It reduces the top individual and corporate tax rates to 25 percent. This would give the wealthiest Americans an average tax cut of at least \$150,000 a year.

The money would come out of programs for the elderly, lower-middle families, and the poor.

Seniors would get subsidies to buy private health insurance or Medicare – but the subsidies would be capped. So as medical costs increased, seniors would fall further and further behind.

Other cuts would come out of food stamps, Pell grants to offset the college tuition of kids from poor families, and scores of other programs that now help middle-income and the poor.

The plan also calls for repealing Obama's health-care overhaul, thereby eliminating healthcare for 30 million Americans and allowing insurers to discriminate against (and drop from coverage) people with pre-existing conditions.

The plan would carve an additional \$19 billion out of next year's "discretionary" spending over and above what Democrats agreed to last year. Needless to say, discretionary spending includes most of programs for lower-income families.

Not surprisingly, the Pentagon would be spared.

So what's the guiding principle here? Pure social Darwinism. Reward the rich and cut off the help to anyone who needs it.

Ryan says too many Americans rely on government benefits. "We don't want to turn the safety net into a hammock that lulls able-bodied people into lives of dependency."

Well, I have news for Paul Ryan. Almost 23 million able-bodied people still can't find work. They're not being lulled into dependency. They and their families could use some help. Even if the economy continues to generate new jobs at the rate it's been going the last three months, we wouldn't see normal rates of unemployment until 2017.

And most Americans who do have jobs continue to lose ground. New research by professors Emmanuel Saez and Thomas Piketty show that the average adjusted gross income of the bottom 90 percent was \$29,840 in 2010 — down \$127 from 2009 and down \$4,842 from 2000 — and just slightly higher than it was forty-six years ago in 1966 (all figures adjusted for inflation).

They could use better schools, access to higher education, lower-cost health care, improved public transportation, and lots of other things Ryan and his colleagues are intent on removing.

Meanwhile, America's rich continue to grow richer — and many of them (and their heirs) are being lulled into lives whose hardest task is summoning the help.

Anyone who thought the Great Recession might reduce America's wild lurch toward wild inequality should think again. The most recent data show that just 15,600 super-rich households — the top 1 tenth of 1 percent — pocketed 37 percent of all the economic gains in 2010. The rest of the gains went to others in the top 10 percent.

Republican Social Darwinists are determined that the Bush tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 be made permanent. Those cuts saved the richest 1 percent of taxpayers (roughly 1.4 million people) more money on their taxes last year than the rest of America's 141 million taxpayers received in total income.

Thank you, House Republicans, for "sharpening the contrast" between your radical Social Darwinism and those of us who still cling to the belief that the most fortunate have a responsibility to the rest.

<a href="#">20120321-01</a> 08:02 Dick Fw: Where Are Muslims Happy?
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

The Muslims are not happy!

They're not happy in Gaza .

They're not happy in Egypt .

They're not happy in Libya .

They're not happy in Morocco.

They're not happy in Iran .

They're not happy in Iraq .

They're not happy in Yemen .

They're not happy in Afghanistan.

They're not happy in Pakistan.

They're not happy in Syria .  
They're not happy in Lebanon.

So, where are they happy?

They're happy in Canada.  
They're happy in Australia.  
They're happy in England.  
They're happy in France.  
They're happy in Italy.  
They're happy in Germany.  
They're happy in Sweden.  
They're happy in the USA.  
They're happy in Norway.  
They're happy in every country that is not Muslim.

And who do they blame?

Not Islam.  
Not their leadership.  
Not themselves.

THEY BLAME THE COUNTRIES THEY ARE HAPPY IN!

AND THEY WANT TO CHANGE THEM TO BE LIKE THE COUNTRIES THEY CAME FROM...

WHERE THEY WERE UNHAPPY.

Excuse me, but...  
How stupid can you get?

<a href="#">20120321-02</a> 09:47 SteveG "Bob Kerrey Runs Hard on Old Washington"
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"Bob Kerrey Runs Hard on Old Washington" by Matt Taylor, *The National Memo*

Mar. 20, 2012 (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/article/bob-kerrey-senate-republicans-nebraska-exclusive-healthcare>)

Bob Kerrey, the Democrat and former governor of Nebraska who is running this fall to win back the U.S. Senate seat he held from 1989 until 2001, said Tuesday he was lured back into public life by something many in Washington find increasingly elusive: the potential to solve lingering national problems the old fashioned way, with strong bipartisan cooperation.

"The thing that pulls me back into the public space, into a campaign that will be exceptionally difficult to win, is the fact that we postponed a number of very significant problems that will only get worse with the remedies on the table," he told *The National Memo*.

His initial campaign announcement on February 29 came one day after Maine Republican Olympia Snowe retired because she said she couldn't deal with the partisan gridlock caused by a Republican Party that has raised filibustering in the upper chamber to a high art form. And to be sure, Kerrey is well aware that the disastrous war in Iraq and economic collapse have sharpened ideological divides since he left Washington to become president of the New School in New York. But the former businessman and Vietnam Medal of Honor winner believes that the fights of the Obama years don't have to break along party lines, and is fond of conjuring up images of a time when now-legendary bipartisan Senate relationships like that between Democrat George Mitchell and Republican Bob Dole forged national policy.

Republicans disagree. Already in the short time since Kerrey joined the field to replace outgoing Democrat Ben Nelson, Karl Rove's Crossroads GPS has spent \$80,000 on a TV ad campaign savaging him for allegedly cutting a "backroom deal" with Democratic Majority Leader Harry Reid on seniority privileges should he win the seat. Perhaps it's because while Nelson was a thorn in the side of his party, a centrist who voted with Republicans much of the time, Kerrey has occasionally taken progressive stands on issues like universal access to healthcare and marijuana legalization. He quickly responded to the TV attack by going on the air with two ads of his own, reintroducing himself as a moderate problem solver and real Nebraskan whose decade in Greenwich Village has not led him astray.

In a wide-ranging discussion with The National Memo, he articulated a populist political message that echoes recent concerns over increasing income inequality.

"When men and women go to work and obey the law, they should share in the results of the production," Kerrey said. "And the market won't always value them the way we value them personally, the way we value teachers or the people who manufacture our products. The market won't always place the same value and we'll have to adjust with laws and taxes, or trade policies. That [approach] separates me from mainstream Republican ideology"

But Nebraska has lurched even further to the right since Kerrey left the Senate.

"He has got a long row to hoe," said Michael Wagner, a political scientist at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and an expert on local politics.

To win, Kerrey will have to catch a few breaks. First, he needs a weak GOP opponent, like Sharon Angle, the Tea Party-backed conservative whose extreme views and controversial statements helped Reid survive a brutal year for Nevada Democrats in 2010. Angle riled up the conservative base but alienated moderates, handing the long-unpopular Reid a surprisingly comfortable victory in a state that had seemed to turn against him.

Conservative Don Stenberg, who is attacking Republican frontrunner Attorney General Jon Bruning from the right for being untrustworthy on social issues (and getting some support from the conservative blogosphere), could fill this role, according to Jennifer Duffy, senior editor at the Cook Political Report. He's a perennial candidate -- and a consistent loser, going down to Chuck Hagel in the primary in 1996, Ben Nelson in the general election in 2000, and Mike Johanns in the primary (again) in 2006.

Kerrey also needs a strong performance from President Obama in the Omaha area, where he won the congressional district (and because of state law, an electoral vote) in 2008. A robust campaign organization and enthused liberal base could help Kerrey compensate for what will likely be weaker numbers in the more rural parts of the state.

But most important to Kerrey's hopes is "the increasing number of Nebraskans who don't affiliate with either party, and how they feel about him," Wagner said. "Do they think it's okay to move back to your sister's house before the filing deadline?" Indeed, the carpetbagger label -- and whether it sticks on the former Navy SEAL -- will be a key factor in the race.

"They're going to talk about his very public musings in 2005 about running for mayor in New York, and I suspect the New School will eventually be an issue," said Duffy.

Kerrey brushed off the chatter about his time away from the state as nonsense that Nebraskans would reject.

"I have no hope that the Republican Party in Nebraska will ever learn what a carpetbagger really was in the 19th century," he said. "It's quite common for people to leave their home and find employment someplace else, and quite common for them to come home."

He will surely highlight his budget cutting as governor and a moderate track-record during two terms in the Senate. But healthcare could be tricky for Kerrey, who based his 1992 presidential campaign on a universal scheme not altogether unlike Obama's. Like many to his left, he says the Obama plan that became law in 2010 doesn't go far enough. Polls show healthcare reform remains toxic in the Cornhusker state, which made headlines for a special

deal Nelson brokered to save the state money in the law's mandated expansion of Medicaid; the provision was struck from the final bill.

"It is false choice to say, 'Are you for repealing the Affordable Care Act?', which is called Obamacare in Nebraska," Kerrey said. "My answer will be no, and I will say to whoever the Republican nominee is: it's not enough to say yes or no. Because the problem still persists. We're spending 17 percent of GDP on healthcare today, more than any other industrial nation. It is a tapeworm inside the economy of our country and the Affordable Care Act didn't solve that problem."

Kerrey comes across as the happy warrior, especially when proposing ways to tackle the entitlement funding issues over which the political class occasionally works itself into a bipartisan frenzy. He cited economist Alice Rivlin's partial privatization approach as preferable to that of Rep. Paul Ryan, the Wisconsin Republican budget guru whose effort already has the sheen of bipartisanship thanks to Democratic Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon.

"I'm intrigued by the Wyden-Ryan plan only because [bipartisanship] is the only way you're going to solve this problem of overhang, almost \$40 trillion of unfunded liability," he said of the plan, which would shift Medicare toward becoming a voucher program, if less aggressively than Ryan's original proposal. "Social Security's actually a relatively small problem compared to Medicare. It begins with the partnership of a prominent influential Republican and influential Democrat. That's what [former Missouri Senator] Jack Danforth and I tried to do in the '90s. You cannot withstand the attacks of the left and right unless you begin with a strong partnership."

Whether there will be any moderate Republicans remaining for him to partner with is an open question.

"You can aspire all you want to bipartisanship, but you need partners," said Norm Ornstein, a congressional scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "And they've been increasingly difficult to come by. Kerrey was very good at doing this when he was in the Senate before, but the real question is whether there is any kind of possibility of reconstituting the kind of Senate that there was when he was there, and the answer is it's a real uphill battle."

20120321-03	10:37	Charis	"Beyond Environment: Falling Back in Love with Mother Earth"
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"Beyond Environment: Falling Back in Love with Mother Earth" by Jo Confino, *The Guardian*

Feb. 20, 2012 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/zen-thich-naht-hanh-buddhidm-business-values>)

(Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh explains why mindfulness and a spiritual revolution rather than economics is needed to protect nature and limit climate change.)

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh says a spiritual revolution is needed if we are going to confront the environmental challenges that face us.

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh has been practising meditation and mindfulness for 70 years and radiates an extraordinary sense of calm and peace. This is a man who on a fundamental level walks his talk, and whom Buddhists revere as a Bodhisattva; seeking the highest level of being in order to help others.

Ever since being caught up in the horrors of the Vietnam war, the 86-year-old monk has committed his life to reconciling conflict and in 1967 Martin Luther King nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize, saying "his ideas for peace, if applied, would build a monument to ecumenism, to world brotherhood, to humanity."

So it seems only natural that in recent years he has turned his attention towards not only addressing peoples' disharmonious relationships with each other, but also with the planet on which all our lives depend.

Thay, as he is known to his many thousands of followers, sees the lack of meaning and connection in peoples' lives as being the cause of our addiction to consumerism and that it is vital we recognise and respond to the stress we are putting on Earth if civilisation is to survive.

What Buddhism offers, he says, is the recognition that we all suffer and the way to overcome that pain is to directly confront it, rather than seeking to hide or bypass it through our obsession with shopping, entertainment, work or the beautification of our bodies. The craving for fame, wealth, power and sex serves to create only the illusion of happiness and ends up exacerbating feelings of disconnection and emptiness.

Thay refers to a billionaire chief executive of one of America's largest companies, who came to one of his meditation courses and talked of his suffering, worries and doubts, of thinking everyone was coming to take advantage of him and that he had no friends.

In an interview at his home and retreat centre in Plum Village, near Bordeaux, Thay outlines how a spiritual revolution is needed if we are going to confront the multitude of environmental challenges.

While many experts point to the enormous complexity and difficulty in addressing issues ranging from the destruction of ecosystems to the loss of millions of species, Thay sees a Gordian Knot that needs slicing through with a single strike of a sharp blade.

### Move beyond concept of the "environment"

He believes we need to move beyond talking about the environment, as this leads people to experience themselves and Earth as two separate entities and to see the planet in terms only of what it can do for them.

Change is possible only if there is a recognition that people and planet are ultimately one and the same.

"You carry Mother Earth within you," says Thay. "She is not outside of you. Mother Earth is not just your environment.

"In that insight of inter-being, it is possible to have real communication with the Earth, which is the highest form of prayer. In that kind of relationship you have enough love, strength and awakening in order to change your life.

"Changing is not just changing the things outside of us. First of all we need the right view that transcends all notions including of being and non-being, creator and creature, mind and spirit. That kind of insight is crucial for transformation and healing.

"Fear, separation, hate and anger come from the wrong view that you and the earth are two separate entities, the Earth is only the environment. You are in the centre and you want to do something for the Earth in order for you to survive. That is a dualistic way of seeing.

"So to breathe in and be aware of your body and look deeply into it and realise you are the Earth and your consciousness is also the consciousness of the earth. Not to cut the tree not to pollute the water, that is not enough."

### Putting an economic value on nature is not enough

Thay, who will this spring be in the UK to lead a five-day retreat as well as a mindfulness in education conference, says the current vogue in economic and business circles that the best way to protect the planet is by putting an economic value on nature is akin to putting a plaster on a gaping wound.

"I don't think it will work," he says. "We need a real awakening, enlightenment, to change our way of thinking and seeing things."

Rather than placing a price tag on our forests and coral reefs, Thay says change will happen on a fundamental level only if we fall back in love with the planet: "The Earth cannot be described either by the notion of matter or mind, which are just ideas, two faces of the same reality. That pine tree is not just matter as it possesses a sense of knowing. A dust particle is not just matter since each of its atoms has intelligence and is a living reality.

"When we recognise the virtues, the talent, the beauty of Mother Earth, something is born in us, some kind of connection, love is born.

"We want to be connected. That is the meaning of love, to be at one. When you love someone you want to say I need you, I take refuge in you. You do anything for the benefit of the Earth and the Earth will do anything for your wellbeing."

In the world of business, Thay gives the example of Yvon Chouinard, founder and owner of outdoor clothing company Patagonia, who combined developing a successful business with the practice of mindfulness and compassion: "It's possible to make money in a way that is not destructive, that promotes more social justice and more understanding and lessens the suffering that exists all around us," says Thay.

"Looking deeply, we see that it's possible to work in the corporate world in a way that brings a lot of happiness both to other people and to us ... our work has meaning."

Thay, who has written more than 100 books, suggests that the lost connection with Earth's natural rhythm is behind many modern sicknesses and that, in a similar way to our psychological pattern of blaming our mother and father for our unhappiness, there is an even more hidden unconscious dynamic of blaming Mother Earth.

In a new essay, "Intimate Conversation with Mother Earth", he writes: "Some of us resent you for giving birth to them, causing them to endure suffering, because they are not yet able to understand and appreciate you."

#### How mindfulness can reconnect people to Mother Earth

He points to increasing evidence that mindfulness can help people to reconnect by slowing down and appreciating all the gifts that the earth can offer.

"Many people suffer deeply and they do not know they suffer," he says. "They try to cover up the suffering by being busy. Many people get sick today because they get alienated from Mother Earth.

"The practice of mindfulness helps us to touch Mother Earth inside of the body and this practice can help heal people. So the healing of the people should go together with the healing of the Earth and this is the insight and it is possible for anyone to practice.

"This kind of enlightenment is very crucial to a collective awakening. In Buddhism we talk of meditation as an act of awakening, to be awake to the fact that the earth is in danger and living species are in danger."

Thay gives the example of something as simple and ordinary as drinking a cup of tea. This can help transform a person's life if he or she were truly to devote their attention to it.

"When I am mindful, I enjoy more my tea," says Thay as he pours himself a cup and slowly savours the first sip. "I am fully present in the here and now, not carried away by my sorrow, my fear, my projects, the past and the future. I am here available to life.

"When I drink tea this is a wonderful moment. You do not need a lot of power or fame or money to be happy. Mindfulness can help you to be happy in the here and now. Every moment can be a happy moment. Set an example and help people to do the same. Take a few minutes in order to experiment to see the truth."

Need to deal with ones own anger to be an effective social activist

Thay has over many years developed the notion of applied Buddhism underpinned by a set of ethical practices known as the five mindfulness trainings, which are very clear on the importance of tackling social injustice.

However, if social and environmental activists are to be effective, Thay says they must first deal with their own anger. Only if people discover compassion for themselves will they be able to confront those they hold accountable for polluting our seas and cutting down our forests.

"In Buddhism we speak of collective action," he says. "Sometimes something wrong is going on in the world and we think it is the other people who are doing it and we are not doing it.

"But you are part of the wrongdoing by the way you live your life. If you are able to understand that, not only you suffer but the other person suffers, that is also an insight.

"When you see the other person suffer you will not want to punish or blame but help that person to suffer less. If you are burdened with anger, fear, ignorance and you suffer too much, you cannot help another person. If you suffer less you are lighter more smiling, pleasant to be with, and in a position to help the person.

"Activists have to have a spiritual practice in order to help them to suffer less, to nourish the happiness and to handle the suffering so they will be effective in helping the world. With anger and frustration you cannot do much."

### Touching the "ultimate dimension"

Key to Thay's teaching is the importance of understanding that while we need to live and operate in a dualistic world, it is also vital to understand that our peace and happiness lie in the recognition of the ultimate dimension: "If we are able to touch deeply the historical dimension – through a leaf, a flower, a pebble, a beam of light, a mountain, a river, a bird, or our own body – we touch at the same time the ultimate dimension. The ultimate dimension cannot be described as personal or impersonal, material or spiritual, object or subject of cognition – we say only that it is always shining, and shining on itself.

"Touching the ultimate dimension, we feel happy and comfortable, like the birds enjoying the blue sky, or the deer enjoying the green fields. We know that we do not have to look for the ultimate outside of ourselves – it is available within us, in this very moment."

While Thay believes there is a way of creating a more harmonious relationship between humanity and the planet, he also recognises that there is a very real risk that we will continue on our destructive path and that civilisation may collapse.

He says all we need to do is see how nature has responded to other species that have got out of control: "When the need to survive is replaced with greed and pride, there is violence, which always brings about unnecessary devastation.

"We have learned the lesson that when we perpetrate violence towards our own and other species, we are violent towards ourselves; and when we know how to protect all beings, we are protecting ourselves."

### Remaining optimistic despite risk of impending catastrophe

In Greek mythology, when Pandora opened the gift of a box, all the evils were released into the world. The one remaining item was "hope".

Thay is clear that maintaining optimism is essential if we are to find a way of avoiding devastating climate change and the enormous social upheavals that will result.

However, he is not naïve and recognises that powerful forces are steadily pushing us further towards the edge of the precipice.

In his best-selling book on the environment, *The World we Have*, he writes: "We have constructed a system we can't control. It imposes itself on us, and we become its slaves and victims.

"We have created a society in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer, and in which we are so caught up in our own immediate problems that we cannot afford to be aware of what is going on with the rest of the human family or our planet Earth.

"In my mind I see a group of chickens in a cage disputing over a few seeds of grain, unaware that in a few hours they will all be killed."

(An edited video of Jo Confino's interview with Thich Nhat Hahn can be seen here:  
<http://plumvillage.org/video/337-beyond-environment.html>.)

For information on Thay's visit to the UK this spring, which includes a meditation in Trafalgar Square, a talk at the Royal Festival Hall, a five-day retreat and a three-day mindfulness in education conference, go to the Cooling the Flames website: <http://www.mindfulnessretreats.org.uk/>

20120321-04	11:20	SteveG	Fw: Common Cause Webinar: Toward a Constitutional Amendment to Overthrow <i>Citizens United</i>
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from Robert Reich at Common Cause:

Please join me on Wednesday, March 28 for a conversation on the challenges facing our economy and democracy in this election year, and a new campaign -spearheaded by Common Cause - to restore everyday Americans to our rightful place at the center of our politics.

Our campaign, Amend 2012, is focused on helping voters make our voices heard in support of a Constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United and again impose sensible limits on political spending. Montana is our first battleground; we're working for a ballot initiative that would allow citizens to instruct Congress to pass an amendment and refer it to the states for ratification.

RSVP today to join me for this special webinar on Wednesday, March 28 at noon eastern time:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/965743950>.

Other speakers include Joshua Estevan Ulibarri, a leading voice in progressive politics and pollster whose research is helping shape our Montana campaign and those to follow, and Derek Cressman, western states regional director for Common Cause.

You will learn about our Montana effort and plans to advance ballot initiatives and referenda in other states.

If you have any questions that you'd like us to address, please submit them in the "Questions and Comments" box when you sign up. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions live during the webinar.

I hope you will join us on March 28, and thanks for all you do.

Sincerely, Robert Reich and the rest of the team at Common Cause

P.S. If you want to learn more, please visit the Amend 2012 website:

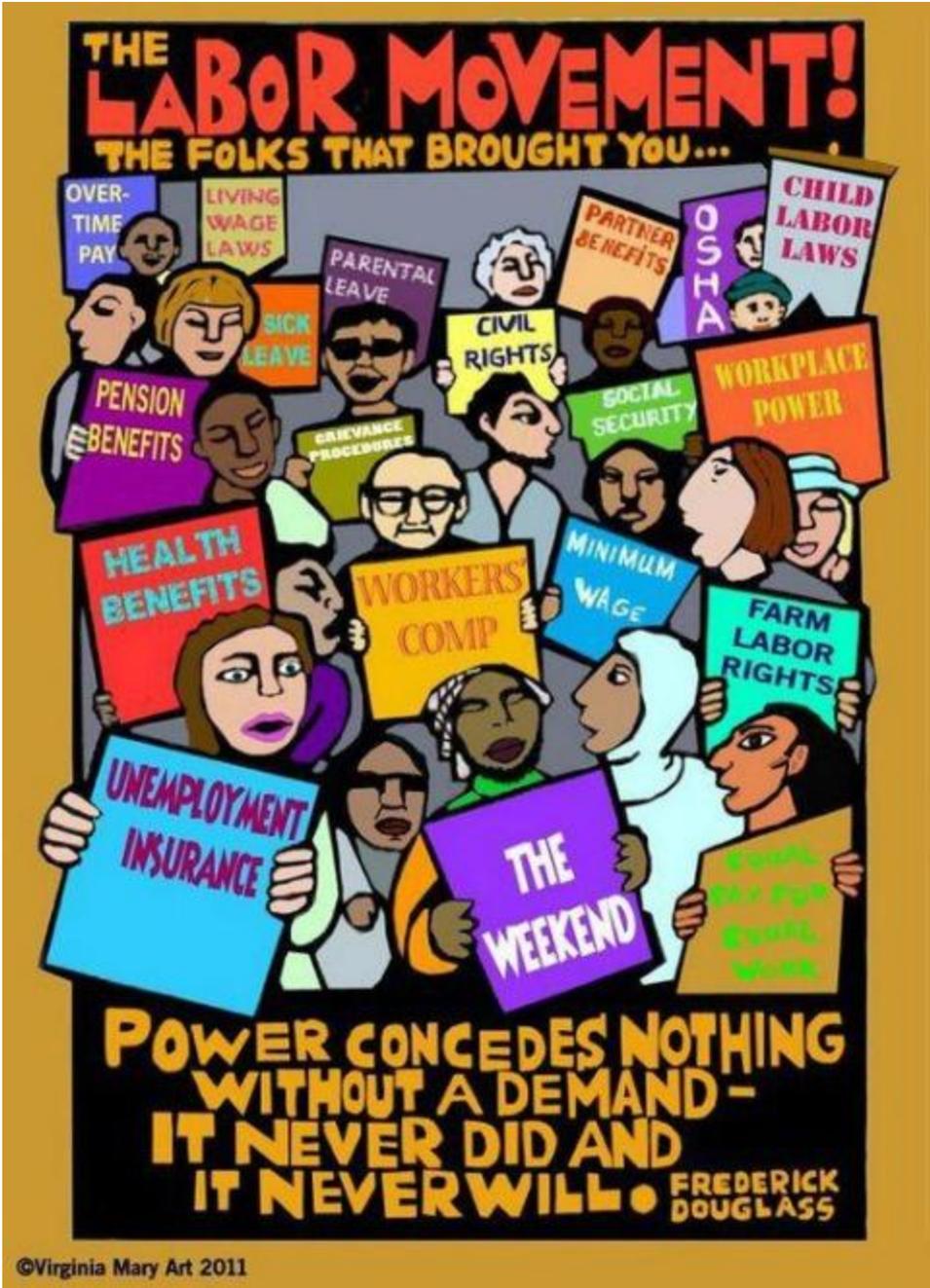
[http://www.amend2012.org/site/c.8qKOJXMvFaLUG/b.7939705/k.1AA3/Reverse\\_Citizens\\_United\\_because\\_only\\_people\\_are\\_people.htm?sid=347505265](http://www.amend2012.org/site/c.8qKOJXMvFaLUG/b.7939705/k.1AA3/Reverse_Citizens_United_because_only_people_are_people.htm?sid=347505265).

Gee: Everything Republicans are against...

"One Graphic Republicans Hope You Don't Share with Your Friends" posted by Jayne, MoveOn.Org

Mar. 20, 2012, (<http://front.moveon.org/one-graphic-republicans-hope-you-dont-share-with-your-friends/?rc=daily.share&id=37639-18997482-FFdMipx>)

How many items on this list is the GOP trying to dismantle?



"The Most Eye-Opening Fact About Inequality That We've Seen All Week" posted by Jeb, MoveOn.Org

Mar. 20, 2012, (<http://front.moveon.org/the-most-eye-opening-fact-about-inequality-that-weve-seen-all-week/?rc=daily.share&id=37639-18997482-FFdMipx>)

Guess who's making bank? Not the American worker.

**If the minimum wage  
had kept pace with the rise in  
executive salaries since 1990,  
America's poorest paid workers  
Would be making more than  
\$23 an hour.**

[20120321-06](#) 13:29 SteveG U.S. History: When the U.S. Pulled-Out of the Olympics Over Afghanistan

Sept. 21, 1980: President Jimmy Carter pulled the U.S. from participation in the Olympics in protest of the Soviet Union's war against Afghanistan.

[20120321-07](#) 13:40 Pam Re: When the U.S. Pulled-Out of the Olympics Over Afghanistan (reply to SteveG, above)

An interesting reminder. I remember not supporting that decision, and I still don't. It seemed to me like cutting off your nose to spite your face. We made a gesture, yeah, but what did it accomplish? It denied all of our athletes, who had been training for years and might never get to the Olympics again, a chance to compete in the biggest competition of them all. The Olympics are about peace, supposedly, but Carter's gesture was a bellicose one. I guess he thought he was taking the high ground, but maybe he should have consulted the athletes first.

[20120321-08](#) 14:39 Bill Re: When the U.S. Pulled-Out of the Olympics Over Afghanistan (reply to SteveG & Pam, above)

We were, at the same time, if I remember correctly, supplying the Afghans with portable surface-to-air missiles, among other weapons. The Russians did the invading then, I suppose, but international relations is not a realm of great moral truth.

[20120321-09](#) 15:26 SteveG Re: When the U.S. Pulled-Out of the Olympics Over Afghanistan (reply to Pam & Bill, above)

I just find it ironic that 32 years later we have been there 10 years fighting. I don't really remember when the Soviet Union left, but less than 20 years between the USSR and the USA invading.

[20120321-10](#) 17:13 SteveG "Banker Hubris Knows No Bounds"

"Banker Hubris Knows No Bounds" by Jim Hightower, [NationofChange](#)

Mar. 21, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/banker-hubris-knows-no-bounds-1332335770>)

Have you heard about the earthquake that has shaken Wall Street to its very core? Well, brace yourself, for this really is a shocker: Bonus payments are down.

Yes, the exorbitant bonus checks pocketed each year by the Goldman Sachs, Citigroupers and other financial tinkerers have been cut by about 25 percent this year, and — oh! — you should hear the Wall Streeters moaning the hard-times, down-and-out banker blues.

"It's a disaster," sobbed one. "The entire construct of compensation has changed."

Many Americans, of course, will say ... "Good! About time!" And it is difficult in these times of middle-class collapse and rising poverty to get teary-eyed over a few financial swells getting a trim. But, come on, Wall Street bankers are human, too (aren't they?) — so open your hearts to their pain.

A hedge-fund manager, for example, says he'll now have to strain to pay his \$7,500 annual dues to remain a member of the Trump National Golf Club in Westchester. Plus, he worries about food, health care and boarding. Not for him and his family, but for his two dogs — he's been laying out \$17,000 a year for upkeep of his labradoodle and bichon frise, including around \$5,000 to hire a dog-walker to take them out each day. He might resort to walking them himself a couple times a week.

The crunch is so bad that one financier confesses that he now shops for discounted salmon for dinner and has had to give up his annual ski trip to Aspen, Colo. And a high-dollar accountant who does financial planning for the wealthy practically weeps for clients who are having to cut back.

Empathizing with the stress of it all, he asks: "Could you imagine what it's like to say, 'I got three kids in private school, I have to think about pulling them out?' How do you do that?" Dabbing his eyes with tissues, he adds that these people have been raking in around \$500,000 a year, and they never dreamed "that they'd be broke."

Broke? We should all be as "broke" as they are.

Are these one-percenters actually worth their bonus checks, even at this year's discounted level? Well, one of the top one-tenth-of-one-percenters, Lloyd Blankfein, says: Hell yes! CEO of Goldman Sachs, Blankfein has sacked up a multimillion personal fortune in bonus cash, but he claims to be worth every penny because he's doing "God's work."

Whoa — that would be one very mean god! Blankfein actually is an ungodly angel of avarice, who turned his once-proud investment house into a casino of greed that was a central player in Wall Street's crash of our economy. But don't take my word for it. He has now been burned by one of his own — a Goldman Sachs executive who got so fed up with the "toxic and destructive" culture fostered by Blankfein that he has resigned and gone public with the banking giant's internal ugliness.

Greg Smith, a 12-year veteran with Goldman and head of one of its major divisions, penned a March 14 New York Times op-ed piece declaring, "It makes me ill how callously (Goldman bankers) talk about ripping their clients off." Forget about the quaint notion that banks are meant to serve the *public* good, Smith confirms that his fellow financiers no longer care about serving the good of their own customers, instead focusing laser-like on enriching the bankers themselves.

Rather than helping clients, he writes, "it's purely about how we can make the most possible money off of them." Smith pointedly adds that this crass selfishness all comes from the top, noting that it's now common to hear Goldman's managing directors privately deride their own clients as "muppets" — stupid people who're easily manipulated. The ruling ethic is — by hook or crook — to haul in bags of client gold for Goldman. If you do that, he writes, "(and are not currently an ax murderer) you will be promoted into a position of influence."

Remember, these are the people you and I were forced to bail out, yet far from showing even a modicum of humility or gratitude, their narcissism is now so extreme that it's even causing bankers to gag!

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20120321-11 23:59 SteveB Photos: Picking Cotton for the 'Boss' (Here We Go Again!)

Some things never change...

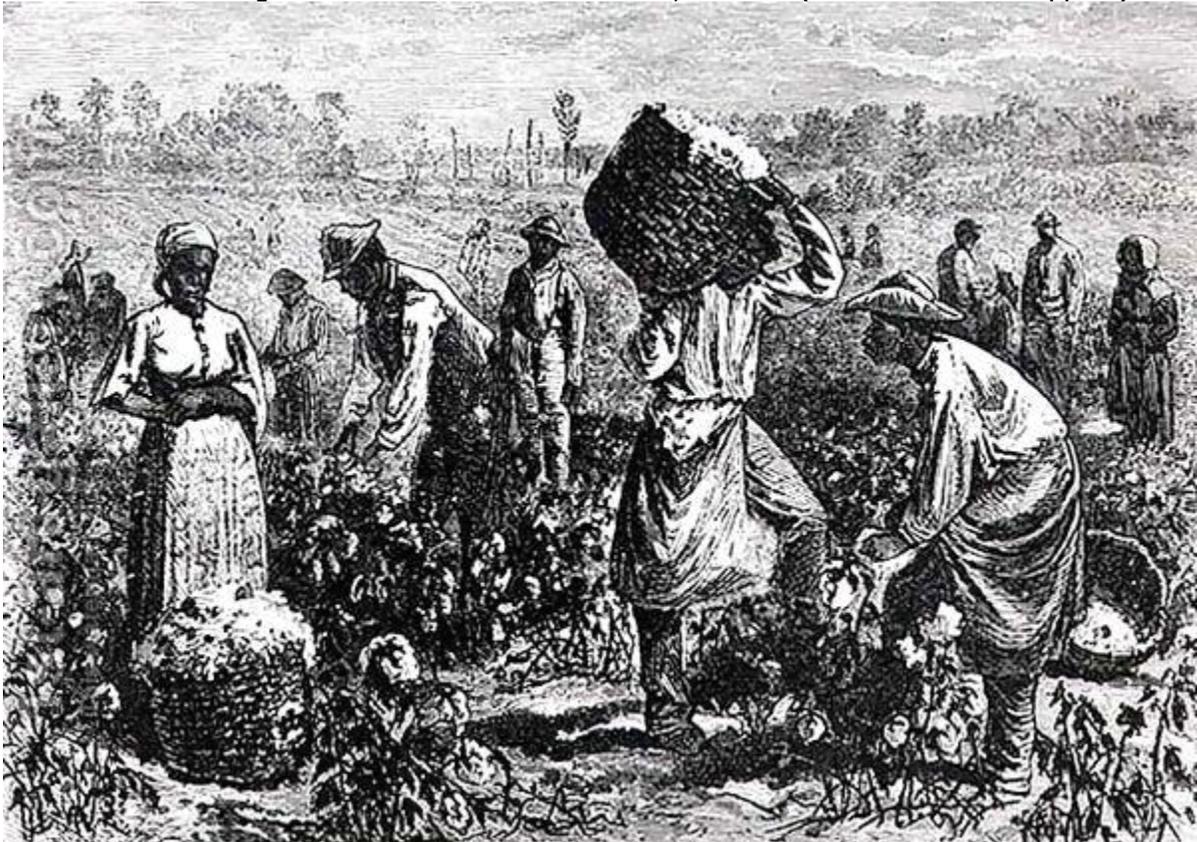
The desire to exploit other humans to get rich never fades. Let us be wary, fellow workers/consumers, or we shall all be made into something even more like slaves than we already are. —SteveB

<http://www.1st-art-gallery.com/William-Ludlow-Sheppard/Slaves-Picking-Cotton-On-A-Plantation.html>

<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/migrants-1.htm>

<http://textilefibre.blogspot.com/p/jute-fiber.html>

1. Slaves Picking Cotton on a Southern Plantation, ~1850's (William Ludlow Sheppard)



2. Illegal Alien Mother and Child Picking Cotton in Arizona, ~2011



3. Picking Cotton in China, ~2011 (National Geographic)



Picking cotton in China  
Photograph by Michael S. Yamashita



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

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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #101 — MAR. 23, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Oliver North on Afghanistan**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 23, 2012)

Afghanistan may be a hell-hole for Americans soldiers, but it's apparently a cool subject for Republican lies. Notice how Oliver North sticks the knife in President Obama every chance he gets in today's article (below), but I see no real disagreement between the two on the subject. Very obviously, by Republican standards, you'd have to say President Obama has done the right things. The Right can't stand this, so they have to drool the lies. Now, how exactly President Obama is supposed to "win" Bush's stupid war (without breaking the bank and further destroying our worldwide credibility)?

