



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

APRIL, 2012 NEWSLETTERS

Edited by Steven W. Baker for FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved

FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE INDEX of FotM DAILY NEWSLETTERS — APRIL, 2012

(Click on cover below to access issue. / Click on issue's FotM Logo to return here.)

The Corruption of Government by Big \$\$\$ Must End!



#107 - Apr. 2, 2012

How Billionaires Destroy Democracy



#108 - Apr. 3, 2012

Presidential Material? Honestly? LOL!



#109 - Apr. 4, 2012

The Obligations of American Companies Like Apple



#110 - Apr. 5, 2012

Mr. Etch-A-Sketch Romney Erased Himself—Oops!



#111 - Apr. 6, 2012

News Explainer: The Essence of the News (#1)



#112 - Apr. 9, 2012

Stop Pure Speculation in the Oil Markets



#113 - Apr. 10, 2012

Bicycle Seats: Republican/Evangelical Anti-Sex Plot?



#114 - Apr. 11, 2012

President Obama's Zingers



#115 - Apr. 12, 2012

The Most Dangerous Lies



#116 - Apr. 13, 2012

How to Fix Income Inequality



#117 - Apr. 16, 2012

The Rich Are 'Different'



#118 - Apr. 17, 2012

FotM NEWSLETTERS, APRIL, 2012 — HEIRARCHICAL HYPERLINKED 1-PAGE INDEX

POLITICS

- [\(01-12\)](#) 2012 PRIMARIES
- [\(02-12\)](#) 2012 ELECTIONS
- [\(03\)](#) CONSERVATIVE MIND, THE
- [\(04\)](#) DEMOCRATS
- [\(05\)](#) LIBERAL MIND, THE
- [\(06\)](#) MISC. POLITICS / CORRESPONDENCE w/ POLITICIANS
- [\(07\)](#) REPUBLICANS
- [\(08\)](#) STATE / LOCAL POLITICS
- [\(09\)](#) THIRD PARTIES

GOVERNMENT

- [\(10\)](#) CONSTITUTION
- [\(11\)](#) CORRUPTION
- [\(12\)](#) EDUCATION
- [\(13\)](#) ELECTION REFORM
- [\(14\)](#) EXECUTIVE BRANCH
- [\(15\)](#) GUNS / INSURRECTION / CRIME
- [\(16\)](#) IMMIGRATION
- [\(17\)](#) JUDICIAL BRANCH
- [\(18\)](#) LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
- [\(19\)](#) MISC. GOVERNMENT / CORRESPONDENCE w/ OFFICIALS
- [\(20\)](#) REPRODUCTION / WOMEN / LGBT
- [\(21\)](#) SOCIAL SECURITY / RETIREMENT
- [\(22\)](#) STATE / LOCAL GOVERNMENT
- [\(23\)](#) TAXES
- [\(24\)](#) TRADE / INT'L RELATIONS
- [\(25\)](#) WAR / SECURITY

REALITY

- [\(26\)](#) ART / LITERATURE / WRITING / MOVIES / MUSIC
- [\(27\)](#) BUSINESS / MONEY / ECONOMICS
- [\(28\)](#) CLASS WAR / POVERTY / RICH & POOR
- [\(29\)](#) DAILY PHOTOS / PHOTOGRAPHY
- [\(30\)](#) ENERGY / TRANSPORTATION / WATER
- [\(31\)](#) FOOD / DRINK
- [\(32\)](#) FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE
- [\(33\)](#) FUN / DIVERSION
- [\(34\)](#) HEALTH CARE / HEALTH / MEDICINE
- [\(35\)](#) HISTORY
- [\(36\)](#) JOBS / LABOR
- [\(37\)](#) LIFE / PHILOSOPHY / SPIRITUALITY
- [\(38\)](#) MEDIA / NEWS MEDIA
- [\(39\)](#) MISC. REALITY
- [\(40\)](#) OCCUPY WALL ST.
- [\(41\)](#) PETITIONS / ACTIONS / CAUSES
- [\(42\)](#) SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY
- [\(43\)](#) U.S.A., THE
- [\(44\)](#) WORLD, THE

FotM NEWSLETTERS, APRIL, 2012 — DETAILED INDEX OF POSTS

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<u>(01-12) 2012 PRIMARIES</u>			
<u>20120404-00</u>		SteveB	Presidential Material? Honestly? LOL! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Craziest Quotes of the 2012 Primaries")
<u>20120411-08</u>	19:32	Art	"Herman Cain Video Shows Man Pecked to Death by Chickens"
<u>20120412-06</u>	19:02	SteveBA	Hilary Rosen vs. Anne R0mney (Stay-at-Home Moms)
<u>20120413-02</u>	11:31	SteveB	On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes ("Santorum Donor Foster Friess Hopes Obama's 'Teleprompters Are Bulletproof'")
<u>20120413-07</u>	12:57	Art	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes
<u>20120413-09</u>	13:51	Pam	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes
<u>20120413-11</u>	17:55	SteveBA	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes
<u>20120413-12</u>	18:58	Art	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveBA)
<u>20120413-13</u>	20:16	SteveBA	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to Art)
<u>20120413-14</u>	20:32	SteveG	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveBA)
<u>20120413-15</u>	21:01	SteveG	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveBA)
<u>20120414-08</u>	09:11	Art	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; Republican (reply to SteveG & SteveBA)
<u>20120414-10</u>	10:00	Pam	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; Republican (reply to Art)
<u>20120414-28</u>	19:25	Art	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; Republican (reply to Pam)
<u>20120413-16</u>	21:08	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (View from the Right: "The Post-Hilary Rosen White House Clown Show")
<u>20120413-17</u>	22:11	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes
<u>20120414-05</u>	08:32	Pam	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveB)
<u>20120414-03</u>	08:28	Pam	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes
<u>20120414-06</u>	08:57	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to Pam)
<u>20120414-07</u>	09:10	Beth	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes
<u>20120414-11</u>	10:05	Pam	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to Beth)
<u>20120414-14</u>	12:14	SteveBA	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; President Obama's Experience (reply to Pam)
<u>20120414-16</u>	13:09	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; President Obama's Experience (reply to SteveBA)
<u>20120414-19</u>	14:01	Clark	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, President Obama's Experience, R0mney(reply to SteveB)
<u>20120415-15</u>	16:19	Ben	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, President Obama's Experience, R0mney(reply to SteveB)
<u>20120414-23</u>	15:41	SteveG	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
<u>20120414-25</u>	16:21	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
<u>20120414-27</u>	16:48	Pam	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
<u>20120414-29</u>	19:33	Art	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
<u>20120414-20</u>	14:16	Dennis	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
<u>20120414-21</u>	14:45	Clark	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Dennis)
<u>20120414-30</u>	20:01	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes ("Mitt Romney in 1994: 'Now Mom and Dad Both Have to Work Whether They Want to or Not'")
<u>20120414-31</u>	20:16	Beth	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveB)
<u>20120414-17</u>	13:52	Dennis	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes ("Maher on 'Rosengate': 'I Think What She Meant Was That Romney's Never Gotten Her A*s Out of the House to Work'")
<u>20120414-18</u>	14:00	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes / Maher on 'Rosengate' (reply to Dennis)
<u>20120422-02</u>	23:57	SteveB	"Jon Huntsman Criticizes Republican Party, Compares Actions to Communist China"

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120423-01	07:46	MarthaH	"Is the Tea Party Still Relevant?" & "Orrin Hatch Pushed into Primary in Utah Senate Race"
20120423-02	08:59	SteveB	Re: "Is the Tea Party Still Relevant?" (reply to MarthaH)
20120423-32	17:15	Pam	'A Conservative in His Soul'
20120423-35	18:35	SteveG	Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'
20120423-37	19:03	Clark	Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'
20120423-38	19:10	Dennis	Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'
20120423-39	19:35	SteveG	Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'
20120423-42	21:06	Clark	Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'
20120423-43	22:02	SteveG	Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'
SEN. RICHARD LUGAR			
20120409-10	17:45	MarthaH	"Dick Lugar: Too Mild to Be Memorable?"
20120409-12	19:07	Art	Re: "Dick Lugar: Too Mild to Be Memorable?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120410-06	15:53	MarthaH	"Reagan White House Counsel Makes Case Against Mourdock's Distortions & "Lugar Attacks Growing Surreal"
20120429-03	06:23	MarthaH	"GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat"
20120429-04	09:18	Pam	Re: "GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat"
(02-12) 2012 ELECTIONS			
20120419-00		SteveB	Maybe America Just Needs More Hair? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Lincoln Had One. So Did Uncle Sam.")
BARACK OBAMA			
20120402-06	13:26	Marci	Fw: Not Wanting to Offend Anyone
20120402-10	20:07	SteveB	Re: Not Wanting to Offend Anyone (reply to Marci, above)
20120403-05	13:37	Beth	Re: Not Wanting to Offend Anyone (reply to Marci, FotM Newsletter #108)
20120412-00		SteveB	President Obama's Zingers by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Obama's Top 20 Jabs at the GOP")
20120417-14	21:18	SteveBA	Fw: After Three Years of Obama...Here's Your Change!
20120420-02	07:53	MarthaH	"President Barack Obama Stops to Sit on Bus Made Famous by Rosa Parks" (w/ Photo)
20120423-44	23:44	SteveM	From the Right: "A Black Man, The Progressive's Perfect Trojan Horse"
20120424-21	22:50	SteveM	"Obama's Make-Believe Life"
20120424-22	23:21	SteveM	Video: "Obama Makes Free Speech a Felony"
20120424-23	23:38	SteveM	"If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought"
20120425-05	13:18	Pam	Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #124)
20120425-07	15:03	SteveB	Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to Pam, above)
20120425-09	16:05	Pam	Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120426-05	11:53	Art	Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120426-10	15:10	SteveB	Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to Art, above)
20120425-15	23:23	SteveM	Fw: Here's Your Change

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120425-16	23:58	SteveB	Re: Here's Your Change (reply to SteveM, above)
20120429-01	01:43	SteveM	"The President Has a List"
20120429-02	05:35	SteveB	Re: "The President Has a List" & "Obama-Phobia: <i>Wall Street Journal</i> , Fox News Revive Nixon's Enemies List" (reply to SteveM, above)
MITT ROMNEY			
20120406-00		SteveB	Mr. Etch-A-Sketch Romney Erased Himself—Oops! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("To Win GOP Nomination, Mitt Romney Erased His Only Credential")
20120406-10	18:58	Bill	"Why the Soul of Mitt Romney's America Can Be Found at Williams-Sonoma"
20120407-02	07:33	SteveB	Cartoon: Mitt R0mney—Candidate Extraordinaire! ("I'm the King of the World!")
20120407-03	11:09	SteveG	"Romney's Gaffes Won't Cost Him as Many Votes as His Views"
20120407-05	13:26	SteveB	"As He Runs from His Record Mitt R0mney Lies About Obama's"
20120407-08	15:24	Art	Re: "As He Runs from His Record Mitt R0mney Lies About Obama's" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120407-09	15:57	SteveG	Re: "As He Runs from His Record Mitt R0mney Lies About Obama's" (reply to Art & SteveB, above)
20120408-03	16:43	SteveB	Re: "As He Runs from His Record Mitt R0mney Lies About Obama's" (reply to Art & SteveG, above)
20120409-08	16:55	SteveB	"Obama Campaign Mocks R0mney's 'Car Elevators'"
20120412-04	15:13	SteveB	Ah...the Benefits of Being Mitt R0mney ("How Did Mitt Make So Much Money and Pay So Little in Taxes?")
20120414-32	20:21	Dennis	"Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse"
20120414-33	20:34	Beth	Re: "Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse" (reply to Dennis)
20120415-01	10:19	Clark	Re: "Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse" (reply to Dennis)
20120415-07	12:34	Art	Re: "Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse" (reply to Dennis)
20120415-02	10:37	Clark	"Mitt Romney: Mothers Should Be Required to Work Outside Home or Lose Benefits"
20120415-09	13:01	Art	Re: "Mitt Romney: Mothers Should Be Required to Work Outside Home or Lose Benefits" (reply to Clark)
20120415-04	11:50	Pam	Re: Mitt Romney, Republican Primaries, President Obama, 2012 Election (reply to Clark)
20120415-10	13:08	Art	Re: Mitt Romney, Republican Primaries, President Obama, 2012 Election (reply to Pam)
20120417-11	17:42	SteveG	"Ted Nugent's Obama Comments Buzz Around Romney"
20120418-13	19:53	Dennis	"Mitt Romney Is Far More Frightening Than Ted Nugent"
20120418-14	20:27	Pam	Re: "Mitt Romney Is Far More Frightening Than Ted Nugent"
20120419-01	09:50	Art	Re: "Mitt R0mney Is Far More Frightening Than Ted Nugent" (reply to Dennis, Apr. 18, 2012)
20120419-04	11:08	SteveB	R0mney's Lies
20120419-06	12:06	Pam	Re: R0mney's Lies (reply to SteveB)
20120419-05	11:47	SteveG	Fw: Don't Let R0mney Bork America in 2012!
20120419-07	12:08	Pam	Re: Don't Let R0mney Bork America in 2012! (reply to SteveG)
20120423-28	15:34	SteveB	"The Amnesia Candidate" (Mitt R0mney)
20120423-29	15:59	Pam	Re: "The Amnesia Candidate" (Mitt R0mney) (reply to SteveB)
20120423-31	16:03	SteveG	Re: "The Amnesia Candidate" (Mitt R0mney) (reply to SteveB)
20120426-07	12:53	SteveB	"The R0mney Opportunity"
20120426-09	13:27	SteveB	"Small Donor Spin" (I'd call it "Blatant Romney Lies")

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120430-00		SteveB	Mitt Romney Is a Liar by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney's Campaign Pledges Raise Questions")
20120427-15	18:36	Art	Bumper Sticker: Dogs Against R0mney
20120427-16	18:59	SteveB	Re: Bumper Sticker: Dogs Against R0mney
20120428-04	09:30	Art	"Photo of the Day: Romney Puts Students to Sleep"
(03) CONSERVATIVE MIND, THE			
20120330-05	07:14	MarthaH	"Anti-Government 'Sovereign Movement' on the Rise in U.S."
20120402-01	06:05	SteveB	"Five Preposterous But Persistent Conservative Myths"
20120403-13	21:24	SteveG	Bumper Sticker: GOP Is Afraid of 2012
20120409-09	17:17	Dennis	Video: How Conservatives (and Liberals?) Think
20120410-07	17:15	Pam	Emotion vs. Fact
20120410-08	17:23	Art	Re: Emotion vs. Fact (reply to Pam, above)
20120410-05	13:26	SteveG	Sen. Joe McCarthy
20120412-03	13:26	SteveB	From the Right: "Fighting the Last War"
20120414-24	16:09	Dennis	"100 Things You Can Say to Irritate a Republican"
20120414-26	16:31	SteveB	Re: "100 Things You Can Say to Irritate a Republican" (reply to Dennis)
20120415-08	12:43	SteveB	"Hey Etch-A-Sketch-Conservatives, Time to Resurrect Some Honesty"
20120418-16	21:44	SteveG	Quote: George Carlin on Conservative Paradox #1,347
20120423-25	14:52	Dennis	Quote: George Carlin on Conservative Paradox #1,347
20120423-27	14:58	SteveG	Re: Quote: George Carlin on Conservative Paradox #1,347
20120426-00		SteveB	Conservatives & Liberals by Steven W. Baker / SteveB
20120425-08	15:29	SteveB	"Why Anyone Should Care That Bill O'Reilly Calls Me a Communist"
20120427-00		SteveB	Bill O'Reilly: 'Robert Reich Is a Communist' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Why Anyone Should Care That Bill O'Reilly Calls Me a Communist")
20120427-03	09:55	Pam	Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (FotM Newsletter #126)
20120427-06	11:42	Art	Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (reply to Pam, above)
20120427-07	12:17	SteveB	Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (reply to Pam, above) / Obama vs. R0mney
20120427-11	15:49	SteveB	"The GOP's Death Wish: Why Republicans Can't Stop Pi*sing Off Hispanics, Women & Young People"
20120427-12	16:51	Dennis	"The Self-Made Myth: Debunking Conservatives' Favorite & Most Dangerous Fiction"
20120427-13	18:10	Pam	Re: "The Self-Made Myth" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120427-14	18:29	Art	Re: "The Self-Made Myth" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120428-01	08:01	SteveB	"Paul Ryan Suddenly Does Not Embrace Ayn Rand's Teachings"
(04) DEMOCRATS			
(05) LIBERAL MIND, THE			
20120331-07	23:39	Pam	Why Labels Can Be Misleading
20120401-01	10:47	Art	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam, above)
20120401-02	14:13	Pam	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam, above)
20120402-05	11:31	Art	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #107)
20120402-11	20:09	Pam 11	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Art, above)
20120402-12	21:05	SteveB 12	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam & Art, above)
20120403-07	18:29	Art	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletters #107-108)
20120403-09	19:27	Pam	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Art, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120403-08	18:52	Dennis	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Art, above) & Cartoon: Obamacare
20120403-10	19:28	Pam	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Dennis, above)
20120404-02	11:06	Art	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #109)
20120407-06	14:19	Dennis	"Opportunity for All? Van Jones Discusses His New Book <i>Rebuild the Dream</i> "
20120427-09	13:41	Jim	A Simple, Logical Declaration
(06) MISC. POLITICS / CORRESPONDENCE w/ POLITICIANS			
20120410-01	08:15	MarthaH	"More See 'Too Much' Religious Talk by Politicians"
20120410-03	11:26	SteveG	A Politician Is...
20120413-04	11:51	J. Biden	They Don't Really Care
20120413-05	11:51	B. Obama	Now We Know
20120414-22	15:34	Jim	Fw: Political Flow Chart
(07) REPUBLICANS			
20120411-09	19:36	Art	"Allen West: I've 'Heard' 80 House Democrats Are Communist Party Members"
20120414-01	07:36	MarthaH	Re: "Allen West: I've 'Heard' 80 House Democrats Are Communist Party Members" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #115)
20120414-04	08:31	Pam	Re: "Allen West: I've 'Heard' 80 House Democrats Are Communist Party Members" (reply to MarthaH, above)
(08) STATE / LOCAL POLITICS			
20120408-09	23:45	SteveG	"Gov. Mitch Daniels Doesn't Break a Sweat Over Stray \$526 Million"
(09) THIRD PARTIES			
(10) CONSTITUTION			
(11) CORRUPTION			
20120406-08	15:17	SteveG	Video: The World According to Monsanto
20120410-00		SteveB	Stop Pure Speculation in the Oil Markets by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Sen. Bernie Sanders: Oil Speculators Must Be Stopped and the CFTC 'Needs to Obey the Law'")
20120411-04	13:21	SteveG	"Explosive: Monsanto 'Knowingly Poisoned Workers' Causing Devastating Birth Defects"
20120411-05	14:26	SteveB	Re: "Explosive: Monsanto 'Knowingly Poisoned Workers' Causing Devastating Birth Defects" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120414-15	13:07	SteveB	"The Latest SEC/Goldman Sachs Sweetheart Deal is the Worst One Yet"
(12) EDUCATION			
20120405-19	14:09	SteveG	"The Assault on Public Education"
20120415-05	12:06	Dale	"Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe"
20120415-11	13:34	Art	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Dale)
20120415-12	14:00	Dennis	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Dale)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120415-16	17:16	Pam	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Dale)
20120416-07	11:04	Pam	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Dennis & Dale)
20120416-14	16:28	Art	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Pam)
20120416-12	13:59	Dennis	Cartoon: Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Pam)
20120427-17	19:29	SteveG	"Student Loan Rate Extension Passed Under Threat of Veto" & More
(13) ELECTION REFORM			
20120402-00		SteveB	The Corruption of Government by Big \$\$\$ Must End! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Koch Brothers, Chamber of Commerce Face Possible Campaign Donation Disclosure after Ruling")
20120330-04	07:00	SteveB	"A National ID Card That Protects Voting Rights"
20120402-08	16:46	SteveG 8	Cartoon: Corporate Free Speech
20120405-01	10:18	SteveG	"Frustrated and Desperate, Bankers Form Super PAC"
20120405-02	10:25	SteveG	Fw: Credo Action Petition: Fight Against Voter Suppression
20120406-07	15:16	SteveG	Fw: How to Fight the People Who Don't Want You to Vote
20120406-09	17:26	Dale	Re: How to Fight the People Who Don't Want You to Vote (reply to SteveG, above)
20120407-04	12:49	SteveB	Re: How to Fight the People Who Don't Want You to Vote (reply to SteveG & Dale, above)
20120407-10	15:59	SteveG	"Intuit Is Now the Fourth Company to Drop Voter Suppression Group ALEC"
(14) EXECUTIVE BRANCH			
20120408-01	12:53	SteveG	"CIA Unlawfully Withholds Documents"
20120420-00		Art	Colombian Prostitutes by Art Hotop / Art
(15) GUNS / INSURRECTION / CRIME			
20120407-01	07:21	MarthaH	"Poll: Trayvon Martin Case Divides U.S. by Race, Age, Wealth & Politics"
20120408-07	22:00	Ann	Cartoon: Happy Easter!
20120410-02	10:31	SteveB	Fw: "Guns & Patriots"
20120412-07	20:39	Tom	Cartoon: Hoodies
(16) IMMIGRATION			
20120425-14	23:22	SteveM	Fw: Great Letter to the AARP
20120426-02	10:17	SteveG	A Thought or Two on Immigration
20120426-13	20:09	MarthaH	"Americans Put to Shame by Immigrants on Sample Civics Test"
20120427-04	11:03	Art	Re: "Americans Put to Shame by Immigrants on Sample Civics Test" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #126)
(17) JUDICIAL BRANCH			
20120406-02	10:22	SteveG	"Strip Searches: The Supreme Court's Disturbing Decision"
20120411-01	06:42	MarthaH	"Poll: More Americans Expect Supreme Court's Health-Care Decision to be Political"
20120411-06	16:44	Art	Re: "Poll: More Americans Expect Supreme Court's Health-Care Decision to be Political" (reply to MarthaH, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
(18) LEGISLATIVE BRANCH			
20120420-17	18:15	SteveBA	"Picture of the Day: Democrats (Not) At Work"
20120426-11	15:49	SteveB	"Killing the Messenger: The Downsizing & Death of the Postal Service"
(19) MISC. GOVERNMENT / CORRESPONDENCE w/ OFFICIALS			
(20) REPRODUCTION / WOMEN / LGBT			
20120405-12	11:49	SteveG	Fw: The Daily Share
20120407-07	15:07	Pam	"The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage"
20120408-02	16:30	SteveB	Re: "The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage" (reply to Pam, above)
20120411-00		SteveB	Bicycle Seats: Republican/Evangelical Anti-Sex Plot? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Riding Bikes Harmful to Female Sexual Health" & "The No-Nose Bike Saddle Faces a Marketing Problem")
20120414-13	10:54	Pam	Birth Surrogacy
20120416-02	09:35	SandyI	"Tennessee Senate Approves Bill To Warn Students That Hand-Holding Is A 'Gateway Sexual Activity'"
20120419-03	10:36	SteveG	Quote: Jimmy Carter on the Subjugation of Women
20120420-05	11:35	SteveG	Fw: Media Education Video: "Cause & Effect"
20120424-00		SteveB	The War on Women Continues by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Planned Parenthood Worried It's the Target of New Undercover Sting")
(21) SOCIAL SECURITY / RETIREMENT			
(22) STATE / LOCAL GOVERNMENT			
(23) TAXES			
20120410-04	13:18	SteveB	"Why the 'Buffett Rule' Sets the Bar Too Low"
20120415-06	12:24	Dale	"The Paradox of Taxing the Rich"
20120416-01	08:30	SteveB	"In Denial About Debt Crisis"
20120417-00		SteveB	The Rich Are 'Different' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Rich Are Different from You and Me -- They Pay Lower Taxes")
20120416-04	09:57	Dale	"Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"
20120416-05	10:41	Clark	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"
20120416-08	11:09	Pam	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"
20120416-09	11:39	Art	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"
20120416-10	11:49	SteveB	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"
20120416-11	11:51	Jim	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"
20120417-01	11:28	Bill	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Clark, Apr. 16, 2012)
20120417-03	12:16	Pam	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Bill)
20120417-05	12:56	SteveG	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Pam)
20120416-13	15:16	SteveB	"Why a Fair Economy Is Not Incompatible with Growth But Essential to It"
20120428-02	08:08	SteveB	"The Highest Tax Burdens in the World"
(24) TRADE / INT'L RELATIONS			
(25) WAR / SECURITY			

