



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #95 — MAR. 15, 2012

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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.

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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)
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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"
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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 eta 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)

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.

20120314-02	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]

20120314-03	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.)

20120314-05	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.

20120314-07	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 \$7,604 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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