Funny isn't it, that Ollie doesn't seem to have any advice on this subject. Chicken?

The Comments are much more informative than their authors (or the webpage which published them) ever intended. As Dale always says, consider the source.

"Afghan Ambivalence" by Oliver North, Guns & Patriots/Human Events

03/20/2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=50251>)

(Obama's vacillating Afghan strategy.)

(WASHINGTON) Four years ago, when then-Sen. Barack Obama was campaigning for president, he said of Afghanistan: This is "a war that we have to win." He also claimed, "The Afghan people must know that our commitment to their future is enduring because the security of Afghanistan and the United States is shared." But after three years of Obama's being commander in chief, it ought to be clear that he never really believed his own campaign rhetoric.

Now, in the aftermath of recent setbacks, his words are further evidence of presidential ambivalence and uncertainty. None of this bodes well for those who hope for a positive outcome in the shadows of the Hindu Kush.

This week, after a U.S. soldier allegedly killed 16 Afghan civilians in Panjwai, a hamlet in Kandahar province, Obama appropriately promised to "make sure that anybody who was involved is held fully accountable with the full force of the law." Though Defense Secretary Leon Panetta reiterated this commitment during a long-planned but unannounced two-day visit to Afghanistan, other unanticipated events -- a reality in all wars -- clouded the message.

Even before Panetta arrived, Afghan President Hamid Karzai was demanding that U.S. and NATO troops cease combat operations in populated areas and be confined to major bases.

Then, as Panetta's aircraft approached Camp Leatherneck in Helmand province, an Afghan national crashed a commandeered pickup truck, which burst into flames just off the base runway. By the time Panetta arrived at a meeting with American, British and Afghan personnel, U.S. Marines and British troops that mustered for a "meet and greet" with the secretary had been ordered to remove their weapons from the site.

Pentagon spokesman George Little told reporters that the unprecedented order to disarm was "unrelated" to the runway incident. But other officials, speaking on background, said the decision was prompted by "an abundance of caution" after six Americans were murdered last month by Afghan personnel.

Yet another story in widespread circulation attributed the order to "fairness" for Afghan troops, who are "not allowed to carry weapons in the presence of senior U.S. officials." Whatever the truth, the order quickly became a public relations nightmare -- and yet another distraction in shoring up public support for those who are fighting this long and difficult war. For that, Obama has no one to blame but himself.

Ever since he decided to provide fewer "surge troops" than requested by his hand-picked battlefield commander and announced an arbitrary "timetable for withdrawal" during a speech in December 2009, the president's rhetoric has been devoid of words about "winning," "defeating the Taliban" or even "peace and security for the Afghan people." Gone, too, is any attempt at comity with Karzai. And while Obama repeatedly reminds us that "we got Osama bin Laden," his efforts to repair relations with neighboring Pakistan have ground to a halt.

This week, in the aftermath of multiple reversals on the ground, the president reiterated that he still intends to withdraw 23,000 of the 91,000 U.S. troops currently deployed in Afghanistan before our presidential election -- and before the "fighting season" comes to an end. In Kabul, Panetta renewed the administration's commitment to "bringing home" all of the remaining 68,000 U.S. troops by 2014.

Taliban leaders immediately announced that they were suspending long-awaited "peace and reconciliation talks" in Qatar because of the "shaky, erratic and vague standpoint of the Americans." What they didn't say is what everyone already knows: The O-Team is getting out of Afghanistan no matter what's happening on the battlefield. All the Taliban have to do is wait until we're gone.

Obama still claims he is "confident that we can continue the work of meeting our objectives" and "accomplish the mission" while implementing his "exit strategy." But then he says his goal is to "responsibly wind down this war" and "bring our troops home." This isn't a "strategy," and it's not a valid reason to send young Americans into harm's way in one of the most difficult and dangerous places on earth.

The commander in chief we hired nearly four years ago still hasn't learned that the only "responsible" way to end a war is to win it.

On the day Taliban leaders announced they were pulling out of any further talks, I was visiting Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. While I was there, the mother of a severely wounded Marine said to me, "I hope my son's sacrifice was not in vain." I share her hope. We all should -- even our ambivalent commander in chief.

(Oliver North is the host of "War Stories" on Fox News Channel, the founder and honorary chairman of Freedom Alliance, and the author of *American Heroes in Special Operations*.)

#### Reader Comments (FIFO):

victorbarney (2 days ago)

Ollie, Surely you must know that both Islam and Marxism have a caliphate to destroy u.s. before they EVER deal with other? The only surprise is that NOT THEY, but the two-witnesses of chapter 11, Revelation in the Hebrew-INSPIRED Scriptures are going to do that because as it also is written YHWH ALWAYS PUNISHES

HIS OWN FIRST! If I'm reading the signs of the times correctly(i.e."forbidden foreigner") of Deuteronomy 17:15 and Obama is the ONLY foreigner(non-Israelite) EVER in the entire history of Israel that has been put over Israel BY IT'S OWN PEOPLE! By our women ONLY, but then, WELCOME TO ADAM'S WORLD! WATCH, especially September 16, 2012 if I'm reading the "signs" of the times correctly?

Kevin Hendon (2 days ago, in reply to victorbarney)

Apprciate your words Victor but can you be a more clear?

Victorbarney (2 days ago, in reply to Kevin Hendon)

Don't see how I can be more clear? WE, U.S., will be destroyed by the two-witnesses of Revelation, NOT by ISLAM! That's all that I'm saying...

Kevin Hendon (2 days ago)

OK not sure I agree but do know that Israel is the focus of a Christian nation! Obama of unknown denomination does not have the same focus. Thanks.

Bill (2 days ago)

The President is a secret Muslim Negro. I blame Jane Fonda.

StanW (2 days ago, in reply to Bill)

Blame Hillary Clinton, Bill. Shes the one that started that rumor.

Baldmotoman (2 days ago)

If Barry Insane Obama wins another term I'm convinced that he is indeed the antichrist, and this nation will be brought down to her knees. Afganistan is a tribul archaic society which will never be controlled by anyone, Karzai is in power by us but is totally against everything we try to do. I see no point of us staying there to be shot at and killed by so-called friends. Our troops are demororlized by many tours of duty (the young man who killed 16 Afgans was on his fourth tour) in a place that is a hellhole and can't be won by conventional warfare. The Taliban knew all they had to do was wait us out and then fill the vacuum, eventually this will be a Islamist terrorist haven, it doesn't take a genius to see what we should do!!!

33Charlemagne (2 days ago)

Obama is a left wing "community organizer" not a military leader or expert on international relations. As such his actions are motivated by political rather than strategic considerations. He undermines our military with his supposedly "egalitarian" scheme of allowing homosexuals to serve openly and he undercuts our strategic goals in Afghanistan by restricting troop levels and publicly announcing a withdrawal date. It is clear that BHO is as out of his element as General George S. Patton would be in a teaching "sensitivity training" class!

KitCarson (1 day ago)

ishmael and his descendants will not get along with their neighbors or themselves. they are taught to lie... thus, "the war the UNITED STATES must win" is now showing us to be weak. bluebama has destroyed our economy, and is doing the same to our military, while turning us into a pariah among the worlds nations. a true muslim communist, bred and handled by the communists of the FDR era.

KJQ (1 day ago)

Bring the troops home now, and not just from Afghanistan. Ron Paul has it right. If you must send Americans overseas, send Christian missionaries. It's not democracy that saves, renews and improves, it's the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bob Miller (1 day ago)

@victorbarney—I think your interpretation of the Scriptures is slightly twisted. The two witnesses are the prelude to the next coming of Christ. If I read my Scriptures correctly, the two witnesses, Enoch and Elijah, denounce the anti-christ and are killed in the street in front of the whole world. This precipitates the return of Christ, which results in total destruction of all man-made structures when His foot touches the Earth. That's my interpretation based on conversations I have had and research I have done. I could be wrong.

Mokyfellow (1 day ago)

Simply put, the people of our nation needs to get to their knees and pray. If we follow the teachings of the early Church as given to us in the New Testament's Book of Acts, we really do not need to worry about what is contained in the Book of Revelation!!!

2War Abn Vet, Citadel, 1964; 1st Bde (Abn), 1st Cav Div, RVN, 1965-6; HQ, XVIII Airborne Corps, Gulf, 1990-91; 2 tours (6yrs) & 23 yrs civ. Test Off, Abn Board (1 day ago)

Obama has already declared a surrender date we're just passing time and losing soldiers now.

studi30 (1 day ago)

Of course since this is Ovomits' war it is righteous unlike Bush's war which wasn't. Libturds!

Michaelnc (1 day ago)

Bird's eye view of the situation: Afghanistan is inhabited by ethnically different tribes of Tadhiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Hazanaras, Afghans, Pathans and a few more. Do we really want to waste our time and teach them Democracy, modern agriculture and how their women should be dressed? They were invaded 500 BC by Darius of Persia and subsequently over 26 centuries by Alexander the Great, Bactrians, Parthians, Mongols, Turks, Arabs, British, Russians and now the USA. We have been now there for over 10 years and nothing has or will fundamentally change. Why waste our blood, money and time?

Slim Jim (1 day ago)

What a disaster!

Burlofearl (10 hours ago)

I think that Panetta was afraid to face the troops with there weapons, I think he was in fear for his owen life with all the crap him and Obama have been pulling on the troops over there and with as many times as they have sent them over and with all of the lies they have told them. hell if I was there I might have shot him myself.

<u>20120322-01</u> 09:04 Pam News
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Atty is coming right along. In a week or so he'll get a new, shorter cast that he should be able to walk on some. It's hard for a little boy to be so restricted, but he's been a trooper. This makes me realize what some families go through on a daily basis--forever.

I had a beer with my buddy Joe yesterday and started off telling him about my new enthusiasm about literature, art, and all things beautiful. By the end though I was back to bitching about injustice. That essay Art sent in by the women refuting the arguments re. women and sex really lit my fuse.

Have a great day. I'm sure the sun is shining.

[20120322-02](#) 10:52 Dale "Topography of Faith" [in the U.S.]

Before looking at this Pew survey map of religious topography, make a guess at what % of the US population classifies themselves as "unaffiliated," which includes atheist, agnostic and "nothing in particular."

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/graphics/pew-religion-08/flash.htm>

[16% 'unaffiliated' and 1% 'no answer'. -SteveB]

[20120322-04](#) 11:29 SteveB Re: "Topography of Faith" (reply to Dale, above)

You know, I guessed 20% and was pretty close to the 16%/17%. A lot would depend upon exactly how the questions were asked, but I believe at least some other surveys have shown similar results.

More interesting to me is the fact that when you clearly and fairly put any one of the "faith-based issues" or "moral issues" in front of the American people, it turns out that it is always a "moral" minority trying to impose its will on an "immoral" majority. Thank God!

[20120322-03](#) 10:55 Art U.S. and Australian National Debt: "What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?" & "Reality Pill Needed for Australians" & "State of the Nation: Australia Today"

**Art:** Hi SteveB, Little e-mail exchange with an Australian friend. He is a very successful businessman with lots of moxy. Just shows lots of other folks are watching.

**Art:** Hi Roger, Good article and good point. In the short term for the USA, getting a handle on the deficit is the most important issue of the day. ( On the longer look global warming is much more important, but I don't think we can resolve at world level and, if not, won't be many folks left alive by 2100 to care.)

85% of our budget goes for defense, Medicare/Medicaid and Social Security. We have a terrible medical system. Expensive and it doesn't work very well. Not sure the new health care law will fix, but at least it's a step in a direction to try. It won't survive the next election, if Republicans win, and we'll be back to square one. This Administration is trying on Defense but getting lots of pushback. I forget off hand what we shell out in percentage relationship for Defense, but it exceeds the rest of the world combined.

Republicans have just come up with their new budget proposal. Sort of follows the old Robin Hood saying - Rob the poor and give to the rich. Only sort of. Whacks away at social programs and reduces taxes for the rich and better the super rich. Not really a serious attempt to address the deficit. Administration proposal not much better but heads in a better direction from my perspective.

I know your are a businessman and I don't know how it goes in Australia, but do you really think anyone is worth \$50- \$70 M a year in salary plus more for bonuses? And that's the low end.

Article below takes an attempt at explaining the issue.

"What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

Mar. 19, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/what-s-worse-paying-taxes-1332171239>)

**Roger:** I couldn't resist sending this to you. Thought you might appreciate it!

When you look at the experience at the end it seems a bit scary.

Ross Greenwood has covered finance and business matters in Australia and around the world for almost 30 years. He is Nine Network's business and finance editor and was co-host of its former flagship current affairs program, Sunday. His reporting assignments for Nine have taken him to Europe, Asia and the Middle East. This is really well put, in terms the average punter can understand. It cuts through political doublespeak, providing clarity.

"Reality Pill Needed for Australians" by USA Today

Mar. 13, 2012, (<http://cbr250.com/forum/thread-8907.html>)

Lesson #1:

Why the U.S. was downgraded:

- U.S. Tax revenue: \$2,170,000,000,000
- Fed budget: \$3,820,000,000,000
- New debt: \$ 1,650,000,000,000
- National debt: \$14,271,000,000,000
- Recent budget cuts: \$ 38,500,000,000

Let's now remove 8 zeros and pretend it's a household budget:

- Annual family income: \$21,700
- Money the family spent: \$38,200
- New debt on the credit card: \$16,500
- Outstanding balance on the credit card: \$142,710
- Total budget cuts: \$385

Got It ?????

Lesson #2:

Here's another way to look at the Debt Ceiling:

Let's say, you come home from work and find there has been a sewer backup in your neighbourhood ... and your home has sewage all the way up to your ceilings.

What do you think you should do?

Raise the ceilings, or pump out the (ummmm) "effluent"?

Lesson #3:

"State of the Nation: Australia Today" by Ross Greenwood, *Money News*

Jan. 27, 2012,

([http://www.2gb.com/index.php?option=com\\_podcasting&id=36&Itemid=41&task=view&limit=10&limitstart=90](http://www.2gb.com/index.php?option=com_podcasting&id=36&Itemid=41&task=view&limit=10&limitstart=90))

Right now the Australian Federal Government is at pains to tell everyone - including us the mug-punters and the International Monetary Fund, that it will not exceed its own, self-imposed, borrowing limits.

How much? \$200 billion. And here's a worry.

If you work in a bank's money market operation; or if you are a politician; the millions turn into billions and it rolls off the tip of the tongue a bit too easily. but every dollar that is borrowed, some time, has to be repaid. By you, by me and by the rest of the country.

Just after 5 o'clock tonight I did a bit of math for Jason Morrison ( Sydney radio presenter). But it's so staggering its worth repeating now.

First thought; Gillard, Swan, Wong, before that Rudd, all of the Labor Cabinet, call these temporary borrowings, a temporary deficit.

Remember Those Words : Temporary Deficit.

The total Government debt will end up around \$200 billion.

So here's a very basic calculation .. I used a home loan calculator to work it out..... it's that simple..,

\$200 billion is \$2 hundred thousand million.

The current 10 year Government bond rate is 4.67 per cent. I worked the loan out over a period of 20 years. Now here's where it gets scary .... really scary.

The repayments on \$200 billion, come to more than one and a quarter billion dollars - every month - for 20 years. It works out we - as taxpayers - will be repaying \$15.4 billion in interest and principal every year .. \$733 for every man woman and child - every year.

The total interest bill over the 20 years is - get this - \$108 billion.

Remember, this is a Government, that just 4 years ago, had NO debt. NO debt.

In fact it had enough money to create the Future Fund, to pay the future liabilities of public servants' superannuation, and it had enough to stick \$20 billion into the Building Australia Fund ...

A note was sent to me which explains that the six leading members of the Government, from Ms Gillard down, have a collective work experience of 181 years, but only 13 in the private sector.

If you take out of those 13 years the number that were spent as trade union lawyers, 11, only two years were spent in the private sector.

So out of those 181 years:

- no years spent running their own business
- no years spent starting their own business
- no years spent as a director of a family business or a company
- no years as a director of a public company
- no years in a senior position in a public company
- no years in a senior position in a private company
- no years working in corporate finance
- no years in corporate or business restructuring
- no years working in or with a bank
- no years of experience in the capital markets
- no years in a stock-broking firm

- no years in negotiating debt facilities with banks
- no years running a small business
- no years at the World Bank or IMF or OECD
- no years in Treasury or Finance.

But these people have plunged Australia into unprecedented debt.

Well, in a way you can't blame them.

It's clear the electorate did not do their homework, because the Government is there by right.

Ah, but they are Labor and people vote for them because Labor is good for the working family - right???

If you have read this you may like to pass it on to your friends to help educate a little as you, them and I, will be repaying the above.

20120322-05 13:40 SteveG Fw: EDF Petition: Stop the Toxic Air Bill!

from Environmental Defense Action Fund:

Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) is Congress's leading global warming denier. Now he wants to deny your right to breathe cleaner air that won't kill you or make you sick.

Please take action today. Help us stop the Inhofe toxic air bill, which would wipe the EPA's life-saving Mercury and Air Toxics Standards off the books and punch a huge hole through our clean air protections.

[https://secure2.edf.org/site/Advocacy?pagename=homepage&page=UserAction&id=1953&autologin=true&utm\\_source=EDF%20action%20network&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=advocacy&JServSessionIdr004=s4m1jb1e1.app305b](https://secure2.edf.org/site/Advocacy?pagename=homepage&page=UserAction&id=1953&autologin=true&utm_source=EDF%20action%20network&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=advocacy&JServSessionIdr004=s4m1jb1e1.app305b)

Sen. Inhofe's bill -- S.J. Res 37 -- would use the obscure Congressional Review Act to block EPA's new emission standards for hazardous mercury and other toxic air pollution.

If enacted, this bill would also forever prohibit the EPA from adopting substantially similar clean air standards in the future.

These standards have been in the works for more than two decades!

- They will prevent up to 11,000 premature deaths every year.
- They will protect our kids from dangerous exposure to toxic mercury pollution, which can cause brain damage in infants and young children.
- And they will save the U.S. economy tens of billions of dollars in avoided health costs every year while putting 85,000 - 117,000 Americans to work installing pollution control technologies between now and 2015.

Last year, more than 800,000 Americans submitted comments to the EPA in support of these landmark standards.

But now, a small group of power industry lobbyists and their allies in the Senate are putting pressure on Senators to support Inhofe's toxic air assault to wipe these life-saving, job-creating standards off the books.

We can't let them win -- not with the stakes so high.

Please take action today. Don't let Sen. Inhofe and the Dirty Air Lobby deny your right to clean, healthy air that won't kill you or make you sick.

Sen. Inhofe claims to have the number of signatures he needs to force a vote on the floor of the Senate at any time. And, unlike most other Senate action, this bill filed under the Congressional Review Act only requires 51 votes.

Help us make sure a majority of the Senate stands with our kids and families against this toxic air assault.

Please take action today.

Thanks for all you do, Heather Shelby, Online Membership Associate

<a href="#">20120322-06</a> 13:44 SteveG Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Investigate the Death of Trayvon Martin!
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from Daily Kos:

In the wake of Trayvon Martin's death, please sign our petition asking Attorney General Eric Holder to investigate the Sanford Police Department's history of failing to prosecute violent crimes against African-Americans:

The Department of Justice has announced that its Civil Rights Division, in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, will investigate Trayvon Martin's death. This is a positive step.<sup>1</sup>

However, the Sanford Police Department has a history of failing to successfully prosecute crimes when the victim is African-American and the alleged assailant is not. This happened not only in the case of Trayvon Martin, but also in 2005 and 2010. In both of those earlier cases, the white son of a Sanford police officer was involved.

In addition to the Department of Justice's investigation into Trayvon Martin's death, a simultaneous investigation of the Sanford Police Department itself needs to be undertaken. Even the city commissioners of Sanford, Florida have now voted that they have no confidence in the police chief.<sup>2</sup>

Please, sign our petition asking Attorney General Eric Holder to investigate the Sanford Police Department's pattern of failing to prosecute violent crimes against African-Americans:

[http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=94](http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=94)

Keep fighting, Meteor Blades, Daily Kos

<sup>1</sup>"Trayvon Martin case going to grand jury" <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/03/20/1076072/-Trayvon-Martin-case-going-to-grand-jury?detail=hide>.

<sup>2</sup>"Sanford commissioners vote no-confidence in police chief over Trayvon Martin slaying investigation" <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/03/21/1076585/-Sanford-commissioners-vote-no-confidence-in-police-chief-over-Trayvon-Martin-slaying-investigation?detail=hide>.

<a href="#">20120322-07</a> 13:46 SteveG Change.org Petition: Bring Zimmerman to Trial!
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from Change.Org:

Our son didn't deserve to die. Trayvon Martin was just 17 years old when he was shot and killed by George Zimmerman. Trayvon wasn't doing anything besides walking home with a bag of Skittles and some iced tea in his hands.

What makes Trayvon's death so much harder is knowing that the man who confessed to killing him, George Zimmerman, still hasn't been charged for Trayvon's killing.

That's why we started a petition on Change.org calling for Zimmerman's prosecution and trial. We aren't looking for revenge, we're looking for justice -- the same justice anyone would expect if their son were shot and killed for no reason.

Click here to join 900,000 people who have already signed our petition calling for justice for our son Trayvon:

[http://www.change.org/petitions/prosecute-the-killer-of-our-son-17-year-old-trayvon-martin?utm\\_campaign=NbYqYZRNGG&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=action\\_alert](http://www.change.org/petitions/prosecute-the-killer-of-our-son-17-year-old-trayvon-martin?utm_campaign=NbYqYZRNGG&utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert)

No family should ever have to go through this nightmare. The law should protect everyone, regardless of where they live, how much money they make, or what color their skin is.

With our petition at 900,000 signers so far, we've made important progress toward making some sense out of what happened. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement will investigate Trayvon's death, and so will the FBI and Department of Justice.

But Trayvon's killer is still free. The surest path to justice runs through Sanford, Florida, and through the office of State's Attorney Norman Wolfinger, who is responsible for bringing charges against Zimmerman. With your help, we believe he'll have no choice but to give Trayvon and his killer their days in court.

Please sign our petition calling on Florida authorities to prosecute our son's confessed killer.

Thank you so much.

Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton

[20120322-08](#) 13:49 Art Re: Trayvon Martin Petitions (reply to SteveG, above)

Think this is the real crime. Bad enough this vigilante shot someone but that the police don't even try to hold the shooter is unbelievable. What are we coming to? This is murder, plain and simple.

[20120322-09](#) 13:54 SteveG Re: Trayvon Martin Petitions (reply to Art, above)

I have heard that the shooter:

1. Was held for 1 hour in questioning.
2. No drug or alcohol tests were taken.
3. He had grass stains on his shirt and blood on his head.
4. No clothing was kept for evidence or testing.
5. No forensic tests were done with the shooter.
6. In 14 months on the neighborhood watch the shooter had made 46 calls to the police station.

Of course, we do not know all the information or if what we have heard or read is accurate – but it smells and smells bad!

[20120322-10](#) 14:05 SteveB Re: Trayvon Martin Petitions (reply to SteveG & Art, above)

Mmmmm...I haven't seen this, but my guess is the perp is white!

Jeez! Rush would call me a racist. But it would really be a reverse racist? An inverted racist?

"Ah...since you put it like that, it sounds very interesting," says Mr. Santorum. "Let me think about this...inverted...with a person of color...it's getting hot in here...excuse me."

"Please Stop Apologizing" by Bill Maher, *The New York Times*

Mar. 21, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/22/opinion/please-stop-apologizing.html>)

THIS week, Robert De Niro made a joke about first ladies, and Newt Gingrich said it was "inexcusable and the president should apologize for him." Of course, if something is "inexcusable," an apology doesn't make any difference, but then again, neither does Newt Gingrich.

Mr. De Niro was speaking at a fund-raiser with the first lady, Michelle Obama. Here's the joke: "Callista Gingrich. Karen Santorum. Ann Romney. Now do you really think our country is ready for a white first lady?"

The first lady's press secretary declared the joke "inappropriate," and Mr. De Niro said his remarks were "not meant to offend." So, as these things go, even if the terrible damage can never be undone, at least the healing can begin. And we can move on to the next time we choose sides and pretend to be outraged about nothing.

When did we get it in our heads that we have the right to never hear anything we don't like? In the last year, we've been shocked and appalled by the unbelievable insensitivity of Nike shoes, the Fighting Sioux, Hank Williams Jr., Cee Lo Green, Ashton Kutcher, Tracy Morgan, Don Imus, Kirk Cameron, Gilbert Gottfried, the Super Bowl halftime show and the ESPN guys who used the wrong cliché for Jeremy Lin after everyone else used all the others. Who can keep up?

This week, President Obama's chief political strategist, David Axelrod, described Mitt Romney's constant advertising barrage in Illinois as a "Mittzkrieg," and instantly the Republican Jewish Coalition was outraged and called out Mr. Axelrod's "Holocaust and Nazi imagery" as "disturbing." Because the message of "Mittzkrieg" was clear: Kill all the Jews. Then the coalition demanded not only that Mr. Axelrod apologize immediately but also that Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz "publicly rebuke" him. For a pun! For punning against humanity!

The right side of America is mad at President Obama because he hugged the late Derrick Bell, a law professor who believed we live in a racist country, 22 years ago; the left side of America is mad at Rush Limbaugh for seemingly proving him right.

If it weren't for throwing conniption fits, we wouldn't get any exercise at all.

I have a better idea. Let's have an amnesty — from the left and the right — on every made-up, fake, totally insincere, playacted hurt, insult, slight and affront. Let's make this Sunday the National Day of No Outrage. One day a year when you will not find some tiny thing someone did or said and pretend you can barely continue functioning until they apologize.

If that doesn't work, what about this: If you see or hear something you don't like in the media, just go on with your life. Turn the page or flip the dial or pick up your roll of quarters and leave the booth.

The answer to whenever another human being annoys you is not "make them go away forever." We need to learn to coexist, and it's actually pretty easy to do. For example, I find Rush Limbaugh obnoxious, but I've been able to coexist comfortably with him for 20 years by using this simple method: I never listen to his program. The only time I hear him is when I'm at a stoplight next to a pickup truck.

When the lady at Costco gives you a free sample of its new ham pudding and you don't like it, you spit it into a napkin and keep shopping. You don't declare a holy war on ham.

I don't want to live in a country where no one ever says anything that offends anyone. That's why we have Canada. That's not us. If we sand down our rough edges and drain all the color, emotion and spontaneity out of our

discourse, we'll end up with political candidates who never say anything but the safest, blandest, emptiest, most unctuous focus-grouped platitudes and cant. In other words, we'll get Mitt Romney.

(Bill Maher is host of "Real Time With Bill Maher" on HBO.)

[20120322-12](#) 15:23 Pam Re: "Please Stop Apologizing" (reply to SteveG, above)

Bill Maher nails it again! One of the tests of a free society is whether people can make offhand remarks or jokes, especially about their leaders. No one laughed at Stalin. It's ironic the Jews took after Axelrod, who is a Jew himself. I'm with Bill. I'm fed up with outrage over trivia. I'm saving mine for things like the black kid shot down in cold blood in Florida or the tax breaks that benefit the rich at everyone else's expense. There IS a place for outrage, but idiots like New take advantage of the common people's (yes, I said "common") proclivity toward anger. It feels so good. Especially when nothing much is at stake.

[20120322-13](#) 15:43 SteveG Quote: Barry Goldwater on Christians in Politics

**Mark my word, if and when these preachers get control of the [Republican] party, and they're sure trying to do so, it's going to be a terrible damn problem. Frankly, these people frighten me. Politics and governing demand compromise. But these Christians believe they are acting in the name of God, so they can't and won't compromise. I know, I've tried to deal with them.**

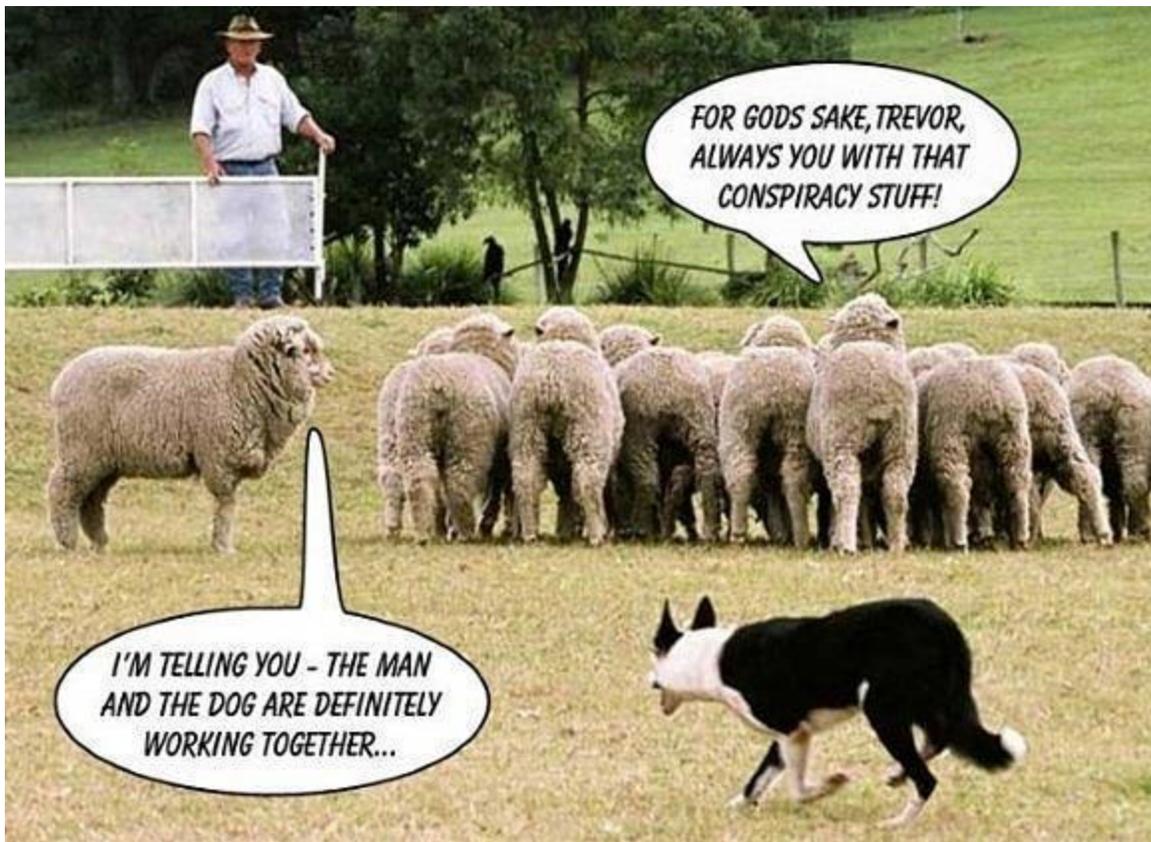
**~ Republican Barry Goldwater**



[I'll admit it. I still have a soft spot in my heart for straight-talkin' Barry! Almost the first President Barry. -SteveB]

[20120322-14](#) 15:46 Pam Re: Quote: Barry Goldwater on Christians in Politics (reply to SteveG, above)

Isn't this great?!!!!



"Walking While Black: The Killing of Trayvon Martin" by Amy Goodman, NationofChange

Mar. 22, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/walking-while-black-killing-trayvon-martin-1332430878>)

On the rainy night of Sunday, Feb. 26, 17-year-old Trayvon Martin walked to a convenience store in Sanford, Fla. On his way home, with his Skittles and iced tea, the African-American teenager was shot and killed. The gunman, George Zimmerman, didn't run. He claimed that he killed the young man in self-defense. The Sanford Police agreed and let him go. Since then, witnesses have come forward, 911 emergency calls have been released, and outrage over the killing has gone global.

Trayvon Martin lived in Miami. He was visiting his father in Sanford, near Orlando, staying in the gated community known as The Retreat at Twin Lakes, where Zimmerman volunteered with the Neighborhood Watch program. The Miami Herald reported that Zimmerman was a "habitual caller" to the police, making 46 calls since January 2011. He was out on his rounds as a self-appointed watchman, packing his concealed 9 mm pistol, when he called 911: "We've had some break-ins in my neighborhood, and there's a real suspicious guy ... this guy looks like he's up to no good, or he's on drugs or something."

Later in the call, Zimmerman exclaims, "OK. These a—holes always get away. ... [Expletive], he's running."

Sounds of Zimmerman moving follow, along with a controversial utterance from Zimmerman, under his breath, considered by many to be "[Expletive] coons." The sound of his running prompted the 911 operator to ask, "Are you following him?" Zimmerman replied, "Yeah," to which the dispatcher said, "OK, we don't need you to do that."

One of the attorneys representing the Martin family, Jasmine Rand, told me: "The term 'coon' on the audiotape ... is a very obvious racial slur against African-Americans. We also heard the neighbors come forward and say, 'Yeah, in

this particular neighborhood, we look for young black males to be committing criminal activity.' And that's exactly what George Zimmerman did that night. He found a young black male that he did not recognize, assumed that he did not belong there, and he targeted him."