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120406-03	10:52	MarthaH	"Bosnia Remembers War, Still Scarred and Divided"
20120415-18	22:13	Tom	"Marine's Career Threatened by Controversial Rules of Engagement"
20120417-04	12:32	SteveB	From the Right: "Common Sense: What Goes Around"
20120425-00		SteveB	The Defense Budget Is Killing Us! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Defending Ourselves to Death")
20120424-13	14:19	Dennis	Fw: Harlequin Novel, Updated: 2011 Version
20120424-15	15:21	SteveG	Re: Harlequin Novel, Updated: 2011 Version
20120425-04	13:14	SteveB	Republicans, War, and the Deficit
20120425-06	14:30	Dennis	Re: Republicans, War, and the Deficit (reply to SteveB, above)
20120426-14	20:42	SteveG	Upcoming Program Segment on Torture
(26) ART / LITERATURE / WRITING / MOVIES / MUSIC			
20120331-06	21:23	Jim	Video: Flower Opening Miracles
20120405-06	11:04	SteveB	Gomez
20120405-22	15:16	Norm	Re: Gomez (reply to SteveB, above)
20120405-24	16:01	SteveB	Re: Gomez (reply to Norm, above)
20120406-01	08:48	Norm	Re: Gomez (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #111)
20120408-08	22:42	SteveG	Pandora Internet Radio
20120406-11	19:58	SteveB	Now, <i>HERE'S</i> a Sailin' Song!
20120408-04	18:43	SteveB	3,868
20120408-05	18:54	Dennis	Re: 3,868 (reply to SteveB, above)
20120408-06	19:22	SteveB	Re: 3,868 (reply to Dennis, above)
20120409-03	13:04	Dennis	Re: 3,868 (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #112)
20120409-01	12:05	SteveB	See What I Mean? The Beatles.
20120409-02	12:38	Pam	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to SteveB, above)
20120409-04	13:33	SteveB	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to Pam, above)
20120409-05	13:44	Pam	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to SteveB, above)
20120409-06	14:04	SteveB	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to Pam, above)
20120409-11	18:24	Norm	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to SteveB, above)
20120413-01	09:07	Tom	Movie Recommendation — <i>The Raid: Redemption</i>
20120423-33	18:12	Art	Fw: Video: Swan Lake in Chinese
20120423-41	21:02	SteveB	Re: Swan Lake in Chinese (reply to Art, above)
(27) BUSINESS / MONEY / ECONOMICS			
20120401-03	18:05	SteveB	"Pink Slime Economics"
20120405-00		SteveB	The Obligations of American Companies Like Apple by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Apple Has an Obligation to Help Solve America's Problems")
20120405-05	10:54	Art	Re: The Obligations of American Companies Like Apple (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #110)
20120405-09	11:30	SteveB	Re: The Obligations of American Companies Like Apple (reply to Art, above)
20120411-02	12:44	SteveB	"Low-Wage Jobs to Blame for Slow Economic Recovery"
20120413-00		SteveB	The Most Dangerous Lies by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The 1%'s Most Dangerous Lies")
20120412-02	11:54	Dale	Video: Viral Ethics
20120415-19	23:58	SteveG	"U.S. to Make Profit from Bailouts, Treasury Says"
20120417-13	21:03	SteveBA	"Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now"
20120418-01	09:57	Pam	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 17, 2012)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120418-08	15:05	SteveG	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to Pam)
20120418-12	18:41	SteveBA	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveG)
20120418-15	21:34	SteveBA	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to Pam)
20120418-17	23:30	SteveG	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA)
20120418-18	23:58	SteveB	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA)
20120419-02	10:16	Pam	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 18, 2012) Health Care
20120419-09	13:43	Dennis	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 18, 2012)
20120417-15	23:55	SteveG	Quote: Henry Ford on Our Financial System
20120420-11	14:46	SteveB	Video: Jon Stewart Interviews Robert Reich
(28) CLASS WAR / POVERTY / RICH & POOR			
20120403-00		SteveB	How Billionaires Destroy Democracy by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("How Billionaires Destroy Democracy")
20120416-00		SteveB	How to Fix Income Inequality by Steven W. Baker / SteveB
20120413-10	17:18	SteveB	"The UN Embraces the Economics of Happiness"
20120416-06	10:59	SteveB	REAL LIFE, NOT REPUBLICAN LIFE
20120417-06	14:12	SteveB	"Thoughts on Tax Day 2012"
20120421-02	10:15	SteveG	"When in Need of Political Distraction, Bash the Poor"
20120423-00		FotM	Sad Conclusion (A Conversation) by Friends of the Middle (sample conversation)
20120423-03	09:35	Pam	Re: Sad Conclusion (A Conversation) (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)
20120423-04	09:46	MarthaH	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Pam, above)
20120423-06	10:37	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Pam, above)
20120423-05	09:47	Art	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)
20120423-12	11:37	Art	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)
20120423-07	10:59	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)
20120423-09	11:16	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)
20120423-11	11:36	Clark	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveB, above)
20120423-13	11:39	Art	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Clark, above)
20120423-08	11:06	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120423-10	11:27	MarthaH	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveB, above)
20120423-34	18:15	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120423-14	11:54	SteveG	Re: Sad Conclusion
20120423-16	12:16	Pam	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveG, above)
20120423-19	12:39	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Pam, above)
20120423-23	14:20	Clark	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveB, above)
20120423-30	16:00	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Clark, above)
20120423-15	12:14	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveG, above)
20120423-17	12:26	SteveG	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveB, above)
20120423-18	12:38	SteveB	Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveG, above)
20120423-20	12:41	Pam	How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion?
20120423-21	12:44	SteveG	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to Pam, above)
20120423-22	13:53	SteveB	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveG, above)
20120423-24	14:43	Pam	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveB, above)
20120423-26	14:56	SteveG	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveB, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120423-40	20:10	SteveBA	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to all, above)
20120424-03	10:22	Pam	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 23, 2012)
20120424-04	10:44	Clark	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to Pam, above)
20120424-05	10:45	Art	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 23, 2012)
20120424-12	14:08	SteveB	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to Art & SteveBA)
20120424-19	18:01	Art	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveB)
20120424-16	15:30	SteveG	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (SteveB, above)
20120424-17	16:05	Clark	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (SteveG, above)
20120424-06	11:22	SteveG	Re: A Happier Conclusion? Health Care (reply to Art, above)
20120424-07	11:43	SteveG	Re: A Happier Conclusion? Health Care
20120424-08	11:55	Clark	Re: A Happier Conclusion? Health Care (reply to SteveG, above)
20120424-09	11:56	Art	Re: A Happier Conclusion? Health Care (reply to SteveG, above)
20120424-10	12:08	SteveB	Re: A Happier Conclusion? Candidates Chosen By God (reply to Clark & SteveG, Apr. 23, 2012) & "Romney: God Wants U.S. to Lead, Not Follow"
20120424-11	12:55	SteveB	Re: A Happier Conclusion? Candidates Chosen By God
20120425-13	23:19	SteveM	Fw: Video: "Real Time with Bill Maher, Mar. 16, 2012: Alexandra Pelosi Interviews Welfare Recipients in NYC"
(29) DAILY PHOTOS / PHOTOGRAPHY			
20120401-05	23:59	SteveB	Video: Optical Illusion
20120402-13	23:59	SteveB	Photo: F*cking Caviar!
20120403-14	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Quinoa growing in <i>El Altiplano</i> , Bolivia/Peru
20120404-05	23:59	SteveB	Photos: Bhutan
20120405-27	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Gomez
20120408-10	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Sarajevo
20120409-13	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Car Elevator Like Romney's?
20120410-09	18:15	Art	Fw: Fantastic 360 Degree Pictures
20120410-10	23:59	SteveB	Photo: "Lady" Riding a Bicycle (on nosed saddle...I hope she's not a Republican...no, not a chance!)
20120411-10	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Somali Pirates! Arrrrgh!
20120412-08	23:59	SteveB	Photos: Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia
20120415-20	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Gaffe "What a Snob!"
20120416-15	23:59	SteveB	Photo: California
20120417-16	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Kyoto, Japan
20120418-19	23:59	SteveB	Photo: The Cubby Bear, Chicago
20120419-24	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Tiger Cubs
20120422-03	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Earth Day 2012
20120423-45	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Slavery?
20120424-25	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Bee
20120425-18	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Tucson, Arizona
20120426-16	23:59	SteveB	Photo: American Farm Life
20120429-10	23:59	Art	Photo: Bums Who Depend Upon Society for Their Lavish Lifestyle
(30) ENERGY / TRANSPORTATION / WATER			
20120414-02	07:39	MarthaH	What We Want? ("Republicans: Drill More, Regulate Less")
20120418-00		SteveB	Come On, Big Guy! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Obama Launches Attack on Oil Speculators" & "The Case of President Obama's Missing Oil Tax")

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120418-07	14:42	SteveB	From the Right: "Another Day, Another Administration Witch Hunt"
20120419-13	18:29	SteveBA	"Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?"
20120419-14	19:10	SteveB	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
20120419-19	20:35	SteveBA	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveB)
20120419-16	19:54	Pam	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
20120419-18	20:31	SteveBA	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to Pam)
20120419-17	20:28	SteveG	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" & "U.S. Exported More Gasoline Than Imported Last Year" (reply to SteveBA)
20120419-20	20:43	SteveBA	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveG)
20120419-21	20:58	SteveG	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
20120419-22	22:46	SteveG	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
20120420-03	09:58	Art	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 19, 2012) & "Common Climate Change Myths"
20120420-04	11:01	Pam	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA & Art)
20120420-12	14:47	Dennis	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA) & "Clean Air & Natural Gas"
20120420-16	18:13	SteveBA	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to Dennis)
20120420-18	18:27	Dennis	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
20120421-04	10:19	SteveG	"Stuck in the Past? DOE's Cold War Mindset Leads to Blown Bucks on Nuclear Labs"
(31) FOOD / DRINK			
20120429-05	09:42	Charis	Bolivian Recipe: <i>Picante de Pollo</i> (Spicy Chicken)
(32) FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE			
20120330-06	08:52	SteveB	Friends of the Middle Website Publications
20120330-09	10:08	SteveB	Re: Friends of the Middle Website Publications
20120330-10	11:06	Pam	Re: Friends of the Middle Website Publications (reply to SteveB, above)
20120330-11	11:20	SteveB	Re: Friends of the Middle Website Publications (reply to Pam, above)
20120330-12	11:42	Pam	Re: Friends of the Middle Website Publications (reply to SteveB, above)
20120406-04	11:12	SteveB	Friends of the Middle Archive
20120406-05	12:18	Pam	Re: Friends of the Middle Archive (reply to SteveB, above)
20120406-06	15:14	Art	Re: Friends of the Middle Archive (reply to SteveB, above)
20120407-11	20:52	Larry	Re: Friends of the Middle Archive (reply to SteveB, above)
20120407-12	21:25	SteveB	Re: Friends of the Middle Archive (reply to Larry, above)
20120413-03	11:05	SteveB	Hypertext Index in Today's Newsletter(#116)
20120413-06	12:56	Art	Re: Hypertext Index in Today's Newsletter(#116)
20120415-13	14:01	DaveY	Stop
20120415-14	15:58	Norm	Slow Down
(33) FUN / DIVERSION			

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120330-01	02:04	SteveG	Fw: 50's Car Test
20120330-02	03:03	SteveB	Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveG, above)
20120330-07	09:25	SteveG	Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveB, above)
20120330-08	09:30	SteveB	Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveG, above)
20120330-13	13:48	SteveG	Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveB, above)
20120331-01	06:53	MarthaH	More Hoosier Humor
20120331-02	08:50	SteveB	Re: More Hoosier Humor (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120331-04	11:07	SandyI	Re: More Hoosier Humor (reply to MarthaH & SteveB, above)
20120331-05	16:58	Tom	Video: What Really Goes On in the Forest at Night
20120402-02	08:33	GaryF	Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #107)
20120402-03	08:43	SteveB	Re: 50's Car Test (reply to GaryF, above)
20120402-04	10:53	Ben	This Will Stretch Your Imagination
20120407-13	23:01	Bill	Video: Mr. Bean & Charles Trénet
20120411-07	18:59	GaryF	"Somali Pirates Refuse to Board Cruise Ships"
20120428-03	08:11	GaryF	Fw: Windows vs. Ford
(34) HEALTH CARE / HEALTH / MEDICINE			
20120331-03	09:02	MarthaH	Fw: And Health Care Doesn't Need Fixing?
20120403-12	19:55	SteveG	Video: Martin Sheen: Stand Up for Medicare
20120405-04	10:53	Pam	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #101)
20120405-07	11:14	Art	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare (reply to Pam, above)
20120405-08	11:28	Pam	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Art, above)
20120405-13	12:08	SteveB	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Pam & Art, above)
20120405-14	12:18	SteveB	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to all, above)
20120405-15	13:07	Pam	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to SteveB, above)
20120405-17	13:33	Art	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Pam & SteveB, above)
20120405-18	13:46	SteveB	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Art & Pam, above)
20120405-20	14:31	Pam	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to SteveB, above)
20120405-25	19:43	SteveB	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Pam, above)
20120405-16	13:26	SteveG	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to all, above)
20120409-07	15:47	SteveB	"Why the Insurance Industry Needs Obamacare to Stay in Business"
20120420-06	12:11	Bill	Fw: AMA's Opinion of Obamacare
20120421-03	10:16	SteveB	"Barney Frank Makes a Misdiagnosis on Obamacare"
20120425-12	22:38	SteveG	The High Cost of U.S. Colleges & Medical Schools
20120426-01	10:14	Art	Re: The High Cost of U.S. Colleges & Medical Schools (reply to SteveG, Apr. 25, 2012)
20120429-06	11:25	Pam	Is American Health Care the Best in the World?
20120429-07	11:54	SteveG	Re: Is American Health Care the Best in the World?
(35) HISTORY			
(36) JOBS / LABOR			

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120424-20	18:26	Dennis	"Auto Industry Employment Has Grown Since the Rescue"
20120426-12	19:43	Dale	Ban on Farm Chores — Really?
20120426-15	23:58	SteveB	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to Dale, above)
20120427-01	08:53	Dale	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! & "Child Labor Groups Upset Farm Rules Being Dropped" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #126)
20120427-02	09:48	SteveB	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to Dale, above)
20120427-05	11:21	Dale	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120429-08	18:24	Dennis	"Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs & Crush Living Standards for Everyone"
20120429-09	20:08	SteveB	Re: "Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs & Crush Living Standards for Everyone"
(37) LIFE / PHILOSOPHY / SPIRITUALITY			
20120330-03	06:55	SteveB	"Four Big Myths About Revelation"
20120414-09	09:41	Jim	Fw: Native American Wisdom
20120414-34	20:42	SteveG	Interesting Thoughts [More to come. -SteveB]
20120414-35	20:48	Beth	Re: Interesting Thoughts (reply to SteveG)
20120415-03	11:37	Pam	Re: Interesting Thoughts (reply to SteveG)
20120418-02	10:34	SteveG	Quote: Hermann Hesse on How We Blindly Kill
20120419-23	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Max Born on Belief
20120420-09	14:05	SteveG	"Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas"
20120420-10	14:45	Pam	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveG)
20120420-13	14:47	SteveB	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveG)
20120420-14	14:58	SteveG	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveB)
20120420-15	16:42	Pam	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveB)
20120420-19	21:32	Jim	Fw: The Fable of the Porcupine
20120425-17	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Gandhi on Love
(38) MEDIA / NEWS MEDIA			
20120404-03	12:48	SteveB	"The Corporate Media Crisis: Everything Old is New Again"
20120409-00		SteveB	News Explainer: The Essence of the News (#1) by Steven W. Baker / SteveB
20120417-08	15:21	SteveG	"Broadcasters Are 'Against Transparency,' Says FCC Chairman"
(39) MISC. REALITY			
(40) OCCUPY WALL ST.			
20120411-03	12:54	SteveB	OWS: "MAYDAY, MAYDAY!!!"
20120412-01	09:35	Pam	Re: OWS: "MAYDAY, MAYDAY!!!" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #115)
20120418-04	13:07	SteveB	"The Importance of Being Sassy"
20120418-06	14:38	SteveG	"Marchers Protest Big Banks, Big Salaries in Downtown Yakima"
20120418-10	15:42	Pam	Re: "Marchers Protest Big Banks, Big Salaries in Downtown Yakima" (reply to SteveG)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
(41) PETITIONS / ACTIONS / CAUSES			
20120403-06	16:26	SteveB	Fw: USAction Petition: Make the 1% Pay Their Fair Share!
20120405-10	11:46	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Petition: No Feces in My Food, Please!
20120405-11	11:48	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Petition: Speak-Up for Medical Implant Tracking
20120412-05	17:17	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Stop Jail Time for Birth Control in Honduras
20120413-08	13:21	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Request for Donation
20120414-12	10:40	SteveB	Fw: Attend the "Tax the 1% Tax Day protest in Sarasota"
20120416-03	09:48	SteveB	Fw: Shut It Down!
20120415-17	19:19	SteveB	Fw: NationofChange Donation Request — Free Book
20120417-02	12:02	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Send a Fax to Rep. Paul Ryan
20120417-07	14:14	SteveG	Fw: Emily's List Action: Tell the GOP Women Deserve Equal Pay
20120417-12	18:20	Art	Re: Emily's List Action: Tell the GOP Women Deserve Equal Pay
20120417-09	17:11	SteveG	Fw: The Other 98% Petition: Help Close the GE Tax Hole
20120417-10	17:34	SteveG	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Support the Student Loan Forgiveness Act
20120418-03	11:06	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Action: Fight for Your Health Insurance Refunds!
20120418-05	13:53	SteveG	Fw: Working America Action: Tell DeMarco: Get Moving to Help Underwater Homeowners!
20120418-09	15:40	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Training Opportunity
20120418-11	16:12	SteveG	Fw: People for the American Way Action: Tell ALEC's Corporate Sponsors it's Time to Ditch ALEC!
20120419-08	12:47	SteveG	Fw: One.org Petition: Help 50 Million People Escape Poverty Through Agriculture
20120419-10	16:09	SteveG	Fw: Sum of Us Action: Monsanto Bringing Back 'Agent Orange'
20120419-11	16:16	Pam	Re: Monsanto Bringing Back 'Agent Orange' (reply to SteveG)
20120419-12	16:48	SteveG	Re: Monsanto Bringing Back 'Agent Orange' (reply to Pam)
20120419-15	19:45	Pam	Re: Monsanto Bringing Back 'Agent Orange' (reply to SteveG)
20120420-01	07:05	MarthaH	Democrats.org Petition: Repeal Shoot First Laws
20120420-07	13:29	SteveG	Fw: PFAW Action: Send Scott Walker a Copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
20120420-08	13:32	SteveG	Fw: DSCC Petition: Take a Stand to Protect Women
20120421-01	10:14	SteveG	Fw: Credo Action Petition: Tell Angie's List to Drop Support of Rush Limbaugh
20120422-01	15:11	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Send John Boehner a Mutant Shrimp Picture
20120423-36	18:37	SteveG	Fw: Share a Public Service Announcement from The 99%
20120424-01	09:51	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: Help a Family Save Their Home from Wells Fargo
20120424-02	09:52	SteveG	Fw: JustLabelIt.org Petition: Urge USDA to Reject GMO Corn
20120424-14	14:47	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Support the Woman's Option to Raise Kids (WORK) Act
20120424-18	16:13	SteveG	"Take Action Against Dow Chemical and Monsanto 'Agent Orange' GMO Crops" & Reply from SteveB
20120424-24	23:56	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Action: Start Your Own Petition
20120425-01	08:26	SteveB	Fw: NationofChange Donation Plea
20120425-02	09:35	SteveG	Re: "Take Action Against 'Agent Orange' GMO Crops" (reply to SteveB, Apr. 24, 2012)
20120425-03	10:47	SteveB	Fw: USAction/True Majority Action: Don't Let Student Loan Rates Double
20120425-10	16:57	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Support Sen. Bernie Sanders Progressive Budget
20120427-08	13:34	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Donate \$5 to Assist "Republican Political Suicide"
20120427-10	15:37	SteveB	Fw: USAction Action: Tell Congress: Don't Let Student Loan Rates Double
20120428-05	11:47	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Action: Fight <i>Citizens United</i>

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
(42) SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY			
20120402-07	13:31	Jim 7	"Brain Wiring a No-Brainer?"
20120403-11	19:36	Dennis	Video: Powerful Speech on Climate Change
20120404-01	10:34	Art	Re: Powerful Speech on Climate Change (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #109)
20120405-03	10:50	Pam	Re: Powerful Speech on Climate Change (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #109)
20120421-05	17:07	Dennis	"The Autism Epidemic & Disappearing Bees: A Common Denominator?"
(43) U.S.A., THE			
20120405-26	21:43	Jim	Fw: <i>New York Times</i> U.S. Census Map
(44) WORLD, THE			
20120401-04	23:35	Charis	"Living Under Dictatorship Taught Me About Democracy"
20120402-09	19:39	Marci	Fw: Canadian Billboards Are Hilarious!
20120403-03	08:37	Art	Re: Canadian Billboards are Hilarious! (reply to Marci, FotM Newsletter #108)
20120403-04	11:58	Pam	Re: Canadian Billboards are Hilarious! (reply to Marci, FotM Newsletter #108)
20120403-01	08:19	Charis	"For Bolivian Farmers, Quinoa Boom Is Both Boon & Bane"
20120403-02	08:35	SteveB	Re: "For Bolivian Farmers, Quinoa Boom Is Both Boon & Bane" (reply to Charis, above)
20120404-04	13:50	SteveB	"Measure Progress in Happiness, Not Money, Bhutan Urges"
20120405-21	14:54	Charis	"US Man Sits 10 Months in Bolivian Jail, Uncharged"
20120405-23	15:58	Art	Fw: Video: Moscow University Flashmob
20120425-11	20:26	Charis	Bolivia
20120426-03	11:12	SteveB	"Welcome to Political Chaos"
20120426-04	11:25	Art	Re: "Welcome to Political Chaos" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120426-06	12:15	Pam	Re: "Welcome to Political Chaos" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120426-08	13:27	SteveB	Re: "Welcome to Political Chaos" (reply to Pam, above)



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #107 — APR. 2, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

The Corruption of Government by Big \$\$\$ Must End!

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

At least we win sometimes in the lower courts...

"Koch Brothers, Chamber of Commerce Face Possible Campaign Donation Disclosure after Ruling" by Paul Blumenthal, Huffington Post

Mar. 30, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/30/koch-brothers-rove-fec-campaign-donations_n_1392838.html?ref=politics&ref=politics)

(David Koch is major funder of independent groups, like Americans for Prosperity, that would be forced to disclose their donors for "electioneering communications" under the District Court's ruling in *Van Hollen v. Federal Election Commission* (FEC).)

(WASHINGTON) On Friday evening, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued a ruling that could begin the process of revealing the identities of secret donors to groups connected to Karl Rove and the Koch brothers.

The court ruled in *Van Hollen v. Federal Election Commission* that the FEC rules that restricted campaign donor disclosure are not valid and must be changed to provide for disclosure.

"We are very happy to see the judge got it right," says Paul Ryan, a lawyer for the Campaign Legal Center, a campaign finance watchdog that was a part of the team challenging the FEC rules.

Those rules state that donors to groups spending money on "electioneering communications," or advertisements that do not specifically call to elect or defeat a candidate, must only be disclosed if they specifically earmarked their donation to that particular expenditure. Since few, if any, donors to these groups ever earmark their donation for a specific election expense there was no disclosure.

That FEC rule came in the wake of the 2007 Supreme Court ruling in *Wisconsin Right to Life v. FEC*. That ruling overturned a ban, instituted by the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law, regarding direct corporate and union contributions to electioneering communications.

Friday's court ruling could reverse a trend started by the FEC rules, and aggravated by the Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United* decision, that led to an explosion in undisclosed contributions to electoral efforts. The percentage of

independent spending that went undisclosed jumped from 1 percent in 2006 to 43.8 percent in 2010, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Advertisements falling under the rubric of "electioneering communications" include those run against President Barack Obama by the American Energy Alliance and Americans for Prosperity, both non-profits linked to the Koch brothers. All ads run by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are classified as "electioneering communications." The ruling would require for the first time that contributions to these groups, and many more, be disclosed.

Crossroads GPS, a non-profit linked to Karl Rove, has run millions of electioneering communications against Obama and Democratic senators this election cycle without disclosing any of their donors.

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) challenged these FEC rules in 2011, arguing that the rules preventing disclosure were an unlawful interpretation of the plain language of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law, which mandated disclosure of these donors. Therefore, he said, they should be tossed out by the court.

"This is good news for our democracy and for voters - this victory will compel the FEC to require enhanced disclosures of the funders of campaign-related advertisements," Van Hollen said in a statement.

Judge Amy Berman Jackson stated Friday in her ruling that, "there is no question that the regulation promulgated by the FEC directly contravenes the Congressional goal of increasing transparency and disclosure in electioneering communications."

"In sum, the Court finds that Congress spoke plainly, that Congress did not delegate authority to the FEC to narrow the disclosure requirement through agency rulemaking, and that a change in the reach of the statute brought about by a Supreme Court ruling did not render plain language, which is broad enough to cover the new circumstances, to be ambiguous," the ruling continued. "The agency cannot unilaterally decide to take on a quintessentially legislative function; if sound policy suggests that the statute needs tailoring in the wake of *WRTL* or *Citizens United*, it is up to Congress to do it."

Fred Wertheimer, the president of campaign finance watchdog group Democracy 21 and another one of the lawyers representing Van Hollen, said in a statement, "Now it is the FEC's turn to act. Democracy 21 calls on the FEC to conduct an immediate rulemaking procedure. The FEC must get new rules in place promptly to ensure that outside spenders making electioneering communications disclose the donors funding these campaign related expenditures."

While the ruling unambiguously states that the FEC's rules on electioneering communications are in contravention of congressional intent and should be invalidated, the next step remains murky.

"If this ruling stood and this was the end of it, we'd have much more disclosure," explained University of California-Irvine law professor Rick Hasen. "I don't think that this is going to be the end of it."

