



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

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.

FotM NEWSLETTER #99 (Mar. 21, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120321-00		SteveB	What's Worse Than Paying Taxes? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("What's Worse Than Paying Taxes?")
20120320-01	11:05	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Petition: Push the Supreme Court Toward a Fair Healthcare Decision!
20120320-02	11:29	Pam	Why There Are Monsters
20120320-03	12:15	Art	Islamic Fundamentalists = Christian Evangelists? ("10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts")
20120320-07	14:47	Pam	Re: Islamic Fundamentalists = Christian Evangelists? (reply to Art, above)
20120320-04	13:06	SteveB	Fw: Get a Cool, Free, NationofChange Canvas Bag (for a Donation)
20120320-05	13:22	Tom	"National Defense Resources Preparedness Executive Order"
20120320-06	13:36	Tom	"International Pressure on Bolivarian Countries: A Hopeful Sign"
20120320-08	15:49	Ben	"South Carolina Teacher Suspended for Reading Ender's Game to Middle School Students"
20120320-09	17:36	SteveG	Cartoon: R0mney-Santorum: What Kind of Knot Is This?
20120320-10	17:44	SteveG	Fw: Health Care for America Now Petition: Kill Congress's Plan to Kill Medicare!
20120320-11	17:55	MarthaH	Heaven or Hell?
20120320-12	20:17	Pam	Re: Heaven or Hell? (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120320-13	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Portland, Maine

20120320-01	11:05	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Petition: Push the Supreme Court Toward a Fair Healthcare Decision!
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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

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<e_id=6001

20120320-02	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.

20120320-03	12:15	Art	Islamic Fundamentalists = Christian Evangelists? ("10 Reasons the Rest of the World Thinks the U.S. Is Nuts")
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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)

20120320-07 14:47 Pam Re: Islamic Fundamentalists = Christian Evangelists? (reply to Art, above)

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.

20120320-04 13:06 SteveB Fw: Get a Cool, Free, NationofChange Canvas Bag (for a Donation)

from NationofChange:

<https://secure.nationofchange.org/bags/?ref=email>

20120320-05 13:22 Tom "National Defense Resources Preparedness Executive Order"

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.

20120320-06	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 disenfranchised 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.

20120320-08	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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