Another 911 call that has been released is from a woman who hears someone crying for help, then a gunshot.

Eyewitnesses Mary Cutcher and Selma Mora Lamilla both heard the cries, which police say could have been from Zimmerman, thus supporting his claim, even though he had a gun and outweighed Trayvon Martin by 80 pounds.

Cutcher said at a press conference: "I feel it was not self-defense, because I heard the crying. And if it was Zimmerman that was crying, Zimmerman would have continued crying after the shot went off. The only thing I saw that night—I heard the crying. We were in the kitchen. I heard the crying. It was a little boy. As soon as the gun went off, the crying stopped. Therefore, it tells me it was not Zimmerman crying."

Sanford Police Chief Bill Lee has defended his department's decision not to arrest Zimmerman. They bagged Martin's body and took it away, labeling him a "John Doe," even though they had his cellphone, which anyone, let alone law enforcement with a shooting victim, could have used to easily identify a person. They tested Martin's corpse for drugs and alcohol. Zimmerman was not tested. Neighbors say that Zimmerman loaded things into a U-Haul truck and left the area.

So, while the police and State Attorney Norm Wolfinger have defended their inaction, a democratic demand for justice has ricocheted around the country, prompting a U.S. Justice Department investigation and leading Wolfinger to promise to convene a grand jury. The Rev. Glenn Dames, pastor of St. James AME Church in nearby Titusville, has called Martin's death "a modern-day lynching." His demand for the immediate arrest of Zimmerman was echoed by the organizers of the "Million Hoodie March" in New York City, named after the often racially stereotyped sweatshirt Martin was wearing in the rain when he was shot.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has called for the removal of Sanford Police Chief Lee. NAACP President Ben Jealous, recounting a mass meeting in a Sanford-area church Tuesday night, quoted a local resident who stood up and said, "'If you kill a dog in this town, you'd be in jail the next day.' Trayvon Martin was killed four weeks ago, and his killer is still walking the streets."

With his gun.

© 2011 Amy Goodman

<a href="#">20120322-17</a> 18:33 SteveG "Three Hidden Time Bombs in the GOP's Medicare Budget"
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"Three Hidden Time Bombs in the GOP's Medicare Budget" by Richard Escow, Huffington Post

Mar. 21, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rj-escow/three-hidden-time-bombs-i\\_b\\_1371531.html?ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rj-escow/three-hidden-time-bombs-i_b_1371531.html?ref=politics))

By now most people have heard some of the worst things about the Republican budget proposal - commonly called the "Ryan plan" and un-ironically described by the GOP as "the Path to Prosperity": That it decimates programs for middle class and lower-income Americans while giving even greater tax breaks to the rich - \$3 trillion worth, in fact. That it guts education, research, and transportation while preserving tax breaks for Big Oil. That it undercuts Medicare with a voucher system that will be worth less and less with each passing year.

And that, despite all that, it would actually increase the deficit.

You'd think that pretty much covers it - but it doesn't. When it comes to Medicare, there are three more ugly facts about this plan that have yet to attract widespread attention - mostly be-cause the Republicans have done their best to keep them secret:

1. They're secretly planning to raise the Medicare age.

It's not in House Budget Chair Paul Ryan's Wall Street Journal editorial, the one where he sneered at "some who would distort for political gain our efforts to preserve programs like Medicare" and said "our plan provides guaranteed coverage options financed by a premium-support payment." It's not in the summary description of the GOP budget, which it claims "strengthens health and retirement security by taking power away from government bureaucrats and empowering patients instead with control over their own care." It's not even in the full budget document itself, which is 99 pages long and contains a section entitled "Strengthening Health and Retirement Security."

So how do we know that the GOP wants to raise the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67? Be-cause that's what Ryan and his staff told the Congressional Budget Office when they asked the CBO to calculate the impact of their plan. It's right there in the CBO report on the budget.

Here's the key sentence: "In addition, the eligibility age for Medicare would increase by two months per year beginning in 2023 until reaching age 67 in 2034."

That's right: When Ryan and his staff instructed the CBO to calculate the impact of the Republican budget, they told its analysts that the GOP plan included an increase in the eligibility age for Medicare. Apparently they didn't have room to mention that fact anywhere in their 99-page document, and didn't see fit to bring it up while they were spouting all that rhetoric about "preserving entitlement programs for the future."

The Republican Party intends to raise the Medicare age for people as they approach the costliest years for receiving health insurance, and they're keeping it a secret from the public. This change alone would indirectly cut Social Security benefits by as much as 45 percent, by forcing seniors to spend that much of their benefit check on additional health care costs.

And remember, the GOP wants to raise the eligibility age for Social Security too. The net effect of these two changes means that older Americans would be forced to keep working - or looking for work - at an age when their medical expenses would make hiring them prohibitively expensive for employers who offer health insurance. They would be forced to try purchasing health insurance on the open market.

Which gets us to our second dirty secret...

## 2. Insurers will get to set their own rates.

The Ryan plan lets private, for-profit health insurers set their own rates - rates which, according to the Ryan plan, will determine the Federal budget for senior health. It doesn't say that, of course, but that's how it would work.

According the GOP's proposal, "All plans ... would participate in an annual competitive bidding process ... The second least expensive approved plan ... would establish the benchmark that determines the premium support amount ... Program growth would be determined by the competitive bidding process ..."

What does that mean in English? That Medicare goes away, to be replaced by a system of private health insurance companies who'll be paid to provide services that are supposed to (but won't) resemble the level of coverage seniors currently receive under Medicare. That health insurers would submit their bids to provide those services once a year.

And then comes the surprising part: The Federal government's expenditures for senior health care will be determined by the private insurers themselves, because the second-lowest bid establishes what the government is willing to pay for health insurance.

How crazy is that? Private health insurance rates have been climbing at three and four times the rate of today's Medicare. They've shown no ability to restrain costs -- and have no motive to do so, since they make money the old fashioned way: on the mark-up. And now they - or the lowest bidder among them - will dictate what the government must pay.

The plan says so, very clearly. "As opposed to pegging the growth rate to a predetermined formula," the GOP document say, "competitive bidding offers the ideal means of harnessing the power of choice and competition to control costs, while also securing guaranteed affordability for patients." In other words, the Republican Ryan plan places budgetary control for a major government program in the hands of the very insurance companies that profit from it.

At least that's what it would do, if they didn't contradict themselves in the very next paragraph.

### 3. The GOP plan radically cuts per-person spending for Medicare.

Remember that sentence we just quoted, the one about not pegging the growth rate to a predetermined formula? They totally lied about that. The plan does peg the growth rate to a predetermined formula, and Ryan's staff were very specific about it in their instructions to the CBO: "Total spending would grow in subsequent years," the CBO was told, "with nominal growth in per capita GDP plus 0.5 percentage points per year."

That's a "predetermined formula." And it's important to note that "nominal growth in per capita GDP" is not the same as the growth in per capita health care costs, which have risen much more quickly than general inflation or GDP. That amounts to a major cut in benefits every year.

It gets even worse. The "per capita GDP" applies to everybody in the nation, not the ever-swelling ranks of Medicare-eligible seniors. This gets technical, but here's what it means: After this formula takes effect in 2023, there will be much faster growth in the Medicare-eligible age group than in the overall population. By structuring their formula this way the Republicans have ensured that there will be dramatic benefit cuts, especially as the "age wave" of Baby Boomers retires in the 2023-2030 period.

The "predetermined formula" is itself a secret, since they said there wasn't one. And the way it's structured will lead to dramatic cuts in Medicare.

### Three-Pronged Attack

While the contradictions and evasions make exact forecasts difficult, it's clear that the net effect of these three changes would be to create a budget-busting giveaway to rich insurance corporations while at the same time slashing health coverage for seniors. And this isn't some radical ideologue's manifesto: it's the Republican Party's official Medicare proposal.

One terrible plan, three dreadful secrets. Presidential candidate Mitt Romney has said very, very nice things about this budget. In fact, all of the GOP's leaders have been bragging about it. Since they're so proud of it, why don't they tell more people what it really does?

<a href="#">20120322-18</a> 19:04 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: End the Bush Tax Cuts on the Rich!
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from CREDO Action:

Tell Congress: End the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy:

[http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/bush\\_cuts\\_2011/?r\\_by=-3891339-6Q6gSVx&rc=confemail](http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/bush_cuts_2011/?r_by=-3891339-6Q6gSVx&rc=confemail)

It's outrageous. The average tax break from the Bush tax cuts enjoyed by the top 1 percent of Americans is larger than the average income of the rest of the 99 percent.

And after a decade of giving money to those who literally didn't need it, the deficit caused in large part by the Bush tax cuts is being used as an excuse to take away the social safety net that protects the most vulnerable members of society.

Tell your member of Congress and your senators: End the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy.

Ending these cuts should be a no brainer. They had been set to expire at the end of 2010, but President Obama ended up cutting a deal with the Republican leadership to extend the cuts for another two years.

And we know that the cuts won't be allowed to expire at the end of 2012 without a big fight.

Republican intransigence on the Bush tax cuts was at the heart of the failure of the Super Committee.

Not only did the Republicans on the Super Committee want the Bush tax cuts to be made permanent, they took the morally bankrupt position that we should blow a bigger hole in the budget by giving even larger tax cuts to the rich.

Simply extending the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy alone would cost us more than \$700 billion over the next decade.

There is very little that so clearly demonstrates the callous venality of some members of Congress than the simultaneous demand to give the Koch brothers a tax cut while pushing benefit cuts to programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Tell your member of Congress and your senators: End the Bush tax cuts.

Democrats caved in 2010, and Republicans expect them to cave again. Between now and the end of 2012, we can expect a relentless push to make the Bush tax cuts permanent.

But this is a fight we can win if we are relentless, too. In this case gridlock and inaction work to our benefit because we don't have to pass a bill - we just need to ensure that Congress doesn't pass a bill that extends the Bush tax cuts past 2012.

The first step is speaking out and laying down a marker so that your member of Congress and senators know their constituents want the Bush tax cuts to end.

Tell your member of Congress and your senators: End the Bush tax cuts.

<http://www.lilith-ezine.com/articles/politics/Afghanistan.html>

<http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/afghanistan/>

Soviet Troops in Afghanistan



Afghan Soldier in a Poppy Field (Paula Nelson) [I love the texture! –SteveB]



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Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #102 — MAR. 26, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **The Reality of Obamacare**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 26, 2012)

(And why I'm proud to call it by that name and so should President Obama. In fact, I believe the Republican pejorative will become an honorable nomenclature.)

Obamacare will go down in history as a step forward, not backward. There is no reason on earth not to get these insurance companies to operate under fair laws. It's exactly like seat belts in your cars, folks. They install so easily, cost almost nothing, have saved countless lives, but the industry kicked and screamed and cried until they were forced to take action. And, as the article below shows, those beneficial actions are really no big deal for the insurance companies that started operating under Obamacare even before they had to.

Corporate greed must be controlled! Especially when it comes to people's lives.

"Health Care Reform Repeal Would Put People at Risk" by Jeffrey Young, Huffington Post

Mar. 23, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/23/health-care-reform-supreme-court-n\\_1373735.html?ref=elections-2012](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/23/health-care-reform-supreme-court-n_1373735.html?ref=elections-2012))

(Dawn Josephson and her family were able to find health insurance that covered her son, Wesley, after health care reform passed.)

Dawn Josephson could barely believe it when she found health insurance that would actually cover the cost of treating her young son's eye condition.

Josephson, a freelance editor, wife and mother of two in Jacksonville, Fla., had been spending as much as \$1,000 a month of her family's budget on surgery, doctor visits, tests, and treatments in the seven months since 2-year-old Wesley awoke one morning with his eyes pointed toward each other, a condition called strabismus. That was on top of the \$807 in monthly premiums the family spent on an insurance plan that excluded anything related to her son's eyes.

A few weeks after President Barack Obama signed a sweeping health care reform law in March 2010, Josephson got a call from another insurance company telling her the family had been accepted into a new plan. "What about Wesley's eye? If he needs another surgery, another test, another something, is it covered?" she asked the customer service representative. She pressed the point again: What's the catch? "Nothing. Your family's fully covered," she was told.

Josephson's change in fortune was the result of the new law's provision that prohibits insurance companies from refusing to cover children with pre-existing medical conditions. The family's new insurer decided to change its rules before the law required it, giving Josephson, her husband Dave, Wesley, and his little sister Margo some relief. A few months later, Josephson got to meet Obama at a health care reform event in Falls Church, Va.

Even with that relief, Josephson can't rest easy. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments next week in a case challenging the constitutionality of health reform. The court, or a Republican president next year, could reverse the family's fortunes again, with Josephson's son, now 6, still struggling to gain control of his right eye. He sometimes wears an eye patch, and might need more surgery, Josephson said.

The fate of millions of other Americans also hangs on the Supreme Court's ruling. Repealing health care reform would squash the hopes of uninsured people struggling to pay for health care.

"I definitely think I'd have to worry about it," Josephson said. "It's scary because you see the before and after."

Josephson now pays about \$600 a month for a plan that covers the whole family, about \$200 less than the old insurance that excluded Wesley's eyes. The savings go deeper than that, she said, because she doesn't have to pay out of pocket for her son's doctor visits and tests and won't be on the hook for the full cost if he needs more surgery.

The Obama administration defends the law as a step toward reforming a dysfunctional and expensive industry of care providers, insurers and for-profit companies. Republicans assail it as unconstitutional. And many Americans remain skeptical, or some hostile. The biggest parts of the law, to extend health coverage to more than 30 million uninsured people, are still two years away from reality -- and may never take effect if the court or a Republican president undoes the law.

But it's not just about political abstractions. Two years later, health care reform has had real and profound effects on some Americans. Insurance companies can't deny coverage to sick children, young adults can stay on parents' workplace plans until they turn 26, people with pre-existing medical conditions now have a fallback plan when they can't find insurance anywhere else, and senior citizens are paying less for prescription drugs.

The first two years of health care reform haven't been without pitfalls. A plan for adults with pre-existing conditions has enrolled far fewer people than reform's creators predicted and has spent more per person than anticipated. A program to help small businesses offer insurance to workers has reached a fraction of eligible firms. The administration had to cancel an insurance plan for people with disabilities called the CLASS Act because officials determined it was fiscally unworkable.

To the people who've been helped by health care reform, all of that is less important than the security the law has provided. To them, repeal isn't a topic for political debate, but a threat to their security.

Janice Llanos, 24, is set to earn her master's degree in public health at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., in May. The Woodbridge, Va., resident has asthma and has been dealing with an undiagnosed gastrointestinal disorder for several years. When she graduated from Virginia Tech three years ago, she lost the insurance she had through her father, a retired Army officer. Llanos learned then she's not the type of person who health insurers want.

After getting rejected by some health plans, she found one that came with a \$5,000 deductible -- meaning she'd have to pay that much money out of pocket before any benefits would kick in. "I was never going to reach the deductible cap with my health care expenses, so I was paying for everything out of pocket" even though her plan charged about \$150 a month in premiums. "I had to forego some health care services just because of the cost." She spent about \$3,200 out of pocket in about 18 months.

That changed at the beginning of last year, when Llanos enrolled in the insurance plan her mother, a federal employee, gets through work. Her mother pays \$390 a month to cover herself, her husband, and Janice. The extra

cost of adding the rest of the family comes to \$160 a month, or just \$10 more than Janice was paying on her own for a plan she couldn't use.

Michele Rappaport and Alan Sorkowitz's problem wasn't that they couldn't find health insurance. It was that their monthly premiums jumped from about \$1,700 to more than \$2,400 in one year. To qualify for health care reform's Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan, the married couple from Tucson, Ariz., had to go uninsured for six months first. Still, the "essentially retired" Rappaport and Sorkowitz, both 59, feel they're better off now because of it. His insurance costs \$450 each month and hers is \$334.

They were paying so much before because of pre-existing medical conditions -- Sorkowitz has diabetes -- even though they consider themselves healthy and haven't used their new insurance much since they signed up last August. "The private insurers looked at us like we were ready to fall apart," Rappaport said. "Not enough Americans have had that experience," she said. "People need to understand they're also vulnerable."

20120323-01 10:06 Pam Being a Grandparent

from SteveB:

I was just thinking...something to tell Atty...breaking his leg and having his cast and all may very well give him one of his first memories in his life. The bad part will disappear. That's kind of a silver lining. Unfortunately, the bad part remains a little longer for Mom and Grandma (?) Mum {?} I don't know what he calls you. My grandkids have so many grandfathers (4) that names get contested. Somehow, I got lucky and got Grandpa.

The boys call me Grandmommy, sometimes Grandmommy Pam to distinguish me from Ben's mother, Grandmommy Weedie (Atty calls her Grandmommy Robert, Ben's dad's name). I have wondered, too, whether Atty will remember this broken leg. I've been spending so much time with him, which has brought us even closer, I think. The night right after his accident, Saskia said he called for me three times. Poor little monkey. Yesterday we were sitting on the swing (cushioned) on our deck, and he went to sleep. He slept for well over an hour, and I just sat there, swinging gently, listening to the birds and taking in the flowers and blooms on the redbuds and dogwoods. It was lovely. I feel close to Jonas too, but he's seven and what he cares about mostly these days are bey blades.

20120323-02 10:40 SteveG Fw: POGO (the Project On Government Oversight)

from POGO:

Our Mission: Founded in 1981, the Project On Government Oversight is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that champions good government reforms. POGO's investigations into corruption, misconduct, and conflicts of interest achieve a more effective, accountable, open, and ethical federal government.

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

20120323-03 10:41 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Protect Access to Birth Control!

from CREDO Action:

President Obama did the right thing for women when he rejected the demands of rightwing activists to limit access to no-cost birth control.<sup>1</sup>

But before these new guidelines go into effect, his administration is holding a public comment period on the new rules. And we know that anti-woman activists will flood President Obama's Department of Health and Human Services with comments urging the administration to overturn their historic decision.

If President Obama had caved to the demands of these radical activists, certain employers like religiously affiliated universities and hospitals would have been allowed to prevent their female employees and students from having access to the same health care as every other woman in America.

We must ensure that President Obama hears that the vast majority of Americans support his decision to ensure no-cost birth control for all women. Click here to submit a public comment in support of access to birth control.

[http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/bc\\_comment/?r=5542639&id=37170-3891339-PGAc0Kx](http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/bc_comment/?r=5542639&id=37170-3891339-PGAc0Kx)

The Department of Health and Human Services and the medical community agree that providing no-cost birth control is an essential part of preventive health care for women. And Kathleen Sebelius, the director of HHS, said that providing birth control at no cost to women should be like "covering flu shots."<sup>2</sup>

However, before activists from CREDO and Planned Parenthood began petitioning President Obama, the New York Times reported that the president was dangerously close to caving to the demands of the anti-woman lobby by adding a giant loophole that would keep a large number of women from being able to access no-cost birth control.<sup>3</sup>

CREDO members sent over 160,000 petitions and made over 3,000 calls to the White House asking President Obama not to cave.

In the end, President Obama listened to our call to protect women's health. But that doesn't mean our work is done.

The anti-woman extremists who are unhappy with President Obama for taking this stand will surely let him know. So let's make sure he hears from those of us who support him standing strong and protecting access to contraception.

Make sure that President Obama hears that the vast majority of Americans support his decision to ensure no-cost birth control for all women.

Click below to submit a comment in support of access to contraception:

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=5542639&id=37170-3891339-PGAc0Kx&t=9>

Thank you for standing up for women's access to birth control.

Ali Rozell, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

<sup>1</sup>"Obama Birth Control Policy: Administration Lays Out Proposals For Carrying Out Compromise," N.C. Aizenman, The Huffington Post, 3-16-2012.

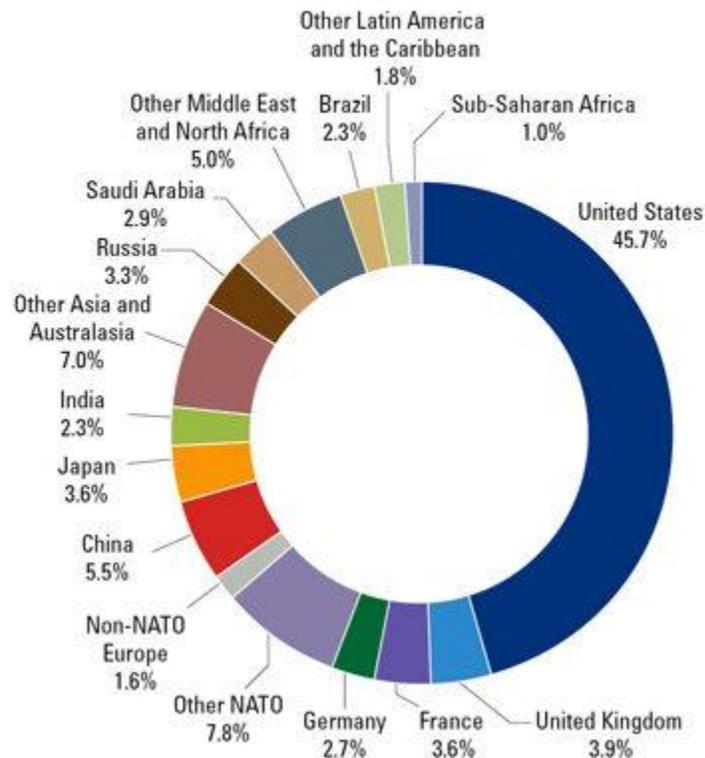
<sup>2</sup>"New U.S. rules require insurance coverage for contraception," N.C. Aizenman, The Washington Post, 8-1-2011.

<sup>3</sup>"Democrats Urge Obama to Protect Contraceptive Coverage in Health Plans," Robert Pear, New York Times, 11-19-2011.

20120323-04	10:52	SteveG	Planned Defense Expenditure by Country (2011)
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<http://cdn.front.moveon.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/DSoriginal3.jpg>

### Planned Defence Expenditure by Country 2011†



[Gee! Just one country is completely disproportionate! –SteveB]

[20120323-05](#)

11:19 Art

Re: Bill Maher: Please Stop Apologizing (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #101)

Found this just ridiculous- "advertising barrage in Illinois as a "Mitzkrieg," and instantly the Republican Jewish Coalition was outraged and called out Mr. Axelrod's "Holocaust and Nazi imagery" as "disturbing."

Blitzkrieg means Lightning Warfare and has absolutely nothing to do with the Holocaust. It was a style of warfare developed by the German Army as a way to get out of the stalemate of WW I. This just silly. Equivalent of associating the development of radar with the massacre of the Jews.

[I suppose if some talking head were to use the word "kaput" (*kaputt*) from the Yiddish for lost or dead, they would be condemned for Holocaust imagery. Ridiculous. Maybe next we won't be able to say the word "German". – SteveB]

Also think your top picture of troops in Afghanistan is Russians. At least the equipment is.

[Well...these are American troops borrowing some old Soviet equipment... Actually, sharp-eyed Art is right. I had even scanned the thing with a magnifying glass... Will correct the error in online version of the newsletter. Thanks, Art! –SteveB]

Good stuff!!

[20120323-06](#)

11:20 SteveG

"Santorum Suggests Obama Beats an 'Etch-A-Sketch' Candidate"

What better endorsement does Obama need?

from "Santorum Suggests Obama Beats an 'Etch-A-Sketch' Candidate" by Arlette Saenz, ABC News

Mar. 22, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/03/santorum-suggests-obama-beats-an-etch-a-sketch-candidate/>)

You win by giving people a choice. You win by giving people the opportunity to see a different vision for our country, not someone who's just going to be a little different than the person in there. If you're going to be a little different, we might as well stay with what we have instead of taking a risk with what may be the Etch A Sketch candidate of the future.

20120323-12

13:06

MarthaH

"Santorum: GOP Better Off with Obama Than 'Etch-A-Sketch' Republican"

"Santorum: GOP Better Off with Obama Than 'Etch-A-Sketch' Republican" by Andrew Rafferty, NBC

Mar. 22, 2012, (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/03/22/10814436-santorum-gop-better-off-with-obama-than-etch-a-sketch-republican?chromedomain=todayonthetrail>)

(Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum told a crowd of supporters in Texas Thursday that the GOP might be better off sticking with President Obama than "taking a risk" on Mitt Romney, who [sic] he referred to as the "Etch A Sketch candidate.")

(SAN ANTONIO, Texas) -Rick Santorum today suggested it would be better to stick with President Obama over a candidate that might be "the Etch A Sketch candidate of the future" -- a shot at chief rival Mitt Romney.

"You win by giving people the opportunity to see a different vision for our country, not someone who's just going to be a little different than the person in there," said Santorum. "If you're going to be a little different, we might as well stay with what we have instead of taking a risk with what may be the Etch A Sketch candidate of the future."

For the second day in a row, the former Pennsylvania senator brought an Etch A Sketch on the trail as a prop to remind voters of Romney adviser Eric Fehrstrom's response to a question about whether Santorum is pushing Romney too far right to win over moderate voters in a general election. "Well, I think you hit a reset button for the fall campaign. Everything changes," Fehrstrom said Wednesday on CNN. "It's almost like an Etch A Sketch. You can kind of shake it up and restart all over again."

The comment gave plenty of ammunition to Santorum and Newt Gingrich, both of whom have made the well-known children's toy a staple of their stump speeches.

Speaking at the USAA headquarters here, Santorum showed optimism about his chances in the delegate rich state of Texas. He told the crowd the primary would not be over by the time the Lone Star State votes on May 29.

"It's the second-biggest delegate prize, and you're going to have an important role. This race will not be over when Texas is coming around," he said.

Santorum's viability hinges on picking up a majority of the 155 delegates that will be up for grabs here. When asked about his path to the nomination, Texas plays a key role.

Still, the GOP hopeful avoided calling on Newt Gingrich to leave the race, though senior campaign advisers have said the former House speaker remaining in the race is cutting into their vote totals and that they would like to receive the former House speaker's support.

Santorum said his campaign has been in contact with both the Gingrich and Romney campaigns, though he declined to give specifics of the conversations.

"I'm worried about being a candidate. I'm not worried about anything else right now," Santorum told reporters who asked about the nature of the conversations.

Accompanying Santorum on the trail today was billionaire-backer Foster Freiss, who is a chief contributor to the pro-Santorum Super PAC Red, White and Blue Fund. They will attend a fundraiser in Dallas on Thursday afternoon.

(UPDATE) The Romney camp responds with this statement from the former Massachusetts governor: "I am in this race to defeat Barack Obama and restore America's promise. I was disappointed to hear that Rick Santorum would rather have Barack Obama as president than a Republican. This election is more important than any one person. It is about the future of America. Any of the Republicans running would be better than President Obama and his record of failure."

[Mitt has all the standard lies down pat, doesn't he? A little smarter than Rick Perry. But just a very little. -SteveB]

<a href="#">20120323-13</a>	13:49	Pam	Re: "Santorum: GOP Better Off with Obama Than 'Etch-A-Sketch' Republican" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Obama's "record of failure" is actually the REPUBLICANS'!

<a href="#">20120323-14</a>	13:52	SteveG	Re: "Santorum: GOP Better Off with Obama Than 'Etch-A-Sketch' Republican" (reply to MarthaH & Pam, above) & "Romney Does Etch-A-Sketch Damage Control"
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"Romney Does Etch-A-Sketch Damage Control" by Matt Taylor, The National Memo

Mar. 23rd, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/romney-does-etch-sketch-damage-control/>)

A top campaign advisor comparing his positions before and after he (eventually) secures the GOP presidential nomination to shaking up an Etch A Sketch toy continues to dog Mitt Romney, who went into a second day of damage control Thursday led by a visit to the don of conservative politics, South Carolina Senator Jim DeMint.

Romney reportedly requested the Thursday morning meeting, and also met with other top conservatives in Congress, including Wisconsin Republican Paul Ryan.

"I can tell conservatives from my perspective is that, I'm not only comfortable with Romney, I'm excited about the possibility of him possibly being our nominee," DeMint said.

The niceties aside, the meeting was clearly an attempt by Romney to talk some conservative movement leaders into helping him end this primary. The current dynamic, where Romney has one foot in the moderate waters he navigated in Massachusetts and the other in the mosh pit of Tea Party politics, isn't working.

The undisputed winner in all of this? Etch A Sketch (OART), whose stock value has soared:

<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/onpolitics/post/2012/03/etch-a-sketch-stock-price-mitt-romney-eric-fehrnstrom-/1?csp=34news>

<a href="#">20120323-07</a>	12:19	SteveG	No Kid Hungry Request: Watch <i>Hunger Hits Home</i>
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from No Kid Hungry:

Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 14.

That night, Food Network will premiere a first-of-its-kind documentary about childhood hunger in America.

The documentary, *Hunger Hits Home*, tells the story of three American families facing hunger, and takes a close-up look at the impact hunger has on a child. The documentary also provides a potent and urgent call to action — something everyone can do to make a difference. We're so proud to be a part of this important documentary. This is a big moment for our cause and our campaign, and I want to be sure that you are a part of it.

We hope you'll watch the premiere with us — at your home — starting at 8:00 p.m. EST/7:00 p.m. CST.

Be among the first to see *Hunger Hits Home* — and make sure others do, too.

Let us know that you're committed to watching it and then take a peek at the trailer.

**What:** *Hunger Hits Home*, narrated by Jeff Bridges, national spokesman for No Kid Hungry.

**Where:** Your home with TV tuned to Food Network.

**When:** Saturday, April 14 - 8:00 p.m. EST/7:00 p.m. CST.

Video Trailer & RSVP: [http://join.strength.org/site/R?i=8lL2K1KkC1veIxLTm\\_gFbg](http://join.strength.org/site/R?i=8lL2K1KkC1veIxLTm_gFbg).

<a href="#">20120323-08</a> 12:20 SteveG Fw: Video: The 99% Spring—100,000 Strong!
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from the 99% Spring:

This April, we're pulling off one of our biggest and brightest actions against corporate corruption yet: we're working with 40+ other groups to train 100,000 people in nonviolent direct action in the tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King and M.K. Gandhi in a 99% spring where we take aim at the megabanks, polluters and election-buyers.

Today, we're debuting our brand-new video and call to action - and we need YOUR help to spread the word. Check it out NOW!

This is just the first step in a shared effort to make this spring one that finds people across America taking direct action in their communities for the first time - and we need your help to spread the word.

<http://the99spring.com/100000-strong-the-99-spring/>

**Reason 653 why we need a 99% SPRING**

AVERAGE AMERICAN TAX RATE	GENERAL ELECTRIC TAX RATE
20.4%	2.3%

#99spring the99spring.com

[Businesses might as well have no income tax as pay 2.3%. But to enjoy the 0% rate, businesses must behave and operate the way the people demand. Otherwise, a 50% rate applies. For instance, foreign profits retained in foreign countries are subject to the 50% tax, but 0% if reinvested in the U.S. And I don't mean simply acquisitions and stock buy-backs. Human beings don't let machines or corporations control them, humans control the machines and corporations. That's the way it must be, or we perish. Re-watch the *Terminator* or *The Matrix* trilogies, please! – SteveB]

[20120323-09](#) 12:25 SteveG Fw: Common Cause Petition: Stop the Koch Brothers!

from Common Cause:

The Koch brothers are trying to buy control of the Cato Institute, an independent think tank, and use it to advance their personal, partisan agenda. And they want taxpayers to subsidize them.

This wrong-headed attempt to skirt the tax laws and politicize a respected non-profit organization must be stopped. Sign our petition today and tell the IRS to crack down on the Koch brothers.

Here's the simple fact: Cato's tax exemption requires it to steer clear of partisan politics.

The Koch brothers' latest takeover attempt would make that null and void. You can stop them by joining with thousands of other Common Cause supporters and taking action today.

Sign the petition and tell the Internal Revenue Service to crack down on the Kochs' latest scheme to push their corporate agenda.

<http://www.commoncause.org/siteapps/advocacy/ActionItem.aspx?c=dkLNK1MQIwG&b=8013269>

Thanks for all that you do. Bob Edgar and the rest of the team at Common Cause

[20120323-10](#) 12:26 Pam Magical Thinkers

I don't see how Santorum's "vision" is essentially different from Obama's. Yes, they disagree on policy, but the values Santorum prattles on about are not alien to Obama. He just doesn't prattle on about silly things like pornography, when there are much bigger issues, like poverty, unemployment, inadequate health care, etc. etc., to worry about. This election is NOT about values. Liberals have values, whatever the tea baggers think. We're not debating whether people should be honest and kind. It seems to me those two qualities are the basis of every decent morality. Everything else is extraneous. If EVERYONE were honest and kind, we wouldn't need a defense budget. If politicians are going to disagree, I wish they'd argue about what actions should be taken and why. If you don't want a single-payer health insurance system, fine. Argue about that with reasons and specifics. Don't just call Obama a socialist and think you've done your job.

I'm still reeling from the twilight-zone comments that I assume came from the blog, the ones about how Obama is a Muslim socialist who's bringing the apocalypse. How does one engage with people who think like that? This is a serious question. My first thought was just to write him (them) off, thinking no good ever came of trying to argue rationally with someone whose thinking is magical. But there are too many magical thinkers to ignore. I see them everywhere, even in the university--granted, I'm in the south. Short of a course in Western Civilization, what is a decent response to an illogical belief? I don't mean I want a way to talk someone out of their religious faith. I just want a way to address those comments that are the next thing to crazy.

[20120323-11](#) 13:05 SteveB Re: Magical Thinkers (reply to Pam, above)

It's that old dichotomy again—the one between the rational folks and the emotional folks, right? Some of us have arrived at our world views through study, research, weighing arguments and evidence, science, and such tools.

Others have arrived at world views by circumventing all this and going directly to the gut, to views based on emotions like fear, love, and hate.

Not very often can the two groups communicate in any meaningful way. Occasionally, something speaks to the masses. The French Revolution comes to mind. The Arab Spring. The Tea Party movement. But to really understand how the logical speak to the illogical, I guess you'd have to ask a Republican. I believe it is nearly always done through lies and based upon great need—the lies from the top meeting the need from the bottom...until all hell finally breaks loose and the people demonstrate their power to destroy, if nothing else. Thus: the guttural communication upward.

[20120323-20](#) 17:04 Dennis Re: Magical Thinkers (reply to Pam, above)

**Pam:** Argue about that with reasons and specifics. Don't just call Obama a socialist and think you've done your job.

**Dennis:** You obviously don't understand wedge-issue politics, Pam.

**Pam:** I'm still reeling from the twilight-zone comments that I assume came from the blog, the ones >>about how Obama is a Muslim socialist who's bringing the apocalypse... ...I just want a way to address those comments that are the next thing to crazy.