On his Election Law Blog, Hasen laid out five possibilities of what could transpire in the wake of this decision, including the FEC immediately writing new, appropriate rules or an appeal from the FEC, prolonging the court challenge. The FEC requires four votes from its six commissioners to appeal a decision.

"This is a good day for those who want to shine light on who's funding our elections," Hasen said. "These things are years in the making. People who think that this is going to solve all the problems immediately are probably going to be disappointed."

The efforts by the Van Hollen team will also continue, according to the statement from Wertheimer. He explained that the legal team will now consult on "a potential second lawsuit challenging the FEC disclosure regulations that have gutted the contribution disclosure requirements for outside groups making independent expenditures."

Independent expenditures are election expenses that do call for the election or defeat of a candidate. This type of spending is what corporations and unions were freed to spend money on in the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling.

The following compilations of FotM Materials and Newsletters are available on the website:

1. Archive (2007-2011, up to the starting of the Newsletters) — 1573 pages (at this moment, in progress but unfinished):

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/archives/FotM-Archive-1.pdf>

2. FotM Newsletters (2011) — 708 pages:

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2011-newsletters/2011-FotM-Newsletters.pdf>.

3. FotM Newsletters (Jan., 2012) — 358 pages:

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2012-newsletters/201201-FotM-Newsletters.pdf>.

4. FotM Newsletters (Feb., 2012) — 402 pages:

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2012-newsletters/201202-FotM-Newsletters.pdf>.

5. FotM Newsletters (Mar., 2012) — 365 pages:

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2012-newsletters/201203-FotM-Newsletters.pdf>.

That's a total of 3406 fairly dense pages in easily-read PDF format. More than 2,000,000 words, very largely irredundant. Much of this is source material, but the equivalent of a large book's worth is original stuff written by the past and present FotM group members.

Together, these files represent a veritable "Small Encyclopedia of Current Events Seen Through a Unique Lens, 2007 to Now", rich with resources that I hope we can keep intact and available. I'll do what I can to preserve the integrity of all our source materials, the things that make our commentary make sense and are necessary to the continuity of the whole. The articles that have all had a special meaning to at least one group member that compelled them to share.

But I recommend that you download these files while you have an opportunity. I will honor intellectual property rights every step of the way. If any copyright holder asks that we not reprint material, I will immediately take that piece down from the website.

Here is a little further explanation of my copyright thinking:

Almost all of our source materials are advocacy pieces, mainly political. The authors are happy to have their views disseminated as widely as possible. All the materials we republish are freely available on the internet. We display sources, links to sources, and copyright notices prominently and invariably. We never sell or charge for content in any way. Many of our materials are licensed through: <http://creativecommons.org/>. And if, at any time, any author or publisher of any of our republished articles requests that we remove their material because of copyright concerns, we will do so immediately. All these steps are those that should be taken by any responsible blog or website interested in protecting intellectual property rights.

Have a great weekend, everybody! Take care. As IBM used to say, "Think." And as Pam says, "Feel and love."

Let me clarify one point.

When someone, already an FotM Member or not, fills out the "SUBSCRIBE OR COMMENT" form on the homepage, an email comes to me immediately.

I might not get it right away, but it's just the same as sending only me an email.

It might contain instructions like:

- "Forward immediately to Pam."
- "For Publication."
- "Not For Publication."
- "To Pam."
- "Please give Pam this message and my email address."
- "Please reply personally."
- "Please forward to the Group."
- "See this link."

I try to follow these instructions as closely as I can and pass along what I can. I'm kinda like one of those operators you used to talk to when you picked up the phone, connecting everybody.

So the two (email or webform) are roughly equal at the front end of things, except that your email goes out to whomever you want immediately and you are comfortable with it.

Have a great weekend, Mom!

Oh, and guess what? I might as well tell you. I just learned yesterday that my youngest daughter, sweet Marissa, is pregnant! I'm so excited. Three grandkids! I know that's not really a lot, but it seems like a lot to me, and I love it. Maybe it will be twins, a boy and a girl (in my fantasies)? I'm so happy for her. And she just got a new job not long ago, working for the government (it pays to be a Democrat, sometimes, haha), so she'll have good insurance.

20120330-10	11:06	Pam	Re: Friends of the Middle Website Publications (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Congratulations, Grandpa. A new baby is always exciting.

You are doing a terrific job with FotM. I'm so glad to be part of it. It's become a big part of my life, and I can imagine it's taken over yours. :-)

20120330-11	11:20	SteveB	Re: Friends of the Middle Website Publications (reply to Pam, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

It's definitely taken over my early mornings, but I don't mind, I'd be reading and writing emails then anyway, at least part of the time. I actually get to do a little less of that now... Thank you for your sweet encouragement and enormous contribution.

My #1 project is finishing the Archive, with its cool hyperlink indexing. I'm trying an experiment and building an Index to the Index, in an attempt to bring simplicity to chaos. That version is not online yet, but will appear in the near future, so everyone can see how it works. Then I'm going to introduce indexing to the Newsletter and probably go back and add it to the monthly Newsletter compilations. Then all the work on "old" stuff will be finished, and I can concentrate on the 2012 Election in real time with FotM.

The Acrobat Reader's full search capabilities and variable text size will continue to be valuable tools for readers.

How the hell did men ever get by when they kept women "down on the farm" Muslim-style? I guess that's at least part of the reason Muslim societies don't seem to be succeeding very well—all that talent going to waste in the harem. At least we've finally made a little progress in that area, though hard-won, and now they want to take it away again, it seems.

In 2013, Marci and I are taking a "Farewell Trip" around the entire U.S. – Florida, up the East Coast to Maine, by Toronto and Niagara Falls to Indiana, Michigan, Chicago to Montana, to Washington, down the West Coast, through Arizona, Texas, New Orleans, and back to Florida. I want to see all my friends from every part of life along the way, and I especially want to see all my Friends of the Middle friends, even if it's just for a lunch or cup of coffee. With some of you, we plan on moving in for a couple of weeks. (Just kidding!) We're planning about two months for the whole trip

I hate to be a flip-flopper like Mitt, but we're putting the cookie business back on hold for another 4-6 months. Marci's working about half time for a well-paying, easy-to-work-for client, and I'm lazy to do the cookie biz all by myself, so I'll just be sitting here reading, writing, and editing most of the time. I'm very happy with either alternative universe. I usually am.

My baby's baby! Strange. Time.

20120330-12	11:42	Pam	Re: Friends of the Middle Website Publications (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

That sounds like a serious trip.

:-) Your baby's baby. That's how I felt when Saskia had Jonas. I'm pretty sure they're the only grandchildren I'm going to have. Dabbs has three girls, but I don't know how to count them. I never see them, and they're not related by blood. I wish them well, of course, but we don't have a relationship. I don't want to disown them, but they're not grandchildren the way Jonas and Atty are. I don't think David will have kids, and I doubt Tanner will. I'm grateful for the two I've got. They're terrific, and that's not just because I'm their Grandmommy. That is a totally objective opinion.

20120330-03	06:55	SteveB	"Four Big Myths About Revelation"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	-----------------------------------

Just a reminder...so we all know. Now...what you may choose to believe is another matter entirely.

"Four Big Myths About Revelation" by John Blake, CNN

Mar. 31, 2012, (http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/31/four-big-myths-about-the-book-of-revelation/?hpt=hp_c1)

The anti-Christ. The Battle of Armageddon. The dreaded Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

You don't have to be a student of religion to recognize references from the Book of Revelation. The last book in the Bible has fascinated readers for centuries. People who don't even follow religion are nonetheless familiar with figures and images from Revelation.

And why not? No other New Testament book reads like Revelation. The book virtually drips with blood and reeks of sulfur. At the center of this final battle between good and evil is an action-hero-like Jesus, who is in no mood to turn the other cheek.

Elaine Pagels, one of the world's leading biblical scholars, first read Revelation as a teenager. She read it again in writing her latest book, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy & Politics in the Book of Revelation*.

Pagels' book is built around a simple question: What does Revelation mean? Her answers may disturb people who see the book as a prophecy about the end of the world.

But people have clashed over the meaning of Revelation ever since it was virtually forced into the New Testament canon over the protests of some early church leaders, Pagels says.

"There were always debates about it," she says. "Some people said a heretic wrote it. Some said a disciple. There were always people who loved and championed it."

The debate persists. Pagels adds to it by challenging some of the common assumptions about Revelation.

Here are what she says are four big myths about Revelation:

1. It's about the end of the world.

Anyone who has read the popular "Left Behind" novels or listened to pastors preaching about the "rapture" might see Revelation as a blow-by-blow preview of how the world will end.

Pagels, however, says the writer of Revelation was actually describing the way his own world ended.

She says the writer of Revelation may have been called John – the book is sometimes called "Book of the Revelation of Saint John the Divine" but he was not the disciple who accompanied Jesus. He was a devout Jew and mystic exiled on the island of Patmos in present-day Turkey.

"He would have been a very simple man in his clothes and dress," Pagels says. "He may have gone from church to church preaching his message. He seems more like a traveling preacher or a prophet."

The author of Revelation had experienced a catastrophe. He wrote his book not long after 60,000 Roman soldiers had stormed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., burned down its great temple and left the city in ruins after putting down an armed Jewish revolt.

For some of the earliest Jewish followers of Jesus, the destruction of Jerusalem was incomprehensible. They had expected Jesus to return "with power" and conquer Rome before inaugurating a new age. But Rome had conquered Jesus' homeland instead.

The author of Revelation was trying to encourage the followers of Jesus at a time when their world seemed doomed. Think of the Winston Churchill radio broadcasts delivered to the British during the darkest days of World War II.

Revelation was an anti-Roman tract and a piece of war propaganda wrapped in one. The message: God would return and destroy the Romans who had destroyed Jerusalem.

"His primary target is Rome," Pagels says of the book's author. "He really is deeply angry and grieved at the Jewish war and what happened to his people."

2. The numerals 666 stand for the devil.

The 1976 horror film *The Omen* scared a lot of folks. It may have scared some theologians, too, who began encountering people whose view of Revelation comes from a Hollywood movie.

The Omen depicted the birth and rise of the "anti-Christ," the cunning son of Satan who would be known by "the mark of the beast," 666, on his body.

Here's the passage from Revelation that *The Omen* alluded to: "This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six."

Good movies, though, don't always make good theology. Most people think 666 stands for an anti-Christ-like figure that will deceive humanity and trigger a final battle between good and evil. Some people think he's already here.

Pagels, however, says the writer of Revelation didn't really intend 666 as the devil's digits. He was describing another incarnation of evil: The Roman emperor, Nero.

The arrogant and demented Nero was particularly despised by the earliest followers of Jesus, including the writer of Revelation. Nero was said to have burned followers of Jesus alive to illuminate his garden.

But the author of Revelation couldn't safely name Nero, so he used the Jewish numerology system to spell out Nero's imperial name, Pagels says.

Pagels says that John may have had in mind other meanings for the mark of the beast: the imperial stamp Romans used on official documents, tattoos authorizing people to engage in Roman business, or the images of Roman emperors on stamps and coins.

Since Revelation's author writes in "the language of dreams and nightmares," Pagels says it's easy for outsiders to misconstrue the book's original meaning.

Still, they take heart from Revelation's larger message, she writes:

...Countless people for thousands of years have been able to see their own conflicts, fears, and hopes reflected in his prophecies. And because he speaks from his convictions about divine justice, many readers have found reassurance in his conviction that there is meaning in history – even when he does not say exactly what that meaning is – and that there is hope.

3. The writer of Revelation was a Christian.

The author of Revelation hated Rome, but he also scorned another group – a group of people we would call Christians today, Pagels says.

There's a common perception that there was a golden age of Christianity, when most Christians agreed on an uncontaminated version of the faith. Yet there was never one agreed-upon Christianity. There were always clashing visions.

Revelation reflects some of those early clashes in the church, Pagels says.

That idea isn't new territory for Pagels. She won the National Book Award for "The Gnostic Gospels," a 1989 book that examined a cache of newly discovered "secret" gospels of Jesus. The book, along with other work from Pagels, argues that there were other accounts of Jesus' life that were suppressed by early church leaders because it didn't fit with their agenda.

The author of Revelation was like an activist crusading for traditional values. In his case, he was a devout Jew who saw Jesus as the messiah. But he didn't like the message that the apostle Paul and other followers of Jesus were preaching.

This new message insisted that gentiles could become followers of Jesus without adopting the requirements of the Torah. It accepted women leaders, and intermarriage with gentiles, Pagels says.

The new message was a lot like what we call Christianity today.

That was too much for the author of Revelation. At one point, he calls a woman leader in an early church community a "Jezebel." He calls one of those gentile-accepting churches a "synagogue of Satan."

John was defending a form of Christianity that would be eclipsed by the Christians he attacked, Pagels says.

“What John of Patmos preached would have looked old-fashioned – and simply wrong to Paul’s converts...,” she writes.

The author of Revelation was a follower of Jesus, but he wasn’t what some people would call a Christian today, Pagels says.

“There’s no indication that he read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount or that he read the gospels or Paul’s letters,” she says. “....He doesn’t even say Jesus died for your sins.”

4. There is only one Book of Revelation.

There’s no other book in the Bible quite like Revelation, but there are plenty of books like Revelation that didn’t make it into the Bible, Pagels says.

Early church leaders suppressed an “astonishing” range of books that claimed to be revelations from apostles such as Peter and James. Many of these books were read and treasured by Christians throughout the Roman Empire, she says.

There was even another “Secret Revelation of John.” In this one, Jesus wasn’t a divine warrior, but someone who first appeared to the apostle Paul as a blazing light, then as a child, an old man and, some scholars say, a woman.

So why did the revelation from John of Patmos make it into the Bible, but not the others?

Pagels traces that decision largely to Bishop Athanasius, a pugnacious church leader who championed Revelation about 360 years after the death of Jesus.

Athanasius was so fiery that during his 46 years as bishop he was deposed and exiled five times. He was primarily responsible for shaping the New Testament while excluding books he labeled as hearsay, Pagels says.

Many church leaders opposed including Revelation in the New Testament. Athanasius’s predecessor said the book was “unintelligible, irrational and false.”

Athanasius, though, saw Revelation as a useful political tool. He transformed it into an attack ad against Christians who questioned him.

Rome was no longer the enemy; those who questioned church authority were the anti-Christians in Athanasius’s reading of Revelation, Pagels says.

“Athanasius interprets Revelation’s cosmic war as a vivid picture of his own crusade against heretics and reads John’s visions as a sharp warning to Christian dissidents,” she writes. “God is about to divide the saved from the damned – which now means dividing the ‘orthodox’ from ‘heretics.’”

Centuries later, Revelation still divides people. Pagels calls it the strangest and most controversial book in the Bible.

Even after writing a book about it, Pagels has hardly mastered its meaning.

“The book is the hardest one in the Bible to understand,” Pagels says. “I don’t think anyone completely understands it.”

And this is a conservative Republican calling for national ID cards. I want verifiable paper ballots too, even if they are tabulated or read by computer. We need paper trails for something as important as elections. And, as we recently learned, at least some of the current voting software has already been hacked. The Chinese are getting excellent at this sort of thing. Not good.

"A National ID Card That Protects Voting Rights" by David Frum, CNN

Mar. 26, 2012 (http://us.cnn.com/2012/03/26/opinion/frum-identity-cards/index.html?hpt=po_r1)

(Voter ID efforts in South Carolina and other states have created controversy.)

Editor's note: David Frum, a CNN contributor, is a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and The Daily Beast. He was a special assistant to President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2002 and is the author of six books, including *Comeback: Conservatism That Can Win Again*.

In December, the U.S. Department of Justice intervened under the Voting Rights Act to stay a South Carolina voter ID law.

Controversy rages over similar laws in Georgia and Texas. Many expect Justice Department action against the Texas law. (The Georgia law was approved in 2005 by the Bush administration Justice Department.)

The argument against voter ID goes as follows: The most common form of ID in the United States is a driver's license. Nonwhite registered voters are somewhat less likely than whites to have driver's licenses. In South Carolina, for example, the gap is nearly 20%. Therefore, voter ID will have a discriminatory effect.

But then we're left with a question: What happens when those minority South Carolinians need social services? How do they identify themselves then? Then, of course, they rely on a Social Security number. But Social Security numbers are notoriously prone to theft, fraud and tampering.

The IRS counted more than 400,000 cases of theft of Social Security numbers in the 18 months from mid-2009 to the end of 2011. Surely that is only the tip of the iceberg. You don't sustain a population of 10 million to 12 million illegal aliens without lots and lots of fake Social Security numbers.

In other words, the U.S. has created two forms of de facto ID: one (Social Security) that is universal, but not reliable; another (state-issued driver's licenses) that is reliable, but not universal.

Obvious question: **Why can't we have a system of personal identification that is universal and reliable?**

Modern technology enables the design of just such a card while also protecting and even enhancing personal privacy.

Imagine you are a 22 year old who wants to buy a case of beer. (Or a 66 year old who wants to buy a discount movie ticket.) You present your driver's license that shows on its face your date of birth, and the cashier computes whether you qualify. But that card actually discloses more information than the cashier requires. The cashier is asking a "yes" or "no" question: 21 or older? 65 or older?

Or imagine that you are an employer who wants to check a job applicant's eligibility for work. Again, the card the employer will see presents more information than required. The employer doesn't care whether you are a citizen or a permanent resident or where you were born or when you became a resident alien. He just wants a "yes" or "no" to the question: Eligible to work?

Same thing at the polls. The poll watchers don't need to know whether today is your birthday. They don't need to know your height or weight. They just need to know: Are you who you say you are? And are you eligible to cast a ballot?

On its face, it would carry only your name and image. That's all most people need most of the time to confirm your identity; for example, when checking the name on your airline ticket against the person bearing the ticket.

But none of the other information that now appears on your driver's license needs to appear there. Not the address. Not the date of birth. No the height or weight.

Information beyond face and name would be encrypted inside the card and would be divulged only to specific scanners. Liquor store owners would have machines that could read only the answer to the "21 or older?" question. Employers would have machines that could read only the "eligible to work?" question. Voting places would read only "eligible to vote?"

Departments of Motor Vehicles in each of the states could encrypt motorist information onto the card. If you moved to another state, you would not need a new card. A visit to the DMV in the new state would wipe out the obsolete motorist information and substitute the new.

Police might have more sophisticated scanners that could read more exactly your address or date of birth or citizenship status.

The card would have encrypted information useful to prevent social service fraud; for example, the number of children you have so you can't enroll for more benefits than for which you qualify.

The card might also carry encrypted medical information useful in case of emergency such as blood type and allergies to medicines.

None of this information would be visible to the casual observer. None would be available except to those with a right and need to access it.

The card need not be compulsory. Even in France, supposedly the homeland of Big Government statism, the national ID card is noncompulsory. But the card would add so much convenience to life that most people would want it: one ultrasecure document that smoothed your way through the modern world -- and guaranteed no-questions asked about your rights to vote, work, drive and purchase alcohol.

Such a card, available for free to all, should obviate all objections to the seemingly common sense requirement that we not just "take your word for it" when you vote or apply for social benefits.

20120330-05	07:14	MarthaH	"Anti-Government 'Sovereign Movement' on the Rise in U.S."
-------------	-------	---------	--

Hey, Republicans, come and pick-up your trash...

"Anti-Government 'Sovereign Movement' on the Rise in U.S." by Kevin Johnson, *USA Today*.

Mar. 30, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-03-30/anti-government-militia-groups-freeman/53873496/1>)

(TRINIDAD, Texas) Gary Thomas will never forget the letter he received in early 2000. It was from John Joe Gray, a suspect in a felony assault case, offering a not-so-subtle warning to the area's chief criminal investigator: He had no intention of answering charges that he had attacked a state trooper.

"What he said was this: 'If y'all come to get me, bring body bags,' " said Thomas, now a local justice of the peace.

Thomas remembers the message clearly, not because of its unvarnished threat, but because — after 12 years — Gray, who doesn't acknowledge the authority of any government, continues to dare police to come and get him.

Sequestered on a 50-acre, wooded compound in East Texas since jumping bail more than a decade ago, Gray and his clan have effectively outlasted the administrations of four local sheriffs, all of whom have decided that John Joe's arrest is not worth the risk of a violent confrontation.

"The risk of loss of life on both ends is far too great," said Anderson County District Attorney Doug Lowe, who first sought to prosecute Gray for the alleged Christmas Eve 1999 assault of Texas Trooper Jim Cleland. "I believed it then; I still feel that way."

The stalemate, perhaps the longest-running standoff in the U.S. between law enforcement and a fugitive living in plain sight, is also emblematic of what the FBI believes is a troubling re-emergence of an anti-government movement that vaulted to notoriety in 1995. Then, one of its disaffected sympathizers, Timothy McVeigh— angered by the government's botched 1993 raid of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas — detonated a truck bomb outside the Oklahoma City federal building, killing 168 people in what was at the time the deadliest terrorist attack on U.S. soil.

In the past three years, there has been growing concern over activities of so-called "sovereign citizens," who like the Grays and many of their anti-government predecessors "claim to exist beyond the realm of government authority," according to a January FBI bulletin to state and local law enforcement officials warning of the potential for violence.

The sovereign movement, estimated by the Southern Poverty Law Center to number 100,000 ardent followers and about 200,000 sympathizers across the country, is rooted in an ideology that rejects government authority at its most basic levels, from its power to tax to the enforcement of criminal laws, including common traffic regulations. The law center, which tracks extremist groups in the USA, based its estimates partly on its reviews of tax disputes and court documents involving people who do not recognize government authority.

Although the FBI does not track sovereigns by number, the bureau does not dispute the law center's estimates, which have swelled dramatically within a national anti-government network of related "patriot" and "militia" groups. Since 2008, the number of groups surged from 149 to 1,274 in 2011, the law center reported this month.

The rapid growth, according to the law center, has been fueled by a collision of factors, from the troubles related to the struggling economy and foreclosure crisis to the election of President Obama, the nation's first black president. Obama's election prompted a "backlash" from extremist groups who were further angered by decisions to provide government assistance to Wall Street banks and automakers, the law center found.

Stuart McArthur, deputy assistant director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, said the sovereigns have become more active in seeking retaliation against government officials by filing fraudulent lawsuits and liens, seeking billions of dollars in judgments. The actions often follow arrests, evictions, court rulings and other interactions with authorities.

At its most extreme, McArthur said, sovereigns have been linked to threats of violence and the murders of six police officers since 2002, including the slayings of officers Brandon Paudert and Bill Evans in West Memphis, Ark., in 2010.

Militia groups swelling

The anti-government patriot/militia movement, marked by a deep distrust of the government, has grown dramatically in the past four years. (Source: The Southern Poverty Law Center.)

"There are people at war with this country who are not international terrorists," said Robert Paudert, the former chief of the West Memphis Police Department and the father of one of the slain officers. "I had never heard of the sovereign citizen movement before May 20, 2010 (the day of his son's murder). But these are people who are willing to kill or be killed for their beliefs."

At Gray's property line

At the end of a rutted, dirt-gravel road, about 70 miles southeast of Dallas, sits John Joe Gray.

It doesn't take long to learn that Gray and his family, after more than 12 years of living in isolation without electricity and modern plumbing, have no intention of surrendering to local authorities or engaging in much discussion about their plight.

A heavily armed patrol of three men — each carrying holstered handguns, knives and rifles — meets visitors one late February afternoon at the family's property line, a fence line festooned with weathered placards bearing anti-government slogans.

"When people fear the government, there is tyranny. When government fears the people, there is freedom," reads one. Another: "Vaccinations equal Annihilation."

Although the three confirm to *USA Today* during a recent visit that they are members of the Gray family, they refuse to provide their full names. The oldest — a bearded man with a mane of long, wiry hair who most resembles Gray's 12-year-old booking photo — said the family is not interested in discussing why they continue to defy authorities. Nor are they inclined to say how long they can hold out.

"We're doing all right," the older man said curtly, adding that the family tends a sizable garden on the property that yields much of their food. A herd of goats, fish from the adjacent Trinity River and wild game help fill their pantry.

For the duration of the brief exchange, a stilted conversation at the fence line, the older bearded man does much of the talking as the others look on, their weapons hanging from worn gun belts and shoulder slings. The weapons, he said, are necessary to keep "trespassers" off their land, suggesting that would include unwelcome visits from law enforcement. He is most adamant, though, in his refusal to discuss the circumstances that have resulted in his unusual standoff with local law enforcement.

"Everybody knows the government controls the media," he said.

Gray fled here, according to Thomas, Lowe and Henderson County Sheriff Ray Nutt, after the now-63-year-old man was released on bond in connection with the 1999 alleged assault on Trooper Cleland. During a routine traffic stop in neighboring Anderson County, Thomas said Cleland saw a .357-caliber handgun in the car and reached for it, sparking a struggle with Gray that spilled onto the roadway. During the struggle, Thomas said, Gray "bit a plug" of flesh out of Cleland's arm.

A search of the vehicle produced some rambling anti-government writings, including references to setting off a bomb on a highway overpass near Dallas.

Gray denied any part in a bomb plot; he was indicted, instead, for the alleged assault. Gray was released on bond, partly on his promise that he would have no access to weapons while free awaiting a hearing. Gray never returned to answer the charge.

Nutt, the fourth sheriff to hold office in the county where Gray is holed up, said he is comfortable not forcing Gray's hand. That decision, he said, is largely informed by the consequences of the federal raid on a Waco compound housing the Branch Davidian religious sect and its leader, David Koresh. Federal agents stormed the property in search of weapons in February 1993, leading to a 51-day standoff, ending in a conflagration that left 80 dead and inspired McVeigh. The specter of that tragedy still looms large here, where the Gray property lies about 80 miles east of Waco.

"I'm reluctant to talk about (the Gray case) much," said Nutt, a former Texas Ranger who was dispatched to Waco at the time. "I just don't want to stir things up."

That's not to say Nutt has ignored the current standoff. A thick file holds a pile of documents related to the Grays. It's believed that seven children live among the 15 people on the property, the sheriff said. Nutt won't discuss any law enforcement surveillance of the compound, although they know sympathizers occasionally drop off food and supplies. The sheriff also believes the family has access to a ham radio, maybe a generator.

The sheriff is not comfortable discussing much more, except to emphasize the strong belief that his department would not have the "firepower" to sustain a prolonged siege to forcibly remove Gray. "Some of our officers would be killed, mostly likely," he said.

No taxation

Mark Potok, editor of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report, which has closely examined the Gray case, said the family adheres to sovereign beliefs, an ideology that is attracting an increasing number of followers in the U.S.

The sovereigns are regarded as a subset of the patriot groups and share much of the same ideology, including a rejection of the government's taxing authority. The Grays, according to local court records, owe nearly \$20,000 in back property taxes. Citing the same fears expressed by law enforcement officials, the county has stopped attempts at collection.

"This is a widespread ideology," the FBI's McArthur said.

Potok and other analysts believe the financial crisis, triggered partly by the collapse of the housing market, is chiefly responsible for the movement's expansion.

This notion is based on a flurry of federal prosecutions against so-called "tax defiers," suspects in debt elimination schemes and others who have sought to enrich themselves or retaliate against local government officials by filing false property liens and lawsuits seeking outrageous monetary judgments.

Last summer, two New York men, Ed Parenteau, 54, and Jeffrey Burfeindt, 48, pleaded guilty in federal court to attaching fraudulent liens against personal and public property, totaling \$135 billion. The motive, according to court records: The pair was "displeased" after local police arrested them on simple trespassing charges.

This week, David Stone, 47, and his son, Joshua Stone, 23, both members of the Hutaree militia, pleaded guilty in a Michigan federal court to possessing illegal machine guns, after a judge dismissed more serious charges that they and other militia members had plotted to attack federal government officials.

The danger ahead

In wake of his son's murder, Paudert, the former West Memphis police chief, is now assisting the Justice Department in a national campaign to prepare law enforcement officials for potential violent encounters with sovereign followers.

Had such information been available in 2010, Paudert said his officers might have recognized the looming danger when avowed sovereign Jerry Kane and his son, Joe, presented them with unusual paperwork indicating the vehicle was registered to the "Kingdom of Heaven."

Minutes later, the Kanes opened fire on the officers and sped away, leaving young Paudert's body on a freeway exit ramp and Evans in a nearby ditch. The Kanes were later killed in a confrontation with police.

"I wish I could have done more to prepare them for what they faced that day," Paudert said.

[Hey, Republicans, I believe these are your guys. This is what your leadership leads to. And you're afraid to arrest them? Whatever happened to "Law and Order"? More BS? -SteveB]

20120330-01	02:04	SteveG	Fw: 50's Car Test
-------------	-------	--------	-------------------

I got 94% - let me know how you do!

50's Car Test

Alright you young & older whipper-snappers, let's see how you do. Be honest & no cheating.

The average score is 73%. This will really rattle the cobwebs in the 'old brain.

"Car Show Game - 1950s", AmericanTorque.com — <http://www.americantorque.com/game/car-show-50s/>.

20120330-02 03:03 SteveB Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveG, above)

75%, pr*ck. I couldn't get those Chrysler products.

Hey, Mark, Ben, Gary F, Bill, how'd you guys do?

20120330-07 09:25 SteveG Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveB, above)

Edsel was a little tough too.

20120330-08 09:30 SteveB Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveG, above)

I sure wish I owned an Edsel. Even though it was an awful car. Worth, now, maybe...well...more than they cost then.

Actually, I'd be happy just to have my '48 Plymouth or my '60 Corvair back.

20120330-13 13:48 SteveG Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveB, above)

The Corvair got you run out of Terre Haute. Back seat of the Plymouth was nice

20120331-01 06:53 MarthaH More Hoosier Humor

Only Hoosiers truly understand the humor.

The year is 2036 and the United States has just elected the first woman as President of the United States.

A few days after the election, the president-elect calls her father in Indiana and asks, "So, Dad, I assume you will be coming to my inauguration?"

"I don't think so. It's a long drive; your mom isn't as young as she used to be, we'll have the dog with us, and my arthritis is acting up in my knee."

"Don't worry about it, Dad, I'll send Air Force One or another support aircraft to pick you up and take you home, and a limousine will pick you up at your door," she says.

"I don't know. Everybody will be so fancy. What would your mother wear?"

"Oh, Dad," she replies, "I'll make sure she has a wonderful gown custom-made by one of the best designers in New York."

"Honey," Dad complains, "You know we can't eat those rich foods you and your friends like to eat."

The President-elect responds, "Don't worry, Dad. The entire affair is going to be handled by the best caterer in D.C. and I'll ensure your meals are salt-free. Dad, I really want you to come."

So her parents reluctantly agree, and on January 20, 2037, arrive to see their daughter sworn in as President of the United States. The parents of the new President are seated in the front row.

The President's dad notices a Senator sitting next to him and leans over and whispers, "You see that woman over there with her hand on the Bible, becoming President of the United States?"

The Senator whispers in reply, smiling broadly, "Yes, sir, I certainly do!"

Dad says proudly, "Her brother played basketball at Purdue."

20120331-02 08:50 SteveB Re: More Hoosier Humor (reply to MarthaH, above)

Shame on you, Martha, but that is so true.

Now, my Mom was an incredible woman, but she was a little like that, in a slightly different Hoosier way. I could come home from, say, college: "Mom, I'm doing so well, I'm first in my class, but my girlfriend's pregnant, so I'm going to drop out of school, get married, and work in a steel mill."

"That's nice, Dear. Did I tell you who I ran into downtown at the Royal Café? Your fourth cousin Willy from Cloverdale! Why, I bet I hadn't seen him for a month! And he said... So I told him... Blah...blah...blah..." for 15 minutes.

"Mmmmmmmmm...!"

"Now, what was it you were saying, my Son?"

Ya know?

20120331-04 11:07 SandyI Re: More Hoosier Humor (reply to MarthaH & SteveB, above)

Yep, that's a true picture.

Don' spend your precious time asking, "Why isn't the world a better place?" It will only be time wasted. The question to ask is: "How can I make it better?". To that there is an answer.

—Leo Buscaglia

20120331-03 09:02 MarthaH Fw: And Health Care Doesn't Need Fixing?

Methinks the politicians don't listen very well either! Below is an email I received from the mother of a gravely ill ALS patient with their plight of yesterday. It makes a hangnail seem soooooo minute:

I got up around two. Megan picked us up at 5:20. Got to Miami at 7:15. R--- was prepped and dressed in the lovely gown and stuck in a freezing room until 10. As they were wheeling her to surgery, they talked about putting her under. She freaked out and I had to explain the reason we were sent here was to have a local. She was wheeled to another cold room until 1:30. Mind you she has had nothing to eat or drink since 7 last night, she is freezing in a hospital gown and they have scared her to death. She goes through the surgery fine. We are supposed to spend the night for observation since we are so far away. They tell

us to go home. So we had to call Megan to pick us up at 5:30 this evening. No pain pills, no food to use in the tube, no nothing. Arrive home around 7:30 after terrible rush hour traffic. R--- is in terrible pain and starving. Why in the hell go through all of that if they are not going to give her the food for the tube.

The plan had been 9 a.m./local anesthetic as general would put her on the vent until she [she's 39 and her dad and 8 other family members have died with ALS] dies, and she can't talk and be understood as the ALS struck her there...spend the night to check on the tube and the nourishment before sending her to the Keys, a 2-hour drive IF there was an issue. And health care doesn't need fixing???? MY BP is going to be up all day over this--guess I will get more done!

MY PARENTS HAD ME TWENTY YEARS TOO LATE so I have to put up with THIS...

SteveB, I will get around to a book list one of these days. Right now life intervenes...

20120331-06	21:23	Jim	Video: Flower Opening Miracles
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--------------------------------

You don't have to be a biologist to appreciate these. These are beautiful, turn on your speakers.

Each flower is filmed for two days, then the photos are collated to get this effect:

[http://player.vimeo.com/video/27920977?title=0&%3bbyline=0&%3bportrait=0href=.](http://player.vimeo.com/video/27920977?title=0&%3bbyline=0&%3bportrait=0href=)

20120331-07	23:39	Pam	Why Labels Can Be Misleading
-----------------------------	-------	-----	------------------------------

This morning I read a review in the *TLN* of a book by a British conservative named Roger Scruton (sounds to me like a "Monty Python" moniker), whose latest work deals with ecology and the environment from a conservative perspective. I saw the word "conservative" and thought, Why not? I always like to know what the "other side" is up to, and this Brit seems to be a pretty big deal across the pond. Scruton makes the case that the real environmentalists are, in fact, conservatives, not liberals, and I find his arguments compelling. (Edmund Burke (18th c.) is, most agree, the father of British conservatism. He opposed the French Revolution not because of its reformist agenda but for its excesses and wanted needed reform to be undertaken gradually and with sufficient forethought. I don't agree with everything Burke said, but he was a justly important figure in the Enlightenment. Scruton is one of his philosophical descendants.) Conservatives favor "an approach to environmental problems in which local affections are made central ... and in which homeostasis and resilience, rather than social reordering and central control" are primary. I can buy that.

His criticism of liberals, like Al Gore, is that their solutions are wildly idealistic, unreasonably global, and utopian in vision. Liberals want instant change, imposed if necessary, with a naive disregard for human motivation in the real world. Scruton says that "liberalism" is an "existential" or "psychological" description of a "temperament" manifested by "those who need to belong to a 'movement' with a 'world-transforming' goal." If this is a common understanding of liberalism, no wonder avowed conservatives are wary.

Scruton argues for an environmentalism grounded in "oikophilia," from the Greek work for "household."

The ancient Greek household included family members, slaves, relatives, anyone who lived under the aegis of what the Romans called the "paterfamilias." "Oikophilia" refers, according to Scruton, to "a 'family of motives' at whose centre is love of one's home." It is a limited sympathy with those whose lives touch immediately upon our own and does not extend much beyond that. We "honour" our ancestors, who bequeathed the oikos to us, and we are mindful of the descendants who will follow us--an essentially Confucian attitude that, in fact, presupposes a cosmic unity with nature that is grounded in place, not in abstractions. Abstractions lead to single-issue advocacy, which all too often mistakes the mouse for the mountain. Scruton cites the example of activists who sought to preserve an endangered small fish at the expense of alternative responses to nature that would have benefited other plants and animals, as well as human beings.

(Digression: this reminds me of the Republican disavowal of the health care mandate that they supported not so long ago. The Supreme Court will probably rule that mandated private health insurance is unconstitutional and coercive, forcing people to take an action against their interests--encroaching on their freedom, in other words. Ironically, a universal, single-payer system would force nothing on anyone, thus preserving individual freedom. Republicans are getting smacked by the swinging door both coming and going, and they apparently don't even realize it.)

I believe we are embracing the idea of "oikos." The "eat local" and "slow food" movements, the prevalence of organic produce in even big chain supermarkets, the proliferation of community gardens at schools, on public land outside government buildings, and on apartment-block rooftops are all evidence of "oikos". You don't have to be a conservative or a liberal to enjoy a delicious meal of grass-fed beef, freshly picked vegetables, and warm-from-the-oven homemade bread. Converts to good, healthy food don't need convincing, and they don't need to be persuaded that their actions are beneficial to the whole world and all its creatures. People tend to do what is natural, relatively easy, and rewarding. Jamie Oliver is doing more good for the world than anything the international conferences on global warming have managed to do.

I have come to believe that size matters, but it involves a paradox. Huge oil companies exploit the earth's resources so that millions of people can be productive and live comfortably. Agribusiness creates efficient monocultures that feed masses of hungry kids on ersatz chicken and cheap starch. The McDonald's model is popular because it is easy, cheap, and universal, not because it's the best place to eat in town. Support a population on mass-produced food and eliminate hunger, or stay small and go for the gold that only the rich can afford? Community gardens, farm markets, and CSAs are one solution. Increased food independence is a goal for more and more families. It's time we found ways to achieve energy independence, not just for the nation but for the individual family or community unit. Indigenous energy--a possibility? Let West Virginians burn coal, let Arizonans build solar panels, let Mainers harness wind power. Make it efficient and affordable for every household to produce enough energy to be self-sustaining. There is a hotel in my city that does this already. There is a solar array on the roof, the elevators use their own power to operate, everything is recyclable, and its marvelous restaurant serves locally produced food. I've noticed that both conservatives and liberals eat there.

20120401-01 10:47 Art Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam, above)

Hi Pam, Hmmmmm. This seems a bit long on theory but maybe short on substance. Of course, I have a feeling being a conservative in The United Kingdom may well be far different from being a conservative in the United States. He may have a point that liberals look for the grand solution, where as conservatives stick closed to home but the problem these days is that we are our brother's keepers. Air pollution in West Virginia threatens my health and well being in Virginia.. Polluting the oceans in Mexico may well threaten fisheries in the United States and so on. So what one group does today may impact many others.

That is I think one of the fundamental differences between those who call themselves conservatives and those who call themselves liberals. Fossil fuel production of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the impact on global warming is a worldwide issue caused fundamentally by the fact that there are 7 billion humans on this planet, all wanting to live the good life. Any solutions are going to take governmental effort at the national and international level, and that very thought is an anathema to conservatives who despise big government. The response in this country has been for conservatives to deny the global warming problem. Trouble is, that won't make it go away. I think that conservatives can be ecologically conscious but there are limits to that approach, and that is the problem. Driving your HUMVEE to the local Fresh Foods store to buy free range chicken may not be enough.

Just a thought.

20120401-02 14:13 Pam Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam, above)

Once again you show me the error of my wayward thinking. Of course I realize we will have to have the national and international will to pull ourselves back from the brink. I was undoubtedly conflating two arguments: ecological rescue and the fluidity of categories. I don't see how anyone can deny the climate problem unless they are willfully

putting themselves in a state of denial. What's her name Duggar, the one with all the kids, says she doesn't believe there's such a thing as a problem with overpopulation, so she's going to go on having more babies. Cripes. I read that if the earth was home to 10 m. people, we would be able to sustain ourselves. We're a long way from that. My point is, we have to come up with a scheme that will bring people on board, not because it is the "right" thing to do--only a minority will do that--but because it's the easy, affordable thing to do. That's where government intervention comes in. I don't think there's anything sacred about big govt. or small govt. The issue is, what works best in particular circumstances. Our government makes it worthwhile for oil companies and corn growers and processors to flourish, but it could just as easily decide to support solar power and spinach. Big money rules, as always. I wish I knew what to do about that problem.

What's in a definition? I agree that British and American conservatives (small "c") are not the same, but I imagine they would both say that "government is best which governs least." Up to a point, I can agree with that. Up to a point. Things that have to do with our food supply, water, medical care, security of all kinds, and education all require a certain amount of government participation and/or oversight. Other matters, like what to do in the privacy of your own home, where to go to church or not, what you say or write (stopping short of slander or libel), whom you associate with, should be strictly hands off so far as government is concerned. If we break these issues down and consider them one by one, I would be surprised to see much difference between conservatives and liberals. Everyone wants clean water. Everyone wants an effective, uncorrupt police force and military. Everyone wants to know that when they take a pill it's going to do what it claims and do it safely. Where I see conservatives and liberals diverging the most is regarding religion and sex, including marriage law. Conservatives squawk when their "rights" are ostensibly threatened, increasingly see law as grounded in morality/Christianity, and, keeping to type, want to impose the missionary position on everyone over 18 and married. All others step to the back of the line. About these matters government should permit the greatest latitude.

I'm trying to figure out a way to talk to conservatives, figuring that if I can do it, there might be a chance that others could too, and I'd like to see the same effort coming from conservatives instead of all the name-calling and deliberate lying. Let's call each other out when we get our facts wrong, but let us at least be honest about what the facts are. If it's a fact, it's not up for debate, whatever your wishes might be. If we disagree about policy, let's discuss our differences rationally, not simply assume our opponent has nothing to bring to the table. In the best of all possible worlds, conservatives and liberals would be in the same camp, both wanting the good and differing only about how to achieve it. What is the good? Hemingway said it's whatever you feel good after. Not bad for a starting point, unless you're a psychopath.

20120331-05	16:58	Tom	Video: What Really Goes On in the Forest at Night
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

<http://m.wimp.com/forestnight/>

[<http://www.wimp.com> is a great site, Tom. I love their random video feature. Something good almost always comes up. Like:

<http://www.wimp.com/gomachine/>

<http://www.wimp.com/gearheart/>

<http://www.wimp.com/wigglyworld/>

<http://www.wimp.com/handdancing/>

—SteveB]

20120401-03	18:05	SteveB	"Pink Slime Economics"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	------------------------

More worthless lying slime from Paul Ryan...

"Pink Slime Economics" by Paul Krugman, *New York Times*

Apr. 1, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/02/opinion/krugman-pink-slime-economics.html? r=1>)

The big bad event of last week was, of course, the Supreme Court hearing on health reform. In the course of that hearing it became clear that several of the justices, and possibly a majority, are political creatures pure and simple, willing to embrace any argument, no matter how absurd, that serves the interests of Team Republican.

But we should not allow events in the court to completely overshadow another, almost equally disturbing spectacle. For on Thursday Republicans in the House of Representatives passed what was surely the most fraudulent budget in American history.

And when I say fraudulent, I mean just that. The trouble with the budget devised by Paul Ryan, the chairman of the House Budget Committee, isn't just its almost inconceivably cruel priorities, the way it slashes taxes for corporations and the rich while drastically cutting food and medical aid to the needy. Even aside from all that, the Ryan budget purports to reduce the deficit — but the alleged deficit reduction depends on the completely unsupported assertion that trillions of dollars in revenue can be found by closing tax loopholes.

And we're talking about a lot of loophole-closing. As Howard Gleckman of the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center points out, to make his numbers work Mr. Ryan would, by 2022, have to close enough loopholes to yield an extra \$700 billion in revenue every year. That's a lot of money, even in an economy as big as ours. So which specific loopholes has Mr. Ryan, who issued a 98-page manifesto on behalf of his budget, said he would close?

None. Not one. He has, however, categorically ruled out any move to close the major loophole that benefits the rich, namely the ultra-low tax rates on income from capital. (That's the loophole that lets Mitt Romney pay only 14 percent of his income in taxes, a lower tax rate than that faced by many middle-class families.)

So what are we to make of this proposal? Mr. Gleckman calls it a "mystery meat budget," but he's being unfair to mystery meat. The truth is that the filler modern food manufacturers add to their products may be disgusting — think pink slime — but it nonetheless has nutritional value. Mr. Ryan's empty promises don't. You should think of those promises, instead, as a kind of throwback to the 19th century, when unregulated corporations bulked out their bread with plaster of paris and flavored their beer with sulfuric acid.

Come to think of it, that's precisely the policy era Mr. Ryan and his colleagues are trying to bring back.

So the Ryan budget is a fraud; Mr. Ryan talks loudly about the evils of debt and deficits, but his plan would actually make the deficit bigger even as it inflicted huge pain in the name of deficit reduction. But is his budget really the most fraudulent in American history? Yes, it is.

To be sure, we've had irresponsible and/or deceptive budgets in the past. Ronald Reagan's budgets relied on voodoo, on the claim that cutting taxes on the rich would somehow lead to an explosion of economic growth. George W. Bush's budget officials liked to play bait and switch, low-balling the cost of tax cuts by pretending that they were only temporary, then demanding that they be made permanent. But has any major political figure ever premised his entire fiscal platform not just on totally implausible spending projections but on claims that he has a secret plan to raise trillions of dollars in revenue, a plan that he refuses to share with the public?

What's going on here? The answer, presumably, is that this is what happens when extremists gain complete control of a party's discourse: all the rules get thrown out the window. Indeed, the hard right's grip on the G.O.P. is now so strong that the party is sticking with Mr. Ryan even though it's paying a significant political price for his assault on Medicare.

Now, the House Republican budget isn't about to become law as long as President Obama is sitting in the White House. But it has been endorsed by Mr. Romney. And even if Mr. Obama is reelected, the fraudulence of this budget has important implications for future political negotiations.

Bear in mind that the Obama administration spent much of 2011 trying to negotiate a so-called Grand Bargain with Republicans, a bipartisan plan for deficit reduction over the long term. Those negotiations ended up breaking down, and a minor journalistic industry has emerged as reporters try to figure out how the breakdown occurred and who was responsible.

But what we learn from the latest Republican budget is that the whole pursuit of a Grand Bargain was a waste of time and political capital. For a lasting budget deal can only work if both parties can be counted on to be both responsible and honest — and House Republicans have just demonstrated, as clearly as anyone could wish, that they are neither.

20120401-04	23:35	Charis	"Living Under Dictatorship Taught Me About Democracy"
-------------	-------	--------	---

The treasure of democracy...

"Living Under Dictatorship Taught Me About Democracy" by Charis Barks, Bolivia Bella

Mar. 31, 2012, (<http://www.facebook.com/notes/charis-barks/living-under-dictatorship-taught-me-about-democracy/10150634108022984>)

I wrote my college grad paper on Nobel Peace Prize nominee Domitila Barrios de Chungara, and the appalling living conditions in Bolivia's mining communities. When I was 11 years old and living in La Paz in 1978, she initiated the protests that ended Bolivia's last military dictatorship.

I still remember the shooting, nighttime helicopter flyovers, 9 p.m. curfews, militarized zones and soldiers on every street corner, massive food shortages, power outages, water rationing in some neighborhoods and other frightening things that took place over the next few years. Getting up at 4 a.m. to stand in line to buy food was a daily routine at times.

I remember driving all over the city with my dad in search of military trucks to buy flour, sugar, rice and other staples that had been donated by other countries. The military confiscated and sold the goods for outrageous prices from their trucks, which they would park on random street corners.

I remember feeling lucky because my grandfather was a Chaco War veteran and therefore we had the privilege of being allowed to purchase some foods at the military commissary that the general public did not have access to. It was at the commissary that I had my first American Grape Crush soda in a can. At that time, anything imported was a luxury, so for my grandfather to buy me one was a pretty major gift and something to be really thankful for.

I remember the 13,000% inflation rates in 1983 that drove the value of the Bolivian peso down from 12 pesos per dollar to 3,300,000 pesos per dollar. I have a photo of myself holding stacks and stacks of money, about 100 million pesos – equivalent to \$33 dollars. People lost their life savings overnight. You had to check the newspaper each day to see what your money was worth from one day to the next. We used to take suitcases full of cash to the money exchange houses to buy dollars as soon as we could. At that time no one bothered to steal your Bolivian money because it wasn't worth anything, and your dollars were safer under the mattress than in the bank.

I remember the numerous short-lived governments that came and went over the next few years, election after election, and protest after protest as the country attempted to find its democratic footing. Elections were often accompanied by curfews. I remember praying fervently with my mom that my dad would make it home safely one night because he had gone to vote (voting is obligatory in Bolivia) and had not returned by 9:00 p.m.

On the day I flew to the US for college, in June of 1984, I was on the last plane out because the latest president had been kidnapped and all national borders were closed, although I didn't find that out until I saw it on the news when I arrived at the airport in Miami. It took place while I was in flight. My family had stayed behind in La Paz and

I was 16 and scared. Back then no one knew where Bolivia was on the map and it rarely ever made the international news - unless it was something really catastrophic.

We had no cell phones, internet or email to keep in touch. Letters took weeks or months to arrive and phone calls cost nearly \$2 a minute. I didn't see my family again for another 3 years. We've become accustomed to everything being so easily accessible and immediate now, that we have little patience or tolerance. We are a society that seeks instant gratification.