**Dennis:** When I was a social worker for the mentally ill in Detroit, the professional way to deal with this was to prescribe Thorazine. I once tried to reason with an agitated schizophrenic, got too close, and barely escaped a roundhouse right to the chin. Best to just stay away from Tea Party rallies.

[20120323-21](#) 17:26 Pam Re: Magical Thinkers (reply to Dennis, above)

I keep hoping there's a way into their teeny little brains without being reduced to name-calling. It seems there isn't any. Sigh.

[20120324-03](#) 13:41 SteveG More Magical Thinkers

Please read the items below and could someone tell me what the logical thought processes are behind the comments?

The comments are from a Fox news cast, a minister, and an attendee at a Republican fundraising event.

A response, especially from a Republican or from the right, or any response would be appreciated – I truly do not understand any of the comments being made.

"As Santorum Fires Gun, Woman Shouts 'Pretend It's Obama'" by Arlette Saenz, ABC News, Mar. 23, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/santorum-fires-gun-woman-shouts-pretend-obama-160942541--abc-news.html>)

"Pat Robertson Believes Peyton Manning Should Get Hurt This Year" by Chris Chase, Yahoo! Sports/Shutdown Corner, Mar. 23, 2012, (<http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/nfl-shutdown-corner/pat-robertson-believes-peyton-manning-hurt-142935112.html>)

"Geraldo Rivera Finds Real Culprit in Trayvon Martin Slaying: The Hoodie" by Zachary Roth, Yahoo! News/The Lookout, Mar. 23, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/lookout/geraldo-rivera-finds-real-culprit-trayvon-martin-slaying-182043689.html>)

[20120324-05](#) 14:51 Art Re: More Magical Thinkers (reply to SteveG, above)

It's all about hate.

<a href="#">20120324-10</a>	22:17	SteveG	Re: More Magical Thinkers (reply to Art, above)
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Hate, racism, racial cleansing, and evil are the answers I have received so far about the articles above.

<a href="#">20120323-15</a>	14:05	SteveB	"Can We Escape the Global Energy Spiral?"
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"Can We Escape the Global Energy Spiral?" by Joe Conason, *The National Memo*

Mar. 22, 212, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/can-we-escape-global-energy-spiral/>)

When the price of gasoline rises, so does political demagoguery, especially during an election year. Frustrated drivers, infuriated by the spinning numbers that denude their wallets at the pump, understandably want to believe the loudmouthed candidate who promises cheaper fuel if only the magic of the marketplace is freed from environmental safeguards, bureaucratic regulations and burdensome taxes. Even an obvious charlatan like Newt Gingrich can get a little mileage by claiming he will fill their tanks for \$2.50 a gallon, or that the Keystone XL pipeline, designed to transport tar-sand petroleum from Canada to Mexico for export, will somehow reduce prices here.

Yet America has already tried the cure prescribed by Gingrich, Mitt Romney, and the Republicans in Congress. Under the Bush administration, Dick Cheney worked in secrecy with the oil industry to remove all obstacles to domestic drilling, regardless of the cost to the air, water, land, and wildlife, not to mention the Treasury. No doubt Cheney and his cronies are gratified by the results, which include increasing production, spectacular profits, and less dependence on foreign resources, as well as spreading environmental degradation.

What the oil boom has not brought so far is a reduction in consumer prices, now approaching the same level as during the summer of 2008, before the economic crash. Worldwide recovery has meant a return to rising prices — mitigated only by trends toward energy conservation, urban revival, and fuel economy. In those hopeful signs may be found the only reliable escape from the global energy spiral.

Certainly Barack Obama seemed to understand that survivable future would require us to move from carbon-based energy to cleaner sources derived from the sun, wind, waves, and biomass — and most importantly, in the short term, many modes of conservation. As president he has spent significant capital toward those ends, both rhetorically and in his budgets, while pragmatically supporting and even extending Cheney's "drill baby, drill" program. As the New York Times reported on Wednesday, the combined effects of increased domestic production and lower fuel consumption are substantially diminishing U.S. dependence on OPEC oil.

So why do consumers continue to pay more and more, with no relief in sight? The simple answer is that oil and gas respond to a world market that demands more and more oil to power growing economies abroad where people want to drive cars, eat meat and imitate the wasteful, polluting and ultimately dangerous lifestyle of the West — even as Western nations seek to reduce those harmful patterns.

Drilling everywhere may please the corporate patrons of Gingrich and Romney, but it won't reduce gas prices here unless the world economy slumps again. The technologies that produce more oil from old fields here are highly damaging to the environment, ruining and depleting scarce water resources that will eventually leave many places uninhabitable. The unprecedented heat wave now scaring scientists here and abroad is a clear warning against the hubris of the oil lobby and its political echoes.

Many cities are already embarked on the pathway out of our enslavement to oil, by reducing fuel consumption, rebuilding transit, and encouraging conservation, clean energy, and smarter development patterns, all of which create far more employment than the oil boom ever will. The president hasn't hindered oil production, as his opponents claim, but he hasn't abandoned his commitment to a secure and healthy future — and he must not.

<a href="#">20120323-16</a>	15:03	SteveG	"OWS Activist Cecily McMillan Describes Seizure, Bodily Injuries in Arrest by NYPD"
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"OWS Activist Cecily McMillan Describes Seizure, Bodily Injuries in Arrest by NYPD" by Amy Goodman, NationofChange

Mar. 23, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/ows-activist-cecily-mcmillan-describes-seizure-bodily-injuries-arrest-nypd-1332519913>)

<a href="#">20120323-17</a>	16:01	SteveG	Fw: USAction Petition: Demand a Budget for All, Not Just the 1%!
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from USAction:

Rep. Paul Ryan's budget is, simply put, an all out attack on the 99%.

Not only would it end Medicare as we know it, but it would eliminate the Affordable Care Act, drastically reduce Medicaid payments to states and cut back nearly all programs to help lower-income families. All the while, Ryan's plan would increase Pentagon spending and give trillions in tax breaks to the richest 1%.

Meanwhile the Congressional Progressive Caucus just released their own budget plan: the Budget for All. Unlike the Republican plan, which would gut nearly every program to help low-income and unemployed Americans get back to work, the CPC plan would invest \$2.4 trillion in job-creation and direct-hire programs.

The CPC plan also calls for public financing of congressional and presidential elections, ending the Bush tax cuts for the top 2% and taxing wealth like work, all while reducing military spending.

Will you send a message to your Representative in Congress and urge them to vote NO on the Ryan plan and to co-sponsor the Congressional Progressive Caucus' Budget for All plan instead?

[http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action\\_KEY=345&track=email\\_2841&Email=sgooch46@aol.com](http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=345&track=email_2841&Email=sgooch46@aol.com)

Republicans claim that they are serious about cutting the deficit, but their only solution is to gut nearly every program of the federal government -- including cuts to veterans' programs, food stamps and housing assistance to lower income families, and reducing transportation spending -- at a time when our infrastructure is crumbling. Ryan's plan would even cut federal education spending by 45 percent, creating a permanent underclass with limited opportunity and access to education.

At a time when Americans are struggling to hold down their jobs and make ends meet, it is outrageous that Republicans would rather balance the budget on the backs of the middle class, than make the 1% pay their fair share.

The CPC plan is proof that we can balance the budget while still investing in our future and protecting necessary programs like Medicare and Social Security for our future generations.

Click here to ask your Representative to co-sponsor the Budget for All plan and to vote NO on the Ryan plan.

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

<a href="#">20120323-18</a>	16:10	Art	"Epic March Heat Wave in Midwest, Great Lakes & Northeast: Link to Global Warming?"
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Think this might be the indications of a problem. Breaking temperature records is one thing, but this is off the charts.

"Epic March Heat Wave in Midwest, Great Lakes and Northeast: Link to Global Warming?" by Jason Samenow, *The Washington Post*, Mar. 22, 2012

Mar. 22, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/capital-weather-gang/post/epic-march-heat-wave-to-conclude-in-midwest-great-lakes-link-to-global-warming/2012/03/22/gIQA6hj3TS\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/capital-weather-gang/post/epic-march-heat-wave-to-conclude-in-midwest-great-lakes-link-to-global-warming/2012/03/22/gIQA6hj3TS_blog.html))

For more than a week, dozens of places in the Midwest, the Great Lakes states and the Northeast have obliterated records for warm weather.

In some cases, record highs have been destroyed by more than 30 degrees, and even morning low temperatures have bested record highs.

In Marquette, Mich., Wednesday's record-crushing high was 81, compared with the old record of 49, which even the morning low of 52 topped. The same day, Grand Rapids, Mich., scored its all-time record temperature, soaring to 87 — 40 degrees above normal.

"When low temperatures are the same as previous record highs, that's incredible — to me, that's just mind-boggling," Mike Halpert, deputy director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center told the Web site OurAmazingPlanet.

Chicago hit 80 for the eighth time in nine days on Thursday and set its ninth record high in as many days.

Compared with 3,550 warm-weather records set in the United States from March 12 through Sunday, there were a piddling 18 cold-weather records, according to the National Climatic Data Center.

The extreme weather pattern is a result of an abnormally huge ridge in the jet stream over eastern North America that has remained stationary for days.

With so many records being broken by such large margins and for so long, what can we say about a connection to global warming?

The University of Utah's Jim Steenburgh is convinced that global warming has a role. The Weather Channel's Stu Ostro shares a similar view, while Accuweather's meteorologists seem more reluctant to connect the dots.

Although the configuration of weather systems made this heat wave possible, I favor the viewpoints of Ostro and Steenburgh: that global warming contributed to its intensity. The background increases in greenhouse gases — at levels unprecedented in at least 800,000 years — are stacking the deck for more extreme heat events such as this.

<a href="#">20120323-19</a>	17:03	SteveB	Fw: An All-of-the-Above Energy Plan (from Sen. John Tester) & "EIA Projects U.S. Non-Hydro Renewable Power Generation Increases, Led by Wind & Biomass"
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from Montana Democratic Senator Jon Tester (Mar. 23, 2012):

As we work to grow our economy and create jobs, energy development presents great opportunities for Montana.

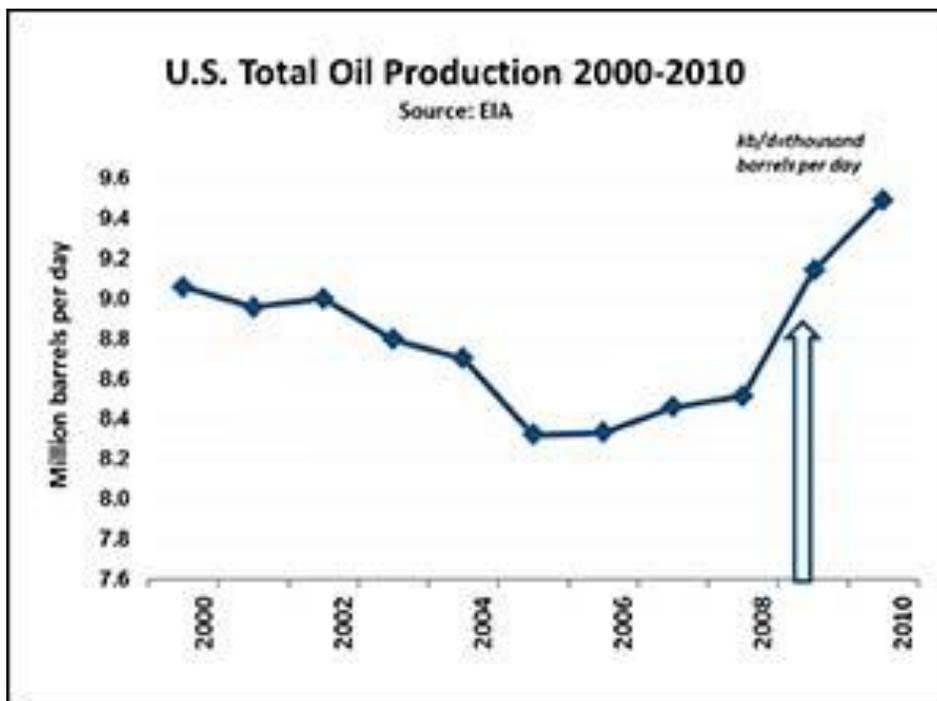
That's why I'm for an all-of-the-above energy plan. This means responsible development of traditional energy resources like coal, oil, and natural gas along with cutting edge renewable energy sources like wind, geothermal, biomass, and solar power.

Last Friday when I visited Richland County, I got a close-up view of the key role Montana can play in developing our energy future and growing our economy. The oil and gas boom in Eastern Montana is boosting our state's economy and will help us use traditional energy resources to reduce consumption of foreign energy and as a bridge to cleaner fuels in the future.

I'm proud of the work Montanans are doing to secure our energy future, and proud to support responsible development of the Keystone Pipeline. Earlier this month, I voted to move the Keystone Pipeline forward now, without delay. Over the past three years, our domestic oil production has risen and our dependence on foreign oil has been on the decline. Development of the Keystone Pipeline will keep us on this path to a more sustainable energy future.

We also must make sure Montana and America lead the world in renewable energy development. Diversifying our sources of energy will stabilize prices and create jobs. Since 2008, renewable electricity generation has doubled. With abundant wind and geothermal resources, Montana wins when we develop renewable energy resources.

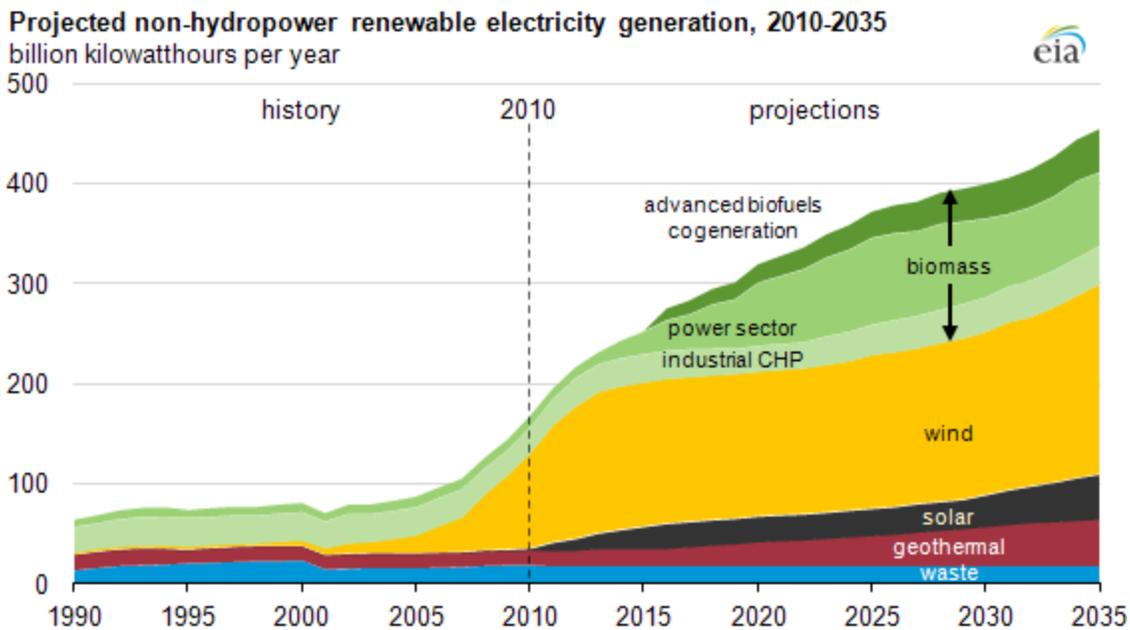
Just last week I met with the CEO of NaturEner, the company developing cutting edge wind energy projects in Glacier and Toole Counties in northcentral Montana. These projects will put hundreds of Montanans to work and provide clean energy today and for years into the future. To help keep these projects on track and attract further development to our state, I'm working hard to get the Production Tax Credit reauthorized.



Montana wins with an all-of-the-above energy plan. We have the resources. We have a dedicated, well-trained workforce. We have innovators leading the way to new energy sources at our colleges and universities. I'm working to make sure these ingredients add up to jobs and economic growth in the years ahead.

["EIA Projects U.S. Non-Hydro Renewable Power Generation Increases, Led by Wind and Biomass" by U.S. Energy Information Administration](#)

Feb. 28, 2012, (<http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=5170>)



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Annual Energy Outlook 2012 Early Release Reference case.  
Note: Data from the Annual Energy Outlook 2012 (AEO2012) Early Release Reference case are subject to change with the release of the full AEO in spring 2012.

Wind and biomass dominate projected increases in U.S. renewable electricity generation, excluding hydropower, in EIA's Annual Energy Outlook 2012 (AEO2012) Early Release Reference case. Increased generation from non-hydro renewable energy resources in the electric power sector accounts for 33 percent of the overall growth in electricity generation from 2010 to 2035. The non-hydro renewable share of total generation in the projection increases from 4% in 2010 to 9% in 2035.

Biomass generation increases nearly 4-fold, driven by two main factors: Federal requirements to use more biomass-based transportation fuels (see Renewable Fuels Standard), which leads to increased electricity generation as a co-product from liquid fuel facilities such as cellulosic ethanol refineries. Also, co-firing of biomass with coal increases over the projection period, induced partially by State-level Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) as well as favorable economics in regions with significant forestry residues. Traditional Industrial combined-heat-and-power generation in sectors such as the pulp and paper industry continue to contribute to overall biomass generation.

The AEO2012 Reference case assumes implementation of current laws and regulations as specified, including the scheduled expiration of some tax credits at the end of 2012. Wind generation nearly doubles between 2010 and 2035, but the growth slows following the expiration of the production tax credit. The full Annual Energy Outlook, to be released in spring 2012, will analyze a number of sensitivities, including one assuming that incentives such as the production tax credit do not expire.

Solar grows rapidly, increasing nearly 7-fold by 2035, as near-term market growth is projected to result in lower system costs. The majority of the growth in solar is with photovoltaics, a significant portion of which comes from the end-use sector (i.e., rooftop solar). However, even with this strong growth, solar still accounts for a relatively small amount of total electricity generation in 2035. The projection reflects the expiration of the 30% solar investment tax credit in 2016, as provided by current law, continuing at 10% thereafter.

Growth in geothermal generation is projected to be robust relative to recent history for the industry, tripling over the projection period, but geothermal remains a small portion of overall generation. Geothermal resources suitable for centralized electricity production are concentrated in the west, and like other renewables, development is driven by State RPS policies.

A key downside uncertainty in the projections for non-hydro renewables is whether States will strictly enforce their RPS requirements, particularly if the current Federal tax credits that make RPS compliance less costly for consumers are not extended. Near-term growth in many renewable technology types is largely used to satisfy State-level RPS

requirements. However, over the long term, renewable technologies may continue to be built as they become increasingly competitive with other electricity generation options.

20120324-01 09:02 SteveB Fw: 2012 Republican Political Survival Total Ideological Immersion Suit

Boy, I sure would like to have dodo (not "doodoo", Art!) for lunch...what? You say I can't because they're extinct? You say they couldn't bend and adapt? Mmmmmm...



20120324-08 19:40 Larry War

In school I always wanted to take a course so I could understand war.

I knew that every so many years (now it's months) we sent armies to Europe or Asia and they yelled a lot and they shot guns a lot and they came back home to brag a lot, but I didn't understand it. I checked the little Golden Books for *The Kids Guide to War*, but I never found it.

I had so many questions, like where do two countries go to conduct a war? If there was such a place, how old did the guys have to be to go there? How often did they check your age? What would happen if you lied about your age? Could a guy go to war even if his mom didn't like it? Is that why they had the secret service? I could just imagine these thousands of guys in the SS dodging bullets and their mothers.

If two countries agreed to go to war and changed their minds what was the penalty? War would be a lot easier to understand if the guys made up their own rules, like stop all penalties, but I think the only important rule would be that nobody could ever get hurt, and if a guy started crying everything had to go into freeze mode until the details were clear to everybody. Maybe I could like war, but not very much.

20120324-02 11:19 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell the FDA: No BPA in Food Packaging!

from CREDO Action:

The FDA decides on March 31st if it will ban BPA in food packaging.

The toxic chemical bisphenol A (BPA) was recently banned in California from being used in baby bottles and sippy cups.

But thanks to the lobbying of the American Chemistry Council and other chemical manufacturers, BPA continues to be allowed in food and beverage packaging including the lining in most canned food and soup.

The FDA can put a stop to it. The agency will decide on March 31st whether or not to continue allowing bisphenol A (BPA) to be used in food packaging. It needs to stand up to industry pressure and protect us from this dangerous chemical.

Tell the FDA: No BPA in food packaging!

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=5542065&id=37220-3891339-gBu9dx&t=7>

BPA is a hormone disruptor that has been linked to a long list of serious health issues, including breast cancer, prostate cancer, early puberty, miscarriages and brain and heart disorders.<sup>1</sup> It's so ubiquitous, it's even used in things like store receipts and plastic bags, and it is estimated that BPA can be found in 90% of our bodies.<sup>2</sup>

FDA's deadline comes in response to a formal petition filed in 2008 by the Natural Resources Defence Council. FDA failed to respond, and finally in December, a federal judge said it must make a final decision on BPA in food packaging by March 31st.<sup>3</sup>

Early last year, FDA admitted that BPA use raised "some concern," reversing a long maintained position that BPA was safe in low doses, as evidence mounted rapidly of BPA's health risks, which in addition to increased propensity for some diseases, include infertility and behavioral problems in children.

The science on BPA is clear, and its health impacts are far reaching, and deeply concerning. BPA isn't safe to be used in food packaging and the FDA needs to take action to protect us from BPA.

Thank you for fighting to keep us safe from toxic chemicals.

Elijah Zarlin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

<sup>1</sup>"A Survey of Bisphenol A in U.S. Canned Foods," Environmental Working Group, March 2007.

<sup>2</sup>"High BPA levels found in at least 90% of moms-to-be," USA Today, October 11, 2010.

<sup>3</sup>"FDA agrees to determine safety of BPA," Washington Post, December 7, 2011.

<a href="#">20120324-04</a>	13:48	SteveG	Shipping Container Homes (to SteveB)
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Sometime ago we had a conversation about shipping containers – would love to have one of these homes:

<http://realestate.yahoo.com/promo/dream-homes-that-come-in-a-crate.html>

<a href="#">20120324-06</a>	17:11	SteveB	Re: Shipping Container Homes (reply to SteveG, above)
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I really love the idea. It needs to be done on a large scale so homeless people can have housing.

These are particularly nice. Thanks!

<a href="#">20120324-07</a>	18:29	SteveG	"U.S. Rep. Brad Miller: 'If Duke Was Playing the Taliban, I'd Have to Pull for the Taliban'"
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"U.S. Rep. Brad Miller: 'If Duke Was Playing the Taliban, I'd Have to Pull for the Taliban'" by Graham Watson, The Dagger/Yahoo! Sports

Mar. 24, 2012, (<http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/ncaab-the-dagger/us-rep-brad-miller-duke-playing-taliban-d-191910616.html>)

<a href="#">20120324-09</a>	20:48	SteveG	"Wall Street Confidence Trick: The Interest Rate Swaps That Are Bankrupting Local Governments"
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from "Wall Street Confidence Trick: The Interest Rate Swaps That Are Bankrupting Local Governments" by Ellen Brown, NationofChange

Mar. 24, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/wall-street-confidence-trick-interest-rate-swaps-are-bankrupting-local-governments-1332571419>)

Far from reducing risk, derivatives increase risk, often with catastrophic results.  
—Derivatives expert, Satyajit Das, *Extreme Money*(2011)

<a href="#">20120325-01</a>	10:02	MarthaH	"As Supreme Court Justices Review Health-Care Law, Stakes Will Be Hard to Ignore"
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"As Supreme Court Justices Review Health-Care Law, Stakes Will Be Hard to Ignore" by Robert Barnes, *The Washington Post*

Mar. 24, 2012, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/supreme-court-health-care-law/?v=casehistory>)

(A look at how the law got to the Supreme Court and the issues in play.)

The Supreme Court on Monday joins the nation's vitriolic debate over the landmark health-care law and the limits of federal power. And though thousands of pages of legal arguments about the Constitution's history and the court's precedents have landed on justices' desks, the outcome may also hinge on less tangible factors.

Experts say all of those go into the mix as justices consider the extraordinary step of striking down — for the first time since the New Deal — a monumental domestic program proposed by the president and passed by Congress.

The three days of arguments that begin Monday are the inevitable result of a legal battle that began the moment the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act became law two years ago. And the court's conclusion will land in the summer heat of a presidential campaign in which each of President Obama's Republican challengers have made opposition to the law an unshakable pledge.

Such a charged political atmosphere is not the court's favored environment. The justices are protective of their charge as neutral arbiters of the law, what Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. described as umpires calling balls and strikes.

But some see other factors at work in the court's decisions — and they say there should be nothing surprising or even particularly negative about that.

"You don't have to view them as junior varsity politicians to see that their political views and economic predilections have some influence on what they do," said Jeff Shesol, whose most recent book chronicled the New Deal battles between the Supreme Court and President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Certainly the presidents who appointed the nine justices — Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama — took ideology into consideration in making their selections.

Roberts and the court have gone to some lengths to show the nation the seriousness and evenhandedness of their inquiry.

They have scheduled six hours of arguments over three days, the most in 45 years. They will examine the law in detail, even parts that no judges below them have found constitutionally questionable. And while cameras are still forbidden, the court has changed its rules to release audiotape and transcripts of the arguments each day.

Roberts even made something of a preemptive strike this year when he defended his colleagues against criticism that some come to the arguments with agendas.

"We are all deeply committed to the common interest in preserving the court's vital role as an impartial tribunal governed by the rule of law," Roberts wrote in his annual report on the state of the judiciary.

But the case sets up a classic problem for the court: when to defer to the political branches as the elected representatives of the people and when to blow the whistle when those politicians have intruded on the Constitution's protection of the people.

The Obama administration points to the arc of decisions stretching back to the New Deal in which the court has said the Commerce Clause and other constitutional provisions provide Congress authority to deal with national economic problems.

The uninsured consumed about \$116 billion in health-care services in 2008, Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli Jr. told the court in the government's brief. The amount was absorbed by providers or passed along to others in increased health insurance premiums, about \$1,000 a year per family.

"Because health insurance is the principal mechanism for meeting these unpredictable and often expensive liabilities, it was reasonable for Congress to invoke that same mechanism to address the problem of uncompensated care," Verrilli wrote.

Paul D. Clement, representing Republican officials in 26 states who have challenged the law, warns the court that the mandate "rests on a claim of federal powers that is both unprecedented and unbounded."

Only by "checking" the government now, he wrote, can the court make clear that this "uncabined authority is not among the limited and enumerated powers granted the federal government."

A *Washington Post*-ABC News poll showed that two-thirds of respondents want the court to invalidate the entire law or the mandate that all individuals purchase health insurance by 2014.

But those who have chronicled how public opinion affects the court said such immediate concerns have little impact on the justices.

"I hope the justices aren't sitting around reading public opinion polls," said Barry Friedman, a New York University law professor and author of *The Will of the People: How Public Opinion Has Influenced the Supreme Court and Shaped the Meaning of the Constitution*. "Something has gone seriously off the rails if that is true."

The court has shown it is unafraid to buck public opinion to protect constitutional principles, particularly in free-speech cases. But Friedman says the court eventually aligns itself with public opinion on controversial issues, such as civil rights and gun ownership.

Shesol, the author of the Roosevelt book *Supreme Power*, said there are obvious parallels to the Supreme Court's consideration of the progressive New Deal legislation.

Both concern the scope of federal authority and how “the national government is empowered to deal with national problems,” he said.

But the stakes were considerably higher in Roosevelt’s time, and public opinion shifted overwhelmingly to endorse the necessity of the New Deal programs, Shesol said. The string of Roosevelt’s programs reviewed by the court gave the justices a way to adjust to that new reality.

Lee Epstein, a political scientist and lecturer at the University of Southern California Gould School of Law who studies public opinion and the court, says the case will not have lasting impact on the court’s reputation no matter the outcome.

“I think it’s one of those cases where they have the freedom to do what they want,” she said.

But she noted the court’s partisan divide, which fits neatly into its usual ideological lineup. Roberts and Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony M. Kennedy, Clarence Thomas and Samuel A. Alito Jr. were appointed by Republican presidents, Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen G. Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan by Democrats.

Since those appointed by Democrats seem likely to uphold a broad reading of government’s powers, a 5 to 4 decision would highlight the partisan divide.

When Epstein considers the court and reads the arguments in the case, she said she sees a conflict between the justices’ personal ideologies and what the court’s precedents seem to forecast.

“The political-scientist side of me sees it 5 to 4” to strike the law, she said. “The law professor side of me sees it 6 to 3 to uphold.”

Somewhat presciently, as Washington lawyer Adam J. White noted recently in the Weekly Standard, Obama talked as a senator about how Supreme Court justices might decide difficult cases.

He set as examples cases where “the constitutional text will not be directly on point” and cases looking at “whether the Commerce Clause empowers Congress to speak on those issues of broad national concern that may be only tangentially related to what is easily defined as interstate commerce.”

In such tough cases, he said, “the critical ingredient is supplied by what is in the judge’s heart.”

Unfortunately for Obama, as his signature domestic achievement goes before the Supreme Court, that missing ingredient was the reason he gave for voting against the confirmation of Roberts.

<a href="#">20120325-02</a>	12:35	SteveB	“Ryan Budget Plan Would Cut Income Taxes for Millionaires by at Least \$187,000 Annually & Facilitate Corporate Tax Avoidance”
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[“Ryan Budget Plan Would Cut Income Taxes for Millionaires by at Least \\$187,000 Annually and Facilitate Corporate Tax Avoidance” by Citizens for Tax Justice](#)

Mar 22, 2012

[http://ctj.org/ctjreports/2012/03/ryan\\_budget\\_plan\\_would\\_cut\\_income\\_taxes\\_for\\_millionaires\\_by\\_at\\_least\\_187000\\_annually\\_and\\_facilitate.php](http://ctj.org/ctjreports/2012/03/ryan_budget_plan_would_cut_income_taxes_for_millionaires_by_at_least_187000_annually_and_facilitate.php)

PDF: <http://www.ctj.org/pdf/ryanplan.pdf>

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan has introduced a budget plan that, if implemented, would reduce revenues so significantly that they would be inadequate to pay for the federal spending under the Reagan administration, let alone the spending required in the years ahead. The Ryan budget would provide income tax cuts for millionaires averaging *at least* \$187,000 in 2014. The plan would also reduce corporate income taxes and would

increase the (already considerable) incentives for corporations to shift profits and jobs overseas. Each of these three problems is described in detail below.

<b>Impacts of Ryan FY2013 Budget Tax Provisions on Millionaires in 2014</b>					
<b>Compared to current law</b>					
<b>Income Group</b>	<b>Average Income</b>	<b>Percent w/tax cut</b>	<b>Percent w/tax hike</b>	<b>Average Tax Change in Dollars</b>	<b>Average Tax Change as % Change</b>
\$1 million - \$5 million	1,861,000	92.5%	6.1%	-111,100	-18.2%
\$5 million to \$10 million	6,846,300	92.0%	6.6%	-450,700	-19.6%
\$10 million and over	25,274,500	89.1%	9.1%	-1,406,400	-13.1%
<b>all over \$1 million</b>	<b>3,158,200</b>	<b>92.3%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>-187,100</b>	<b>-17.0%</b>

Citizens for Tax Justice, March 2012

**Estimates assume that the Ryan plan would:**

- Replace income tax rates of 25% and higher with one 25% rate
- Replace lower income tax rates with one 10% rate
- Maintain 15% rates for capital gains and dividends
- Repeal all itemized deductions (all taxpayers take standard deduction)
- Repeal all tax credits
- Repeal exclusion for employer-provided health care
- Repeal deduction for health insurance for the self-employed
- Repeal PEP and Pease (upper-income phase-outs for exemptions and itemized deductions)
- Repeal Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)

**Tax Revenue Would Not Be Enough to Pay for Reagan-Era Spending**

First, the Ryan budget would lock in the low revenue levels that are the result of the Bush tax cuts, which will expire at the end of this year if Congress simply does nothing.

The Ryan budget plan indicates that this level of revenue would equal 18 or 19 percent of GDP (that is, 18 or 19 percent of our overall economy) in the following decades. Federal spending has been greater than this for most of the past 50 years.

In fact, even during the Reagan administration, federal spending ranged from 21.3 percent to 23.5 percent of GDP. And that was at a time when America was not fighting any wars, the baby-boomers were not retiring, and health care costs had not yet skyrocketed the way they have today.<sup>1</sup>

**Millionaires Would Receive Average Income Tax Cut of at Least \$187,000 in 2014**

Second, the Ryan budget would replace the existing personal income tax with a personal income tax that has just two rates, 10 percent and 25 percent, repeal the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT), and offset the costs by closing unspecified tax loopholes and tax expenditures. The table on the first page illustrates that taxpayers with adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeding \$1 million would enjoy a tax cut of *at least* \$187,000 under this plan no matter how it is implemented.

The figures in the table were calculated under the assumption that taxpayers with AGI exceeding \$1 million would have to give up *all* the major tax loopholes and tax expenditures that Rep. Ryan could conceivably target for repeal. While Rep. Ryan does not specify which tax provisions he would repeal, these calculations assume he would repeal *all* itemized deductions, all tax credits, the exclusion for employer-provided health insurance, and the deduction for health insurance for the self-employed.<sup>2</sup>

Even under these assumptions, over 92 percent of these very high-income taxpayers would enjoy a net tax cut, and the average income tax change for these taxpayers would be a reduction of \$187,000 in 2014.

The reason is that reducing the top personal income tax rate (which will be 39.6 percent in 2014 under current law) to 25 percent would provide a benefit to millionaires that would far exceed their loss of any deductions, credits, or breaks for health care.

By way of comparison, millionaires would receive an average income tax cut of \$115,000 in 2014 if the Bush tax cuts are extended through that year.<sup>3</sup>

The Ryan budget document calls for closing enough tax loopholes and tax expenditures to ensure that this simplified personal income tax would collect as much revenue as the current system would collect if the Bush tax cuts were made permanent for everyone. This is a very low revenue goal, but Rep. Ryan's tax proposals would almost certainly fail to meet it nonetheless.