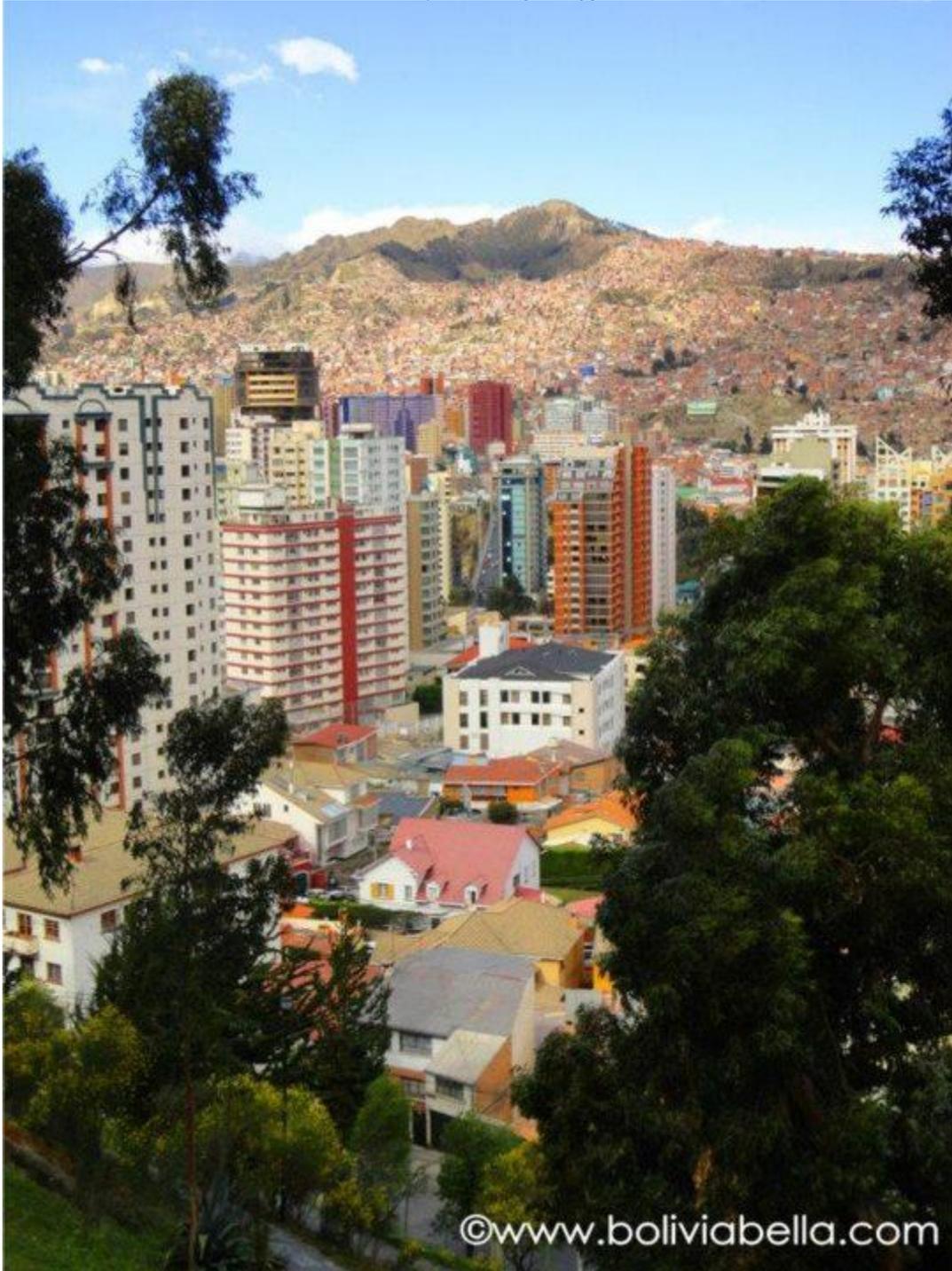
It was a very hard time and many people like Domitila took valiant chances with their lives by speaking out. She was jailed, tortured and exiled and returned to Bolivia in 1982. Finally, by the end of 1984, shortly after I graduated from high school and left La Paz, the country achieved relative stability. Because of her efforts, we have enjoyed democracy for the past 25 years. She died on March 13th, 2012 in Cochabamba.

Domitila Barrios de Chungara was an indigenous woman from the mining communities of Potosí. From the age of 10, she raised her 5 younger siblings on her own. She became a union leader and fought for the rights of all Bolivians to live freely. During and after her exile, she traveled to many countries to share her story. This virtually illiterate woman, a product of extreme poverty, went on to be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize and upon her death two weeks ago, was given the highest national honor a Bolivian citizen can receive, the Condor of the Andes.

As an American I'm paying close attention to our upcoming elections. It worries me to see a nation so disheartened and it causes me to seriously question what our leaders and potential leaders actually stand for. But Domitila's life story, and recent death here in Bolivia, remind me of how important it is to not ever think a single voice cannot make a difference.

I've seen Bolivia go from dictatorship to democracy and I appreciate the freedoms I have today. Because of this, I also recognize when those freedoms are in danger of being curtailed. If you live in a country that allows you to exercise your rights freely, don't take them for granted. Think hard about what is important to you, what you value or do not, what you are truly willing to live with, and live without. Remind your leaders (and those who want to be) that they work for you, not you for them. And don't be complacent. Exercise your right to express yourself, to speak your mind, and to vote even if it's optional. Because if you live in a country where you are still free to do so, someone had to fight for it. Someone had to sacrifice their personal safety, freedom, or life... for you to enjoy what you have. As with anything in life, don't wait until you lose what you have, to decide you want it.

La Paz, Bolivia (today)



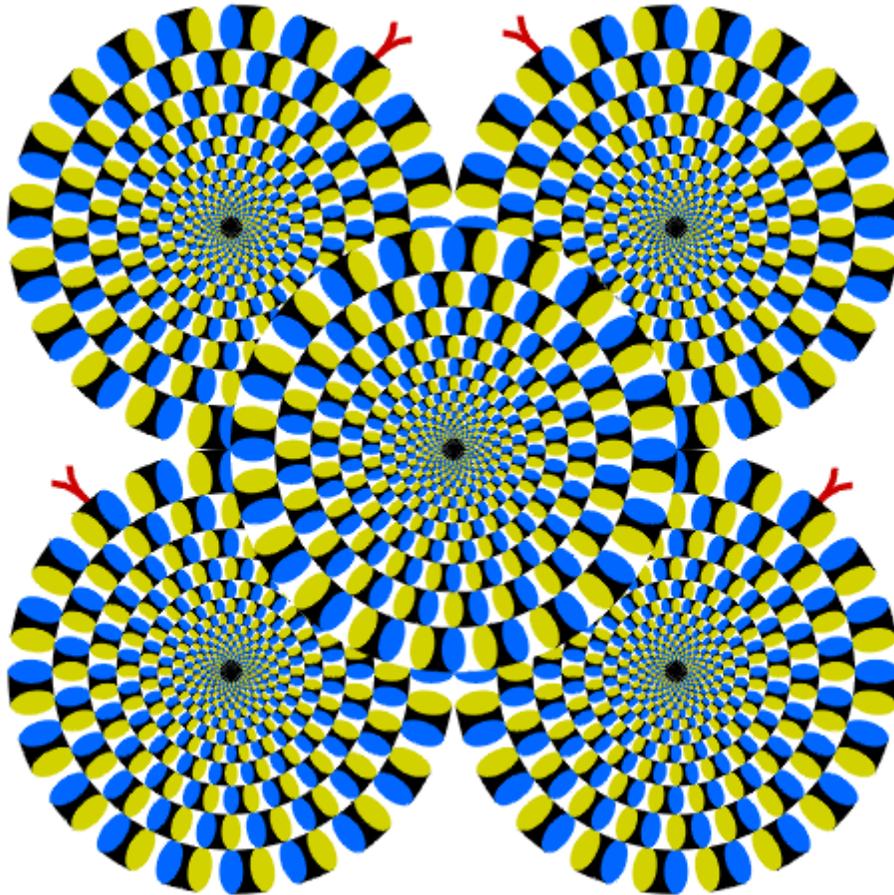
©www.boliviabella.com

From SteveB (Apr. 1, 2012, 12:59 pm)—Video: Optical Illusion

Stare at one of the 5 wheels. It will appear to be motionless, but the other four will seem as though they are turning. Whichever one you stare at will appear to suddenly stop rotating. Also try staring at any of the white spaces near the spinning wheels. In reality, none of the wheels are turning at all (so, of course it's not a video, after all).

<http://katiec13.wordpress.com/tag/optical-illusion/>

<http://www.maniacworld.com/optical-illusions.html>



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #108 — APR. 3, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

How Billionaires Destroy Democracy

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 3, 2012)

At least one inescapable conclusion will be reached in November: Americans will decide that one party represents most of the rich and the crazies, while the other party represents some of the rich and the rest of us. Perhaps all is not as it should be, but I know which party will receive my vote. Personally, I'm sick and tired of the rich grabbing a bigger and bigger share of the "pie" at the same time working people receive less and less, prices rise, resources for the poor and needy are reduced, while the rich continue to eat more caviar. Here's my prediction: after the election, something is going to be done about this!

"How Billionaires Destroy Democracy" by Linda McQuaig and Neil Brooks, Salon

Apr. 1, 2012, (http://politics.salon.com/2012/04/01/how_billionaires_destroy_democracy/)

(Wealthy Wall Streeters have rigged the economy and the government against the people. Here's how they did it.)

There are many words that could be used to describe Barack Obama, but one adjective decidedly doesn't fit: Aggressive. So it was more than passing strange when a prominent member of Wall Street — Stephen Schwarzman, chairman of the private equity giant Blackstone Group — compared actions by President Obama to one of the most notoriously aggressive acts by one of history's most aggressive villains. Speaking to the board of a nonprofit group, Schwarzman fiercely denounced initiatives by the Obama administration: "It's war. It's like when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939."

In the arena of political commentary, few things are considered more clearly below-the-belt than comparing an opponent to Hitler. So there was a small stir in August 2010 when it was reported that Schwarzman — whom *Time* magazine had included on its 100 most influential people list only three years earlier — had likened Obama to the Nazi strongman. Schwarzman acknowledged making the remark and then apologized for it, while reaffirming the sentiment behind it. But what was striking about the Hitler comment — besides its sheer viciousness and absurdity — was what had provoked it. Schwarzman wasn't complaining about undue military force, torture, or ethnic cleansing. He was likening the president to the most reviled man in history on the grounds that Obama was trying to close a tax loophole that allowed hedge fund and private equity managers (like Schwarzman) to pay tax at a rate that Warren Buffett famously noted was lower than that paid by their secretaries.

In an era marked by gluttony and hubris, Steve Schwarzman has still managed to stand out.

His 60th birthday party in Manhattan in 2007 was so lavish — with live performances by Rod Stewart and Martin Short — it became Wall Street legend. Then there's Schwarzman's 35-room Park Avenue residence, his sprawling

estate in Saint-Tropez, a spectacular spread in Jamaica, and his massive Palm Beach estate, where the executive chef says it typically costs about \$3,000 a weekend to feed just Schwarzman and his wife.

Schwarzman is a major figure in private equity, part of the surging field of “alternative asset” financial institutions that, along with hedge and real estate funds, appeared on the horizon two decades ago and now control trillions of dollars in assets. While hedge funds are well-known for contributing to the subprime mortgage crash, private equity funds are notorious for taking over established firms with borrowed money and essentially pillaging them. The bought-out companies are typically saddled with increased debt from the takeover and forced to make massive dividend and fee payouts to the private equity managers and their investors, while employees are shedded and union contracts gutted. The companies are usually chopped up into smaller pieces and sold soon afterwards at inflated prices, creating another windfall for the private equity managers. By 2007, the Blackstone Group had taken control of more than 112 companies worth nearly \$200 billion. In 2011, Schwarzman ranked 169th on Forbes’ worldwide billionaire list, worth an estimated \$5.9 billion.

Schwarzman may be rougher at the edges than most of the hedge fund and private equity crowd. But his outburst against Obama reminds us of the “war” he and others — by themselves or by proxies — have been engaged in to minimize their contribution to the public treasury. It’s an all-too-familiar tale of how effective the rich are at getting their way, even when the battle is being played out in a very public arena where a small group of billionaires advancing their own self-interest would seem a very tough sell.

Victor Fleischer didn’t set out to be a 21st-century Robin Hood. His real aim was just to get tenure.

Fleischer joined the New York law firm Polk Davis in the late 1990s, working on the formations of private equity and venture capital funds. He was struck by the very low rates of tax paid by fund managers, even compared to the already low tax rates being paid by executives receiving corporate stock options. Fleischer wasn’t discovering something new; the rules had been in place since 1954. Nor was he outraged or even particularly interested in the question of tax fairness. At the time, he was simply interested in the impact that the tax rules governing so-called “carried interest” might have on the law firm’s clients.

The question stayed in Fleischer’s mind after he left Polk Davis in 2001 and became a law professor specializing in taxation. Hoping to get a paper published to improve his chances of securing tenure, Fleischer put together his thoughts on the taxation of private equity funds. Now that he was no longer constrained by working for people in the private equity field, he started to pay attention to what seemed to him to be a “quirk” in the law that distorted tax principles while undermining distributive justice.

He identified the fact that managers of private equity, venture capital and hedge funds were claiming a significant part of their incomes as capital gains (taxed at 15 percent), rather than treating them as regular income (taxed at 35 percent). That substantial difference in rates was magnified by the enormity of the incomes in question. A private equity manager receiving, say, \$600 million as a capital gain would pay \$90 million in tax. If the same income were treated as income from salary, it would be taxed at 35 percent (and also be subject to a 2.9 percent payroll tax), bringing the private equity manager’s tax bill to \$227.4 million — almost \$140 million more.

The ostensible purpose of the lower capital gains rate is to compensate investors for the risk they take in investing their capital. But private equity and fund managers aren’t investing their own capital. They’re investing other people’s capital. They’re simply money managers. By claiming capital gains treatment, they are passing off regular income as capital gains, simply to save themselves taxes.

The fund managers insist that their compensation is still very risky; while some deals may lead to huge profits, others prove disastrous. True. But risk is hardly confined to fund managers. And at lower income levels, the risks are far larger. Indeed, in the last 30 years, vast swaths of the economy could be designated as risky for those needing to earn a living. The sort of stable, lifelong jobs that were common a generation ago have been largely replaced by contract or part-time work, with little or no security. A layoff can mean the loss of the family home or health benefits, or even destitution — far more serious plights than anything likely to befall a hedge fund manager. (For that matter, no one ever seems to argue for special low tax rates for the real risk-takers among us — miners, oil-rig workers, acrobats, firemen, window washers working on tall buildings.)

The so-called “carried interest” loophole enjoyed by hedge fund and private equity managers raises the larger question of whether capital gains — even real ones — should ever be taxed at lower rates. On the face of things, the lower rate seems patently unfair. Why should someone earning income by investing their fortune be taxed at a substantially lower rate than those earning income from the sweat of their brows or from using skills they’ve spent years acquiring? The fairness argument has essentially been set aside, however, as business has relentlessly promoted the notion that such preferential treatment is necessary to coax those with capital to invest it. But do investors really need coaxing? Warren Buffett, one of the world’s savviest investors, doesn’t think so. “I have worked with investors for 60 years and I have yet to see anyone — not even when capital gains rates were 39.9 percent in 1976-77 — shy away from a sensible investment because of the tax rate on the potential gain,” Buffett argues.

Our business culture tends to portray investors as modern-day heroes who put their hard-earned capital into worthy high-risk ventures that lead to path-breaking discoveries that enrich the lives of all of us. Sadly, the vast majority of investments don’t fit into this category (and those that do qualify for additional tax incentives). Rather, as former mutual fund manager John C. Bogle notes, “most capital gains are made from gambling in the stock market.” So the ultimate function of the special low rate on capital gains is to save our wealthiest citizens billions of dollars a year on their winnings in the Wall Street casino.

Fleischer’s paper found its way into the hands of congressional Democrats at a time when they were looking for fresh sources of revenue to pay for the expansion of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program and the Earned Income Tax Credit. The juxtaposition of high-flying hedge fund managers and children without health care seemed like a public relations nightmare for the Wall Street crowd.

Schwarzman himself helped put an unsavory face on the fund manager set with his plan to turn Blackstone into a publicly traded company in the spring of 2007. The plan would not only allow Schwarzman and other top Blackstone executives to continue to qualify for the low capital-gains rate as fund managers, but would also allow their new multi-billion-dollar publicly traded company to largely avoid paying corporate taxes. If Schwarzman won the approval of SEC regulators, he and Blackstone co-founder Peter Peterson would receive billions of dollars worth of stock, plus hundreds of millions in cash. And this would surely set a precedent, enticing other private equity funds, as well as investment banks — including giants like Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley — to reorganize themselves along similar lines, making the paying of corporate taxes almost optional for Wall Street institutions.

Schwarzman’s move had pushed the issue of sweetheart taxation for private equity kings from law school reviews to the front pages of newspapers. A bill to stop Schwarzman — dubbed the Blackstone bill — quickly appeared in Congress.

Momentum seemed to be building against the Blackstone deal and more broadly for a bill, sponsored by Democratic congressman Sander Levin that would shut down the fund manager loophole completely. But Wall Street quickly organized a counterattack. Some of the largest private equity firms formed the Private Equity Council, and, within six months, the Council had retained four top lobby firms to handle the case. Labor and public interest groups lobbied from the other side, presenting a letter to Congress signed by more than a hundred organizations across the country urging that the loophole be closed. But private equity had resources that were probably 1,000 times greater, according to Steve Wamhoff, legislative director of the Washington-based group Citizens for Tax Justice.

No argument seemed too extreme or silly to advance in defense of maintaining the loophole. Lobbyists insisted, for instance, that the tax break was crucial in the fight against cancer, pointing to the fact that the loophole also applied to those running venture capital funds, which sometimes invest in high-risk start-up firms — including those developing products to fight cancer. Private equity was trying to make the case that showering tax breaks on all fund managers, some of whom might be investing their funds in firms involved in fighting cancer, was an effective way to subsidize the fight against cancer — rather than simply increasing direct subsidies to cancer researchers or start-up firms.

In the end, the weakness of the case for maintaining the loophole didn’t matter. In three years of Congressional battles over the issue — with the Democrats mostly voting to shut down the loophole, and Republicans voting to keep it alive — the House passed a bill to shut it down three times. But Democrats finally abandoned attempts to overcome Republican obstacles in the Senate in June 2010. So, even with the Democrats holding the White House,

the House and the Senate (including 60 seats for a while), “they were still incapable of closing the most indefensible loophole in existence,” notes Wamhoff.

In the run-up to the debt-ceiling crisis in the summer of 2011, the most indefensible loophole in existence was once again in the spotlight. Figures from the Congressional Budget Office showed that closing the loophole could save \$21 billion over 10 years. That wouldn’t eliminate the debt, of course, but given the scope of the debt problem, it seemed a lot of money to simply ignore. New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof devoted a column to the tax break, awarding it the grand prize for the “Most Unconscionable Tax Loophole.” The president himself zeroed in on it again. “How can we ask a student to pay more for college before we ask hedge fund managers to stop paying taxes at a lower rate than their secretaries?” Obama said in an address to Congress in July.

But the Tea Party crowd now becoming power players in the Republican Party was as resistant to compromise as Obama was prone to it. They blamed the mounting deficit entirely on Obama (even though George W. Bush had added \$5.07 trillion to the debt, primarily due to his tax cuts and military spending, while Obama had added just \$1.44 trillion, mostly fighting the recession). Spotting an opportunity to use the deficit to achieve deep spending cuts, hard-line Republicans refused to raise the debt ceiling without a long-term strategy for debt reduction, which they insisted be entirely achieved through spending cuts. In the final deal, signed into law just hours before the deadline for a Latin American–style default, the hijackers appeared to win, with \$917 billion in deficit-reduction measures all to come from spending cuts (and another \$1.5 trillion to be worked out by a bipartisan committee). The radical Republicans had turned the fairly routine business of raising the debt ceiling — something Republicans had agreed to 87 times since World War II — into a bloodbath of spending cuts.

An observer could easily conclude that all this simply shows how resistant Americans have become to tax increases. But in fact it shows no such thing. In the years leading up to the debt-ceiling showdown, Americans have repeatedly told pollsters that they support higher taxes *on the rich* as a way to reduce the deficit. A Washington Post-ABC News poll reported in July 2011, as the crisis reached a crescendo, found that 72 percent supported raising taxes on those earning more than \$250,000 a year.

What the debt-ceiling fiasco really showed was how a band of Republican extremists had effectively taken the U.S. political system hostage and were moving to enact the Right’s long-time fantasy of dismantling popular New Deal programs — particularly Social Security — which had been politically untouchable since the 1930s. Americans were told that these programs were simply no longer affordable — even though the country had grown considerably richer over the decades. In fact, what had changed was not the affordability of the programs but the intransigence of the nation’s elite to paying taxes.

So while programs helping students, the elderly, and the poor were to be picked over by deficit-cutting politicians with surgical precision, private equity and hedge fund managers were to be spared any increase in taxes. They could get back to work pillaging companies and destabilizing financial markets with full peace of mind, knowing they’d continue to enjoy a tax rate lower than the mechanics who service their private jets.

Indeed, only a month after the debt-ceiling crisis, Stephen Schwarzman was back on the offensive, no longer just defending the special tax break that saved him millions of dollars a year, but now insisting on the need for broad tax reform — *so that low-income people would pay more*. Schwarzman’s concern was that many Americans manage to avoid paying income tax at all because their incomes are so low. His solution was a flat tax, so that everyone would pay some income tax. “If some people are left out and some people have special deals, it doesn’t feel like the kind of situation where everyone’s going to get on board,” Schwarzman told CNBC.” For Schwarzman, “special deals” aren’t loopholes for billionaires but exemptions for those with low incomes — mostly the elderly, people with children, and the poor — who’ve been dubbed “lucky duckies” by the *Wall Street Journal* for their apparent tax-free status.

Having rebuffed Obama’s invasion, the Wall Street crowd was now itching to launch a counter-invasion. No longer was the goal just to protect their own loopholes. They now sought to solve the deficit crisis, which they had greatly contributed to with their reckless financial speculation, by digging into the empty pockets of low-income Americans. It wasn’t that the rich weren’t paying enough tax; it was that others weren’t paying enough. It was time to go after the lucky duckies. A new rallying cry could be heard rumbling from the boardrooms of Wall Street: *Make the Poor Pay!*

Barely a month after Barack Obama had been sworn in as the 44th U.S. president, riding a wave of immense popular support with his "Yes, we can" rallying cry echoing around the country and the world, a voice seemed to appear from nowhere saying, "No, actually you can't." Ostensibly, it came first from Rick Santelli, a relatively obscure investment manager-turned-commentator on CNBC, who denounced Obama's plans to help struggling American homeowners as "promoting bad behavior." In a wide-ranging rant from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange on February 19, 2009, Santelli said, "We're thinking of having a Chicago Tea Party in July. All you capitalists that want to show up to Lake Michigan, I'm gonna start organizing." Within hours, a protest movement had swung into action on the Internet, talk radio, and cable TV, and rallies were scheduled across the country for the following week.

The apparently spontaneous outburst of disaffected Americans was greatly helped along by an organized and sophisticated campaign ultimately funded by two of America's richest men, Charles and David Koch.

In many ways, the emergence of the Tea Party as a potent force in American politics can be seen as the culmination of almost four decades of behind-the-scenes effort on the part of the billionaire brothers. The political views of the Koch brothers have always been on the extreme right, nurtured by their father, Fred Koch, a cofounder of the ultra-right-wing John Birch Society. Since inheriting his massive privately held oil fortune in the late 1960s, the brothers have been pouring untold millions of dollars into promoting libertarian causes. The probing of Ames and Levine, as well as a comprehensive, investigative piece by Jane Mayer in the *New Yorker* in August 2010, have shown that the brothers established a vast network of ultra-conservative political organizations, advocacy groups, publications, and think tanks. Included in this network is the high-profile Cato Institute, which has aggressively pushed for an end to Social Security, and the Mercatus Center, located at George Washington University, which has been a leading advocate of environmental deregulation and inaction on climate change.

The brothers have mostly stayed out of politics directly (apart from David Koch's stint as the vice presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party in 1980, positioned to the right of Ronald Reagan). Perhaps the Kochs sensed how politically toxic a couple of billionaires could be to a movement whose central aim has been slashing taxes on the rich and dismantling programs, like Social Security, that keep millions of Americans out of poverty.

In fact, the Kochs were really just one — although a leading one — of the ultra-rich U.S. families that in the 1970s turned their attention and directed their wealth to the task of pushing American politics sharply to the right and putting in place policies that more clearly favored their own interests.

The business elite is and always has been the most powerful force in U.S. politics, by virtue of its dominant role in the economy. But what is striking — and perhaps inspiring to revisit — is the extent to which the power of business was somewhat curtailed in the 1930–1970 period, and the extent to which this allowed policies favoring other members of society to flourish.

But by the early 1970s, with postwar growth starting to stall, business had an opening. It also had a growing sense that it was losing ground to a broader anti-business movement that came out of the mass student protests over U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The movement's ostensible leader, Ralph Nader, was attracting widespread support and sympathetic media coverage for this freewheeling campaign against "corporate power." The threat felt by business leaders was captured well in an eight-page memorandum written in 1971 for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce by Lewis Powell, a prominent Virginia attorney who served on a number of corporate boards (and later on the Supreme Court). The memo, expressed a feeling of being under siege. It amounted to a manifesto warning business that "the American economic system is under broad attack" and the assault was gaining influence "from the college campus, the pulpit, the media, the intellectual community...and from politicians." Powell echoed Goldwater's earlier condemnation of "scared-e-cat" businessmen, urging them to "stop suffering in impotent silence, and launch a counter-attack."

Powell laid out a comprehensive plan that bears an uncanny resemblance to what actually happened. He argued that business largely owned, funded, or had influence over the key media, religious, and academic institutions in society, and should use its leverage to counter what he perceived as the liberal, anti-business bias of these institutions. He advocated explicit business intervention in the political sphere, where he said the American businessman had become "truly the forgotten man." This had to be countered with concrete steps — expanding the

“role of lobbyist for the business point of view” — in order to regain political clout with governments. It was time, wrote Powell, for business to learn that “political power is necessary; it must be used aggressively and with determination — without embarrassment and without reluctance which has been so characteristic of American business.”

Powell’s manifesto reverberated powerfully within business circles. Along with the Koch brothers, a number of America’s biggest corporate dynasties came forward to inject massive funds into the cause of pushing the country sharply to the right. The Olin family, owner of a giant chemical and munitions business, provided tens of millions of dollars to think tanks, organizations, and programs at major universities aimed at inculcating right-wing ideas and policy solutions. Huge financial support for libertarian and conservative causes (and later the attempt to impeach Bill Clinton) also came from Richard Mellon Scaife, heir to the massive Mellon banking, aluminum, and oil fortune. Joseph Coors, who had inherited the brewery fortune, described how he was “stirred up” by reading the Powell memo and wondered why businessmen were “ignoring a crisis.”

Freshly stirred by Powell’s call to arms, Coors became a key figure in establishing the Heritage Foundation, which was to become an influential promoter of radical pro-capitalist ideas as well as “the Judaeo-Christian moral order.” The foundation quickly attracted major corporate funding from Dow Chemical, General Motors, Pfizer Mobil, Chase, and the Manhattan Bank. Du Pont CEO Charles McCoy became one of the instigators of the Business Roundtable, an exclusive group of CEOs of leading U.S. companies, who planned to use their economic clout to gain access to top government and congressional leaders.

The war chest of funds from wealthy families and corporations provided the seed money for a huge new infrastructure of organizations, think tanks, publications, and “astro-turf” campaigns funded by the wealthy but designed to appear as grass-roots movements. With this massive effort to reshape the debate and politics of America, the wealthy elite was investing in a deliberate long-term strategy — exactly what Powell had called for — realizing that institutions shaped by liberal values wouldn’t change over night, but could be completely overhauled over time through determined push-back from business. The media, owned by business interests, quickly became a helpful collaborator, and the buzzwords of free-market ideology were soon dominating the airwaves. The rightward drift accelerated after media mogul Rupert Murdoch hired former Republican strategist Roger Ailes to launch Fox News in 1996 with an aggressive conservative message that pushed the media concept of balanced coverage ever farther to the right.

The impact on the Republican Party has been the most profound, with conservative money ensuring that moderates in the style of Dwight Eisenhower — or even George H. W. Bush — are increasingly blocked from winning their party’s nominations. The impact of conservative money on the Democratic Party has also been immense. With increasingly expensive political campaigns in the TV age, business gained a huge advantage with cash-hungry Democratic candidates, particularly after labor’s economic clout and financial contributions diminished. As labor faded, the well-financed voices of business grew louder and more persistent, aggressive, and ubiquitous. Democrats became the new scared-e-cats, retreating in lockstep as the conservative juggernaut advanced, putting up scant resistance as the goalposts were moved ever farther to the right. The Democrats largely abandoned support for important labor policies, allowing the minimum wage to languish, supporting trade deals that encouraged privatization and favored corporate interests, and even emerging as the leading proponents of financial deregulation in the 1990s. This brought in huge campaign support from the financial industry, realigning the party with Wall Street, particularly under the influence of powerful Democratic senators Charles Schumer and Joseph Lieberman.

The campaign to roll back the postwar egalitarian advances, starting in the 1970s, gained momentum in the following decades as the rich got vastly richer and invested heavily in a sophisticated political infrastructure to advance their cause. Their political victories not only enriched themselves further but weakened other segments of society, creating economic insecurity for millions of Americans. That insecurity left ordinary Americans frightened, short of resources, and no longer inclined to trust and rely on unions, which seemed increasingly impotent in the face of rising business wealth.

The 2008 financial crash and its brutal aftermath has raised the possibility that the pendulum might swing back, once again diminishing the wealth and power of the elite. This hasn’t happened yet — although the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in the fall of 2011 point to a building storm.

So far, however, the privileged elite have mostly managed to protect and even enhance their financial position, with the Wall Street crowd using its clout to win a massive \$4.7 trillion bailout. The elite have also managed to derail attempts to raise their taxes. The very rich seem poised to dismantle programs that are vital to the well-being of millions of ordinary Americans and that for decades seemed politically untouchable.

Mark Hanna may well have identified a crude truth about American politics when he said "There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money and I can't remember what the second is." Perhaps the second thing, which the Republican strategist so casually forgot, is that it matters how widely money is distributed. We therefore offer up a corollary to Hanna's rule: When money is distributed more equally in society, ordinary citizens speak with louder voices, making meaningful democracy possible.

(Excerpted from *Billionaires' Ball: Gluttony and Hubris in an Age of Epic Inequality* by Linda McQuaig and Neil Brooks. Copyright 2012. Excerpted with permission by Beacon Press. Linda McQuaig, the author of seven best sellers and winner of a National Newspaper Award, has been a national reporter for the *Globe and Mail*, a senior writer for Maclean's magazine, and a political columnist for the *Toronto Star*. The author of three books, Neil Brooks is director of the graduate program in taxation at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto. He has participated in building projects relating to income tax in Lithuania (through the Harvard Institute for International Development), Vietnam (Swedish International Development Agency), Japan (Asian Development Bank), China (AUSAid) and Mongolia (AUSAid).)

20120402-01	06:05	SteveB	"Five Preposterous But Persistent Conservative Myths"
-------------	-------	--------	---

"Five Preposterous But Persistent Conservative Myths" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

Apr. 2, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/five-preposterous-persistent-conservative-myths-1333375542>)

1. Entitlements Are the Problem

Beyond the fact that we're 'entitled' to Social Security and Medicare because we pay for them[!!!!], these two government-run programs have been largely self-sustaining while supporting the needs of millions of Americans.

Medicare is much less costly than private health care. Social Security, which functions with a surplus, would not be in danger of a long-term shortfall if the richest 10% (those making over the \$106,800 cutoff) paid their full share.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities recently reported that 91% of entitlements go to the elderly or disabled, or to members of working households needing supplemental assistance. Only 9% of entitlement dollars go to non-working but employable individuals, and most of that is for medical care, unemployment, and survivor benefits.

2. Charter Schools Are the Answer

Free-market adherents have a lot of people believing that the public school system needs to be 'saved' by charter schools. That belief is not supported by the facts. A Stanford University study "reveals in unmistakable terms that, in the aggregate, charter students are not faring as well as their traditional public school counterparts."

A Department of Education study found that "On average, charter middle schools that hold lotteries are neither more nor less successful than traditional public schools in improving student achievement, behavior, and school progress."

Charter schools also take money away from the public system. For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District loses nearly \$7,000 in state money for each student who transfers to a charter. In Florida, the entire

\$55 million budgeted in 2011 for school maintenance went to charters. Governors in several states plan to direct money to schools that serve upper-middle-income families.

Furthermore, charter school teachers have fewer years of experience and a higher turnover rate, and according to one study were less likely to be certified.

Perhaps most damning are studies by the University of Colorado and UCLA which found that some charter schools segregate students by race and income. Said researcher Gary Miron of Western Michigan University, "Parents are selecting schools where their child will experience less diversity."

3. Corporate Taxes Are Too High

This one is easy. The facts can be found in U.S. Office of Management (OMB) figures, which show a gradual drop over the years in Corporate Income Tax as a Share of GDP, from 4% in the 1960s to 2% in the 1990s to 1.3% in 2010. That's one-third of what it used to be.

Also coming from the OMB is the percent of Total Tax Revenue derived from corporate taxes. The corporate share has dropped from about 20% in the 1960s to under 9% in 2010.

Finally, in a U.S. Treasury report of global competitiveness, it is revealed that U.S. corporations paid only 13.4% of their profits in taxes between 2000 and 2005, compared to the OECD average of 16.1%. A similar PayUpNow.org analysis of 100 of the largest U.S. companies found that less than 10% of pre-tax profits in 2010 were paid in non-deferred U.S. federal income taxes.

Corporate tax avoidance is rampant at the state level, too. A new study by Citizens for Tax Justice, which evaluated 265 large companies, determined that an average of 3% was paid in state taxes, less than half the average state tax rate of 6.2%.

4. Jim Crow Is Dead

Even though white Americans are the nation's most frequent drug users and dealers, the people in jail for these offenses are overwhelmingly black. In some states, African Americans make up 80-90% of all drug offenders sent to prison.

As a nation, we lead the world in rates of imprisonment, and drug offenses have accounted for two-thirds of the increase in federal inmates.

Once drug users are in prison, they're stigmatized for life. As stated by Michelle Alexander, author of "The New Jim Crow": "Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color "criminals" and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind...Once you're labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination - employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, and exclusion from jury service - are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow."

5. Poverty Is Declining Everywhere

There's something disturbing about World Bank researchers using mathematical functions to determine who's living in poverty. But free-market fanatic The Economist liked the results, proclaiming that "poverty is declining everywhere."

That's easy to say when the World Bank gets to set its own poverty threshold, at \$1.25 per day. The organization admits there was little change in the number of people living below \$2 per day between 1981 and 2008. And almost half the world lives on less than \$3 a day.

Another fact is that the rapid growth of China accounts for most of the global poverty changes. China is where hundreds of millions of starry-eyed young people went from zero income on the farms to a few

dollars a day under oppressive factory working conditions. The GDP may show a decline in poverty, but a "quality of life" index wouldn't make that mistake.

6 & 7. Evolution and Global Warming Don't Exist

These are just too preposterous for words.

Progressive activists continue to work toward the day when poverty is down everywhere, and minorities receive equal treatment, and education is properly funded, and tax subsidies rather than entitlements are minimized. But that day is being delayed by make-believe messages from the American conservative.

20120402-02 08:33 GaryF Re: 50's Car Test (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #107)

85% but had guess at lots of the early 50's cars as I must be a lot younger than most of you guys...

20120402-03 08:43 SteveB Re: 50's Car Test (reply to GaryF, above)

Gee, thanks for rubbing it in. From my score, I must be the youngest. I had to guess because I wasn't even born then! Well...I was a baby...

20120402-04 10:53 Ben This Will Stretch Your Imagination

I presume this is an April Fools' posting. But the site is registered to Virgin... so it's an OFFICIAL prank, if prank it is.

A celebrity quote from Tom Hanks, a master of the deadpan, is reassuring in its own way. Seth Green, of course, nails it down.

<http://virginvolcanic.com/>

20120402-05 11:31 Art Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #107)

Wayward thinking?? Not you. Good luck with finding a way to talk to conservatives. For the most part my efforts have been a complete failure. I know it sounds smug, but the problem is they don't really seem to think much, and you are a thinker. Have you noticed while we on the so called "liberal" side wring our hands over the divide in America and actually write things and put down our own particular analysis of some specific issue such as unwed mothers or whatever, they never actually write anything. They just send along some copied e-mail (usually inaccurate) spewing hate and contempt for President Obama or liberals in general? And, if you do point out that the e-mail they sent is wrong by using SNOPEs or FACT or FICTION, they never respond.

Hard to have a conversation under those circumstances.

20120402-11 20:09 Pam Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Art, above)

But there must be SOME intelligent, thoughtful conservatives. David Brooks? George Will? I don't agree with him, but he's not dumb. Nor is William Kristol, though he's even more off base than Will. Maybe I'm a bit like Obama. I think he, too, wants to find a rapprochement with conservatives. It's a shame conservatives don't make more of an effort to convince people, rather than simply trying to scare them and stoke their hatred. I'd be willing to listen to reasonable arguments, but, as you say, Art, I don't hear any. Looks like Newt is finally getting the hook, and about time. I think Romney getting the nomination is a bit like getting a PhD. Everyone knows you're going to get it, but they want to see you suffer first.

20120402-12 21:05 SteveB Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam & Art, above)

It's interesting to me that the right has pretty much deserted the field of logic, rational thinking, and argument. They have cleverly and carefully chosen a field of battle that lies beyond the realms of logical thought. Their arguments go to the guts of people who don't want to bother with logic. Their lies hold no water, yet gain traction.

One small thing that makes me a little hopeful is the way our FotM Group Members from the Right have stood their ground and kept logically arguing their positions until we all understood their views.

NOT! They took their marbles and ran away. Seemingly all of them—friends or not. That's a shame. I thought we were all quite nice to them, especially considering... But since their positions are based on emotion, faith in dogma, outright lies, and manipulation, what can they really contribute, other than the same name-calling over and over? To a Republican, calling an opponent a "socialist" apparently ends the discussion, in their view. (I would love to be proven wrong on this!)

Another small point of hope is that, surely in the fall, R0mney will have to debate the issues, right? He's going to have to deal with logic. Right? Maybe. Yet you will be amazed at the lies which will spill from his patrician, power-hungry lips.

Meanwhile, my working Republicans friends, the billionaires steal more of your money every day. When will it be time to stop believing their lies?

Could you please pass that giant bowl of caviar, please? Thank you. Now go wash and wax my Mercedes.

20120402-07 13:31 Jim "Brain Wiring a No-Brainer?"

How (some of?) our brains are wired...

Fascinating study of the brain and how it is wired.

"Brain Wiring a No-Brainer?" by HIMH (contact: Jules Asher)

Mar. 29, 2012, (<http://www.nih.gov/news/health/mar2012/nimh-29.htm>)

The brain appears to be wired more like the checkerboard streets of New York City than the curvy lanes of Columbia, Md., suggests a new brain imaging study. The most detailed images, to date, reveal a pervasive 3D grid structure with no diagonals, say scientists funded by the National Institutes of Health.

"Far from being just a tangle of wires, the brain's connections turn out to be more like ribbon cables — folding 2D sheets of parallel neuronal fibers that cross paths at right angles, like the warp and weft of a fabric," explained Van Wedeen, M.D., of Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), A.A. Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging and the Harvard Medical School. "This grid structure is continuous and consistent at all scales and across humans and other primate species."

Wedeen and colleagues report new evidence of the brain's elegant simplicity March 30, 2012 in the journal *Science*. The study was funded, in part, by the NIH's National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the Human Connectome Project of the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research, and other NIH components.

"Getting a high resolution wiring diagram of our brains is a landmark in human neuroanatomy," said NIMH Director Thomas R. Insel, M.D. "This new technology may reveal individual differences in brain connections that could aid diagnosis and treatment of brain disorders."

Knowledge gained from the study helped shape design specifications for the most powerful brain scanner of its kind, which was installed at MGH's Martinos Center last fall. The new Connectom diffusion magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner can visualize the networks of crisscrossing fibers — by which different parts of the brain communicate with each other — in 10-fold higher detail than conventional scanners, said Wedeen.

Curvature in this DSI image of a whole human brain turns out to be folding of 2D sheets of parallel neuronal fibers that cross paths at right angles. This picture came from the new Connectom scanner. Source: Van Wedeen, M.D., Martinos Center and Dept. of Radiology, Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard University Medical School

“This one-of-a-kind instrument is bringing into sharper focus an astonishingly simple architecture that makes sense in light of how the brain grows,” he explained. “The wiring of the mature brain appears to mirror three primal pathways established in embryonic development.”

As the brain gets wired up in early development, its connections form along perpendicular pathways, running horizontally, vertically and transversely. This grid structure appears to guide connectivity like lane markers on a highway, which would limit options for growing nerve fibers to change direction during development. If they can turn in just four directions: left, right, up or down, this may enforce a more efficient, orderly way for the fibers to find their proper connections — and for the structure to adapt through evolution, suggest the researchers.

Obtaining detailed images of these pathways in human brain has long eluded researchers, in part, because the human cortex, or outer mantle, develops many folds, nooks and crannies that obscure the structure of its connections. Although studies using chemical tracers in neural tracts of animal brains yielded hints of a grid structure, such invasive techniques could not be used in humans.

Wedeen's team is part of a Human Connectome Project Harvard/MGH-UCLA consortium that is optimizing MRI technology to more accurately to image the pathways. In diffusion imaging, the scanner detects movement of water inside the fibers to reveal their locations. A high resolution technique called diffusion spectrum imaging (DSI) makes it possible to see the different orientations of multiple fibers that cross at a single location — the key to seeing the grid structure.

In the current study, researchers performed DSI scans on postmortem brains of four types of monkeys — rhesus, owl, marmoset and galago — and in living humans. They saw the same 2D sheet structure containing parallel fibers crossing paths everywhere in all of the brains — even in local path neighborhoods. The grid structure of cortex pathways was continuous with those of lower brain structures, including memory and emotion centers. The more complex human and rhesus brains showed more differentiation between pathways than simpler species.

Among immediate implications, the findings suggest a simplifying framework for understanding the brain's structure, pathways and connectivity.

The technology used in the current study was able to see only about 25 percent of the grid structure in human brain. It was only apparent in large central circuitry, not in outlying areas where the folding obscures it. But lessons learned were incorporated into the design of the newly installed Connectom scanner, which can see 75 percent of it, according to Wedeen.

Much as a telescope with a larger mirror or lens provides a clearer image, the new scanner markedly boosts resolving power by magnifying magnetic fields with magnetically stronger copper coils, called gradients. Gradients make it possible to vary the magnetic field and get a precise fix on locations in the brain. The Connectom scanner's gradients are seven times stronger than those of conventional scanners. Scans that would have previously taken hours — and, thus would have been impractical with living human subjects — can now be performed in minutes.

“Before, we had just driving directions. Now, we have a map showing how all the highways and byways are interconnected,” said Wedeen. “Brain wiring is not like the wiring in your basement, where it just needs to connect the right endpoints. Rather, the grid is the language of the brain and wiring and re-wiring work by modifying it.”

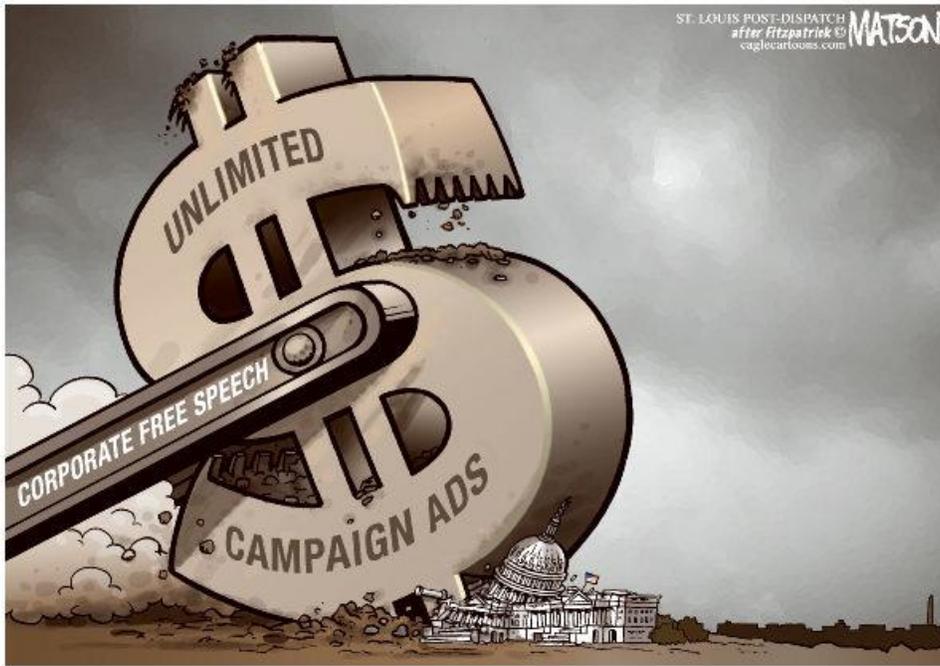
The mission of the NIMH is to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illnesses through basic and clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery and cure. For more information, visit the www.nimh.nih.gov.

The NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research is a cooperative effort among the NIH Office of the Director and the 15 NIH Institutes and Centers that support research on the nervous system. By pooling resources and expertise, the Blueprint supports transformative neuroscience research, and the development of new tools, training opportunities, and other resources to assist neuroscientists.

About the National Institutes of Health (NIH): NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

20120402-08 16:46 SteveG Cartoon: Corporate Free Speech

Government is the prize...



20120402-06 13:26 Marci Fw: Not Wanting to Offend Anyone

What do you think of this thing?

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

When we get 100,000,000, that's one hundred million willing Christians to BOND together, voice their concerns and vote, we can take back America with God's help, Become one of the One hundred million, then lets get 200 million. It can be done by sending this email to your friends. Do the math. It only takes a willing heart and a fed up soul. God Bless America and Shine your light on Her..

In 1952 President Truman established one day a year as a "National Day of Prayer."

In 1988 President Reagan designated the First Thursday in May of each year as the National Day of Prayer.

In June 2007 (then) Presidential Candidate Barack Obama declared that the USA "Was no longer a Christian nation."

This year President Obama canceled the 21st annual National Day of Prayer ceremony at the White House under the ruse Of "not wanting to offend anyone"

BUT... on September 25, 2009 from 4 AM until 7 PM, a National Day of Prayer FOR THE MUSLIM RELIGION was Held on Capitol Hill, Beside the White House.

There were over 50,000 Muslims in D.C. that day.

HE PRAYS WITH THE MUSLIMS!

I guess it Doesn't matter if "Christians" Are offended by this event - We obviously Don't count as "anyone" Anymore.

The direction this country is headed should strike fear in the heart of every Christian, especially knowing that the Muslim religion believes that if Christians cannot be converted, they should be annihilated.

This is not a Rumor - Go to the website To confirm this info: <http://www.islamoncapitolhill.com>

Send this to ten people and the person who sent it to you!...to let them know that indeed, it was sent out to many more.

[Poor, unfortunate, persecuted Christians! Do I detect a lack of trust that I will complete my email work? I guess I'll just send it to all 300 or so of you, readers. Maybe then I will truly be blessed. -SteveB]

20120402-10	20:07	SteveB	Re: Not Wanting to Offend Anyone (reply to Marci, above)
-------------	-------	--------	--

Here are the facts: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/prayerday.asp>.

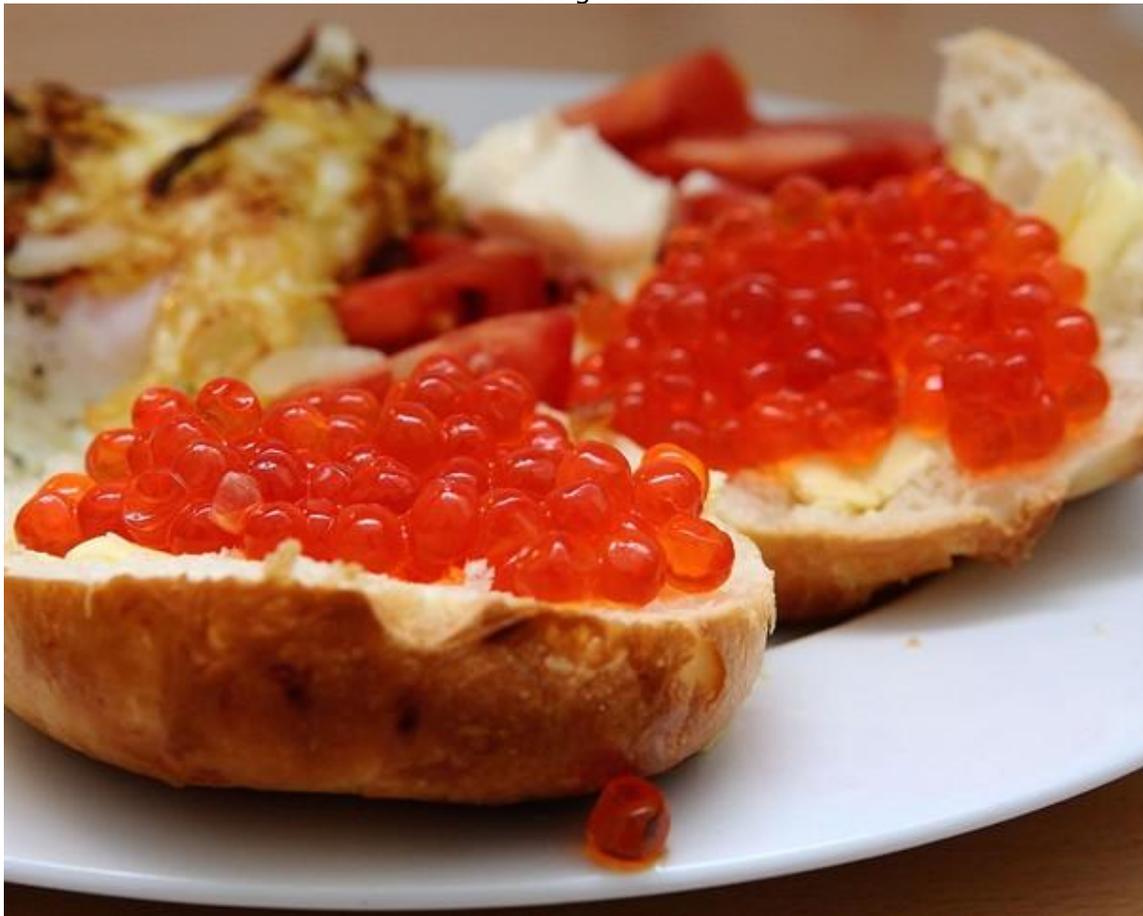
Those Republicans are the world's biggest liars!

[Forget the mashed potatoes and please pass me that caviar! –SteveB]



<http://www.luxury-insider.com/features/2007/fact-file-caviar>

Some billionaires eat nothing but caviar. What a waste!



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #109 — APR. 4, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

Presidential Material? Honestly? LOL!

Now that the Republican race seems about over...

For posterity: Quotes from this most un-presidential (in history?) presidential field of contestants.

All these incompetents kind of remind me of the Canadian "man" determined to become Miss Universe. Donald Trump: "Well...OK...if we have to!"