### **Budget Plan Would Slash Corporate Taxes and Exempt Profits Shifted Overseas**

Third, the Ryan budget would replace the statutory corporate income tax rate of 35 percent — which Rep. Ryan criticizes as one of the world's highest — with a statutory rate of just 25 percent. The budget document comes close to admitting that the *effective* corporate income tax rate — the percentage of profits that corporations actually pay after accounting for the loopholes they enjoy — is far lower than 35 percent. (CTJ recently found that the 3-year effective tax rate for consistently profitable *Fortune* 500 corporations averaged just 18.5 percent.)<sup>4</sup>

It's unclear if the Ryan budget is intended to repeal enough corporate tax subsidies to offset the cost of reducing the statutory corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 25 percent, but the non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) has already concluded that this is impossible in any case.

Last year, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (who Ryan cites as involved in his budget overhaul effort) proposed to reduce the statutory corporate income tax rate to 25 percent and offset the costs by repealing tax subsidies. Around the same time, the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) concluded that repealing *all* corporate tax subsidies would raise enough revenue to offset the cost of reducing the corporate income tax rate to 28 percent, and no lower, for a decade. Beyond the first decade, repealing all corporate tax subsidies would raise even less revenue, meaning the corporate income tax rate would have to be higher than 28 percent to be part of any revenue-neutral corporate tax reform.<sup>5</sup>

Another idea that Ryan's budget borrows from Camp's proposal is the introduction of a "territorial" tax system, which is a euphemism for exempting the offshore profits of U.S. corporations from the corporate income tax.

A territorial system would increase the existing incentives for U.S. corporations to move their operations offshore or use accounting gimmicks to make their U.S. profits appear to be "foreign" profits generated in offshore tax havens.<sup>6</sup>

The tax system already encourages corporations to engage in these abuses because it allows them to "defer" (delay) paying U.S. corporate income taxes on any profits that are generated offshore or made to appear that they were generated offshore.

If allowing corporations to defer their U.S. taxes on offshore profits encourages these abuses, then exempting those offshore profits from U.S. taxes entirely would logically increase this incentive.

The only way to prevent these abuses is for Congress to enact a tax reform that repeals "deferral." This would mean that U.S. corporations would not pay lower taxes on profits that they generate (or appear to generate) in

countries with lower corporate income taxes than the U.S. And, just as in the current system, U.S. corporations would be allowed a credit for taxes paid to foreign governments, to prevent double-taxation.<sup>7</sup>

### **Why the Ryan Budget Plan Does Not Specify How It Would Pay for Tax Rate Reductions**

As explained already, the Ryan budget plan calls for closing tax loopholes and tax subsidies to offset the costs of reducing tax rates (beyond the rate reductions that are part of the Bush tax cuts) but does not name any particular tax loophole or tax subsidy to be repealed.

There may be a very specific reason for this vagueness. Two years ago, when Rep. Ryan offered a budget plan that would allow individuals to pay income taxes at a top rate of 25 percent and repeal the corporate income tax, he did propose a specific way to offset the costs — a regressive value-added tax (VAT).

Citizens for Tax Justice analyzed the tax components of that plan and found that, on average, taxpayers among the richest ten percent would pay less in taxes while taxpayers among the bottom 90 percent would pay more. We also found that the plan would reduce revenues by \$2 trillion over ten years.<sup>8</sup>

The truth is that it is very difficult to lower the top income tax rate to 25 percent and offset the costs simply by eliminating or reducing tax expenditures. That's why Ryan's previous plan relied on a regressive VAT. Rep. Ryan probably (correctly) decided the budget plans he would present last year and this year would seem more appealing if he left that detail out of it.

#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup>Office of Management and Budget, Historical Tables, Table 1.2.  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals/>.

<sup>2</sup>Other major tax expenditures are supposedly incentives for savings and investments and would surely not be repealed because the Ryan budget plan specifically objects to "raising taxes on investing." For example, the preferential rates for capital gains and stock dividends and various breaks for retirement savings are clearly not among those tax expenditures Ryan would repeal, given that language in the budget document.

<sup>3</sup>These figures refer to federal personal income taxes. Millionaires would receive other types of tax cuts under the Ryan budget plan. For example, the plan does not specify what would be done with the federal estate tax, but it strongly implies that it would not allow the estate tax cut in effect this year to expire. The Ryan budget plan would also repeal a reform of the Medicare tax (which was included in President Obama's health care reform) that increases the Medicare tax from 2.9 percent to 3.8 percent for wages of high-income individuals and applies the 3.8 percent Medicare tax to investment income as well.

<sup>4</sup>Citizens for Tax Justice, "Corporate Taxpayers & Corporate Tax Dodgers, 2008-2010," November 3, 2011.  
<http://ctj.org/corporatetaxdodgers>.

<sup>5</sup>Letter from Thomas A. Barthold, Joint Committee on Taxation, October 27, 2011.  
<http://democrats.waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/112/JCTRevenueestimatesFinal.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup>A CTJ fact sheet explains why Congress should reject any proposal to exempt offshore corporate profits from U.S. taxes. Citizens for Tax Justice, "Why Congress Should Reject A 'Territorial' System and a 'Repatriation' Amnesty: Both Proposals Would Remove Taxes on Corporations' Offshore Profits," October 19, 2011.  
<http://www.ctj.org/pdf/corporateinternationalfactsheet.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>For more, see Citizens for Tax Justice, "Congress Should End 'Deferral' Rather than Adopt a 'Territorial' Tax System," March 23, 2011. <http://www.ctj.org/pdf/internationalcorptax2011.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup>Citizens for Tax Justice, "Rep. Ryan's House GOP Budget Plan: Federal Government Would Collect \$2 Trillion Less Over a Decade and Yet Require Bottom 90 Percent to Pay Higher Taxes," March 9, 2010.  
<http://www.ctj.org/pdf/ryanplan2010.pdf>.

"116 Billion Reasons to Be For the Health Care Mandate" by Ruth Marcus, NationofChange

Mar. 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/116-billion-reasons-be-individual-mandate-1332687807>)

The most compelling sentences in the Obama administration's brief defending the constitutionality of the health-care law come early on. "As a class," the brief advises on Page 7, "the uninsured consumed \$116 billion of health-care services in 2008."

On the next page, the brief drives the point home: "In 2008, people without insurance did not pay for 63 percent of their health-care costs."

Those figures amount to a powerful refutation of the argument that the individual mandate — the requirement that individuals obtain insurance or pay a penalty — exceeds the government's authority to regulate interstate commerce. To me, \$116 billion seems like a whole lot of commerce.

But let's leave the Supreme Court justices to hack their way through the underbrush of the Commerce Clause. Because those numbers are not only relevant to Commerce Clause jurisprudence, they illuminate the fundamental irrationality of public opposition to the individual mandate.

The mandate is by far the most unpopular feature of a law on which Americans are otherwise evenly divided. A Kaiser Family Foundation poll this month found that two-thirds of those surveyed disliked the mandate. Even among Democrats, a majority (53 percent) opposed the requirement; independents (66 percent) and Republicans (77 percent) were even more hostile.

Yet this is a provision that the overwhelming majority — those with insurance — should support, for the simple reason that these people currently end up footing the bill for much of that \$116 billion.

As the government's brief notes, "Congress found that this cost-shifting increases the average premium for insured families by more than \$1,000 per year."

In other words, those worried about having to pay ever-higher premiums should be clamoring for the individual mandate, not agitating for repeal.

Indeed, for all the bristling over the mandate, it will be irrelevant to the 80 percent of non-elderly Americans who already have insurance, either through their employers, government programs, or purchased on their own.

The biggest real-world risk to these people would be if the court were to overturn the mandate yet allow the rest of the health-care law to remain in place, driving premiums ever upward.

Amazingly, Republicans have managed to transform the mandate from an exemplar of personal responsibility into the biggest public policy bogeyman of all time.

The irony of the fight over the mandate is that President Obama was against it before he was for it. During the 2008 campaign, one of the signature differences between Obama and Hillary Clinton was that Clinton's health plan included an individual mandate whereas Obama's mandate covered only children.

Once elected, Obama quickly recognized the inescapable truth: An individual mandate was essential to make the plan work. Without that larger pool of premium-payers, there is no feasible way to require insurance companies to cover all applicants and charge the same amount, regardless of their health status.

In part, hostility to the mandate reflects a broader uneasiness with the perceived encroachment of big government.

In the Kaiser poll, 30 percent of those who opposed the mandate cited government overreach as the biggest reason. Not surprisingly, twice as many Republicans (40 percent) cited that reason as did Democrats (18 percent).

But opposition to the mandate also stems from the public's failure to understand — or, alternatively, the administration's failure to communicate — basic facts.

For example, Kaiser found that when people were told that most Americans "would automatically satisfy the requirement because they already have coverage through their employers," favorability toward the mandate nearly doubled, to 61 percent.

Favorable attitudes rose to nearly half when people were told that without the mandate, insurance companies would still be allowed to deny coverage to those who are sick; that without the mandate people would wait until they were sick to purchase insurance, driving up premium costs; or that those unable to afford coverage are exempt.

"People don't understand how the mandate works at all and they don't understand why it's there," Kaiser's polling director, Mollyann Brodie, told me.

Brodie suspects that it's too late to change minds. "This law as a whole has really become a symbolic issue to people and they really aren't open to information," she said.

Maybe, but the administration must keep trying — not only to sell the law's goodies but also to explain how the mandate makes them possible. Otherwise, they could end up winning the minds of the justices, yet losing the hearts of the people whose votes they need to keep the law in place.

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<a href="#">20120325-04</a>	16:21	SteveB	Music from the Friends of the Middle Website
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<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/links.html>

### **FRIENDS of the MIDDLE – MUSIC**

**Collective Soul** – *Youth* (2004)

**don Omar** - *The Last Don* (2003)

**Dube, Lucky** – *Slave* (1989)

**Fonsi, Luis** - *Abrazar La Vida* (2003)

**Gomez** - "Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone" (2009 live single B-side)

**Gomez** - *How We Operate* (2006)

**Leontiou, Kristian** - *Some Day Soon* (2005)

**Little Feat** - *Sailin' Shoes* (1972)

**Reik** - *Un Día Más* (2008)

**Shakira** - *Fijación Oral*/Vol. 1 (2005)

<a href="#">20120325-05</a>	18:11	Dennis	Fw: Internet Warning
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**Internet Warning: If you get an email  
with the title "Nude photo of  
Newt Gingrich" don't open it!  
It's a nude photo of Newt Gingrich.**

<a href="#">20120325-06</a>	19:37	Art	"5 Myths About the Health-Care Law"
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As the Supreme Court begins its discussions the Health Care Act, for those who are interested in facts, it might be of interest to review the below.

"5 Myths About the Health-Care Law" by Walter Dellinger, *Washington Post*

Mar. 23, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/5-myths-about-the-health-care-law/2012/03/19/gIQAHJ6JWS\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/5-myths-about-the-health-care-law/2012/03/19/gIQAHJ6JWS_story.html))

1. The "individual mandate" forces everyone to buy health insurance.

The law states that, beginning in 2014, individuals must ensure that they and their dependents are covered by health insurance. Taxpayers who do not meet this requirement will have to pay a penalty that the law calls a "shared responsibility payment." It begins at \$95 for the first year and never exceeds 21 / 2 percent of anyone's annual taxable income.

A large majority of Americans, of course, have health insurance through their employers, Medicare or Medicaid and are already in compliance with this requirement. Given the relatively modest payment required of those who choose not to maintain insurance, no one is being forced to buy a product they don't want.

The challengers argue that the mandate is a binding requirement that makes anyone who goes without insurance a lawbreaker. The government has determined, however, that those who pay the penalty, like those who are exempt from the penalty, are not lawbreakers. As a practical matter, the so-called mandate is just a relatively modest financial incentive to have health insurance.

2. Only the individual mandate is at stake in the Supreme Court case.

The mandate is not a stand-alone provision that can be invalidated without affecting the rest of the law. In fact, it is merely an ancillary measure that makes two more-fundamental provisions of the law workable: "guaranteed issue" and "community rating."

A significant problem with our nation's health-care system has been that insurance companies can reject applicants who have had health problems, including minor ones. The guaranteed issue provision prevents companies from turning down applicants because of their medical conditions or history. The community rating measure bars insurers from charging higher premiums to those who have had illnesses or accidents.

Experience in the states has shown that if people can't be turned down for health insurance, there must be an incentive for them to sign up for it before they have an accident or illness. The individual mandate was enacted to ensure that the central, nondiscrimination provisions can work as they were intended — to provide everyone access to affordable health care, regardless of their medical history or current conditions. If the court were to strike down the mandate, the law's popular provisions on preexisting conditions would fall as well.

3. If the court upholds the health-care law, it means Congress has the power to require Americans to purchase any product.

The health-care case is a test of Congress's power under the Constitution to regulate commerce among the states. One way to defend the law is simply to say that a requirement to purchase insurance or any other product sold in interstate commerce is obviously a regulation of that commerce. President Ronald Reagan's solicitor general, Charles Fried, and conservative judge Laurence Silberman have adopted this view.

The Obama administration is not relying upon such a sweeping argument, however, and its more limited claim would not justify any law that required Americans to buy products such as cars or broccoli.

The mandate does not force people into commerce who would otherwise remain outside it. Instead, it regulates the consumption of health care, an activity in which virtually everyone will engage. Right now,

people who go without insurance often shift the costs of their health care to other patients and taxpayers. That situation is different from what happens with any other type of purchase.

Would the government's defense of the mandate also support a law requiring Americans to buy broccoli or a car? The answer is a simple and emphatic no.

#### 4. The law is socialist.

Actually, the opposite is true. The principal reason the Affordable Care Act has been called unprecedented is that it declines to follow the New Deal approach of having a monolithic government agency be the single provider of a good or service. Instead, the law adopts a new approach, one conservatives have long supported, of using providers in the private market to deal with social and economic problems.

In defending his "Massachusetts mandate" as a conservative model for national health-care legislation, former governor Mitt Romney editorialized in 2009 that by imposing tax penalties on people who choose to remain uninsured, an individual mandate "encourages 'free riders' to take responsibilities for themselves rather than pass their medical costs on to others." And, as Romney noted, conservatives have never been inclined to favor freeloaders.

#### 5. The law is an extraordinary intrusion into liberty.

Liberty is always said to be fatally eroded, it seems, when great advances in social legislation take place. The lawyers who urged the Supreme Court to strike down the Social Security Act of 1935 argued that if Congress could provide a retirement system for everyone 65 and older, it would have the power to set the retirement age at 30 and force the very young to support everyone else.

It was said that if Congress had the authority to create a minimum wage of \$5 an hour, it would also be a regulation of commerce to set the minimum at \$5,000 an hour. In 1964, critics argued that if Congress could tell restaurant owners not to discriminate on the basis of race, it could tell them what color tablecloths to use. None of these things happened.

Nothing in the health-care law tells doctors what they must say to patients or how those patients are to be treated. It only requires people to either have insurance coverage or pay a modest tax penalty.

Nearly 75 years ago, a Supreme Court dominated by appointees of conservative presidents rejected the challenge to the constitutionality of the Social Security Act. The words of Justice Benjamin Cardozo's 1937 opinion are relevant today:

"Whether wisdom or unwisdom resides in [the statute in question] it is not for us to say. The answer to such inquiries must come from Congress, not the courts."

(Walter Dellinger served as head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel and acting solicitor general from 1993 to 1997. He filed a brief on behalf of the Senate and House Democratic leadership defending the health care law in the Supreme Court.)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0438488/>

Robot from Terminator Salvation (2009)



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #103 — MAR. 27, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve?**

(posted by Dennis Cox, Mar. 27, 2012)

This is an excellent discussion of political development over the last century.

"What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve?" by Ira Glasser, Huffington Post

Mar. 24, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ira-glasser/election-2012-gop\\_b\\_1377280.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ira-glasser/election-2012-gop_b_1377280.html))

About a month ago, Jonathan Chait published an important article in *New York Magazine* arguing that demographic changes in the United States will before too long spell doom to the political influence and hegemony of conservatives, and that conservatives, well aware of these changes, regard the 2012 elections as their last, best chance to reverse the course America is on. "Conservative America," Chait writes, "will soon come to be dominated, in a semi-permanent fashion, by an ascendant Democratic coalition hostile to its outlook and interests." The Republican Party, Chait explains, had over decades found itself increasingly confined to white voters, "especially those lacking a college degree and especially rural whites." Meanwhile, Democrats have increased their standing among whites with graduate degrees, secular whites and racial minorities. And he highlighted swing states like Colorado, Nevada, Arizona, Virginia and North Carolina where this demographic shift was increasingly evident. In 2008, Chait says, Obama carried out that blueprint, and the trend is continuing.

Chait's argument is not simplistic. He recognizes that coalitions are fluid, and shift as competing political parties adapt. He recognizes, too, that short-term events -- like a 9/11 attack, foreign crises, economic catastrophes or a scandal like Watergate -- can interrupt long term trends and trump them. But, Chait insists, "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" as well as the "stew of racial, religious, cultural and nationalistic" identity politics that have dominated elections. As Frank Rich summarized Chait's analysis, "the 2012 election is likely to be the last stand for the older, demographically antique America" that the Republican primaries reflect. This "now or never" mentality among conservative Republicans, Chait argues, this sense that demographic trends are against them, is driving their apocalyptic view of what Obama represents and of the critical importance to them of this election. Republican conservatives, Chait says, see this election as their last chance to stop history.

Chait's emphasis on demographic shifts is powerful and mainly on target, but there is a broader historical context to his analysis that complements, extends and better explains the hysteria dominating the current rhetoric of the Republican party. In other words, there is content to all of this.

Most, if not all, political and social retreats from reality and descents into "once there was a golden age" fundamentalist fervor are the result of a panic reaction to fundamental change and a resistance to modernity that cannot be assimilated or accepted, and that so unsettles the ground rules by which they live and have always lived that they lash out at the changes, or what they see as the symbols of those changes, in a desperate, if ultimately futile attempt to hold back the sea. This is what characterized the wave of fundamentalist politics in the 1920s in America, when the advancements of science (as especially symbolized by evolution) so threatened the world as many people knew it, that they arose in a wave of repressive reaction to try and block it. This was also the period in which the world turned upside down when women won the right to vote (1920); it was the period when labor unions became strong and challenged the prevailing distributions of economic power; it was the period when the NAACP was created (1909) and the ACLU (1920). This is the period when Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood (connection to the present intended), was arrested every other day on the streets of New York for distributing informational leaflets and pamphlets on birth control; this was the period when the late 19th-century Comstock laws outlawed obscene materials, but also defined information about contraception as pornographic and banned its distribution; this was the period when John Scopes was tried and convicted for teaching evolution in Tennessee, a case so important in the evolving struggle to hold back the sea that no less than William Jennings Bryan was brought in to the small town of Dayton to prosecute Scopes. It was the jazz age, new, unbridled dances and scary music, most of it played by blacks. It was the time of Stravinsky, Gertrude Stein and the new cubist art. It was also the time of Freud, and of Einstein's startling theories. To many who lived traditional lives rooted in the past, these developments were profoundly unsettling; social patterns, indeed reality as many knew it, and the rules that governed reality, seemed everywhere to be in chaos and under attack. Many worried that everything valuable and important was ending, that society itself was becoming unmoored. Waves of fundamentalist revivalism developed, and seeped into American politics. This was when alcohol Prohibition passed (1919, effective 1920, not to be repealed until the New Deal). Much the same thing happened again as a reaction to the profound changes during the 1960s.

I think what Chait says about the force of demographic change is true, as far as it goes. But it doesn't go far enough. My analysis of politics over the last 30 years, and particularly "social issue" politics, often running counter to the real economic interests of those who subscribe to it, is this:

During the 1960s, we experienced -- in addition to the unsettling changes wrought by the atomic and hydrogen bombs and the beginnings of space travel -- a bewildering series of profound social changes: in my parlance, the Bill of Rights, more notable over most of our history as a promise unredeemed, woke up from its nearly two century old Rip Van Winkle slumber. The civil rights movement grew, arising out of post-war, post-Jackie Robinson America, beginning in 1955, when Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. splashed their way into America's conscience and its consciousness; other groups soon took the civil rights movement as their template: women, prisoners, mental patients, students at and even more significantly below the college level, people on welfare, gays, the disabled. Everyone came out of the closets of repression and invisibility and asked the same question: Does the Bill of Rights apply to me? Can I limit the power of those who have unjust dominion over my life?

Free speech expanded beyond the shackles of 1950s McCarthyism and the Comstockian residues of the late 19th, early 20th century restrictions. Barney Rossett published Henry Miller and *Lady Chatterly's Lover* and distributed the film *I Am Curious (Yellow)*. The civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam war movements resurrected First Amendment rights. These movements, happening during a time of increased secularism, fueled in part by the assurances to Protestants made by the first Catholic president in 1960, and enabled by the historically accidental Warren Court, saw group after group test its claims. And energized by these movements and the growth of financial support for organizations during a time of affluence, groups like the ACLU, NAACP, NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF) and others were equipped to bring these claims into court in a more systematic way than had ever occurred before. A civil liberties/civil rights/public interest bar arose, the first in our history: no longer were such cases limited by the number that could be brought by a few volunteers; now a full-time professional bar of such lawyers developed, and beginning in the late 60s, young people for the first time in large numbers began to go to law school for the purpose of working in such organizations, whose expansion permitted their employment in ever-increasing numbers. The ACLU, NAACP and LDF became templates for other groups championing the rights of women, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, etc. Environmental groups arose and flourished. So did groups to defend the rights of prisoners, mental patients, the disabled and gays. Roughly between 1954, when the Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board of Education*, and 1973, when it decided *Roe v. Wade*, virtually all the rights most of us wake up with every morning and take for granted, became realized and enforceable for the first time. This

included equality rights for blacks, women and others; free speech rights; separation of church and state; reproductive rights; prisoners rights; etc. We forget how recent these decisions were, but it was not until 1965 that a Connecticut law making it a crime to sell married couples contraceptives was struck down, not until 1967 that a Virginia law making it a crime for blacks and whites to marry -- what Barack Obama's parents had done -- was struck down. Similarly, most of the decisions that struck down required school prayers, that applied the Fourth Amendment to state and local searches, that established the exclusionary rule and the Miranda warning did not occur until the 1960s.

Parallel developments occurred in Congress and in some state legislatures: in 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed, outlawing discrimination based on race and sex in public accommodations, employment and to some extent in education; in 1965 the Voting Rights Act was passed, outlawing racial discrimination in voting; and in 1968, the Fair Housing Act was passed, outlawing racial discrimination in the rental and sale of housing. By 1968, the legal infrastructure of Jim Crow was dismantled, and a new legal infrastructure of civil rights enforcement established in its place, at least formally. And in 1965, racist immigration quotas that had been in place since 1924 to quash the flood of late 19th, early 20th century immigration from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and limit it mainly to Northwestern Europe, were replaced with race and ethnic-neutral standards, ushering in, for the first time in more than a half-century, large numbers of immigrants from South and Central America, Africa and Asia. This was a revolution, and taken together with the exponential explosion of rights across the spectrum during these same years, radically altered not only the demography of America, but also its distribution of legal rights and power. This was received as a bone-rattling shock in many parts of America, no less than the teaching of evolution had been received in Dayton, Tenn. in 1925.

Why? Because all rights are by definition a limitation on power: the right to a secret ballot implies a limit on the government's authority to peek; the right not to be unreasonably searched, absent a judicial warrant, in your home is a limit on the power of the police to do so. The right to marry someone with different skin color is a limit on the police power of the state to prohibit it. The right to march in the street is a limit on the power of the state to stop you. The right to buy contraceptives is a limit on the power of the state to prohibit it. And the right not to be forced to participate in a public school prayer ceremony that is not in accordance with your religious beliefs, or the right not to be singled out and stigmatized for your refusal, is a limit on the power of a state school to require it. The explosion of rights between 1954 and 1973 radically altered the rules of the game and, perhaps more importantly, the perceptions of those who lost their privileges (many of whom had little else).

Suddenly, and what seemed all at once, the lives of many Americans who for all their memory had assumed such powers and privileges, turned upside down. Now white, male, mostly Protestant Americans had to compete, as after 1947 white baseball players had to compete, on the merits (at least legally) not only with blacks, but also with women; the competitive advantages they had enjoyed as the result of the historical exclusions of blacks and women were, at least legally, over. Baptists who controlled the populations of small Southern towns had to give up controlling prayers in local public schools, had to tolerate speech and depictions of sex in libraries and drugstore news displays and in movie theaters that they used to have the power to prohibit. For many of them, it felt like they had lost control of their lives, and the lives of their children; certainly they had lost the power to control others and use the law to force their beliefs upon others who did not share them.

They did not take this lying down: already in the '50s and into the '60s "Impeach Earl Warren" billboards pockmarked the Southern, rural countryside; attempts to censor books proliferated; resistance to racial and gender anti-discrimination laws became entrenched, and sometimes violent. The civil rights laws in particular altered the political landscape radically: as early as 1964, Barry Goldwater broke the Democrats nearly-century-old hold on the Deep South; in an otherwise lopsided defeat, Goldwater carried only six states, his home state of Arizona and five states of the Deep South. This established the Republican foothold in the formerly solid Democratic South, and paved the way for Nixon's Southern Strategy and George Wallace's third-party bid four years later. Demography hadn't changed much, but the old New Deal working class white constituency had, and by 1980 many found their way to Ronald Reagan -- and not because his deregulatory tax policies were in their economic interest.

Then, after more than a decade of decisions expanding rights, in 1973, *Roe v. Wade* was decided, and a strong fundamentalist reaction developed. Driven doctrinally by the Catholic Church, it found ready allies among fundamentalist Protestants, who were already shaken by other sociological tsunamis in speech, race, women's rights and the separation of church and state. The antagonisms between Catholics and Protestants had long been

instrumental in maintaining the separation of church and state, historically and politically (as noted above, as recently as 1960, this was in evidence in candidate Kennedy's famous assurances to Protestants that he was not in fact an agent of the Pope nor would he exercise power along religious lines if elected ). But now, and for the first time in our history, the social issue of abortion rights unified Catholics and Protestants and a systematic politicized religious assault on the separation of church and state, and the religious liberty it enabled, began. In 1980, Jerry Falwell announced his Moral Majority; an examination of their goals and precepts seemed to mirror an opposite agenda to the ACLU's and to the panoply of enforceable rights that had developed since the 1960s. In 1980 Reagan was elected, and the modern conservative political movement began, not as a protest, but as a hegemony. The lasting accomplishments of the Reagan years may have been the changes in the tax code and regulatory regimes that had prevailed for nearly a half century. But that was not what fueled his electoral success; what fueled his electoral success was the fundamentalist movement represented by Falwell, Pat Robertson and what came to be called the social agenda. Censorship of Kurt Vonnegut, Judy Blume and others, movements to pass "creationist" statutes that attempted to elevate the book of Genesis to a branch of science; hostility to the claims of gays, women and reproductive rights all combined to generate what began to be called "the culture wars." To a very demonstrable extent, I think, the conservative movement of the last 30 years (absent the economic issues of deregulation, also supported by Clinton and Robert Rubin and beyond the comprehension or the interest of most voters) may be seen as a panic response to a crumbling world and to the rights expansions of the '60s that struck like a tsunami, washing away all the prior governing arrangements. For these people, reality itself, or at least a reality where they felt in charge, was disappearing. As always, it was the symbols of these changes that were attacked: the federal courts, especially the Supreme Court, which (unelected) had rendered many of these decisions; the ACLU and Planned Parenthood, which had brought many of the cases or performed hated services; books and magazines and films; television and Hollywood and "eastern elites." When Pat Buchanan roared, in his quixotic presidential campaign, that "we" needed to "take back our country," he was talking about a country prior to the rights revolutions of the 60s, when people who looked and believed like him ruled the roost and did not have their powers limited by the rights we had won. What conservatives were desperately trying to conserve was not the values at America's origin (the Bill of Rights was, after all, ratified in 1791), but rather the privileges and powers of 19th century and early 20th century America. This is what has fueled the reactionary politics of the past three decades, and it is what we are seeing now in the Republican base and its candidates.

It is true that demographic changes affect this struggle. But demographic changes did not cause the struggle, nor do they lie at its roots. It is also true, I think, that the views represented by the likes of Rick Santorum are fading, and that his screams against the changes he cannot prevent are like a death rattle. That doesn't mean they can't damage, doesn't mean they can't temporarily prevail. But they know their time is passing and that the next generation will not react with shock to the changes that shock Santorum, because they will not experience them as changes, because they will have gotten used to them, because they grew up with them. There may be as many young women, including Catholic women, as ever who regard themselves as conservative. But nearly all of them use birth control, before as well as during marriage. Gays will be accepted, just as a stroll through the schools of rural Georgia or the streets of Jackson, Miss. today does not reveal what went on there in 1963. Problems will not end, the competition among values will not end, but the vision of life that Rick Santorum clings to will end, or diminish to a point where it is not politically viable. Chait is right that the Republican right wing knows this; he is right that they see this as their last shot (it may not be; I wouldn't celebrate victory quite yet); he is right that they are responding with a strategy that will probably end in hastening their political demise (having cultivated that fundamentalist reaction for decades, the Republican Party has backed itself into a corner); and he is right that demographics is affecting the outcome, and will do so over the next decade. But to understand what is happening politically, I think one has to understand that this is about more than demographics: it is about fundamental social change and the reaction to it. **And the fundamental changes at stake and at issue are mostly about rights, the rights won by submerged and subordinate groups roughly between 1954 and 1973, and the privileges and powers lost or limited, or perceived to be lost, by those who benefited, however unjustly, from the subordination of others.**

"The Right's Etch a Sketch Imperative" by E.J. Dionne Jr., NationofChange

Mar. 26, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/right-s-etch-sketch-imperative-1332774625>)

Clarifying moments are rare in politics. They are the times when previously muddled issues are cast into sharp relief and citizens get a chance to look past the spin and obfuscation.

Americans were blessed with three such moments last week:

#### Clarifying Moment #1

Rep. Paul Ryan made absolutely clear that he is not now and never was interested in deficit reduction. After a couple of years of being lauded by deficit hawks as the man prepared to make hard choices, he proposed a budget that would not end deficits until 2040 but would cut taxes by \$4.6 trillion over a decade while also extending all of the Bush tax cuts, adding an additional \$5.4 trillion to the deficit. Ryan would increase military expenditures and then eviscerate the rest of the federal government.

Oh yes, Ryan claims he'd make up for the losses from his new tax cuts with "tax reform" but offered not a single detail. A "plan" with a hole this big is not a plan at all. Ryan's main interest is in cutting the top income tax rate to 25 percent from the current 35 percent. His message: Solving the deficit problem isn't nearly as important as (1) continuing and expanding benefits for the wealthy and (2) disabling the federal government.

Robert Greenstein, president of the progressive Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, is tough on deficits, careful in his use of numbers, and measured in his choice of words. These traits make his assessment of Ryan's proposal all the more instructive.

"It would likely produce the largest redistribution of income from the bottom to the top in modern U.S. history and likely increase poverty and inequality more than any other budget in recent times (and possibly in the nation's history)," Greenstein wrote. "Specifically, the Ryan budget would impose extraordinary cuts in programs that serve as a lifeline for our nation's poorest and most vulnerable citizens, and over time would cause tens of millions of Americans to lose their health insurance or become underinsured."

Thanks to Ryan, we now know that this election is not about deficits at all. It is about whether we will respond to growing inequalities of wealth and income by creating even larger inequalities of wealth and income.

#### Clarifying Moment #2

Last week the nation also focused seriously on the "Stand Your Ground" laws that the National Rifle Association has pushed through in state after state. These statutes came to wide attention because of the tragic killing of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager.

George Zimmerman, the man who pulled the trigger, was not under serious investigation until there was a national outcry because under the Florida law, a citizen has a right to use "force, including deadly force, if he or she reasonably believes it is necessary to do so to prevent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself or another or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony."

These laws perfectly reflect the NRA's utopia. No longer will we count on law enforcement to preserve the peace. Instead, we will build a society where all citizens are armed and encouraged to take the law into their own hands. If you feel threatened, just shoot.

Since when did conservatives start believing that laws should be based on "feelings" and subjective judgments? What kind of civilization does this create? Surely this moment should inspire the peaceable majority to challenge the entire gun lobby worldview — and that most certainly includes the legions of timid Democrats who have been cowed by the NRA.

### Clarifying Moment #3

There was, finally, that toy metaphor from Eric Fehrstrom, a top aide to Mitt Romney. Asked on CNN if the primary campaign had forced Romney "to tack so far to the right it would hurt him with moderate voters in the general election," Fehrstrom replied that "everything changes" after the primaries. "It's almost like an Etch a Sketch," he added, "you can kind of shake it up, and we start all over again."

The context matters because Romney later said Fehrstrom was talking about post-primary changes that would be made "organizationally," a claim that is plainly untrue. Ironically, the semi-denial reinforced the lesson Fehrstrom taught: To win, Romney is willing to change not only his own positions but also reality itself.

**Conservatives will need an exceptionally powerful Etch a Sketch to wipe the nation's memory clean of the education it received during the 2012 campaign's most enlightening week so far.**

© Washington Post Writers Group

<a href="#">20120326-02</a>	12:12	Tom	Internal Memo: Keystone XL Pipeline Statement from Valero CEO
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### **From Tom (Mar. 27, 2012, 12:12 pm)—Internal Memo: Keystone XL Pipeline Statement from Valero CEO**

Interesting viewpoint!

For those of you unfamiliar with Valero, it is an independent oil company based in San Antonio, TX. It owns 2 refineries, but no oil fields - it buys all the oil it refines and processes via contract or on the open market.

Its origin was as a public utility providing natural gas to the city of San Antonio, but it has grown to be a significant gasoline retailer in a good portion of the southeast and southwest, as well as a purveyor of natural gas.

It is a significant economic force in Texas, even in light of the other majors (Shell, Exxon Mobil, etc.) based in the state. This memo to employees is a realistic insight into the economic importance of the proposed XL pipeline.

<http://www.valero.com/OurBusiness/Pages/Home.aspx>

Date: January 24, 2012

To: Valero Employees

From: Bill Klesse

Subject: Keystone XL Pipeline Statement

As you know, the Obama administration decided last week to deny TransCanada's application to ship crude oil via the Keystone XL pipeline from Canada to the Gulf Coast. Valero has planned to be a shipper and purchaser of that oil since 2008, and obviously we were disappointed in the decision. We issued a statement in response to questions from the media, and I wanted to share it with you in case you get questions from friends or business partners, and so that you would know why Valero supports the Keystone XL pipeline. This is the statement:

Despite the uncertainty and political fighting over the Keystone XL pipeline, Valero has continued to invest in its U.S. refining operation. In 2011 we spent nearly \$3 billion on projects, and for 2012 our capital expenditure budget is over \$3 billion. These expenditures are keeping our employees on the job and putting additional people to work. To reference two of our refineries, at Port Arthur, Texas, we have 1,600 contractors working on an expansion project, and at St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, we have another 1,000 contractors working on a separate project. We need this kind of economic activity to accelerate to help all Americans.