And, you want to know something? *Citizens United* or not, I don't think there's enough money in the world for any of these goons to buy their way into the White House!

"Craziest Quotes of the 2012 Primaries" by Politico

Mar. 24, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/gallery/2012/03/craziest-quotes-of-the-2012-campaign/000023-000259.html>)

1. Oops

'And let's see. I can't. The third one, I can't. Sorry. Oops.' — Perry, Nov. 9, 2011, freezing on the debate stage as he struggled to remember the third federal government department he planned to cut.

2. Corporate speak

'Corporations are people, my friend.' — Romney, Aug. 11, 2011, to a heckler at the Iowa State Fair.

3. Twirling

'OK, Libya. President Obama supported the uprising, correct? President Obama called for the removal of Qadhafi. Just want to make sure we're talking about the same thing before I say, 'yes I agree,' or 'no I didn't agree.' I do not agree with the way he handled it for the following reason – nope, that's a different one. I gotta go back to, see. I got all this stuff twirling around in my head.' — Cain, Nov. 14, 2011, in response to a question about Libya from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel editorial board.

4. Unemployment

'I don't care what the unemployment rate's going to be. Doesn't matter to me.' — Santorum, March 19, 2011, at a campaign stop in Illinois.

5. Take a bath

'Go get a job right after you take a bath.' — Gingrich, Nov. 19, 2011, speaking about Occupy Wall Street at a 'Thanksgiving Table' forum in Iowa.

6. John Wayne

'Well what I want them to know is just like, John Wayne was from Waterloo, Iowa. That's the kind of spirit that I have, too.' — Bachmann, June 27, 2011, mixing up movie star John Wayne, who was born in Winterset, Iowa, with John Wayne Gacy, the serial killer, who was born in Waterloo.

7. Fire away

'I like being able to fire people.' — Romney, Jan. 9, 2012, while speaking about holding insurance service providers accountable at a Chamber of Commerce breakfast in Nashua, New Hampshire.

8. Things happened

'There's no question at times of my life, partially driven by how passionately I felt about this country, that I worked far too hard and things happened in my life that were not appropriate.' — Gingrich, March 8, 2011, referring to his extramarital affairs and multiple marriages in an interview taped at the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition with CBN's David Brody.

9. 'Blah' people?

'I don't want to make black people's lives better by giving them somebody else's money; I want to give them the opportunity to go out and earn the money.' — Santorum, Jan. 1, 2012, at a campaign stop in Sioux City, Iowa. Santorum said he actually mumbled 'blah' people, not 'black' people as was widely reported.

10. Three words

'My strategy for China is three words: Outgrow China.' — Cain, Oct. 19, 2011, in a speech at the Western Republican Leadership Conference.

11. Tweeter

'And you can always follow me on Tweeter.' — Perry, June. 21, 2011, accepting an award from RightOnline for his work in Texas and his involvement in new media activism.

12. Showing off

'He doesn't quite understand the situation.' — Huntsman, Jan. 7, 2012, speaking Mandarin Chinese during a New Hampshire debate.

13. Obamneycare

'President Obama said that he designed Obamacare after Romneycare and basically made it Obamneycare.' — Pawlenty, June 12, 2011, on 'Fox News Sunday.'

14. 9-9-9

'9-9-9.' — Cain, repeatedly.

15. 'Very poor'

'I'm not concerned about the very poor.' — Romney, Feb. 1, 2012, in a CNN interview after his Florida primary win.

16. What a snob

'President Obama wants everybody in America to go to college. What a snob.' — Santorum, Feb. 25, 2012, speaking to a tea party group in Michigan.

17. The good news

'The good news is, that little plan that I just shared with you doesn't force the Granite state to expand your tax footprint. If you know what I mean. Like 9 percent expansion.' — Perry, Oct. 28, 2011, in a speech at the Cornerstone Action Dinner in Manchester, N.H. that went viral and touched off speculation that he could have been drunk or taking painkillers.

18. \$10K

'Rick, I'll tell you what — ten thousand bucks? Ten thousand dollar bet?' — Romney, Dec. 10, 2011, to Rick Perry during a presidential debate trying to settle a dispute about health insurance.

19. Ubeki...

'And when they ask me who is the president of Ubeki-beki-beki-beki-stan-stan I'm going to say, 'You know, I don't know. Do you know?'" — Cain, Oct. 7, 2011, in an interview with CBN News' David Body.

20. Recanting

'Let me say on the record, any ad which quotes what I said Sunday is a falsehood.' — Gingrich, May 17, 2011, telling Fox News's Greta Van Susteren he made a mistake criticizing Rep. Paul Ryan's budget.

21. Devil's in the details

'When you take the 9-9-9 plan and you turn it upside down, I think the devil's in the details.' — Bachmann, Oct. 11, 2011, at a debate in New Hampshire.

22. Fake

'Because he's a fake.' — Paul, Feb. 22, 2012, responding to CNN's John King's question at a debate why he was running an attack ad calling Santorum a 'fake.'

23. Cars, cars, cars

'I drive a Mustang and a Chevy pickup truck. Ann drives a couple of Cadillacs, actually.' — Romney, Feb. 24, 2012, in a speech to the Detroit Economic Club at Ford Field.

24. Gotta catch 'em all!

'A poet once said, 'life can be a challenge. Life can seem impossible. It's never easy when there's so much on the line.'" — Cain, Aug. 11, 2011, actually quoting Donna Summer's song 'The Power of One' from the film 'Pokémon: The Movie 2000.' Cain frequently quoted the song, most notably in his speech suspending his campaign on Dec. 3, 2011.

25. Politicians to the moon

'Well, I don't think we should go to the moon. I think we maybe should send some politicians up there.' — Paul, Jan. 26, 2012, responding to CNN's Wolf Blitzer's question about his thoughts on the space program at the Jacksonville, Fla. Debate.

26. Bull----

'Quit distorting my words. If I see it, it's bull——.' — Santorum, March 25, 2012, to New York Times reporter Jeff Zeleny when asked about his line that Romney was 'the worst Republican in the country to put up against Barack Obama.'

27. Grandiose

'I think grandiose thoughts.' — Gingrich, Jan. 19, 2012, at the South Carolina Republican debate. [I think you missed a few shades of meaning there, genius. --SteveB]

28. Shucky Ducky

'Aw, shucky ducky!' — Cain, May 21, 2011, officially announcing his presidential bid at a rally in Atlanta.

29. Who doesn't love trees?

'The trees are the right height. I like seeing the lakes. I love the lakes. There's something very special here. The Great Lakes, but also all the little inland lakes that dot the parts of Michigan. I love cars.' — Romney, Feb. 16, 2012, at a campaign stop in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

30. Reflecting on the past

'One of the reasons we fought the revolution in the 16th century was to get away from that kind of onerous crown.' — Perry, Oct. 11, 2011, speaking after a debate on the Dartmouth College campus.

31. Etch A Sketch fallout

'If you're going to be a little different, we might as well stay with what we have instead of taking a risk with what may be the Etch A Sketch candidate of the future.' — Santorum, March 22, 2012, at a campaign stop in San Antonio, Texas.

32. Students as janitors?

'These schools ought to get rid of the unionized janitors, have one master janitor and pay local students to take care of the school.' — Gingrich, Nov. 18, 2011, at an address at Harvard.

33. Another history mixup

'You're the state where the shot was heard around the world at Lexington and Concord.' — Bachmann, March 12, 2011, to a crowd in Manchester, N.H., mixing up Concord, N.H. with Lexington and Concord, Mass.

34. Doggone

'My next door neighbor's two dogs have created more shovel-ready jobs than this administration.' — Johnson, Sept. 22, 2011, at the Fox News-Google debate in Orlando, Fla.

35. Unusual

'This is an unusual interview.' — Romney, Nov. 29, 2011, in a testy interview with Fox News' Bret Baier.

36. 18 or 21?

'Those who are going to be over 21 on November 12, I ask for your support. Those who won't be, just work hard.' — Perry, Nov. 29, 2011, at a town hall meeting at the Institute of Politics at New Hampshire's Saint Anselm's College. [Where the voting age is 18. --SteveB]

37. Nausea

'What kind of country do we live in where only people of non-faith can come in the public square and make their case? That makes me throw up.' — Santorum, Feb. 26, 2011, on ABC's 'This Week.'

38. Tiffany's

'Go talk to Tiffany's.' — Gingrich, May 22, 2011, asked about the \$500,000 he spent at the jewelry store.

39. Koch brothers

'I am the Koch brothers' brother from another mother.' — Cain, Nov. 4, 2011, speaking at an Americans for Prosperity summit in Washington.

40. Unemployed

'I should tell my story. I'm also unemployed.' — Romney, June 16, 2011, after listening to a group of unemployed Floridians talk about their difficulties find a job.

41. Contraception

'One of the things I will talk about, that no president has talked about before, is I think the dangers of contraception in this country.' — Santorum, Oct. 18, 2011, in an interview with CaffeinatedThoughts.com.

42. Appalled

'I'm appalled you would begin a presidential debate on a topic like that.' — Gingrich, Jan. 19, 2011, to CNN's John King after he opened the South Carolina debate asking if Gingrich wanted to respond to the allegations that he asked for an "open marriage" with his ex-wife.

43. Legalize it

'So I advocate legalizing marijuana — control it, regulate, tax it.' — Johnson, May 5, 2011, at the first Republican presidential debate in Greenville, South Carolina.

44. Zoo lover

'When you say to me about really great moments of happiness, it is hanging out at zoos.' — Gingrich, Nov. 8, 2011, in an interview with CNN's Piers Morgan.

45. The fence

'When I'm in charge of the fence, we going to have a fence. It's going to be 20 feet high. It's going to have barbed wire on the top. It's going to be electrocuted, electrified. And there's going to be a sign on the other side that says it will kill you.' — Cain, Oct. 15, 2011, talking about the United States-Mexico border at a rally in Tennessee. A day later, he called the proposal a joke.

46. Enormous success

'Obama is an enormous success — the most successful food stamp president in American history.' — Gingrich, May 13, 2011, in a speech to the Georgia Republican convention.

47. Tutti-frutti

'I'm not going to say it. I'm not going to say it. ... Tutti-frutti. I know I'm going to get in trouble!' — Cain, on what ice cream flavor would best describe Michele Bachmann in a mid-October interview with GQ that ran in the Dec. 2011 issue.

48. Woodrow Wilson [Oops! --SteveB]

'Washington has abused the Constitution. You go back to the, a decade ago, with Woodrow Wilson.' — Perry, Nov. 29, 2011, in an interview with CNN citing Pres.

49. Pink slip

'I know what it's like to worry whether you're going to get fired. There were a couple of times I wondered whether I was going to get a pink slip.' — Romney, Jan. 8, 2012, speaking at a rally about sharing the anxiety of workers worried about losing their jobs.

50. 'Delicious?' [What a worldly guy! --SteveB]

'How do you say 'delicious' in Cuban?' — Cain, Nov. 16, 2011, in a question to reporters in Miami.

20120403-01 08:19 Charis "For Bolivian Farmers, Quinoa Boom Is Both Boon & Bane"
--

Quinoa, now known as one of the world's Super Foods is creating land conflicts, environmental problems, and a decline in local consumption in Bolivia.

"For Bolivian Farmers, Quinoa Boom Is Both Boon and Bane" by Jean Friedman-Rudovsky, *Time*

Apr. 3, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/bolivian-farmers-quinoa-boom-both-boon-bane-093806693.html>)
(<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2110890,00.html>)

As a child, Benjamin Huarachi, 55, ate quinoa almost every day, as a matter of practicality. The crop is one of few that thrive on Bolivia's high plains, 13,000 ft. (4,000 m) above sea level, explains the farmer. His impoverished family had no idea that the colorful tall tufts yield one of the healthiest foods on the planet. Nor did Huarachi imagine that his childhood staple would one day bring economic success. "Quinoa was always comida para los indios [food for Indians]," he says, almost laughing, "Today it's food for the world's richest."

Over the past decade, the "Andean superfood" has become a pinnacle product for First World foodies. Often mistaken for a grain, quinoa is actually a chenopod (cousin to a beet); rich in minerals, it's the only vegetable that's a complete protein. To the added delight of politically correct health nuts, it's produced by small-scale Andean farmers like Huarachi who reap direct benefits of its international popularity. Recently, those benefits have skyrocketed: quinoa's price has tripled since 2006, triggering a boom in the poorest region of South America's poorest country. "Now we've got tractors for our fields and parabolic antennas for our homes," says Huarachi, who's also a board member of Bolivia's largest quinoa-growers association, ANAPQUI.

Growers relish in the moment and the attendant prosperity. "My quinoa sells like hotcakes," says Fidencia Huayllas, grinning. She's spent her boom cash on expanding her mud-and-brick home. Seventy percent of the region's high school graduates can now afford to attend university, Huarachi says, "thanks to quinoa." He leans forward, face brightening: "In 1983, 100 lb. of quinoa sold for 25 bolivianos -- the price a T-shirt. Now that sack goes for \$100 [700 bolivianos]. That's a lot of T-shirts."

But the windfall could become a double-edged sword. In February, violence over prime quinoa-growing territory left dozens injured, and land conflict is spreading. "Sure, the price of quinoa is increasing," says Carlos Nina, a local leader in Bolivia's quinoa heartland, "but so are our problems." Apart from increasing feuds over property rights, these include the collapse of the traditional relationship between llama herding and soil fertilization, with potentially disastrous consequences of quinoa's "organic" status, and the ironic twist that the children of newly prosperous farmers no longer like eating quinoa, contributing to dietary problems.

According to historians, quinoa cultivation originated in the Altiplano around 3,000 B.C. Legend says it was a gift from the gods to the indigenous Aymara: a highly nutritious crop as small compensation for being saddled with one of earth's harshest climates. (It's an easy story to believe, since only divine intervention seems to explain how anything could sprout from the high plateau's rocky, sandy soil.)

The present from the heavens has always been a base of the Andean diet, but only recently did the crop begin its international journey. In 1993, NASA researchers recommended it as part of a potential space-colony diet. Over the following decade, the food gained wider appeal, going from hippie hype to Costco convenient practically overnight. "Quinoa was in the eye of the storm," says Bolivian-born Sergio Núñez del Arco, founder of Andean Naturals, the U.S.'s largest quinoa importer, explaining that the product fit almost every recent health craze: whole grain, gluten-free, fair trade, organic.

Approximately half the world's supply is now grown in Bolivia. (Peru is a close second, Ecuador third.) "We worked hard to keep quinoa out of the hands of middlemen," says ANAPQUI's general secretary Ciprian Mayorga inside the association's processing plant, the entrance to which is now manned by an armed private security guard. Members' harvests arrive there, where a thorough washing removes the seeds' bitter outer layer before its direct export to the U.S. and Europe. Strong growers' unions have also kept multinational agro companies at bay. Production remains family based, average plots range from 1 to 15 hectares (2.5 to 37 acres). Free of genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, Bolivia's export is 90% organic. This fair-trade model has elevated the superfood's image. "You can feel good about drinking well," says reviews for France-based Fair's new (Bolivian-grown) quinoa vodka, echoing virtually every quinoa ad campaign out there. Consumers feel confident supporting a product with just roots.

But despite good intentions, a dangerous cycle may be under way. "When you transform a food into a commodity, there's inevitable breakdown in social relations and high environmental cost," says Tanya Kerssen, a food-policy analyst for the U.S.-based food and development institute Food First. February's conflict is a harbinger, notes Kerssen. Global warming has led to fewer frosts, resulting in more prime land available for quinoa cultivation. That has led to a near free-for-all. For three days in February, hundreds of farmers fought over what was once abandoned land. Four people were temporarily kidnapped, dozens were injured and, according to local leader Nina, a dynamite blast left one man armless. "I've never seen anything like this in my life," says Nina, 70, adding that since the government is ignoring pleas for military monitoring of the upcoming harvest, the situation will likely worsen.

What's more, territorial bickering is spreading. "Every week, I visit two or three communities with land disputes related to quinoa," says Nina, who, as mallku (traditional indigenous authority) must resolve these quarrels personally. Many families don't have land titles, he explains -- they weren't needed when the ample arid soil was communal herding ground. Also, quinoa's high sale price is prompting a reverse migration of those who had long ago abandoned the Altiplano, triggering property disagreements.

Environmental problems are emerging too. Traditionally, quinoa fields covered 10% of this fragile ecosystem, llamas grazed on the rest. Now, llamas are being sold to make room for crops, provoking a soil crisis since the cameloid's guano is the undisputed best fertilizer for maintaining and restoring quinoa fields. (Other options like sheep poop appear to encourage pests.) Increased production also means erosion and strains on limited water sources. "It's frightening to think that a region that has sustained Andean civilizations for millennia could become sterile," says Kerssen.

Equally troubling is the fact that growers themselves are eating less of their gift from the gods. Last year, the Bolivian government acknowledged that national quinoa consumption over the previous five years had decreased

34%. Now there's worry of malnutrition in the quinoa heartland as growers admit that it's tempting to sell their entire harvest while prices are high.

But, they add, decline in rural consumption can't be blamed entirely on price spikes. "My kids eat quinoa -- because they are obligated to," says Huarachi, explaining that the next generation simply prefers Coca-Cola over homemade quinoa soda, cookies over quinoa bread. Ironically too, growers note that as villagers climb out of poverty, a badge of upward mobility is the replacement of the nutritious comida de indios with processed "city" foods.

The Bolivian government says it includes quinoa-based products in school breakfasts and maternal-nutrition baskets nationwide. "We've got people in [the Amazon] eating quinoa," says Bolivia's Vice Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture, Victor Hugo Vásquez, explaining that before quinoa's mass production for export, Bolivians outside of the western highlands didn't even know it existed. The government also provides low-interest loans to small farmers, aiming to increase production, which could eventually make the product more affordable there.

But it may be too little too late, says Kerssen: "Quinoa is now a free-market phenomenon. This is a boom, and there's definitely going to be a bust."

20120403-02	08:35	SteveB	Re: "For Bolivian Farmers, Quinoa Boom Is Both Boon & Bane" (reply to Charis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

You've really been doing a great job with Bolivian news on your website (<http://www.boliviabella.com>).

Thanks a bunch, girl!

20120403-03	08:37	Art	Re: Canadian Billboards are Hilarious! (reply to Marci, FotM Newsletter #108)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Terrific!!

20120403-04	11:58	Pam	Re: Canadian Billboards are Hilarious! (reply to Marci, FotM Newsletter #108)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Very amusing, but I doubt they're "real." Last time I looked, Canada had a law against billboards. I HATE billboards, and our state had a huge controversy over them some years ago. It was always such a pleasure to go from highways lined with billboards big enough to house entire families to Ontario, where you could actually see the scenery.

20120403-05	13:37	Beth	Re: Not Wanting to Offend Anyone (reply to Marci, FotM Newsletter #108)
-----------------------------	-------	------	---

I have already seen this one debunked, though I don't remember where. Fox News nonsense.

Further. among those of us who call ourselves Christians, not all of us have the same political convictions.

20120403-06	16:26	SteveB	Fw: USAction Petition: Make the 1% Pay Their Fair Share!
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

from USAction:

Tax Day is in just two weeks and this year the Senate will vote on whether the ultra-rich will finally pay their fair share.

Up for a vote is Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse's "Paying A Fair Share Act" which would make it so millionaires and billionaires paying lower tax rates than the middle class would have to pay a 30 percent effective tax rate.¹

Already, the support for this bill has been huge. Earlier this year we delivered over 50,000 petitions to Sen. Whitehouse in support of his bill to tax the ultra-rich. And new polls show over 73 percent of Americans support the Buffett Rule — a rule making sure people like Warren Buffett don't pay a lower tax rate than their Secretaries.²

But it's not Sen. Whitehouse and progressive champs like him that we need to convince. If we're going to make the Buffett Rule the law of the land, we need to convince moderate Democrats and even some Republicans.

Will you check if your Senators are on board with the Buffett Rule yet — and if not, ask them to sign on as a cosponsor today?

http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=314&track=email_2859&Email=friendsinthemiddle@hotmail.com

In addition to your letters, a number of our affiliates will have secretaries and other 99ers deliver petitions in person to Senators' district offices to send the message home.

Right now, a dozen Senators are already signed on as sponsors. Many more agree, but haven't signed on yet.

Help us get the cosponsors we need to break a filibuster and pass the Buffett Rule. Every letter you send helps because whether your Senator fights for the 1% or the 99%, they all know that if you're willing to write them a letter, you're willing to talk to friends and family about why the ultra-rich should pay their fair share.

And in an election year, showing politicians that we know their voting record and are willing to speak out is the best tool we have to make change. Send your Senators a personal message asking them to cosponsor the Buffett Rule.

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

¹<http://thehill.com/blogs/on-the-money/domestic-taxes/207515-senate-dems-push-buffett-rule-bill>

²<http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/09/poll-73-percent-support-the-buffett-rule-including-66-percent-of-republicans.php>

20120403-07	18:29	Art	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletters #107-108)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Here's a thought. As I think I mentioned,. I enjoy (not quite the word I want by OK) looking at the letters attached to a news article or also in my case on Speaker of the House Bonehead's blog (long story here for another time). At any rate, the one thing that strikes me, as we have discussed previously, is the vicious dislike for President Obama contained in these "letters" but never any substance to go with it. "We need to make sure that communist, NAZI, atheist, Moslem, anti Christian never serves another term." Never why, just the hatred.

Why?? One thing I do hear from time to time is the President is arrogant and speaks down to people. He certainly is very smart and I can see how some could take it that way. So here's a theory. I know this is going to sound a bit condescending but it seems to fit. In my limited experience the people who I know who seem to express such hatred for the President are all from what I would call the limited intelligence group. Many have college degrees of some sort but not advanced degrees. Of course many have no degrees at all. They rail at the President's use of a teleprompter but conveniently forget the debates with McCain where he handed McCain his debating head without any teleprompter. In their hearts they know the President is much smarter than they are and they think that he thinks that, and that is why they hate him. Of course, the fact he has black skin makes it that much worse. Bright, smart, well educated people are not put off by the President's intelligence but the less bright ones are.

I didn't say this very well but just out of curiosity think about your group. Do the really bright well educated and well traveled ones support the Democrats and the others the Republicans? Might be a clue to unravel the mystery.

[20120403-09](#) 19:27 Pam Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Art, above)

Americans are so anti-intellectual. We adulate athletes who are thugs but disdain anyone with a Harvard degree. You can always tell an insecure man by whether he's intimidated by a smart woman or not. One reason I always liked Clinton was that he liked Hillary (at least some of the time). All this posturing and caterwauling about "elitism" is just a screen for a massive case of inferiority complex--as I see it. We have to assert that we're No. 1, because if we didn't, no one else would. I love it that Obama is smart. I love it that Stephen Hawking is smart. I even love it that Steve Jobs was smart, though he may have been less than sympatico. WHY is intelligence the great no-no?! Thanks for calling a spade a spade, Art.

[20120403-08](#) 18:52 Dennis Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Art, above) & Cartoon: Obamacare

from Art:

At any rate, the one thing that strikes me, as we have discussed previously, is the vicious dislike for President Obama contained in these "letters" but never any substance to go with it. "We need to make sure that communist, NAZI, atheist, Moslem, anti Christian never serves another term." Never why, just the hatred.

I think the following may illustrate your point, Art:



[20120403-10](#) 19:28 Pam Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Dennis, above)

Brilliant.

[20120403-11](#) 19:36 Dennis Video: Powerful Speech on Climate Change

Listen to what this young woman told these UN delegates in Durban....

Hopefully it got their attention.

Video: "This Amazing Young Lady Stuns UN Delegates With A Powerful Speech" posted by Brandon, MoveOn.org

Apr. 3, 2012, (<http://front.moveon.org/this-amazing-young-lady-stuns-un-delegates-with-a-powerful-speech/>)

She finishes in great style with a technique made popular by Occupy Wall Street. Watch:

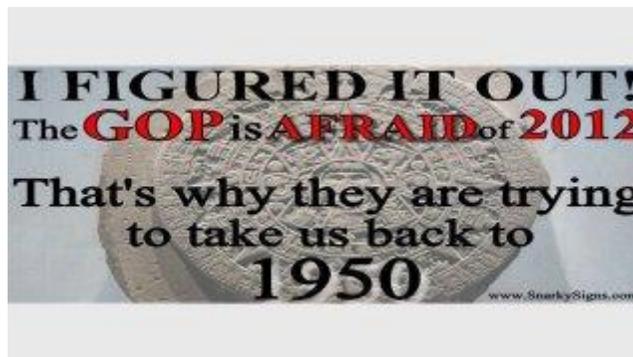
[20120403-12](#) 19:55 SteveG Video: Martin Sheen: Stand Up for Medicare

Take a listen:

Video: "Martin Sheen Calls Out The Fear Mongers In Under Two Minutes" posted by Jayne, MoveOn.org

Apr. 2, 2012. (<http://front.moveon.org/martin-sheen-calls-out-the-fear-mongers-in-under-two-minutes/#.T3uKGEdaGhc.facebook>)

[20120403-13](#) 21:24 SteveG Bumper Sticker: GOP Is Afraid of 2012



[Or maybe 1850! With slavery. Taxes were way too high for the 1% in 1950. That's why we had the "golden age".
-SteveB]

<http://technorati.com/lifestyle/article/quinoa-supergrain-of-the-andes/>

Field of harvest-ready quinoa (Bolivia)



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #110 — APR. 5, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

The Obligations of American Companies Like Apple

The argument that American companies, or even their uber-rich CEOs, owe nothing to American society is ludicrous. It is past time for the chickens to come home and roost. The model of using China, or any other country, to rape America must end.