This illustrates why the federal government's rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline is so absurd. There are pipelines in every neighborhood all across America . The administration's decision was not about pipelines, it was about the misguided beliefs that Canadian oil sands development should be stopped and that fossil fuel prices should increase to make alternative energy more attractive. Instead, we should be impressed with how well the oil sands engineering and recovery technology has advanced, and the economic benefits this development brings. Having more oil available in the marketplace has the potential to lower prices for consumers. As an independent refiner, Valero buys all of the oil we process. Due to the administration's misguided policies, refiners like Valero will have to buy more oil from other sources outside the U.S. and Canada . Consumers will bear the additional shipping cost, not to mention the additional greenhouse gas emissions and political risks.

With all the issues facing our country, it is absolutely unbelievable our federal government says no to a company like TransCanada that is willing to spend over \$7 billion and put Americans to work on a pipeline. The administration's decision throws dirt into the face of our closest ally and largest trading partner.

The point above is that it is not about pipelines as many pipelines cross the Ogallala Aquifer, in the Great Plains region, and, in fact, there is already significant oil and gas production in the area covered by the aquifer. This is politics at its worst.

Thanks for your support. H/T: Ed Farris, TX

20120326-03 15:42 Tom Catoon: Casual Friday

The Empire Celebrates Casual Fridays, and Strikes a Blow to the Rebel Alliance!



<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/sdpca/mines/Links.htm>

Chola in Sunlight



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

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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #104 — MAR. 28, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Obamacare Deep in SCOTUS Trouble**

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

I hope this correspondent is wrong about how the Obamacare case went in court yesterday. This is such an important decision. How I wish Clarence Thomas were not a justice!

Mid-Coronary Artery Bypass Surgery



"Obamacare's Supreme Court Disaster" by Adam Serwer, Mother Jones

Mar. 27, 2012, (<http://motherjones.com/mojo/2012/03/obamacare-supreme-court-disaster>)

Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli Jr. should be grateful to the Supreme Court for refusing to allow cameras in the courtroom, because his defense of Obamacare on Tuesday may go down as one of the most spectacular flameouts in the history of the court.

Stepping up to the podium, Verrilli stammered as he began his argument. He coughed, he cleared his throat, he took a drink of water. And that was before he even finished the first part of his argument. Sounding less like a world-class lawyer and more like a teenager giving an oral presentation for the first time, Verrilli delivered a rambling, apprehensive legal defense of liberalism's biggest domestic accomplishment since the 1960s—and one that may well have doubled as its eulogy.

"What is left?" Justice Antonin Scalia demanded of Verrilli, "if the government can do this, what can it not do?" Verrilli's response to this basic and most predictable of questions was to rattle off a few legal precedents.

Justice Samuel Alito asked the same question later. "Could you just—before you move on, could you express your limiting principle as succinctly as you possibly can?" Verrilli turned to precedent again. "It's very much like *Wickard* in that respect, it's very much like *Raich* in that respect," Verrilli said, pointing to two previous Supreme Court opinions liberals have held up to defend the individual mandate. Where the lawyers challenging the mandate invoked the Federalist Papers and the framers of the Constitution, Verrilli offered jargon and political talking points. If the law is upheld, it will be in spite of Verrilli's performance, not because of it.

The months leading up to the arguments made it clear that the government would face this obvious question. The law's defenders knew that they had to find a simple way of answering it so that its argument didn't leave the federal government with unlimited power. That is, Obamacare defenders would have to explain to the justices why allowing the government to compel individuals to buy insurance did not mean that the government could make individuals buy anything—(say, broccoli or health club memberships, both of which Scalia mentioned). Verrilli was unable to do so concisely, leaving the Democratic appointees on the court to throw him life lines, all of which a flailing Verrilli failed to grasp.

"I thought what was unique about this is it's not my choice whether I want to buy a product to keep me healthy, but the cost that I am forcing on other people if I don't buy the product sooner rather than later," said Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Verrilli responded gratefully: "That is—and that is definitely a difference that distinguishes this market and justifies this as a regulation."

Time and time again, conservative attorneys and judges fine-tuned their argument to fit existing legal precedent, arguing that the mandate was an unconstitutional use of Congress' authority to regulate commerce because it forces individuals into the stream of commerce, rather than regulating economic behavior already underway. Former Solicitor General Paul Clement, who argued against the constitutionality of Obamacare, ably responded to questioning from the Democratic appointees on the court, all of whom offered more persuasive defenses of the mandate than the man who had come to the court to do so.

Most of the conservative appointees on the court appeared to sign on to the argument—advanced by Judge Henry Hudson in his decision striking down the mandate—that the view the individual mandate regulates economic "inactivity" rather than economic activity. That argument was designed by foes of the law to circumvent a previous opinion written by Scalia, where he wrote that "where Congress has the authority to enact a regulation of interstate commerce, it possesses every power needed to make that regulation effective." Scalia seemed to sign onto Hudson's reasoning during oral arguments.

"Here you're regulating someone who isn't covered," Scalia said. "You are saying that some people who aren't in [the insurance market] must be in it and that's different from regulating in any manner commerce that already exists out there." Chief Justice Roberts, when asking questions of Verrilli, seemed to be speaking for himself. By contrast, when addressing the law's opponents, he twice identified the government as the source of the counterargument. Even Justice Anthony Kennedy, considered to be a potential swing vote, seemed open to the inactivity/activity argument. "The reason this is concerning is because it requires the individual to do an affirmative act," Kennedy said.

Yet Kennedy appeared somewhat sympathetic to the government's position that the health care market was unique, though he curtly observed that if upheld, he fully expected that the government would apply the mandate to other industries.

Verrilli was given five minutes for a final rebuttal and offered a stronger performance than he had in the previous hour he had been given.

"Everyone subject to this regulation is or will be in the insurance market," Verrilli said. Citing the legendary Chief Justice John Marshall, he concluded that "the provisions of the Constitution needed to be interpreted in a manner that would allow them to be effective in addressing the great crises of human affairs that the Framers could not even envision."

It may not have been enough.

<a href="#">20120327-01</a>	08:09	SteveB	Fw: From the Right: Why Gun Restrictions Face Tough Battles
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from *Guns & Patriots*:

After complex Capitol Hill machinations, some of which I shared with you and some I have not, senators John R. Thune (R.-S.D.) and David Vitter (R-La.) filed March 20 the "Respecting States' Rights and Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act."

The bill intends to guarantee the rights of gun owners to carry concealed weapons across state lines in accordance with the laws of individual states, ending the absurd patchwork of state laws for travelers.

While asserting the national purpose intended in the Bill of Rights, the bill balances the constitutional rights protected by the Bill of Rights with the rights of each state to enforce its own laws regarding concealed firearms.

Thune said he was pleased to file a bill that strikes the balance between the sovereignty of the states and the spirit of the Second Amendment.

"Rather than establish a national standard, our bill will ensure that law-abiding citizens are able to carry concealed firearms while at the same time respecting the laws of the respective states they visit," he said.

In this issue, our good friend John Velleco writes about the Thune-Vitter bill from the perspective of Gun Owners of America.

The bill is also supported by the National Rifle Association.

Thune and Vitter are great champions for restoring our gun rights. Please encourage your senators to support their effort. If passed, it would be paired with the Stearns-Shuler bill that passed in November and the differences would be worked out in conference committee manned by members of both chambers. That new conference bill would then need to be approved by each chamber before being sent for the president's signature.

Another champion for gun owners is Sen. Gerald W. "Jerry" Moran (R-Kansas). Moran stepped up March 20 to file the "Second Amendment Sovereignty Act," which prohibits federal officials from using the "voice, vote, and influence" of the government during its participation in talks for the United Nation's proposed Arms Trade Treaty in any way that would compromise Second Amendment rights of U.S. citizens, including regulation of civilian firearms and ammunition.

The U.N. expects the Arms Trade Treaty to be completed by July 2012.

"Our country's sovereignty and firearm freedoms will not be infringed upon by an international organization made up of many countries with little respect for gun rights," Moran said. "Our Second Amendment rights are not negotiable."

It is refreshing to bring you good news from Washington. I will continue to keep you posted in this space as news develops. Until next week, please check out this week's roster of articles.

Enjoy, Neil W. McCabe, Editor, Guns & Patriots

<a href="#">20120327-02</a>	10:45	Dale	Who Are the Racists? & Video: "Black Panthers Offer Bounty for Teen's Shooter"
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The rush to "hang" the shooter just might...MIGHT.....MIGHT be premature.

I don't know what happened in this incident and I'm not defending the actions of the shooter, but it seems to me the knee-jerk reaction is as racist a response as I have ever witnessed.

IF, a white militant organization published a wanted poster for a black person, with a reward, what would happen? How would the media treat it?

What would you say? If thousands of white folks marched through the streets and organized rallies protesting a reverse incident....you would call it bigotry and hate. Wouldn't you? Where is the backlash, when Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton show up to inflame the hate.

I don't know how this case will turn out, but I am ashamed of the way many are reacting...not proud. Racism and bias are not right and I feel terrible about the pain the parents are experiencing. I can even understand and forgive their need to seek some kind of retribution for their loss, but that doesn't excuse the "rush to judgement" by everyone else.

In my opinion.

Video: [http://www.cnn.com/video/?hpt=hp\\_t3#/video/bestoftv/2012/03/26/ac-black-panther-bounty-zimmerman.cnn](http://www.cnn.com/video/?hpt=hp_t3#/video/bestoftv/2012/03/26/ac-black-panther-bounty-zimmerman.cnn).

<a href="#">20120327-03</a>	10:52	SteveB	Re: Who Are the Racists? (reply to Dale, above)
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Thank you for this, Dale. I don't necessarily agree, but I think we have to learn all the facts before judging.

I know it seems like the left is judging this vigilante and some obviously are, but mainly what is being judged is the situation where, **if the gun had not been present, it's more likely no lives would have been lost.** I know we don't know that for sure, but that's the supposition, and it seems much closer to the truth to me than that Zimmerman is guilty of murder. Either way, it's a tragedy.

And I would still have been happier had the dude been arrested, at least for a while. Not doing so seems unseemly to me.

<a href="#">20120327-04</a>	11:46	MarthaH	Poll: How Do You Interpret the Constitution?
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Visit our Facebook page to weigh in on the effect the individual mandate will have on the U.S. economy: <https://www.facebook.com/NBCPolitics>.

The Supreme Court today is hearing arguments on the individual mandate included in the health care reform law. Do you think the Constitution gives Congress the power to require Americans to purchase health insurance? Total of 4,322 votes:

- Yes, since Congress has the power to regulate commerce it can enact the insurance mandate and solve a national problem.

Results: 1840 votes = 42.6%.

- No, Congress has no power to command any American to enter into commerce, for example, to buy insurance.

Results: 2,346 votes = 54.3%.

- Maybe, but the text of the Constitution isn't clear on this point, so a constitutional amendment is.

Results: 136 votes = 3.1%.

[Surprising results, to me. Isn't it agreed that Congress has the right to make us buy seatbelts in our cars? State legislatures make us buy helmets to ride motorcycles and insurance to drive a vehicle. I am made to buy homeowners insurance on my house by the stupid bank, fer cryin' out loud. Why would the government not be able to do the same with health insurance? I find the arguments ludicrous, yet the government seems to have flubbed its SCOTUS case (see lead article today). Social Security and Medicare also force us to engage in commerce—with the government, at least. How could it be deemed more intrusive on freedom to simply involve private enterprise in a similar endeavor? In mean, if the high court actually rules against this, aren't these other programs history too, and then what? Either true socialism or true fascism must surely follow. Tread warily, SCOTUS! –SteveB]

[20120327-05](#)

15:11 Art

Re: What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve? (reply to SteveB. FotM Newsletter #103)

Hi SteveB, Great lead article. Here's something I sent a Spanish friend ( Barcelona) a few days ago. A little shorter but, perhaps not too surprisingly, similar:

The United States is going through a challenging period as we adjust to a fast moving demographic change coupled with our being displaced as the economically and politically most powerful nation in the world. The mostly white lower middle class is not adjusting to what is happening and wants to go back to the way it was. To most of them politically that means the President Reagan era, which is as far back as most of them can remember, when they dream "things were different then". It's not really true, of course, but people believe what they want to believe. It is combined with a nasty continuing streak of racism, that still exists in many parts of this nation, and will make for an extremely ugly election this time. I don't know how it will come out for either the Republican nomination process or the general election, but I do think it will be critical for the future path of the nation.

[20120327-06](#)

15:42 SteveB

Re: What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve? (reply to Art, above)

I think you are about completely parallel. It is an important election. I hope President Obama is very well guarded! I worry. He is one important man right now and historically, I believe.

I love Barcelona (and the whole south of Spain and Portugal). One of my favorite cities, though I only got to spend a few days there.

[20120327-08](#)

16:30 Art

Re: What Are Conservatives Trying to Conserve? (reply to SteveB. FotM Newsletter #103)

You know that is what I worry about the most. Most of the Republicans have stirred up so much hate, someone is bound to try, especially if polls this summer show him leading.

Agree Spain is fascinating and loaded with history. I have spent most of my time in Granada, but have found interesting things everywhere.

20120327-09	16:32	SteveB	"Healthcare Jujitsu"
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Obamacare vs. the SCOTUS...

"Healthcare Jujitsu" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Mar. 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/healthcare-jujitsu-1332856521>)

Not surprisingly, today's debut Supreme Court argument over the so-called "individual mandate" requiring everyone to buy health insurance revolved around epistemological niceties such as the meaning of a "tax," and the question of whether the issue is ripe for review.

Behind this judicial foreplay is the brute political fact that if the Court decides the individual mandate is an unconstitutional extension of federal authority, the entire law starts unraveling.

But with a bit of political jujitsu, the President could turn any such defeat into a victory for a single-payer healthcare system – Medicare for all.

Here's how.

The dilemma at the heart of the new law is that it continues to depend on private health insurers, who have to make a profit or at least pay all their costs including marketing and advertising.

Yet the only way private insurers can afford to cover everyone with pre-existing health problems, as the new law requires, is to have every American buy health insurance – including young and healthier people who are unlikely to rack up large healthcare costs.

This dilemma is the product of political compromise. You'll remember the Administration couldn't get the votes for a single-payer system such as Medicare for all. It hardly tried. Not a single Republican would even agree to a bill giving Americans the option of buying into it.

But don't expect the Supreme Court to address this dilemma. It lies buried under an avalanche of constitutional argument.

Those who are defending the law in Court say the federal government has authority to compel Americans to buy health insurance under the Commerce Clause of the Constitution, which gives Washington the power to regulate interstate commerce. They argue our sprawling health insurance system surely extends beyond an individual state.

Those who are opposing the law say a requirement that individuals contract with private insurance companies isn't regulation of interstate commerce. It's coercion of individuals.

Unhappily for Obama and the Democrats, most Americans don't seem to like the individual mandate very much anyway. Many on the political right believe it a threat to individual liberty. Many on the left object to being required to buy something from a private company.

The President and the Democrats could have avoided this dilemma in the first place if they'd insisted on Medicare for all, or at least a public option.

After all, Social Security and Medicare require every working American to “buy” them. The purchase happens automatically in the form of a deduction from everyone’s paychecks. But because Social Security and Medicare are government programs financed by payroll taxes they don’t feel like mandatory purchases.

Americans don’t mind mandates in the form of payroll taxes for Social Security or Medicare. In fact, both programs are so popular even conservative Republicans were heard to shout “don’t take away my Medicare!” at rallies opposed to the new health care law.

There’s no question payroll taxes are constitutional, because there’s no doubt that the federal government can tax people in order to finance particular public benefits. But requiring citizens to buy something from a private company is different because private companies aren’t directly accountable to the public. They’re accountable to their owners and their purpose is to maximize profits. What if they monopolize the market and charge humongous premiums? (Some already seem to be doing this.)

Even if private health insurers are organized as not-for-profits, there’s still a problem of public accountability. What’s to prevent top executives from being paid small fortunes? (In more than a few cases this is already happening.)

Moreover, compared to private insurance, Medicare is a great deal. Its administrative costs are only around 3 percent, while the administrative costs of private insurers eat up 30 to 40 percent of premiums. Medicare’s costs are even below the 5 percent to 10 percent administrative costs borne by large companies that self-insure, and under the 11 percent costs of private plans under Medicare Advantage, the current private-insurance option under Medicare.

So why not Medicare for all?

Because Republicans have mastered the art of political jujitsu. Their strategy has been to demonize government and seek to privatize everything that might otherwise be a public program financed by tax dollars (see Paul Ryan’s plan for turning Medicare into vouchers). Then they go to court and argue that any mandatory purchase is unconstitutional because it exceeds the government’s authority.

Obama and the Democrats should do the reverse. If the Supreme Court strikes down the individual mandate in the new health law, private insurers will swarm Capitol Hill demanding that the law be amended to remove the requirement that they cover people with pre-existing conditions.

When this happens, Obama and the Democrats should say they’re willing to remove that requirement – but only if Medicare is available to all, financed by payroll taxes.

If they did this the public will be behind them — as will the Supreme Court.

<a href="#">20120327-07</a> 16:26 Art Our American Business (Leaders)???
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This is the time of year for those of you who hold stocks in American Companies separately, to start received annual financial statements and Proxy Shareholder statements. For a number of years I have always tried to find to compensation statements for the senior leadership and it has gotten harder and harder to understand each year, but I know it is a lot.

Below is a portion of what I received today from Duke Energy. One of the items to vote on was listed "the approval of the Duke Energy's Corps. named executive officer compensation". OK, I thought, what is that compensation. Seemed a reasonable question to ask. After a bit of a search I found an table of contents for the annual report that referred me to page 228. PAGE 228, not page 5 or 6 but buried way in there. This is what I found on page 228 in the Annual Report:

ITEM 11. EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION. Duke Energy will provide information that is responsive to this Item 11 in its definitive proxy statement or in an amendment to this Annual Report not later than 120 days after

the end of the fiscal year covered by this Annual Report, in either case under the caption "Executive Compensation," and possibly elsewhere therein. That information is incorporated in this Item 11 by reference.

OK, I thought, let's go look at the proxy statement. Again more search but finally a table of contents that referred me to "Executive Compensation" page 20. Here is what I found:

As required by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the "Dodd-Frank Act"), we included two shareholder votes on named executive officer compensation in last year's annual proxy statement. In those votes, which were advisory and non binding, our shareholders approved the compensation of our named executive officers as disclosed in the annual 2011 proxy statement (commonly referred to as a "say-on-pay" vote) and approved the recommendation of our Board of Directors to hold future say-on-pay votes on an annual basis.

As a result, we are providing our shareholders with the opportunity to approve, on a non binding, advisory basis, the compensation of our named executive officers as disclosed in this proxy statement. This proposal gives our shareholders the opportunity to express their views on the compensation of our named executive officers. In connection with this proposal, the Board of Directors encourages shareholders to review in detail the description of the compensation program for our named executive officers that is set forth in the Compensation Discussion and Analysis beginning on page 35, as well as the information contained in the compensation tables and narrative discussion in this proxy statement.

As described in more detail in the Compensation Discussion and Analysis section, the guiding principle of our compensation philosophy is that pay should be linked to performance and that the interests of our executives and shareholders should be aligned. Our compensation program is designed to provide significant upside and downside potential depending on actual results as compared to predetermined measures of success. A significant portion of our named executive officers' total direct compensation is directly contingent upon achieving specific results that are important to our long-term success and growth in shareholder value. We supplement our pay-for-performance program with a number of compensation policies that are aligned with the long-term interests of Duke Energy and its shareholders.

We are asking our shareholders to indicate their support for the compensation of our named executive officers as disclosed in this proxy statement by voting "FOR" the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the shareholders of Duke Energy approve, on an advisory basis, the compensation paid to Duke Energy's named executive officers, as disclosed pursuant to Item 402 of Regulation S-K of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, including the Compensation Discussion and Analysis, the compensation tables and the narrative discussion in Duke Energy's 2012 proxy statement.

Because your vote is advisory, it will not be binding on the Board of Directors, the Compensation Committee or Duke Energy. The Compensation Committee, however, will review the voting results and will take them into consideration when making future decisions regarding the compensation of our named executive officers.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS RECOMMENDS A VOTE "FOR" THE APPROVAL OF THE COMPENSATION OF OUR NAMED EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AS DISCLOSED IN THIS PROXY STATEMENT.

????????? What???????

From page 35 you need to read on to about page 54 with more and more blaa blaa. Finally on Page 54 I did find a chart that seems to indicate the CEO will make about \$8.7M this year - a very nifty \$2M raise from 200,9 I might add (business has really suffered under this Administration). But wait, there is still more about stock options etc. etc for another 20 some pages. No wonder I never get a dividend and the company never seems to make any money. I still have no idea what the CEO of Duke Energy makes.

A lot has been claimed in this election run up about how unions have ruined American Companies and made them too expensive. I think we may be on to another big problem: Self-serving business leadership whose only aim is to line their own pockets, and it is so bad they are ashamed to openly admit to us—their stock holders—just how bad they are ripping off the company and us, the shareholders. They try their best to hide the actual salaries in layer after layer of confusion and hope we will just give up.

Oh by the way, these folks also need a tax break. Not me, not you, just them.

Needless to say I voted, NO.

My recommendation, if the Board of Directors recommends it, just say no.

<a href="#">20120327-10</a>	21:14	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Save the Rhino!
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from Avaaz:

**The rhino is being hunted into extinction and could disappear forever unless we act now.** Shocking new statistics show 440 rhinos were brutally killed last year in South Africa alone -- a massive increase on five years ago when just 13 had their horns hacked off. **European nations could lead the world to a new plan to save these amazing creatures** but they need to hear from us first!

Fueling this devastation is a huge spike in demand for rhino horns, used for bogus cancer cures, hangover remedies and good luck charms in China and Vietnam. Protests from South Africa have so far been ignored by the authorities, but **Europe has the power to change this by calling for a ban on all rhino trade** -- from anywhere, to anywhere -- when countries meet at the next crucial international wildlife trade summit in July.

The situation is so dire that the threat has even spread into British zoos who are on red-alert for **rhino killing gangs! Let's raise a giant outcry** and urge Europe to push for new protections to save rhinos from extinction. When we reach 100,000 signers, our call will be delivered in Brussels, the decision-making heart of Europe, with a crash of cardboard rhinos. Every **50,000 signatures will add a rhino to the crash -- bringing the size of our movement right to the door of EU delegates** as they decide their position. **Sign the petition below, then forward this email widely:**

[http://www.avaaz.org/en/save\\_rhinos/?v](http://www.avaaz.org/en/save_rhinos/?v)

**So far this year one rhino has been killed every day in South Africa**, home to at least 80% of the world's remaining wild rhinos. Horns now have a street value of over \$65,000 a kilo -- more expensive than gold or platinum. The South African Environment Minister has pledged to take action by putting 150 extra wardens and even an electric fence along the Mozambique border to try and stem the attacks -- but **the scale of the threat is so severe that global action is required.**

Unless we act today we may lose this magnificent and ancient animal species permanently. **Some Chinese are loudly lobbying for the trade in horn to be relaxed, but banning the trade in all rhinos will silence them.** With the EU's leadership, we can bring these international gangsters to justice, put the poachers in prison, and push for public awareness programmes in key Asian countries -- and end this horn horror show for good.

**In the next few weeks, the EU** will be setting its agenda for the next big global meeting in just a few months -- our best chance of turning the tide against the slaughter. We know that rhinos will be on their agenda, but **only our pressure can ensure they challenge the problem at its source. Let's build a giant outcry and deliver it in a spectacular fashion -- sign now** and together we can stop the slaughter across Africa.

In 2010, Avaaz's actions helped to stop the elephant ivory trade from exploding. In 2012, we can do the same for the rhino. When we speak out together, we can change the world -- last year was the worst year ever for the rhino, but this can be the year when we win.

With hope, Iain, Sam, Maria Paz, Emma, Ricken and the whole Avaaz team

**More Information:**

"Few Rhinos Survive Outside Protected Areas" (WWF):  
<http://www.worldwildlife.org/species/finder/rhinoceros/rhinos.html>.

"South Africa Record for Rhino Poaching Deaths" (BBC): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15571678>.

"'Cure for Cancer' Rumour Killed Off Vietnam's Rhinos" (*The Guardian*):  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/nov/25/cure-cancer-rhino-horn-vietnam>.

"British Zoos on Alert as Rhino Poaching Hits the UK" (*International Business Times*)  
<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/289792/20120130/british-zoos-uk-alert-rhino-poaching-hits.htm>.

[20120327-11](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Rhino

<http://medcaresolutions.us/surgery-centers>

African Rhino



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #105 — MAR. 29, 2012

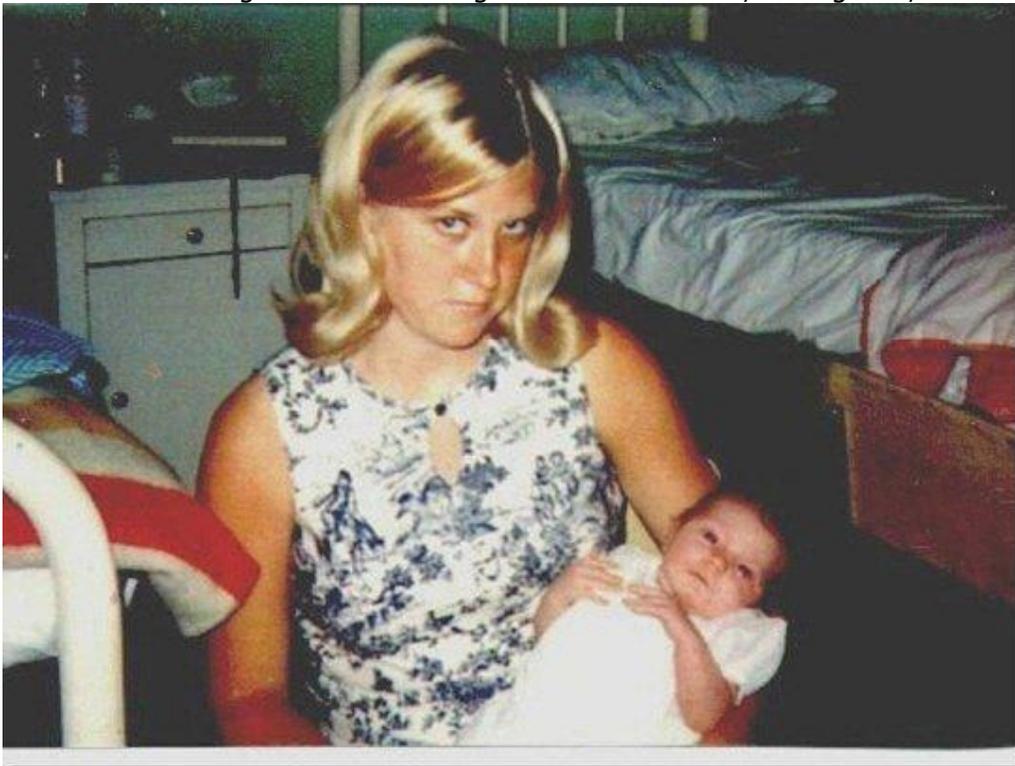
*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **...And Justice for All?**

(posted by Pam McRae, Mar. 29, 2012)

"Karen B." holding her newborn daughter for the last time, on August 1, 1966.



If I did everything right, you should have seen a Yahoo News item about a CBS report on adoption in the 50s, 60s, and 70s in another post [see below]. I'm not sure it was included, but there was also a page taken from an old social work textbook that discusses unwed motherhood, which I cannot now find. Basically it says that young women who give birth out of wedlock are immoral and deserved to be punished, that society shouldn't have to take up the burden of raising "illegitimate" children, that single mothers are bad mothers who will deny their children adequate material comfort and educational opportunity. It also says no one knows how these birth mothers feel after giving up their children. Really?

I'm reading Howard Zinn's \*History of the United States\* and being reminded just how unfair life was for women at least until the hiatus of WW II, when women were allowed to take men's jobs for the duration. It's enough to make a feminist out of Rick Santorum. There was a time when women were denied--just about everything. Many subjects were taboo, most especially anything to do with the human body. The past thirty years have brought many changes, and "feminism" has gone mainstream. There is one subject, however, that remains beneath the radar: the plight of birth mothers and their children who are prevented by law from finding each other.

Ever since Dan Quayle had the vapors over Murphy Brown's baby, unwed motherhood has lost its stigma. Babies are still given up for adoption, but not because their mothers will be social outcasts if they don't. In fact, a young woman is more likely today to face opprobrium if she relinquishes her child. Times have changed. Unmentionable topics, such as birth control, breast cancer, and STDs, are now discussed openly, and "Two and a Half Men," which glorifies extra-marital sex, is the most popular TV show in America. The silent generation, my generation, still labors (no pun intended) under the old rules of secrecy and shame. It is time to shed some light on these women and their children, change the laws that deny their access to each other, and acknowledge that the real wrong was the way unwed mothers were treated and made to feel so ashamed that many, if not most, of them still keep their secret from even their families and closest friends. It's time for the shame to stop, for birth mothers to be acknowledged as the mothers they are and accorded the respect they deserve. The only way to begin this conversation is for women like me, who are birth mothers, to be open about our experience. Most of us have proved ourselves to be good mothers to subsequent children and to have careers and accomplishments comparable to those of other women of our generation. Betty Ford was a brave lady. We should all follow her example.

"Adopted or Abducted?" by Dan Rather, Yahoo! News

Mar. 27, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/forced-adoptions-for-unwed-mothers-around-the-globe.html>)

(Veil of secrecy lifts slowly on decades of forced adoptions for unwed mothers around the globe.)

Most women describe giving birth to a child as a life changing experience – in a word – “challenging”, “joyous”, “miraculous.” But generations of young, unwed women describe their experience of giving birth to a child as a nightmare – and decades later their suffering has yet to end.

From Australia to Spain, Ireland to America, and as recent as 1987, young mothers say they were “coerced”, “manipulated”, and “duped” into handing over their babies for adoption. These women say sometimes their parents forged consent documents, but more often they say these forced adoptions were coordinated by the people their families trusted most...priests, nuns, social workers, nurses or doctors.

Last month, a Dan Rather Reports producer and crew were in Canberra, Australia as Parliament released the findings of an 18-month-long investigation revealing illegal and unethical tactics used to convince young, unmarried mothers to surrender their babies to adoptive homes from the late 1940s to the 1980s. And we interviewed some of the victims -- adoptees and mothers separated at birth.

“One of the happiest days of my life, most proudest achievements, is giving birth and holding my newborn child,” says Senator Rachel Siewert, who oversaw the Australian Senate Committee Report. “These women didn't have that experience. And I can't imagine it.”

Siewert added, “There was a lot of testimony from people that were associated with Catholic institutions. And Catholic Health Services here issued an apology and I understand they're gonna be putting in place some grievance procedures.”

In some cases, mothers in Australia were drugged and forced to sign papers relinquishing custody. In others, women were told their children had died. Single mothers also did not have access to the financial support given to widows or abandoned wives, and many were told by doctors, nurses, and social workers that they were unfit to raise a child. Siewert says, “We heard practices that were either illegal or unethical and downright cruel.”

"It wouldn't surprise me to hear the same thing happened elsewhere," continues Siewert, "...the U.K., the U.S., Canada and Ireland. So you could, I think, expect that those countries also had these sorts of practices."

Two weeks ago, a prominent Canadian law firm announced that it would file a class-action lawsuit against Quebec's Catholic Church accusing the Church of kidnapping, fraud and coercion to force unwed mothers to give up their children for adoption.

Attorney Tony Merchant represents several hundred women who claim that when they were in maternity homes in the 1950s and 1960s, social workers, nurses, doctors, and even men and women in the employ of the Catholic Church cooperated with government officials to force or, even coerce, young women to sign away their rights to keep their child never knowing they even had a choice.

Merchant was quoted in the Montreal Gazette as saying, "The beliefs the Catholic Church (in Quebec) had about premarital sex and the judgmental approach the church had, made it particularly aggressive in pressuring women into putting their children up for adoption."

In Spain, an 80-year-old nun, Sister Maria Gómez, became the first person accused of baby snatching in a scandal over the trafficking of 1,500 newborns in Spanish hospitals over four decades until the 1980s. The babies were either stolen, sold or given away by adoption.

Since October, Dan Rather Reports has contacted nearly 100 alleged victims, social workers, researchers, lawyers and authors from around the world to shine a bright light on the issue of forced adoptions. The two most respected books on the subject of "forced adoptions," Ann Fessler's *The Girls Who Went Away* and Rickie Solinger's *Beggars and Choosers* indicate that the tactics used to procure adoptable babies in Australia, Ireland, Canada and Spain were also implemented in the United States.

We have interviewed numerous women in the U.S. who told us that they were sent to maternity homes, denied contact with their families and friends, forced to endure labor with purposely painful procedures and return home without their babies. Single, American mothers were also denied financial support and told that their children would be better off without them.

In some cases, they too were told that their babies had died. Many signed away their rights while drugged and exhausted after childbirth. Others were threatened with substantial medical bills if they didn't surrender or were manipulated through humiliation. According to Fessler, these seemingly unethical practices were used against as many as 1.5 million mothers in the United States.

When we asked these women who say they were victims of "forced adoption" to use one word to describe their experience giving birth...here's what they told us...

"Sad" states Angie from Colorado, who says at age 19 her pregnancy was kept an absolute secret and that she disappeared before her infant daughter was put up for adoption against her will in 1972. "Sad" also states Chris from Massachusetts, who gave up her firstborn through Catholic Charities in 1969.

"Trauma" states Valerie from Toronto who says in 1970 a Salvation Army matron at the Bethany Home for unwed mothers dropped her off at Grace Hospital in Toronto to labor alone. While crying out in pain during labor, she says a nurse called her a "slut."

"Barbaric" states Christine, a PhD. candidate at the University of Western Sydney in Australia, who heads the Apology Alliance, made up of individuals and groups from all around Australia who seek an apology for the practices and policies that led to forced adoptions in her country.

"Devastating" states Shawn who was a sophomore in college in 1974 when at age 19 she gave birth to a son she has yet to see in person or touch. During the delivery, she says her doctor forcibly grabbed her foot and said, "I hope this has taught you not to get in trouble again."

"Horrible" states Lily who was 17 in 1967 when she says she was "held in slavery for nearly 10 months" in a home for unwed mothers before she says she was forced to give her son up for adoption.

"Traumatic" states Fran from Pennsylvania, who says in 1959 at age 20 she did not give informed consent before her son was placed for adoption. "It was not a choice...it was social policy."

"Tragic" states Susan, who at age 21 in 1967 says she had to fight just to see her daughter a day after giving birth to her at Miserecordia Hospital in Milwaukee. A supervisor tried to talk her out of it, but she persisted. A few days later, she regrettably agreed to give her daughter up for adoption.

"Torture" states Hanne from British Columbia, Canada, who says at age 16, her baby girl was "stolen...abducted on the delivery table." "Torture" also states Carlynne from Florida, who says at age 20, she was not able to see, touch or was told the sex of her baby before being forced to put it up for adoption.

"Shattering" states Karen who was living in Virginia in 1966, when at age 18, she says she was "told by Catholic Charities to sign the paper" and give her daughter up for adoption. "I was never told I could visit her in foster care. I didn't even know she was in foster care. I wasn't told that I had six months to get her!! To change my mind.. as if I had even made up my own mind. I didn't...they did."

"Horrible" states Laura from Virginia, who says at age 16 she was "forced" to give her son up for adoption in 1972. "I was totally coerced from day one."

"Decimated" states Elizabeth from Melbourne, Australia, who says in 1963 at age 18 she was rendered unconscious before her daughter was taken from her at birth, even though she was married to the father of her baby 11 months before the adoption was finalized. "Decimated" also states Leslie, who at age 17 was going into labor at a maternity home in Alabama when "Sister Martha, the director of the maternity home drove me to the hospital, pulled into the driveway and let me out. I went in and admitted myself. I labored that night (alone) in one of the hallways" because she says she was told the maternity ward was only for married women. Ironically, the son she says was taken from her was born on Mother's Day 1966.

Carol, was a college freshman in 1966, when she says a social worker in Pittsburgh betrayed her with promises to help her keep newborn son. After the birth, drugged and disoriented, Carol says she unknowingly signed relinquishment papers presented by that social worker as hospital release forms. She needed two words to answer our question, "soul rape."

Photos: <http://news.yahoo.com/photos/adopted-or-abducted-slideshow/adopted-or-abducted--photo-1332786408.html>.

"As for the problem of the unmarried mother... if she has... been able to give away the living symbol of her 'sin' or 'mistake'... she is 'solved' as a social problem... If she keeps her child and requires economic aids for the support of herself and child, she is not 'paying'." [Social Work & Social Problems, Nathan E. Cohen, Editor, "Unmarried Mothers", Helen Harris Perlman (1964) p. 279.]

unemployment gratuitous addition to a population problem may be viewed with concern.

5. As for the problem of the unmarried mother herself, if she has, by her own efforts or with help, been able to give away the living symbol of her "sin" or "mistake" and pick up where she left off, she is "solved" as a social problem. (Whether she feels her problem to be solved, no one knows.) If she keeps her child but needs no economic support, she is lost to public view. So, as far as is known, she is no problem. The assumption is that she is paying for her transgressions—and this is a morally satisfying assumption. If, however, she keeps her child and requires economic aids for the support of herself and child, she is not "paying." Indeed, it commonly appears that perhaps she is being paid for sins and, by such payment, even encouraged to further sexual irresponsibility.

6. Finally the baby and growing child himself presents a problem of social concern when he is kept by a socially, economically, and culturally impoverished mother. There is question and concern whether children reared under such complex disadvantaged conditions can grow into "good citizens." Moreover, the provision of necessary physical and mental health services, of long-time economic maintenance, of developmental opportunities in order to counteract the effects of deprivation present formidable money costs. That such resources are at present undeveloped or inadequate in quantity and quality is a further problem of social solutions. Particularly does this concern the citizenry, for there is evidence both of recidivism and of the transmission of undesired standards of economic dependence and "immorality" from one generation to the next.

Thus in this mixture of social values and concerns in regard to morality and money, the sanctity and desirability of good family life, the provision of "reformation," and of open opportunity for the sound development of children into "good citizens," the mother and child out of wedlock present society with problems of widespread concern.

*Is this a "social work problem"?* All professions, as Whitehead has said, are concerned with making certain that the rights of individuals are safeguarded at the same time as a sense of community and effective social living are maintained. In examining the various aspects of the social problem of unmarried motherhood, it is clear that the services and concerns of a number of professions would be involved. Medicine, the ministry, law, and education are perhaps the professions whose functions and authority place them in a forefront position on the problems that lead to unmarried motherhood. Social work is the profession, that, traditionally, provides the services and develops and mans the resources by which a problem, once it exists and becomes a matter of

20120328-02 15:09 SteveB Re: ...And Justice for All? (reply to Pam, above)

The picture of that girl is heartbreaking, as is the fact that any of this ever happened this way, yet it did. If this is what women and children suffered here, what must it be like for women in Muslim countries? Though I don't see how that erases any of your societal shame. The shame is not as it is described by the writer of that manual, it's the shame of the writer that should be immense.

Much of this has to do with the importance of the family...knowledge which I have largely come by later in life than I would wish.

It seems like in mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century America, we somehow decided that in this modern day and age the family was not something so important. This was wrong.

But they say love always finds a way and I'm starting to believe it.

I am very proud of you, Pam!

I found some other, maybe useful, stuff:

Misc.:

<http://coloradomoms.com/forums/showthread.php?1571-forced-adoptions>.

*Looking Back to See Ahead*, by Helen Harris Perlman (1989):

[http://books.google.com.bo/books?id=t3s2wL\\_saPsC&pg=PA231&lpg=PA231&dq=%E2%80%9CUnmarried+Mothers%E2%80%9D+Helen+Harris+Perlman&source=bl&ots=-HRS2ukNbI&sig=YabakocpoXf2l\\_g5pHoHjVmGkgI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=eV5zT-2EBsOltwfx\\_tniAw&sqj=2&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com.bo/books?id=t3s2wL_saPsC&pg=PA231&lpg=PA231&dq=%E2%80%9CUnmarried+Mothers%E2%80%9D+Helen+Harris+Perlman&source=bl&ots=-HRS2ukNbI&sig=YabakocpoXf2l_g5pHoHjVmGkgI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=eV5zT-2EBsOltwfx_tniAw&sqj=2&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

*Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, by Joanne Jay Meyerowitz (1994):

[http://books.google.com.bo/books?id=uFLVTPBKNNMC&pg=PA325&lpg=PA325&dq=%E2%80%9CUnmarried+Mothers%E2%80%9D+Helen+Harris+Perlman+\(1964\)&source=bl&ots=7Y2rKi8nKg&sig=WqM1McIIRTPpyq\\_KclKtYy1NOLw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=4I9zT6r3FoS9tweqn\\_SNBg&sqj=2&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com.bo/books?id=uFLVTPBKNNMC&pg=PA325&lpg=PA325&dq=%E2%80%9CUnmarried+Mothers%E2%80%9D+Helen+Harris+Perlman+(1964)&source=bl&ots=7Y2rKi8nKg&sig=WqM1McIIRTPpyq_KclKtYy1NOLw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=4I9zT6r3FoS9tweqn_SNBg&sqj=2&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

Senate Inquiry Regarding Forced Adoption Practices Submission:

[http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=%E2%80%9Cunmarried%20mothers%E2%80%9D%20helen%20harris%20perlman%20\(1964\)&source=web&cd=7&sqj=2&ved=0CEQQFjAG&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsenate.aph.gov.au%2Fsubmissions%2Fcommittees%2Fviewdocument.aspx%3Fid%3D0c47700e-ef2f-424b-be78-9c4ce4c46127&ei=4I9zT6r3FoS9tweqn\\_SNBg&usq=AFOjCNG3ma4ugeEQV3a0n7gUrC2Yz2CymQ](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=%E2%80%9Cunmarried%20mothers%E2%80%9D%20helen%20harris%20perlman%20(1964)&source=web&cd=7&sqj=2&ved=0CEQQFjAG&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsenate.aph.gov.au%2Fsubmissions%2Fcommittees%2Fviewdocument.aspx%3Fid%3D0c47700e-ef2f-424b-be78-9c4ce4c46127&ei=4I9zT6r3FoS9tweqn_SNBg&usq=AFOjCNG3ma4ugeEQV3a0n7gUrC2Yz2CymQ).

All I could find on "Unmarried Mothers" Helen Harris Perlman (1964):

<http://babyscoopera.blogspot.com/2007/12/little-night-reading.html>.

<a href="#">20120328-01</a> 12:22 various Friends of the Middle
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**Pam:** I don't see a way to comment on things in the newsletter. Is the blog supposed to be where the conversation takes place? I seem to do better when I send things to a limited list and can go back and forth via email. Am I missing something?

**SteveG:** I feel the same way.

**SteveB:** Pam, there is a form on the first webpage (<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org>) for submitting anything you want. Normally...it might be quick, but it will go only to me, then only to the Newsletter. Your blog comment, I already commented on and posted, but have been out since. I don't think you're missing anything. And your old way is fine. To me, unless you're somebody famous, a blog is no big deal, though, at this time, we seem to be reaching more new people via the blog than the website, and the Newsletter continues to grow modestly from all three venues. Take care and enjoy that early summer.

**Pam:** If the old way is OK, I think I'll stick with that.

**SteveB:** :-). Yet I admire your spirit of experimentation!.

**Pam:** Aw, shucks.

20120328-03

15:41

Dennis

"The Strange Conservative Brain: 3 Reasons Republicans Refuse to Accept Reality About Global Warming"

Since I support nuclear power, you have no reason to disagree that the following article is not correct (read all the way through to understand why).

"The Strange Conservative Brain: 3 Reasons Republicans Refuse to Accept Reality About Global Warming" by Chris Mooney, AlterNet

Mar. 28, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/154709/>)

(Note: These are notes for remarks that I gave recently at the Tucson Festival of Books, where I was asked to talk about my new book *The Republican Brain* on a panel entitled "Will the Planet Survive the Age of Humans?")

So the question before us on this panel is, "Will the Planet Survive the Age of Humans?" And I want to focus on one particular aspect of humans that makes them very problematic in a planetary sense -- namely, their brains.

What I've spent the last year or more trying to understand is what it is about our brains that makes facts such odd and threatening things; why we sometimes double down on false beliefs when they're refuted; and maybe, even, why some of us do it more than others.

And of course, the new book homes in on the brains -- really, the psychologies -- of politically conservative homo sapiens in particular. You know, Stephen Colbert once said that "reality has a well-known liberal bias." And essentially what I'm arguing is that, not only is that a funny statement, it's factually true, and perhaps even part of the nature of things.

Colbert also talked about the phenomenon of "truthiness," and as it turns out, we can actually give a scientific explanation of truthiness -- which is what I'm going to sketch in the next ten minutes, with respect to global warming in particular.

I almost called the book *The Science of Truthiness* -- but *The Republican Brain* turns out to be a better title.

### The Facts About Global Warming

So first off, let's start with the facts about climate change -- facts that you'd think (or you'd hope) any human being ought to accept.

It turns out that the case for human-caused global warming is based on simple and fundamental physics. We've known about the greenhouse effect for over one hundred years. And we've known that carbon dioxide is a heat trapping gas, a greenhouse gas. Some of the key experiments on this, by the Irishman John Tyndall, actually occurred in the year 1859, which is the same year that Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*.

We also know that if we do nothing, seriously bad stuff starts happening. If we melt Greenland and West Antarctica, we're looking at 40 feet of sea level rise. This is, like, bye bye to key parts of Florida.

### Enter the Denial

So then, the question is, why do people deny this? And why, might I add, do Republicans in particular deny this so strongly?

And if your answer to that question is, "oh, because they're stupid" -- well, you're wrong. That's what liberals want to think, but it doesn't seem to be correct. In fact, it seems to be precisely the opposite -- smarter (or more educated) Republicans turn out to be worse science deniers on this topic.

This is a phenomenon that I like to call the "smart idiot" effect, and I just wrote about it for AlterNet and Salon.com.

Let me tell you how I stumbled upon this effect -- which is really what set the book in motion. I think the key moment came in the year 2008 when I came upon Pew data showing:

- That if you're a Republican, then the higher your level of education, the less likely you are to accept scientific reality -- which is, that global warming is human caused.
- If you're a Democrat or Independent, precisely the opposite is the case.

This is actually a consistent finding now across the social science literature on the resistance to climate change. So, for that matter, is the finding that the denial is the worst among conservative white males -- so it has a gender aspect to it -- and among the Tea Party.

So seriously: What's going on here? More education leading to worse denial, but only among Republicans? How can you explain that?

### A Three-Level Explanation

Well, I think we need to understand three points in order to understand why conservatives act this way. And I will list them here, before going into them in more detail:

1. Conservatism is a Defensive Ideology, and Appeals to People Who Want Certainty and Resist Change.
2. Conservative "Morality" Impels Climate Denial -- and in particular, conservative Individualism.
3. Fox News is the Key "Feedback Mechanism" -- whereby people already inclined to believe false things get all the license and affirmation they need.

So let's go into more detail:

#### 1. Conservatism is a Defensive Ideology and Appeals to People Who Want Certainty and Resist Change.

There's now a staggering amount of research on the psychological and even the physiological traits of people who opt for conservative ideologies. And on average, you see people who are more wedded to certainty, and to having fixed beliefs. You also see people who are more sensitive to fear and threat -- in a way that can be measured in their bodily responses to certain types of stimuli.

At the extreme of these traits, you see a group called authoritarians -- those who are characterized by cognitive rigidity, seeing things in black and white ways -- "in group/out group," my way or the highway.

So in this case, if someone high on such traits latches on to a particular belief -- in this case, "global warming is a hoax" -- then more knowledge about it is not necessarily going to open their minds. More knowledge is just going to be used to argue what they already think.

And we see this in the Tea Party, where we have both the highest levels of global warming denial, but also this incredibly strong confidence that they know all they need to know about the issue, and they don't want any more information, thank you very much.

#### 2. Conservative "Morality" Impels Climate Denial -- in particular, Conservative Individualism.

But, you might say, "well, Tea Party conservatives don't deny every aspect of reality." And it's true. Presumably, they still will accept a factual correction if they have, say, the date of Mother's Day wrong. Presumably they're still open minded about that... we hope.

So why deny this particular thing? Why deny that global warming is caused by humans? And here, I think you've got to look at deep seated moral intuitions that differs from left to right. And it's important to note at

the outset that whatever your moral intuitions are, they push you emotionally to reason in a particular direction long before you are actually consciously thinking about it.

So, conservatives tend to be "individualists"-- meaning, essentially, that they prize a system in which government leaves you alone -- and "hierarchs," meaning, they are supportive of various types of inequality.

The individualist is threatened by global warming, deeply threatened, because it means that markets have failed and governments -- including global governments -- have to step in to fix the problem. And some individualists are so threatened by this reality that they even spin out conspiracy theories, arguing that all the world's scientists are in a cabal with, like, the UN, to make up phony science so they can crash economies.

So now let's look at what these individualist assumptions do to the denial of science. In one study by Yale's Dan Kahan and colleagues:

- "Individualist-hierarchs" and "egalitarian-communitarians" are asked: Who's an expert on global warming?
- Only 23 percent of H-I's agree that a scientist who thinks GW is human-caused is a "trustworthy and knowledgeable expert," vs. 88 percent of E-Cs.

In another study, meanwhile, Kahan showed that if you frame the science of global warming as supporting nuclear power, then conservatives are more open to accepting it, presumably because it does not insult their values any longer.

### 3. Fox News is the Key "Feedback Mechanism" -- whereby people who want to believe false things get all the license they need.

So clearly, there are some deeply rooted attributes that predispose conservatives towards the denial of global warming.

But there are also "environmental" factors -- things that have come to exist in our world that did not exist before, that interact with these things about conservatives, and make all this much worse.

And here, Fox News is undeniably at the top of the list. There are now a host of studies (video here) showing that Fox News viewers are more misinformed about various aspects of reality, including two such studies about global warming.

So if you've got Fox News, you've got a place to go to reaffirm your beliefs. And that serves this psychological need for certainty and security. So conservatives opt in, they get the misinformation, their beliefs are reaffirmed, and they're set to argue, argue, argue about why they're right and all the scientists of the world are wrong.

### Conclusion

So in sum, we need a nature-nurture, or a combined psychological and environmental account of the conservative denial of global warming. And only then do we see why they are so doggedly espousing a set of beliefs that are so wildly dangerous to the planet.

(Chris Mooney is the author of four books, including *The Republican War on Science* (2005). His next book, *The Republican Brain: The Science of Why They Deny Science—and Reality*, is due out in April.)

WHEN I WAS A KID, THE NEWSPAPERS WERE A SOURCE OF TRUTH OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED OR IS HAPPENING. MY GOD, WHAT THE MEDIA HAS COME TO LATELY!---NO LONGER DO THEY SEARCH FOR AND REPORT TRUTH, JUST A CONTINUOUS BARRAGE OF THEIR POLITICAL IDEOLOGY CRAP.

"Zimmerman Was on the Ground Being Punched When He Shot Trayvon Martin" by Kyle Rogers, *Charleston Conservative Examiner*

Mar. 21, 2012, (<http://www.examiner.com/charleston-conservative-in-charleston-sc/zimmerman-was-on-the-ground-being-punched-when-he-shot-trayvon-martin>)

Last weekend in the city of Chicago alone, gangbangers slaughtered ten people and wounded another forty. The youngest fatality is only six years old. The youngest person wounded is only one-year-old. Many of the victim were pedestrians sprayed with bullets in drive by shootings. The national news has said nothing about this.

So why does one shooting in Florida warrant weeks of national news? Why has there been thousands of articles a day, for the last four days, about one single shooting?

Almost all of the news items about George Zimmerman and Trayvon Martin contains a combination of false statements, opinions presented as facts, transparent distortions, and a complete absence of some of the most relevant details. Almost all news items are written solely from the point of view of the grieving family. The media also fills their articles with outdated baby-faced pictures of Trayvon. Very few include that he was a towering 6'2" football player. Is the media really reporting the news, or is this classic agitation/propaganda to advance a political agenda.

Literally thousands of articles contain at least one false statement in the first couple of lines. They usually read "George Zimmerman, a white man," or "shot by a white man." Zimmerman is described by family as a multiracial Hispanic. His appearance is clearly that of a Latino/Mestizo individual. However, the media wants him to be white because that better fits the political narrative they are trying to artificially create. Many news articles have also claimed the neighborhood is "mostly white." This is also a lie. The neighborhood is only 49% white. It is over half non-white.

All the way back on February 27th, the local Orlando Fox station interviewed the witness who dialed 911. Almost none of the thousands of articles since have mentioned any of the details described by the witness. Some, however, have attributed false statements to this witness. On March 16th, the Sanford police department released new details to the Orlando Sentinel. Once again, these details have been ignored or changed by the media.

1. The witness reports that George Zimmerman was on the ground and Trayvon is on top of him punching him.
2. The witness says that George Zimmerman was screaming and yelling for help.
3. Police arrive and find Zimmerman bleeding on his face and the back of his head. He also has had grass stains on his back. All this confirms the story told by Zimmerman and the witness.
4. Police play the 911 tape for Trayvon Martin's father, who tells police that the voice screaming is not the voice of his son.

The neighborhood this took place in has seen a lot of crime. Would you be surprised to learn that there were eight burglaries, nine thefts, and a shooting just in the past year? In fact, the local homeowners' association reports that George Zimmerman actually caught one thief and aided in the apprehension of other criminals. The Miami Herald wrote about this on March 17th. None of the thousands of articles and cable news segments that came after, thought this was important. In fact the Miami Herald goes on to interview neighbor, Ibrahim Rashada, who is black. Rashada confirms that there has been a lot of crime in the neighborhood and indicates to the reporter that the perpetrators are usually black.

The media also characterizes Trayvon as a "model student." In fact, he was under a five day suspension when the shooting took place. That is why he was staying at a house so far from his school on a school night. A lawyer for Trayvon's family has blocked access to his school records. However, you have to do something pretty bad to get suspended for five days.

Now that you know the suppressed facts of the case, you can form a better more balanced opinion. Maybe you still think Zimmerman was wrong to pull the trigger. However, I think you will come to the conclusion that the "mainstream" clearly is pushing an agenda. Even when they have to grossly alter and adjust a story to fit that agenda.

<a href="#">20120328-04</a>	16:43	MarthaH	"Brace Yourself for Another 5-4 Decision"
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Back to 2000...

...from whence this all started: Hanging chads+ court-selected president + TN not for native son+ Nader = a country divided.

If the health insurance mandate is found unconstitutional, can the rest of the health care law survive?

"Brace Yourself for Another 5-4 Decision" by Chuck Todd, Mark Murray, Domenico Montanaro, Brooke Brower, NBC News

Mar. 28, 2012, (<http://aolaw.org/2012/03/28/first-read-first-thoughts-brace-yourself-for-another-5-4-decision/>)

Brace yourself for another 5-4 decision: Yesterday's oral arguments at the Supreme Court raised the distinct possibility that the individual mandate — and perhaps the entire health-care law — could be decided by another controversial 5-4 decision. Such an outcome, especially after other 5-4 decisions like *Bush vs. Gore* and *Citizens United*, would have two potential consequences. One, it would feed the perception that the U.S. Supreme Court is as partisan as Congress and increasing parts of the media; in other words, these nine justices (either trained at liberal law schools or members of the conservative Federalist Society) are essentially political actors wearing black robes. And two and most importantly, a 5-4 decision would satisfy no one. If the court strikes down the mandate and the health-care law by that narrow margin, liberals and Democrats would blame it on the conservative justices. If the mandate and law are upheld by a 5-4 decision, conservatives would point their fingers at the liberals and the unpredictable "mushy" swing justice, Anthony Kennedy. That's the problem with a split decision: The losers would feel like they lost on a political technicality, not because there was a legal consensus.

If the health insurance mandate is found unconstitutional, can the rest of the health care law survive? The Daily Rundown's Chuck Todd discusses.

A bad day for the mandate: Make no mistake: The mandate had a VERY bad day yesterday. As the New York Times writes, "Predicting the result in any Supreme Court case, much less one that will define the legacies of a president and a chief justice, is nothing like a science, and the case could still turn in various directions. But the available evidence indicated that the heart of the Affordable Care Act is in peril." Liberals and Democrats are holding out for hope with Kennedy's sentence at the end of yesterday ("The young person who is uninsured is uniquely, proximately, very close to affecting the rates of insurance and the costs of providing medical care in a way that is not true in other industries"), as well as with Chief Justice John Roberts' tough questioning of the plaintiff's attorney. The backseat "oral arguing" on the Democratic side is quite loud; the grumbling and handwringing about Solicitor General Donald Verrilli's apparent inability — at some points — to make what some folks thought were easy rebuttals to the cell phone, broccoli and funeral analogies seem to frustrate not just those in the blogosphere but also in the White House. That said, plenty of Verrilli supporters out there who say folks are overreacting and point to the tough questioning the government received on the D.C. circuit and yet they still prevailed. As our friends at SCOTUS Blog note, Verrilli had the tougher case to make; Paul Clement had the easier one.

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

1. The fattest knight at King Arthur's Round Table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island. It turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
3. She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.
4. A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class, because it was a weapon of math disruption.
5. No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.
6. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road...and was cited for littering.
7. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.
8. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.
9. A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.
10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
11. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
12. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other: 'You stay here; I'll go on a head.
13. I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.
14. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: 'Keep off the Grass.'
15. The midget fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
16. The soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.
17. A backward poet writes inverse.
18. In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.
19. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.
20. If you jumped off the bridge in Paris, you'd be in Seine.
21. A vulture boards an airplane, carrying two dead raccoons. The flight attendant looks at him and says, 'I'm sorry, sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger.'
22. Two fish swim into a concrete wall. One turns to the other and says 'Dam!'
23. Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.
24. Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, 'I've lost my electron.' The other says 'Are you sure?' The first replies, 'Yes, I'm positive.'

25. Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root canal? His goal: transcend dental medication.

26. There was the person who sent ten puns to friends, with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did.

[20120328-07](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: near Greencastle, Indiana

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

Rolling Stone Bridge on the Big Walnut Creek, Indiana



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #106 — MAR. 30, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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### **The Strategy: Repeat.** **President Obama *Acts* Like a Muslim! Repeat...**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 30, 2012)

You all remember from 2008 that President Obama is a mystery man: born in some strange foreign land to weird parents, educated in a Mosque, selected as a baby by powerful, unseen forces to one day become President of the United States, non-Christian, no experience, incompetent, with connections to known "radicals", an "empty suit". None of that has changed. After four years as President, he has "no experience" and he's still black. All the idiots (And there are so many! But, thank God, a minority.) still believe he's some Muslim "sleeper" sent by foreign powers to destroy their sacred Constitution with "socialism". And this is the guy who got Bin Laden and appears to be the only politician in Washington who truly would like to reduce the deficit. Well...all the lies are set to return later this year, in spades! Ask Mitt. It's already starting.

"Creating the Muslim Manchurian Candidate" by John Feffer, Tomdispatch/NationofChange

Mar. 29, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/creating-muslim-manchurian-candidate-1333035060>)

Those who fervently believe that Barack Obama is a Muslim generally practice their furtive religion in obscure recesses of the Internet. Once in a while, they'll surface in public to remind the news media that no amount of evidence can undermine their convictions.

In October 2008, at a town hall meeting in Minnesota for Republican presidential candidate John McCain, a woman called Obama "an Arab." McCain responded, incongruously enough, that Obama was, in fact, "a decent family man" and not an Arab at all. In an echo of this, a woman recently stood up at a town hall in Florida and began a question for Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum by asserting that the president "is an avowed Muslim." The audience cheered, and Santorum didn't bother to correct her.

Though they belong to a largely underground cult, the members of the Obama-is-Muslim congregation number as many as one third of all Republicans. A recent poll found that only 14% percent of Republicans in Alabama and Mississippi believe that the president is Christian.

These true believers treat their scraps of evidence like holy relics: the president's middle name, his grandfather's religion, a widely circulated photo of Obama in a turban. They occasionally traffic in outright fabrications: that he attended a radical madrasa in Indonesia as a child or that he put his hand on the Qur'an to be sworn in as president. An even more apocalyptic subset believes Obama to be nothing short of the anti-Christ.

By and large, however, this cult doesn't attract mainstream support from the larger church of Obama haters. Indeed, these more orthodox faithful have carefully shifted the debate from Obama being Muslim to Obama acting Muslim. Evangelical pundits, presidential candidates, and the right-wing media have all ramped up their attacks on the president for, as Baptist preacher Franklin Graham put it recently on MSNBC, "giving Islam a pass."

The conservative mainstream still calls the president's religious beliefs into question, but they stop just short of accusing him of apostasy and concealment. What they consider safe is the assertion that Obama is acting as if he were Muslim. In this way, Republican mandarins are cleverly channeling a conspiracy theory into a policy position.

There is a whiff of desperation in all this. After all, it's not an easy time for the GOP. The economy shows modest signs of improvement. The Republican presidential candidates are still engaged in a fratricidal primary. By expanding counterterrorism operations and killing Osama bin Laden, the president has effectively removed national security from the list of Republican talking points.

One story, however, still ties together so many narrative threads for conservatives. Charges that the president is a socialist or a Nazi or an elitist supporter of college education certainly push some buttons. But the single surefire way of grabbing the attention of the media and the public -- as well as appealing to the instincts of the Republican base -- is to assert, however indirectly, that Barack Obama is a Manchurian candidate sent from the Islamic world.

### Obama and the Muslim World

A succession of Republican candidates have attempted to run to the right of party favorite Mitt Romney by asserting that only a true conservative can defeat Obama in November. Most of them boasted of the same powerful backer. Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Rick Perry, and Rick Santorum all declared that God asked them to run for higher office. Together with Newt Gingrich, they have deployed various methods of appealing to their constituencies, but none is more potent than religion.

Rick Santorum, a Catholic and the favorite of the evangelical community, has been particularly adept at using his soapbox as a pulpit. The president subscribes to a "phony theology," Santorum has claimed, "not a theology based on the Bible, a different theology." Although he occasionally asserts that "Obama's personal faith is none of my concern," he nonetheless speaks of the president's attempt to "impose values on people of faith"-- implying that the president is certainly no member of that community.

In his attacks on the president's spirituality, Santorum is cleverly attacking Mitt Romney's Mormonism as well (a theology also based on text other than the Bible). At the same time, the suggestion that Obama is somehow "other" operates as a code word for "Black" in a race in which race goes largely unmentioned.

It's an odd set of charges. Obama, after all, did everything possible during his first presidential campaign to foreground his Christianity. He was repeatedly seen praying in churches and assiduously avoided mosques. He never made a campaign appearance with a prominent Muslim. He talked about his "personal relationship" with Jesus Christ.

The day after he clinched the Democratic Party nomination in 2008, he gave a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in which he reaffirmed that he was "a true friend of Israel." Although he would occasionally mention his Muslim relatives and the time he spent in Indonesia as a child, he generally did whatever he could to emphasize only two out of the three major monotheisms.

As president, Obama has certainly "reached out" to the Muslim world. In Cairo, in June 2009, he spoke of seeking "a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition."

That new beginning, however, has yet to come. At home, for example, the Obama administration provided federal funds that the New York City Police Department then used to expand its surveillance of Muslim American neighborhoods. (Even the CIA was involved in this "human mapping" project.) The FBI has spent the Obama years rounding up suspected Muslim terrorists in operations that flirt dangerously with entrapment. The administration

has expanded the no-fly list, though because the list is secret it's difficult to know whether Muslim-Americans are specifically profiled. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that they are.

The administration's record internationally is even more disappointing. The conduct of U.S. troops in Afghanistan -- the night raids, massacres (including the recent murders of 16 Afghan villagers), and the Qur'an burnings -- have enraged local Muslims. Obama has expanded the CIA's drone air campaign by a considerable margin in the Pakistani borderlands. Civilian casualties, overwhelmingly Muslim, continue to occur there and in other "overseas contingency operations" as U.S. Special Operations Forces have dramatically expanded their activities in the Muslim world.

Despite right-wing charges, Obama has maintained a tight relationship with Israel and the Israeli leadership. As former New Republic editor Peter Beinart concludes, "The story of Obama's relationship to [Prime Minister] Netanyahu and his American Jewish allies is, fundamentally, a story of acquiescence."

It's no surprise, then, that surveys in six Middle East countries taken just before and two months after the Cairo speech in 2009, the Brookings Institution and Zogby International discovered that the number of respondents optimistic about the president's approach to the region had suffered a dramatic drop: from 51% to 16%. A 2011 Pew poll found that U.S. favorability ratings had continued their slide in Jordan (to 13%), Pakistan (12%), and Turkey (10%).

And yet, perversely, the hard right in the U.S. maintains that the Obama administration has behaved in quite the opposite manner. "There's something sick about an administration which is so pro-Islamic that it can't even tell the truth about the people who are trying to kill us," Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich typically said while campaigning in Georgia.

Pro-Islamic? That's news to the Islamic world.

But it's nothing new to the world of the U.S. right wing, which portrays Obama as anti-Israel and weak in the face of Islamic terrorism. At best, the president emerges from these attacks as a booster of Islam; at worst, he is the leader of a genuine fifth column.

Although the administration's policy on Iran is virtually indistinguishable from those of his Republican challengers, they have presented him as an appeaser. The president who "surged" in Afghanistan somehow becomes, through the magic of election-year sloganeering, a pacifist patsy. Although Obama never endorsed the location of the "Ground Zero mosque," his opponents have suggested that he did. Although he was slow to withdraw support from U.S. allies in the Middle East like Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Ben Ali in Tunisia, Republican candidates have accused the president of practically campaigning on behalf of the Islamist parties that have grown in influence as a result of the Arab Spring.

Barack Obama, the right wing has discovered, does not have to be Muslim to convince American voters that he has a suspect, even foreign, agenda. They have instead established a much lower evidentiary standard: he only has to act Muslim.

For this, they don't need a birth certificate. All they need are allegations, however spurious, that the president is in league with Iran's Ahmadinejad, Arab Spring jihadists, and anti-Israel forces at home. This more subtle but no less ugly Islamophobia has already insinuated itself into the 2012 elections in a potentially more damaging way than did the overt disparagement of Obama's religious bona fides back in 2008.

### The Upcoming Elections

The 2010 midterm elections witnessed a sharp uptick in anti-Islamic sentiment. In addition to the concocted "Ground Zero mosque" controversy, Florida preacher Terry Jones threatened to burn the Qur'an in front of the world's cameras; a group called Stop Islamization of America bought anti-Islamic ads on buses in major cities; and a movement to pass anti-Sharia legislation at a state level began in Oklahoma. In response to this brushfire of hatred, Time magazine devoted a cover story to Islamophobia that year. On the right at least, Islam seemed on the way to becoming a litmus test in the way communism was during the Cold War.

Two years later, the hysteria seems to have subsided. The Islamophobes haven't gone into hiding. They tried to organize an advertising boycott of the TV show All-American Muslim; they campaigned against halal meats. But these efforts didn't get much traction.

Meanwhile, Park51-- the real name of the cultural center inaccurately dubbed the "Ground Zero mosque" -- opened in its original Park Street location with an exhibition by a Jewish photographer. Terry Jones is pursuing a quixotic bid for the presidency far from the media spotlight. Time has returned several times to the topic of Islamophobia, particularly after Anders Breivik's bombing and shooting rampage in Norway in July 2011, but with none of the intensity of the summer of 2010. The anti-Sharia campaign has passed legislation in several states, and laws are pending in more than a dozen more. But the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the Oklahoma anti-Sharia statute unconstitutional, and the anti-Sharia crowd has been unable to provide a single piece of evidence that Islamic law poses any challenge to the U.S. legal system.

Don't be fooled, though, by the relative quiet. It's still early in the election cycle. The Republicans, arrayed in a circular firing squad, have been largely focusing their attacks on each other. The last man standing will marshal his resources to challenge Obama. In the unlikely event that Rick Santorum emerges as the Republican candidate, religion will be central to his attack on Obama and the Democrats.

Mitt Romney has a more ambivalent relationship to religion as a wedge issue, given the level of discomfort that many American have toward Mormonism. But there are no Mormon countries to which Romney can be accused of owing primary allegiance. It will be safe, in other words, to challenge Obama for acting rather than being Muslim, for deferring to the Muslim world much as anti-Catholic voters in 1960 imagined John F. Kennedy to be taking his orders directly from the Pope.

Romney is already lining up his ducks, welcoming onto his team Islam critic Walid Phares and attack ad specialist Larry McCarthy (who did an distortion-laden spot on the "Ground Zero mosque" back in 2010). After securing the nomination, Romney will simultaneously appeal to the center and shore up support among evangelicals. The message that Obama is weak, anti-Israel, and appeases Islamic movements and countries could catch the attention of both constituencies.

A disconnect between accusation and reality hardly matters in American politics these days. Obama the "socialist" somehow manages to work hand in hand with Wall Street financiers. Obama the "Nazi" courts AIPAC. Obama the "peacenik" has been very much a war president. And Obama the "Muslim" gets a big thumbs-down from the Muslim world.

The president makes a lousy Muslim Manchurian candidate, for he has disappointed his imagined Muslim handlers at virtually every turn. In an election in which racist slogans are off the table, however, the Islamophobic accusation of "acting Muslim" remains a politically acceptable chauvinism. Given the deep anti-Islamic currents in American culture, such accusations might unfortunately prove effective as well.

<a href="#">20120329-01</a> 05:49 MarthaH "Study Tracks How Conservatives Lost Their Faith in Science"
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"Study Tracks How Conservatives Lost Their Faith in Science" by Alan Boyle, MSNBC

Mar. 29, 2012 (<http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/03/29/10911111-study-tracks-how-conservatives-lost-their-faith-in-science>)

(How do liberals and conservatives differ in their attitudes toward science? Statistics indicate that conservatives' confidence in science as an institution has declined dramatically since 1974.)

An analysis of 36 years' worth of polling data indicates that confidence in science as an institution has steadily declined among Americans who consider themselves conservatives, while confidence levels have been at steadier levels for other ideological groups.

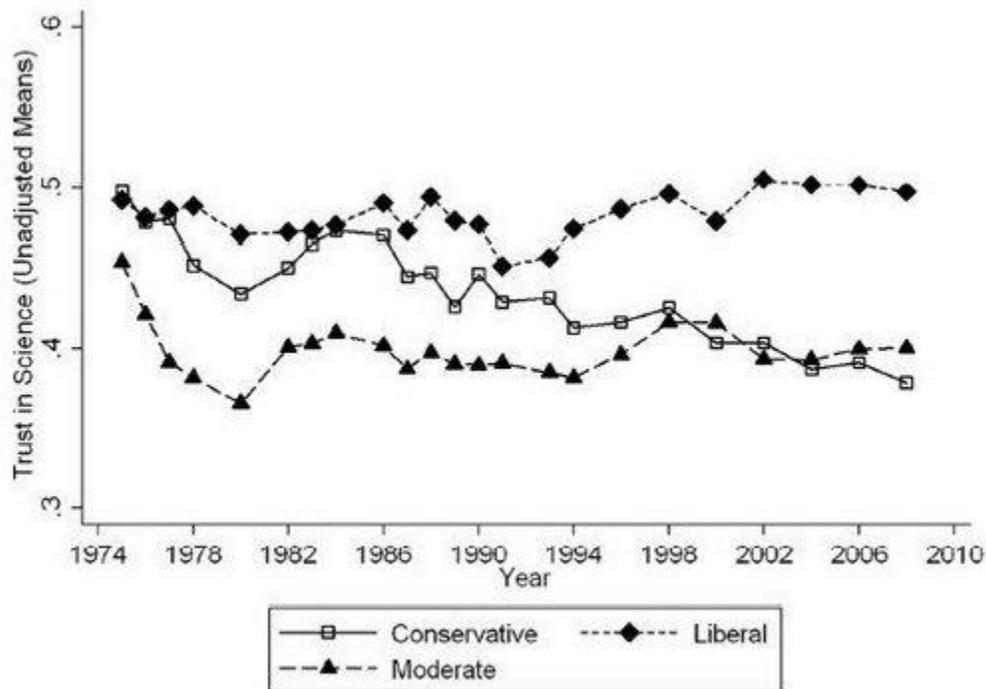
The study, published in the April issue of the *American Sociological Review*, provides fresh ammunition for those who complain that conservative views on issues such as climate change are at odds with the scientific consensus.

"You can see this distrust in science among conservatives reflected in the current Republican primary campaign," Gordon Gauchat, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Sheps Center for Health Services Research, said in a news release from the American Sociological Association. "When people want to define themselves as conservatives relative to moderates and liberals, you often hear them raising questions about the validity of global warming and evolution, and talking about how 'intellectual elites' and scientists don't necessarily have the whole truth."

It's not clear how much impact Gauchat's study will have on the debate over politics and science: Liberals are likely to see it as confirmation of what they already believe, while conservatives who are skeptical about the scientific elite are likely to greet these scientific claims with skepticism as well.

But the analysis represents a serious effort to flesh out political attitudes toward science with real data. Gauchat bases his findings on a statistical analysis of survey results from the General Social Survey, a long-running project that has weighed public confidence in social institutions since 1974. The GSS has been conducted annually or semiannually by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, or NORC, with an annual average of 1,500 Americans taking part.

Gauchat cross-referenced attitudes toward the scientific community with various demographic categories, and found that two categories showed a significant erosion of trust in science: conservatives and frequent churchgoers. People who identified themselves as conservatives voiced more confidence in science than moderates or liberals in 1974, but by 2010, that level had fallen by more than 25 percent.



This graph shows the unadjusted mean values for public trust in science, classified by self-reported political ideology between 1974 and 2010. The figures are derived from the General Social Survey.

Why the drop? Gauchat suggested that the character of the conservative movement has changed over the past three and a half decades — and so has the character of the scientific establishment.

"Over the last several decades, there's been an effort among those who define themselves as conservatives to clearly identify what it means to be a conservative," he said. "For whatever reason, this appears to involve opposing science and universities, and what is perceived as the 'liberal culture.' So, self-identified conservatives seem to lump

these groups together and rally around the notion that what makes 'us' conservatives is that we don't agree with 'them.'"

Meanwhile, the perception of science's role in society has shifted as well.

"In the past, the scientific community was viewed as concerned primarily with macro structural matters such as winning the space race," Gauchat said. "Today, conservatives perceive the scientific community as more focused on regulatory matters such as stopping industry from producing too much carbon dioxide."

Gauchat's findings run counter to at least one liberal stereotype about conservatives: that right-wingers are distrustful of scientists because they have less education. The figures do support a link between more education and more trust in science, but they also show that more highly educated conservatives are, if anything, more distrustful.

That trend fits best with the concept that "educated or high-information conservatives will hold hyper-opinions about science, because they have a more sophisticated grasp about what types of knowledge will conform with or contradict their ideological positions, and they will prefer to believe what supports their ideology," Gauchat wrote.

So what does this mean for the role of science in setting national policy? "In a political climate in which all sides do not share a basic trust in science, scientific evidence no longer is viewed as a politically neutral factor in judging whether a public policy is good or bad," Gauchat said. Heightened distrust could turn young people away from careers in science and engineering, and in the long run, that could hurt America's standing in a global economy that is becoming increasingly competitive on the technological front.

Vanderbilt University's Jonathan Metzl and Northwestern University's Jennifer Richeson explain the science behind how the brain weighs decisions and forms political beliefs.

Gauchat took on this project to assess the claims made by science journalist Chris Mooney in his 2005 book, *The Republican War on Science* — and Mooney, who reviewed the paper before publication, said the findings confirmed those claims.

"It's certainly gratifying to see this study come out," Mooney told me. "I appreciate that the author actually undertook to use data. I'm glad I wasn't just whistling in the wind when it came to Republicans and science."

Now Mooney is coming out with another book, titled *The Republican Brain: The Science of Why They Don't Believe in Science*.

"In the book, I'm really careful to say there's what we call 'nature' and what we call 'nurture,' and you can't explain anything in politics without both of them," he said. "Whenever you see change in a group over time, that's probably 'nurture.'"

Mooney said the factors Gauchat mentioned would fit in the nurture category, along with the GOP's "Southern strategy" to bring what were once traditionally Democratic states into the Republican fold. "This is tapping into the power of nurture, but I also say we've ignored nature for too long," he said.

In *The Republican Brain*, Mooney weaves his case for "nature" in politics from a variety of studies tracing the brain-based differences between liberal and conservative views of reality.

"You're starting to find things about fixity of belief, desire to have certainty, and you see that these things are also associated with conservatism," he said. "These traits are content-neutral. You could take today's conservatives, stick them in [Soviet] Russia, and they can be very pro-science."

Mooney said people may be born with brains that predispose them either to liberal-leaning traits such as "openness to experience," or conservative-leaning traits such as "conscientiousness."

"The research suggests that people are born with a predisposition, but it's only a predisposition," Mooney said. "'Just born that way' is a phrase that makes me uncomfortable, because it implies some sort of hard wiring. Genes aren't destiny."

If you haven't figured it out by now, Mooney considers himself a liberal, and he's doubtful that any amount of "nurture" could turn him into a conservative. But he said liberals could learn a lot from conservatives, specifically about loyalty to leaders and to their cause. Like conservatives, some liberals may find themselves at odds with the scientific consensus on some issues. Which issues, specifically? Mooney pointed to hard-line stands against hydraulic fracturing (a.k.a. fracking), nuclear power, childhood vaccination and genetically modified organisms.

"Liberals have wanted to believe that if the system were just fair, then everybody would agree with us," he said. "That's a liberal fantasy. Actually, it turns out that liberalism is not the only way of being. ... Liberals should realize that not everybody's like them, and liberals' instincts in politics could be exactly what you don't want to do."

I'm imagining there's a lot to disagree with here, whether you're a liberal or a conservative. Good thing there's a comment section below. To paraphrase Monty Python, this is the right room for an argument.

#### More about politics and science:

Conservative or liberal? It may be in the genes:

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15534009/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/conservative-or-liberal-it-may-be-genes/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15534009/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/conservative-or-liberal-it-may-be-genes/).

Scientists say they've found the 'liberal gene':

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39891927/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/scientists-say-theyve-found-liberal-gene/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39891927/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/scientists-say-theyve-found-liberal-gene/)

Brain scans show whether you lean left or right:

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42475322/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/politics-brain-scans-show-whether-you-lean-left-or-right/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42475322/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/politics-brain-scans-show-whether-you-lean-left-or-right/)

Study finds that political bias affects brain activity:

[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11009379/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/political-bias-affects-brain-activity-study-finds/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11009379/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/political-bias-affects-brain-activity-study-finds/)

(Alan Boyle is msnbc.com's science editor. You can also check out *The Case for Pluto*, my book about the controversial dwarf planet and the search for other worlds.)

20120329-02	09:11	Pam	Re: ...And Justice for All? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #105)
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Thank you, SteveB, not only for posting my comments but also for finding all that good additional material. I've done a fair amount of research on the subject of the Baby Scoop, but these sources were new to me. Some poor soul in the last item, a blog, is very, very angry at his birth mother--and by extension all birth mothers. I don't think his reaction is typical, but I'd still like to address it, not to change his mind--I doubt I could do that--but to present another point of view.

I was not FORCED to give up my son. I wasn't threatened, lied to, or rejected by my family (not exactly anyway). What I was, was surrounded by my parents' distress, a social worker's assurances that giving up my child would be the best thing I could do for him, and my doctor's stated assumption that unwed mothers gave up their babies "out of love for the child." At the time I made this irrevocable decision I was young, frightened, and all too aware of the toll my pregnancy was taking on my parents. I couldn't stop crying during the days we tried to figure out what to do with me, but I didn't believe I was in as much pain as my parents, especially my mother, were. I was heartbroken at the thought of losing my child--I wanted to stay pregnant forever--but I knew that deep down I was strong. I could do what I believed should be done. I would, as they say, suck it up.

I love that poem by W. H. Auden that begins, "About suffering they were never wrong/ the Old Masters."

I know now that there are losses you never get over. "Recovery" is what we call "learning to hide your feelings." Forty-four years of persistent grief has taught me that, if nothing else. But I am one of the lucky ones from my generation of birth mothers. I have found my son, and while I am seldom at a loss for words (in writing at least) I cannot find words adequate to express my feelings of joy. "Joy" is the least of it.

What that bitter, angry "anonymous" in the blog fails to realize is that 99% (maybe more) of birth mothers love their babies and want what is best for them. If an unmarried girl in 1968 truly believed she was acting in the best interests of her baby and gave him to a family who could provide a "richer" life, she should receive sympathy, not blame. For some weird reason (books have been written) western culture finds sex problematic. It must be controlled, contained, limited, repressed. "It is better to marry than to burn." --St. Paul. I was not married when I conceived my son, but he was conceived with love, and, once I knew he was on his way, he was definitely wanted. I didn't give him up because I wanted to or because I took the easy way out. I did the hardest thing a woman can do, and I have paid for that decision for forty-four years. I am not religious and don't have much sense of the mystical, but I can't help feeling that my finding my son is the universe sending me a message: I have paid, and I am forgiven. I am not a bad person, I deserve this happiness before my life is over, and I am justly proud of ALL my children.

[And we are all with you, Pam. This is such a black and white issue, so steeped in the repressive, paranoid sexuality of the past, that hurt families and, thanks largely to the party of "family values" still hurts families by not letting them be together after all this time, even when both concerned parties choose. I thought it was interesting that this problem has been most pronounced in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Ireland, and the U.K. What is it about that British prudishness or Puritanism or whatever the hell it is that would have sacrificed so many of our young women and their babies for the sake, in some cases, of mere appearance of propriety? The damage can never be repaired, though solace can be reached, but we must never allow those days to be forced upon us again. The frightened sexuality of the past must be left behind, with the family front and center as the surest source of human happiness. Give us our babies and our mummies back, stand up for the family, a\*s-holes! -SteveB]

<a href="#">20120329-03</a>	11:05	SteveB	The Paradox of Our Times
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**The Paradox of Our Times:** Republicans want to return America to the glories of its past (I guess this would have to be the post-WWII era, prior to the start of the decline.). But, inexplicably, they do not want to return to the high income taxes, protectionism, fair elections, honest politicians, and government interventionism that led to and nurtured that "golden age" so etched into the brains of conservatives. It's just a tragedy that the whole reality of the history of those times has so conveniently been forgotten in the name of conservative dogma by those same "brains".

<a href="#">20120329-04</a>	12:59	Dennis	"The Truth About \$6 Gas, \$200 Oil & the Quest for Energy Independence"
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Here's what an expert on energy has to say about U.S. energy independence including the truth about the T. Boone Pickens Plan. Get ready to pay more.

"The Truth About \$6 Gas, \$200 Oil, and the Quest for Energy Independence" by Jason Simpkins, Money Morning

March 29, 2012, (<http://moneymorning.com/2012/03/29/truth-about-6-gas-200-oil-and-quest-for-energy-independence/>)

No one needs to tell the average American about the impact of oil and gas prices. If they don't feel it in their wallets every day, they hear about it on the news every night.

But surprisingly, amid all the rhetoric, there have been no real answers to some of the key questions driving the energy debate... until now.

Is President Obama truly responsible for high gas prices, and can his opponents really bring them back down?

What role has Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke's loose monetary policy played in soaring energy costs?

Is more domestic drilling the answer?

Renowned energy expert Dr. Kent Moors answers all of these questions - and more - below.

Dr. Moors, an adviser to six of the world's top 10 oil companies and a consultant to governments around the world, also talks about the effect political turmoil in the Middle East could have on energy prices in the immediate term and how North America will gain energy independence in 15-20 years.

Here's what else Moors - a bona-fide energy expert - had to say...

### Dr. Moors on Gas Prices

#### **Can a U.S. President actually impact gas prices- at least enough to get gasoline back to \$2.50 a gallon? Or is this just talk? I don't know whom to believe anymore...**

Presidents have limited ability to affect the gas prices. They can, of course, release crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserves and that has an impact for short-term problems (such as the heating fuel shortage in the Northeastern U.S. a few years ago). However, that would not offset more endemic problems (such as the one we have been moving into). And frankly, gas at \$2.50 a gallon is a pipe dream - unless there is a major recession or worse. A collapse in demand is the only factor that could drive down prices that far and that is hardly the outside element we would prefer to deal with the rising prices.

#### **How is the U.S. Federal Reserve's zero interest rate policy affecting oil and gasoline prices? What's going to happen when the Fed starts to raise rates in late 2014 and after?**

This has only a very indirect effect. Increasing productivity and economic recovery generates a greater demand for energy. To the extent that the Fed policy improves employment and business investment that is the extent to which it will affect demand, and increasing demand increases energy prices.

#### **How much of U.S. refining capacity is there available even if we do up U.S. oil production? Couldn't this be a serious bottleneck, helping to keep gas prices high?**

Yes. We currently have about 8% surplus capacity, providing there are not unscheduled major interruptions in processing. One approach we will see more of is tolling. American crude, especially heavy oil and discounted grades, will be exported for refining and the oil products will then be brought back into the country.

#### **Is there a formula that translates the price of crude (WTI and Brent) into the price of gas at the pump? And is there a profit margin component we can look at to compare the potential profit of integrated oil companies vs. refiners?**

A \$1.00 rise in crude price per barrel on average produces a 3.6-cent a gallon rise at the pump (for regular). The primary cost to a refiner is still the crude oil as raw material, but their primary profit comes from the refinery margin (the difference between cost of processing and wholesale price obtained). Refinery margins are considered proprietary secrets and are not released by refineries. General levels discussed in the media are estimates (and usually not very good ones). However, those margins can be recreated, with the most detailed study done being mine. Check out my book "The Vega Factor," p.128ff and related footnotes, as well as the appendices on pages 209-303.

## Dr. Moors on Oil

### **How much relief from high oil prices could we get by domestic drilling, fracking, building pipelines, and freeing up the permitting process, and how quickly? Wouldn't we be better off if Uncle Sam got out of the way?**

The relief we'd gain from domestic resources would be limited at best. Domestic drilling will improve the national security issue, but unconventional oil and remaining traditional oil are more expensive to extract, process, and transmit. We will have sufficient volume but at a higher overall price.

### **How would you evaluate China's strategy of perusing the globe and doing all it can to lock up long-term energy sources?**

I see it as essential for its domestic needs and further industrial expansion. The strategy of acquiring upstream assets abroad combined with expanded pipeline capacity is thus far working. Exploitation of its own internal unconventional gas resources (shale and coal bed methane) remains a very high new priority.

### **Do you believe in Peak Oil? If so, how much time do we have before the "cheap oil" economy blows up?**

No, not as originally formulated. With the rise of unconventional oil (shale, tight, heavy oil; bitumen, oil sands), we do not have a lack of reserves into the foreseeable future. However, we have lost light sweet crude - i.e. cheaper oil. The "cheap oil" economy was over by 2008. The only reason we had a decline in prices between August 2008 and September 2009 was because of the subprime mortgage blowup, credit crunch and recession. In other words, without exogenous factors depressing demand, "cheap" becomes a very relative term.

### **What's the geopolitical risk premium on a barrel of oil? If world peace broke out tomorrow what would the cost be?**

This, of course, depends upon the current crisis du jour and the risk premium resulting. At the moment, Iran probably costs about \$10 a barrel (but will be rising). Arab Spring if it flares up again will add another \$10. Here's an interesting result several weeks ago from our sessions at Windsor Castle. The GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council - Persian Gulf minus Iran) ambassadors told us the following: The Arab Spring has required that they dramatically increase expenditures for social programs and added expenses have been incurred via the unofficial support for various groups (such as the opposition in Syria). The high price of crude oil assures their economies will remain undiversified - always a dangerous situation with effective unemployment reaching 40% or more in these countries and the average age below 25. The ambassadors said that to maintain the current drain on their budgets, average crude prices must exceed \$85 a barrel (which they are). But that level will need to be about \$120 by 2014 and more than \$130 by 2016. In other words, prices will be going up because of what the producers need, regardless of demand considerations in the consuming countries.

## Dr. Moors on Natural Gas

### **With the glut of natural gas available, how realistic is it that we will see a large migration to natural gas powered vehicles, and how long would it take to build the infrastructure to support that? Will the Pickens Plan work?**

Considerable additional demand will be coming on line for gas over the next several years:

1. Significant increase in the use of gas for electricity generation.
2. Continued increasing industrial use.
3. Accelerated use over crude oil as feeder stock for petrochemicals.
4. Dramatic additions in liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports beginning in 2014.
5. Vehicle fuel.

Now on this last one, the move takes place first in high-end truck traffic, replacing even higher priced diesel. The retrofitting of entire fleets is taking place in Canada and to a more limited extent in the United States. Compressed natural gas (CNG) and LNG fueling terminals are already appearing, with increasing proprietary locations being established near interstate highways by companies to fuel their own vehicles. A number of municipalities are moving buses to natural gas. New York City has passed an ordinance preventing any new taxis from being registered in the city that are not either natural gas driven or hybrids. Passenger vehicle usage will take longer and require a more detailed infrastructure. Still, we did a study two years ago concluding that the average service station would need to spend only \$84,000 to provide upwards to 20% of its fueling capacity as CNG or LNG. The Pickens Plan is self-serving to Mr. Pickens' assets and acquisitions. It cannot provide pricing that make sense without significant government subsidies, a somewhat paradoxical position from where he started with this two years ago.

### **What will it take for natural gas prices to find their footing?**

Three years, as the new demand segments mentioned below come on line.

### **How mired in politics is the Keystone Pipeline and it is a viable oil initiative for the future of America?**

The Keystone XL will be built. Already, the section between Cushing, OK and the Gulf is moving forward. It does not need approval from Washington. The addition crossing the Canadian-U.S. border does, however. The pipeline will be redirected out of the environmentally sensitive area in Nebraska (the previous route had it stretching over the primary aquifer for the Midwest). Republicans tried to turn this into a campaign issue by forcing an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in six months. But since you can't legally do it that quickly, they gave Obama a political way out. Virtually the only U.S. oil imports in 15-20 years will be from Canada, so the pipeline is central.

### Dr. Moors on Energy Independence

#### **Is energy independence a myth or a real possibility?**

It's a real possibility, achievable in 15-20 years. First, the national security argument can be settled. At our meeting at Windsor, the international consensus was unanimous that North America will be energy independent within two decades, given the largess of unconventional oil and gas. According to the projections, by the time we reach this level, we will still need about 30% of our daily supply of oil from imports, but that will all be coming from Canada. However, the second issue is price. A full Keystone pipeline system and related pipelines south from Canada will actually add an average of 4-8 cents a gallon at the pump. More to the point, however, the emphasis of more expensive unconventional production will actually raise the price since it is more expensive to extract, process, upgrade and deliver. We may, therefore, finally meet our hydrocarbon needs but will find the price rising nonetheless. Alternative sources will not cut the price. And remember, the energy segment remains "driven" by the cost of vehicle fuel.

<a href="#">20120329-05</a>	13:18	SteveG	"How Religion Has Been Used to Promote Slavery"
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A documentary coming on CNN – might be worth watching.

"How Religion Has Been Used to Promote Slavery" by John Blake, CNN

Mar. 29th, 2012, ([http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/29/how-religion-has-been-used-to-promote-slavery/?hpt=hp\\_c1](http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/29/how-religion-has-been-used-to-promote-slavery/?hpt=hp_c1))

(Moses led the Israelites out of slavery, but he and other religious giants accepted slavery for others, scholars say.)

(Editor's note: The CNN documentary 'Slavery's Last Stronghold' airs on CNN International TV March 29, 30, 31 and April 22. Check local listings for times.)

Which revered religious figure - Moses, Jesus, or the Prophet Mohammad - spoke out boldly and unambiguously against slavery?

Answer: None of them.

One of these men owned slaves, another created laws to regulate - but not ban - slavery. The third's chief spokesman even ordered slaves to obey their masters, religious scholars say.

Most modern people of faith see slavery as a great evil. Though the three great Western religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - disagree on many matters, most of their contemporary followers condemn slavery.

Yet there was a time when Jews, Christians and Muslims routinely cited the words and deeds of their founders to justify human bondage, scholars say.

At times, religion was deployed more to promote the spread of slavery than to prevent it.

"The lesson in all this is we need historical humility," says Daniel C. Peterson, author of "Muhammad, Prophet of God." "It's stunning for us to look back now and say, how can people face themselves in the mirror after doing what they did, but they did."

But what did the founders of the three great Western religions do? Did they have slaves and did they condemn the practice? Or were they, at least on this issue, squarely men of their times?

The answers to these questions are as murky and contradictory as history itself.

### What's a slave?

Part of the problem is historical context. Most contemporary people think of slaves as people condemned to a lifetime of bondage, working on plantations and being whipped like oxen.

That kind of slavery did exist during the lives of Moses, Jesus and the Prophet Mohammad. Many slaves were prisoners of war; concubines, gladiators, laborers in salt mines. They could be killed, raped and discarded at any moment.

Yet there were layers of slavery in the ancient world. Many slaves would be seen today as indentured servants, or people trying to pay off debts; royal bodyguards and entrepreneurs, historians say.

Sometimes the slaves became masters. In medieval Egypt, Muslim rulers trained and educated slaves to be their bodyguards. One group of slaves grew so powerful that they overthrew the rulers of Egypt and established their own dynasty, says Ali Asani, a professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Languages and Culture at Harvard University.

"Slavery meant different things in different cultures," Asani says. "There wasn't always this sense of powerlessness and oppression. In certain forms, it became an access to power."

In other forms, it became access to freedom, says John Dominic Crossan, one of world's leading scholars on the life and times of Jesus.

That was the case in the world of Jesus. The Roman Empire was the dominant power of Jesus' day, and it survived on the backs of millions of slaves. Yet there was only one mass slave revolt against Rome, which was led by Spartacus, a gladiatorial slave, Crossan says.

The reason there were so few massive slave rebellions against Rome was because some of its slaves had avenues for advancement, dim though they may seem to modern sensibilities.

Slaves could buy their freedom. They ran businesses for their masters or tutored their children. Greek slaves, in particular, were often valued because of their education and culture, he says.

Roman slavery was cruel and capricious, but not all Romans saw slaves as subhuman.

“One of the most extraordinary aspects of Roman slavery,” says Crossan, author of “The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus became Fiction about Jesus,” was that the Romans ended up with a huge number of slaves who were smarter than their masters.”

### The uncomfortable historical record

It’s been said that great religious figures transcend history. They rise above the peculiar customs of their day to show a new path forward.

It’s a matter of debate if Moses, Jesus and the Prophet Mohammad did that with slavery. All three seemed to either ignore or tolerate some forms of slavery, some scholars say.

The parables of Jesus, for example, were full of references to slaves. Terms like “servants” or “stewards” are what we would call slaves today. Yet Jesus doesn’t seem to make any moral judgments about slavery in his parables, Crossan says.

The subject may have been irrelevant to him or his audience, says Crossan, the Jesus scholar. Jesus didn’t own any slaves. Neither did his disciples or the crowds Jesus addressed. They were all too poor and lived under desperate economic circumstances.

“It may well be that the people he talked to were small farmers who would not have the luxury of slaves,” Crossan says. “He [Jesus] doesn’t say anything for or against it.”

Still, Crossan says that he believes that Jesus would have opposed slavery, given the nature of his teachings. Scholars aren’t so certain about Jesus’ most influential disciple, the Apostle Paul.

The man whose writings make up most of the New Testament had to deal with slavery. As Christianity spread through the Roman Empire, many slaves joined the church.

At various parts of the New Testament, Paul seems to accept slavery. He tells slaves to obey their masters. At other times, Paul seems to challenge the morality of slavery. In one New Testament letter, Paul intercedes on behalf of a runaway slave and chides the master for calling himself a Christian and holding a slave.

Crossan, along with some other biblical scholars, says there are actually two versions of Paul in the New Testament: the authentic, “radical” Paul who opposed slavery and a “Pseudo-Paul” inserted into the texts by early church leaders who were afraid of antagonizing Rome.

“It’s one thing to say that Jesus is Lord,” Crossan says. “Now if you’re saying a Christian can’t have slaves, then something must be wrong with slaves. So now you’re attacking the Roman system, which is a slave economy.”

Jesus’ apparent silence on slavery and Paul’s ambiguous statements on the issue had dreadful historical consequences. It helped ensure that slavery would survive well into the 19th century in the U.S., some scholars say.

American Christians who owned slaves had a simple but powerful defense in the run-up to the Civil War. The Old and New Testament sanctioned slavery and, since the Bible is infallible, slavery is part of God’s order, says Mark Noll, author “The Civil War as a Theological Crisis.”

“The defenders of slavery said Jesus condemned quite a few things that were standard in the Old Testament,” Noll says. “He condemned polygamy, violence, easy divorce, but he never condemned slavery.”

## Let my people go, but keep the others

Neither did Moses, the founder of Judaism, say other scholars.

There's no record of Moses owning slaves, but the Mosaic laws permitted and regulated slavery, says Peterson, the author of "Muhammad, Prophet of God" and a religious scholar at Brigham Young University in Utah.

Still, under Mosaic law, a master was encouraged to free slaves and forgive debts after a certain period of time that was called the year of jubilee, Peterson says.

"They were not trying to create a permanent underclass of slaves that went from parents to child and child and grandchildren," Peterson says of the ancient Israelites.

But how could ancient Israelites sanction any form of slavery given their exodus from Egyptian captivity? Didn't their God explicitly condemn slavery when he ordered Moses to tell Pharaoh to "let my people go?"

The text is not clear on that question, says Brannon Wheeler, a religious scholar.

He says the Exodus stories suggest that the God of Israel was angry at Pharaoh not for enslaving a group of people, but for unjustly enslaving the "Chosen People" - the people God had promised to give their own homeland.

"In order to make that promise stick, He [God] has to get them out of Egypt," says Wheeler, director of the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies at the United States Naval Academy in Maryland.

"It's not like He [God] says slavery is bad and I want to abolish it."

The Prophet Mohammad never explicitly condemned slavery, and actually owned slaves, some scholars say.

Yet he recognized the humanity of slaves, teaching followers that freeing slaves was an act of piety. He allowed slaves to buy their freedom and demanded that they should be treated with love and respect, says Asani, author of "Celebrating Muhammad: Images of the Prophet in Popular Muslim Poetry."

"He himself did own slaves but he treated them as family," Asani says. "One called Zayd he treated like an adopted son and one of his wives was a Coptic Christian slave."

The followers of men like the Prophet Mohammad, though, would take a harsher attitude toward slaves.

By the time of the crusades, Christians and Muslims were enslaving one another by the thousands. They cited their faith as justification, says Robert C. Davis, author of "Holy War and Human Bondage."

"Religion was the defining principle of slavery—this person is another faith and can be enslaved," Davis says.

Some church leaders preached that enslaving others was an act of evangelism, Davis says.

"One pope said that the justification for slavery was that it was important for spreading the faith," Davis says. "Once they were enslaved, they would more readily take to Christianity."

Those kinds of actions may now seem barbaric, but the texts and stories that were used to justify slavery still exist in the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Few, though, would quote those scriptures today, and many don't even know they exist.

"We shouldn't be surprised," says Jonathan Brockopp, a religion professor at Pennsylvania State University. "Religions redefine themselves and people draw on different stories and underplay other stories. This happens constantly."

It happened with slavery, and, who knows, perhaps it's happening again in our time. There may be a religious practice accepted today that future generations will look upon and ask the same question we ask about people who enslaved others in the name of God:

How could they?

<a href="#">20120329-06</a>	14:36	Pam	Re: Photo: Near Greencastle, Indiana (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #105)
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I love the picture of the covered bridge.

<a href="#">20120329-07</a>	17:28	Art	Re: "Zimmerman Was on the Ground Being Punched When He Shot Trayvon Martin" (reply to Dick & SteveB, FotM newsletter #105)
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Good articles. Found the one on the shooting of young Martin interesting. Think the writer does make a point. For me it has not been about race from the beginning. It is the issue of a grown man armed with a gun shooting a kid armed with Skittles, and the police saw no reason to investigate beyond a cursory look. That is not right. For the record I also think Rivera had a point. Many, if not most, of the night time 7-11 robberies do show a young, all to often black, young man wearing a hoodie. Stop walking around a neighborhood at night wearing a hoodie. My God, it is Florida after all.

You might enjoy the attached, sage advice by Chris Rock.

"How Not to Get Your A\*s Kicked by the Police" video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s61cL6b3hws>

<a href="#">20120329-08</a>	18:05	Pam	Re: "Zimmerman Was on the Ground Being Punched When He Shot Trayvon Martin" (reply to Art, above)
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I always worry about rushing to judgment when I hear a disturbing story like Trayvon's. But the fact that one was armed and the other wasn't is pretty compelling evidence that Zimmerman over-reacted. He should not have been following Trayvon, especially after being told not to. I heard today that the police video shows Zimmerman without blood, scratches, or grass stains. I can't imagine a 17 yr. old kid, even a rascalion, getting aggressive with an armed man. It does not compute. And if Z. did have to defend himself, why not aim low?

<a href="#">20120329-09</a>	18:57	Art	Re: "Zimmerman Was on the Ground Being Punched When He Shot Trayvon Martin" (reply to Pam, above)
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"Rascalion"? Really now Pam, only you and I and maybe SteveB even know what that means. It was murder, plain and simple.

Since 50% of the participants are conveniently dead, we'll probably never know the full details, but gun versus Skittles?? That's enough for me to arrest the shooter pending a full investigation, which is not what the Sanford Police Dept. did.

<a href="#">20120329-10</a>	22:04	SteveG	Fw: 1950's Car Test
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I got 94% - let me know how you do!

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

## 50's Car Test

Alright you young & older whip per-snappers, let's see how you do. Be honest & no cheating.

The average score is 73% This will really rattle the cobwebs in the 'old brain.

"Car Show Game - 1950s", AmericanTorque.com: <http://www.americantorque.com/game/car-show-50s/>

[20120329-11](#) 23:00 SteveB Re: 1950's Car Test (reply to SteveG, above)

Damn, you're good, SteveG. I only got 75%. :-)

I couldn't get those Chrysler products. GM is much easier for me because my Dad worked at Allison Div. and always drove GM cars.

I can't wait to hear some other scores! I bet I beat Pam...well, maybe...

[20120329-12](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: near Solsberry, Indiana

<http://indianapublicmedia.org/arts/sculpture-trails-solsberrys-international-melting-pot/>

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

Sculpture Trails Outdoor Museum



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

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