"Apple Has an Obligation to Help Solve America's Problems" by Clyde Prestowitz, CNN

Apr. 3, 2012, (http://edition.cnn.com/2012/04/03/opinion/prestowitz-apple-jobs/index.html?iid=article_sidebar)

(Apple should realize that what is good for the company can also be good for the American economy, says Clyde Prestowitz.)

Editor's note: Clyde Prestowitz is the founder and president of Economic Strategy Institute. A former counselor to the commerce secretary in the Reagan administration, Prestowitz is the author of *The Betrayal of American Prosperity* and blogs about the global economy at Foreign Policy.)

Americans have become used to the fact that most of the jobs created by Apple are in China. We know that Steve Jobs told President Barack Obama that "those jobs aren't coming back." Recently, an executive at Apple said that the company has no obligation to solve America's problems by moving some of those jobs back to the United States.

As a business, Apple has a right to fear that moving the assembly work from China to the United States will entail raising labor costs so high as to make the company less competitive and profitable. But for it to say that it has no obligation to help solve America's problems is completely unacceptable.

Virtually every piece of technology in any Apple product had its origin or was partially developed on the basis of a U.S. government-funded program. In a global world where piracy of products is commonplace, Apple, like other multinationals, has continuously pressed the U.S. government to enforce copyright and patent laws to protect its intellectual property from international theft. Does Apple owe anything to Uncle Sugar? You betchum. Big time.

Skeptics are right to point out that moving the factory assembly operations to the United States is a nonstarter as long as we continue to have free trade with China. These kinds of jobs are labor-intensive, and the differential in the cost of labor between America and China is just too large. But this is not where the real value or the good jobs we want for Americans lies.

The assembly value in an iPhone is only about \$7. The real treasure-trove is in the parts. For example, the displays, the processors, memory chips and other key electronic components comprise nearly half of the value of the iPhone.

These components require intensive capital and technology investments, but they do not require a great amount of labor. In other words, they can all be produced in America. Indeed, according to a recent study by Booz and Co., to supply the U.S. market, the most competitive location in which to produce these components is the United States.

At the moment, however, Apple is not procuring most of these parts in America. With a few exceptions, the company is getting them from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, China or Germany.

Let's take Gorilla Glass, a product made by Corning Inc. of Corning, New York, that is used as the display for the iPhone and iPad as well as many other smartphones and tablets. Corning can and does make that glass in America.

But to gain access to China's market, Corning is pressured by the Chinese government to make Gorilla Glass in China so that it can be used in any Chinese factory that makes a product that needs the glass. Basically, Corning must invest and produce in China, even though, in my estimates, it might be less expensive to make Gorilla Glass in America and export it to China. The same is true for other assembly line parts.

So what should Apple do?

We know that Samsung, a South Korean supplier, had started to produce a key processor for Apple in Austin, Texas. That's a good first step. Apple should go further by telling other suppliers that it wants more components to be made in America. One advantage for this move is that it can create an environment in which more research and development is possible, which in turn can strengthen overall innovation for Apple.

Apple should also move some of its assembly operations to Mexico. Mexican labor isn't as cheap as Chinese labor, but after one adjusts for the differences in the cost of shipping, establishing assembly-line factories in Mexico should be quite acceptable from a financial and quality perspective. By moving more production of advanced components to America and the human labor to Mexico, more jobs will be added to North America and help reduce the U.S.-Mexican trade deficit, which is about \$55 billion annually. And by having the assembly work just over the border, Apple can ensure that costs can be kept under control.

As Apple is trying to get out of the recent controversy surrounding its suppliers' labor practices in China, where workers put in more than 60 hours a week, the world's most highly valued company would do well to consider how best to spend and invest its \$100 billion cash pile. It needs to realize that what is good for Apple can also be good for the American economy.

20120404-01	10:34	Art	Re: Powerful Speech on Climate Change (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #109)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

THIS IS FABULOUS!!!!

Really worth a listen. Note the timetable.

20120404-02	11:06	Art	Re: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #109)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

From Art (Apr. 4, 2012, 11:06 am)—reply to Dennis, Apr. 3, 2012, ref: Why Labels Can Be Misleading (Cartoon)

Finally it makes sense. I have found the real logic for Republican objections to health care. Now it all fits.

20120404-03	12:48	SteveB	"The Corporate Media Crisis: Everything Old is New Again"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

"The Media Is the Message" —Marshall McLuhan (another Canadian)

"The Corporate Media Crisis: Everything Old is New Again" by Robert Jensen, NationofChange

Apr. 4, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/corporate-media-crisis-everything-old-new-again-1333545674>)

(More than ever, it's important to understand the forces that constrain good journalism.)

These days there's one political point on which one can usually get consensus: Mainstream journalists are failing. In common parlance, most everyone "hates the media." But there is little agreement on why journalism might be inadequate to the task of engaging the public in a democratic society. More than ever, it's important to understand the forces that constrain good journalism.

In *Prophets of the Fourth Estate: BroadSides by Press Critics of the Progressive Era*, editors Amy Reynolds and Gary Hicks look back to the press criticism of the Progressive Era for help in that project. In the material they've collected and analyzed, we can see how the problems of a corporate-commercial media system go back more than a century.

In my Foreword to the book, I try to identify some of the key limitations of the contemporary media system and emphasize the importance of this work to the project of deepening democracy.

The managers of commercial news organizations in the United States love to proclaim their independence from the corporate suits that sign their paychecks. Extolling the unbreachable "firewall" between the journalistic and the business sides of the operation, these editors and news directors wax eloquent about their ability to pursue any story without interference from the corporate front office.

"No one from corporate headquarters has ever called me to tell me what to run in my paper," one editor (let's call him Joe) told me proudly after hearing my critique of the overwhelmingly commercial news media system in the United States.

I asked Joe if it were possible that he simply had internalized the value system of the folks who run the corporation (and, by extension, the folks who run the world), and therefore they never needed to give him direct instructions.

He rejected that, reasserting his independence from any force outside his newsroom. I countered:

"Let's say, for the purposes of discussion, that you and I were equally capable journalists in terms of professional skills, and we were both reasonable candidates for the job of editor-in-chief that you hold. If we had both applied for the job, do you think your corporate bosses would have ever considered me for the position given my politics? Would I, for even a second, have been seen by them to be a viable candidate for the job?"

Joe's politics are pretty conventional, well within the range of mainstream Republicans and Democrats – he supports big business and U.S. supremacy in global politics and economics. In other words, he's a capitalist and imperialist. I am on the political left, anti-capitalist, and critical of the U.S. Empire. On some political issues, Joe and I would agree, but we diverge sharply on the core questions of the nature of the economy and foreign policy.

Joe pondered my question and conceded that I was right, that his bosses would never hire someone with my politics, no matter how qualified, to run one of their newspapers. The conversation trailed off, and we parted without resolving our differences.

I would like to think my critique at least got Joe to question his platitudes, but I never saw any evidence of that. In his subsequent writing and public comments that I read and heard, Joe continued to assert that a news media system dominated by for-profit corporations was the best way to produce the critical, independent journalism that citizens in a democracy needed. After he retired from the paper, he signed on as a "senior adviser" with a high-powered lobbying/public relations firm, apparently without a sense of irony, or shame.

The collapse of mainstream journalism's business model has given news managers less time to pontificate as they scramble to figure out how to stay afloat, but the smug, self-satisfied attitude hasn't changed much.

As a former journalist, I certainly understood Joe's position. When I was a working reporter and editor, I would have asserted my journalistic independence in similar fashion, a viewpoint that reflected the dominant assumptions of newsroom culture. We saw ourselves as non-ideological and uncontrolled. We knew there were owners and bosses whose political views clearly were not radical, and we knew we worked in a larger ideological system. But we working journalists were convinced that we were not constrained.

It was not until I got some critical distance from the daily grind of journalism that I learned there were compelling analyses of the news media that questioned those assumptions I had taken for granted. That media criticism, which had taken off in the 1970s on the heels of the progressive and radical social movements of the '60s, was a rich source of new insights for me, first as a graduate student and later as a professor.

But that was only part of my education about the political economy of journalism. As is so often the case, I needed to look to the past to better understand the present. While I had immersed myself in contemporary criticism, I had been slow to look at history, and turning to the critiques of journalism from the progressive/populist era of the early 20th century proved fruitful. Early critics of the commercial news media were pointing out the ways that media owners' interest in profit undermined journalists' desire to serve the public interest. Owners and managers are interested in news that serves the bottom line, while journalists are supposed to be pursuing news that serves democracy.

The writings collected and analyzed in this volume provide that historical context. This material is important for the ways it reminds us of a simple truth: An overwhelmingly commercial, for-profit media system based on advertising will never adequately serve citizens in a democracy. But while history helps us recognize simple truths, it does not lead to simplistic predictions – we study history not only to identify the continuities, but also to help us understand the effects of the inevitable changes in institutions and systems.

Indeed, news media and society as a whole have changed over the century. Most obvious are the recent economic changes that have undermined the business model of commercial media. Newspapers and broadcast television stations were wildly profitable through the 20th century, which subsidized an annoying cockiness on the part of owners, managers, and working journalists. Competition from digital media has wiped that smug smile off the face of mainstream journalism, leaving everyone scrambling to come up with a new model. But to focus only on the recent economic crisis would be to miss other trends in the past century that are at least as important.

Reporters who were once members of the working class have become quasi-professionals, and that professionalization of journalism has had effects both positive (elevating ethical standards) and negative (institutionalizing illusory claims to neutrality). Too often journalists in the second half of the 20th century acted as part of the power structure rather than critics of it, as reporters and editors increasingly identified with the powerful people and institutions they were covering rather than being true adversaries.

In the 21st century, the idea of professional journalism – whatever its problems and limitations – is under assault from a pseudo-journalism driven by right-wing ideology. The assertion that the problem with media is that they are too liberal is attractive to many ordinary people who feel alienated from a centrist/liberal elite, which appears unconcerned with their plight. But the right-wing populism offered up by conservatives obscures the way in which elites from that perspective are equally unconcerned with the struggles of most citizens.

So, we sit at a strange time: Professional journalism is inadequate because of its ideological narrowness and subordination to power, but the attacks on professional journalism typically are ideologically even narrower and are rooted in a misguided analysis of power. Some of us are tempted to applaud the erosion of the model of professional journalism we find inadequate for democracy, but a more politicized model for journalism likely will follow the right-wing propaganda that has dominated in the United States in recent decades.

Does history offer insights as we struggle to create a more democratic news media? My reading of the past century leaves me focused on two points.

First, we have to be clear about what we mean by "democracy." The elites in the United States prefer a managerial conception of democracy based on the idea that in a complex society, ordinary people can participate most

effectively by choosing between competing groups of political managers. A participatory conception understands democracy as a system in which ordinary people have meaningful ways to participate in the formation of public policy, not just in the selection of elites to rule them.

Second, we must recognize that expansions of individual freedom do not automatically translate into a deepening of democracy. Though legal guarantees of freedom of expression and political association are more developed today, there is less vibrant grassroots political organizing compared with the United States of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In other writing I have referred to this as the "more freedom/ less democracy" paradox, and it is central to understanding the perilous political situation we face. (see *Citizens of the Empire: The Struggle to Claim Our Humanity* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004), Chapter 4, "More Freedom, Less Democracy: American Political Culture in the Twentieth Century," pp. 55–76.)

The lesson I take away: Real democracy means real participation, which comes not from voting in elections or posting on blogs, but from **a lifelong commitment to challenging power from the bottom up.**

The problem, in short, is not just a media that doesn't serve democracy, but a political, economic, and social system that doesn't serve democracy. Paradoxically, radical movements have over the past century won an expansion of freedom, but much of the citizenry has become less progressive and less politically active at the grassroots. Concentrated wealth has adapted, becoming more sophisticated in its use of propaganda and skillful in its manipulation of the political process.

Journalism's claim to a special role in democracy is based on an assertion of independence. The corporate/commercial model puts limits on journalists' ability to follow crucial stories and critique systems and structures of power. Flinging the doors open to a more ideological journalism in a society dominated by well-funded right-wing forces will not create the space for truly independent journalism that challenges power.

The simple truth is that a more democratic media requires a more democratic culture and economy. The media critics in this volume articulated that idea in the context of their time. We need to continue that tradition.

20120404-04	13:50	SteveB	"Measure Progress in Happiness, Not Money, Bhutan Urges"
-------------	-------	--------	--

Bhutan: Happiness is more important than money...

"Measure Progress in Happiness, Not Money, Bhutan Urges" by Haider Rizvi, NationofChange

Apr. 4, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/measure-progress-happiness-not-money-bhutan-urges-1333548769>)

("Gross national happiness (GNH) is more important than gross domestic product.")

"We are starting a global movement on this issue," Jigme Thinley, the prime minister of Bhutan, told IPS after a high-level meeting on "Happiness and Well-being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm" held at United Nations (U.N.) headquarters in New York on Monday.

Thinley said he wants the international community to realise that a paradigm shift in addressing the issue of sustainability in both the environment and global development is urgently needed.

The prime minister explained that in his country, "gross national happiness" is a development paradigm that has guided its development for several decades. He said hoped the world community would embrace that model.

The phrase "gross national happiness" was first coined in 1971 by the fourth king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who declared, "Gross national happiness (GNH) is more important than gross domestic product."

That concept implies that sustainable development should not depend solely on economic aspects of wellbeing as it addresses the notion of progress.

Since then, the idea of GNH has influenced Bhutan's economic and social policy and also captured the imagination of others far beyond its borders. According to Bhutanese officials, their country has created a system of measurement that would not only be useful for policymaking but would also create policy incentives for the government, non-governmental organisations and businesses to increase GNH.

The GNH index incorporates traditional areas of socio-economic concern, such as living standards, health and education, as well as less traditional aspects of culture and psychological wellbeing.

"It is a holistic reflection of the general wellbeing of the Bhutanese population rather than a subjective psychological ranking of 'happiness' alone," said Thinley.

Bhutan has developed nine domains – psychological wellbeing, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards – that help measure GNH.

So what kind of results does the GNH index give?

According to the 2010 GNH index, 41 percent of Bhutanese qualified as "happy". The remaining 59 percent ranged from "narrowly happy" to "unhappy", with 47.8 of the totally population characterised as "narrowly happy". Happy people have sufficiency in six out of the nine domains.

"Deeply happy" people – about eight percent – enjoyed sufficiency in seven or more of the nine domains, officials said.

A measure of gross national happiness might be presumed to comprise a single psychological question on happiness such as, "Taking all things together, would you say you are: very happy, rather happy, not very happy, or not at all happy?"

Bhutanese officials debunked this myth, however. "The objectives of Bhutan, and the Buddhist understandings of happiness, are much broader than those that are referred to as 'happiness' in the Western literature," they said in a press note.

In 2011, the U.N. unanimously adopted a General Assembly resolution, introduced by Bhutan with support from 68 member states, calling for a "holistic approach to development" aimed at promoting sustainable happiness and wellbeing.

This week, the high-level meeting on "Happiness and Wellbeing" brought together world leaders, development experts and civil society representatives to develop a new economic paradigm based on sustainability and wellbeing.

"It's imperative that we build a new, creative guiding vision for sustainability and our future," said Nasir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, president of the General Assembly. "That will bring a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach."

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said gross domestic product (GDP) has long been "a yard stick by which economies and politicians have been measured. Yet it fails to take into account the social and environmental costs of so-called progress."

Gross national product, or GNP, is often contrasted with Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While GNP measures the output generated by a country's enterprises (whether physically located domestically or abroad) GDP measures the total output produced within a country's borders - whether produced by that country's own firms or not, according to the government of Bhutan.

When a country's capital or labour resources are employed outside its borders, or when a foreign firm is operating in its territory, GDP and GNP can produce different amounts of total output. In 2009, for instance, the United States estimated its GDP at 14.119 trillion dollars, and its GNP at 14.265 trillion.

Reflecting on the fact that the Himalayan kingdom introduced the new ways of looking at national prosperity, Vinanda Shiva, a leading human rights and environmental activist from India told IPS, "It's an important event. It cannot be ignored."

Her compatriot Asghar Ali Engineer added, "What happiness we are talking about here? If we are talking about happiness of all human beings, we must change this (global) economic system."

So long as patterns of consumption continue, he said, "I don't think that millions of people around the world will be happy."

"We should not be deprived of happiness. We have oceans of tears in this world. This model of development is not sustainable," added Alexander Likhotal from Russia.

The chairperson of the meeting on happiness, Helen Clark, former prime minister of New Zealand, urged the U.N. to provide a platform for success stories about how to measure global advancement in sustainable development.

The prime minister of Bhutan told IPS that he attend a U.N. summit on sustainable development, commonly called the Rio+20 summit, in Rio de Janeiro in June. There, he said, he would urge policymakers to consider Bhutan's idea about happiness.

"That will be a historic moment," he told IPS. "I will make a request to the Secretariat to adopt a holistic approach towards development. I hope the U.N. will adopt this new paradigm."

20120404-05 23:59 SteveB Photos: Bhutan

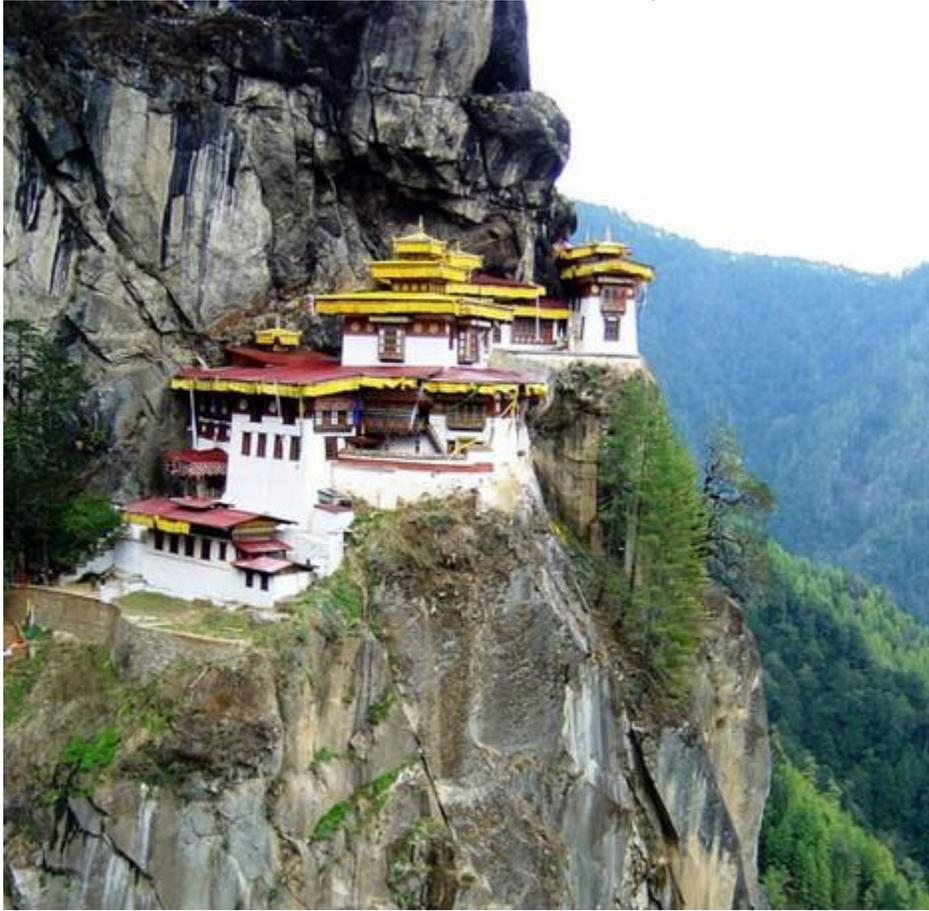
<http://www.lifeawayfromlife.com/bhutan.htm>

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

(source: LifeAwayFromLife.com)



(source: HimalayanTours.com)



(source: Zimbio)



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #111 — APR. 6, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

Mr. Etch-A-Sketch Romney Erased Himself—Oops!

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

One more thing, Mitt, the Russians are our natural friends and allies. Don't blow it, stupid.

"To Win GOP Nomination, Mitt Romney Erased His Only Credential" by Joe Conason, *The National Memo*

Apr. 5, 2012. (<http://www2.nationalmemo.com/romney-erased-credentials/>)

Mitt Romney raised eyebrows by delivering a speech on Wednesday suggesting that President Obama is an unreliable figure, devoid of principle, program, and purpose. "He wants us to re-elect him," the presumptive GOP nominee practically sneered, "so we can find out what he will actually do." Someone clearly advised him that an audacious attack on Obama's character would please the partisan base, distract voters from his own opportunistic gyrations, and create space for him to draw a new, flattering, resolute portrait of himself.

But as a presidential nominee who spent most of the primary season erasing his own political record, Romney may already have eliminated any positive rationale for his candidacy. After disowning the most important programs and positions he advocated as Massachusetts governor, what can he present as his qualifications for the presidency? Please don't say Bain Capital, because the nation is in no mood to elevate a ruthless private equity mega-millionaire into the Oval Office. And don't say Summer Olympics, because that doesn't sound quite big enough for a would-be leader of the free world.

Adopting the favored cliché of conventional politics, Romney's friends and advisors — even his wife Ann — assure us that he will now pivot toward the broader electorate, returning to positions that once marked him as an acceptably moderate Republican. When everyone learns his true views, we won't have to worry about his pandering to the Tea Party, the religious extremists and the corporate right. But even if he can persuasively distance himself from the far right on such issues as contraception — the surprise controversy that reopened the partisan gender gap — he will not be able to retrieve the gubernatorial record he has discarded.

Romney's obsessive erasure of his own achievements began before the last presidential cycle, while he prepared to enter the 2008 Republican primary. During those years, he notoriously shifted long-held positions on abortion, stem cell research, gay rights, illegal immigration, and other key issues in an effort to outflank John McCain on the right. The makeover went well beyond social issues. Having vowed in 2003 that he would never sign Grover Norquist's anti-tax pledge as governor, he signed the same pledge with a flourish four years later. And having spent millions of taxpayer dollars in the pursuit of alternative energy sources to replace fossil fuels as a hedge against climate

change in 2003, he spun around to denounce such notions in a 2007 press release. His enthusiasm for fossil fuels — and his disdain for “green jobs” — can scarcely be matched today by Sarah “Drill Baby” Palin.

If Romney can convince voters of his newfound right-wing orthodoxy, that won't help him explain why he should be president. Given the partisan gridlock that has confronted the inexperienced Obama, a candidate boasting of success as Republican governor of a Democratic state could arguably offer an alternative. But while Romney often talks about his role in working with legislators of the other party, he can no longer describe what they did without eroding his own party's enthusiasm. Certainly he cannot “pivot” back to the universal health coverage that became his signature accomplishment — a bill that inspired the Obama administration's insurance mandate and required substantial state spending (and taxes) to achieve its worthy objective. Indeed, he hasn't been able to talk about the goal of universal coverage, which is simply unacceptable to the “let 'em die” ideologues of the Tea Party. He can't even brag too loudly about eliminating the state's budget deficit because that too involved increasing taxes — or hiking fees and closing loopholes for the wealthy, viewed with equal contempt in his party.

Reforming health care and balancing budgets frame the entirety of Romney's single term as governor. The final blow to any bipartisan credibility that Romney might still retain came when he endorsed the “marvelous” Ryan budget, a plan that undermines both of those goals while symbolizing the dysfunctional divisiveness of the Republican Congressional majority.

Maybe he should start talking about the Olympics after all. It isn't an impressive credential for the American presidency — but when the summer games begin, at least he won't have to pretend that he never supported them.

20120405-01 10:18 SteveG “Frustrated and Desperate, Bankers Form Super PAC”

“Frustrated and Desperate, Bankers Form Super PAC” by Matt Taylor, *The National Memo*

Apr. 4, 2012, (<http://www2.nationalmemo.com/frustrated-and-desperate-bankers-form-super-pac/>)

Though most of us don't think of bankers as struggling to make their voices heard in Washington, they felt compelled to form a Super PAC last September to launch “surgical” strikes on enemies and reward friends who look out for their interests.

“Congress isn't afraid of bankers,” Roger Beverage, the president and CEO of the Oklahoma Bankers Association, told American Banker. “They don't think we'll do anything to kick them out of office. We are trying to change that perception.”

Apparently the no-strings-attached bailout of America's major financial institution, a decade of lax regulation, and tepid attempts at reigning in their most abusive practices in the wake of the economic collapse is just too much for these folks to handle. They're being bullied, and they won't have it.

“Clearly there are Members of Congress who have absolutely no reservations about kicking traditional banks in the teeth, and we are tired of it,” said Howard Headlee, the president and chief executive officer of the Utah Bankers Association. “We've got to be able to defend the folks who have the courage to stand up for us as well.”

He has a point about courage. With polls showing banks (and the people who run them) not exactly beloved in America, it takes a certain amount of chutzpah to trumpet the cause. And complaining that key members of Congress aren't listening closely enough won't make these guys any more popular.

The big question going forward is who gets targeted most aggressively. Elizabeth Warren, the populist consumer champion basing her Massachusetts Senate campaign on lingering resentment against Wall Street banks, is a good bet.

20120405-02 10:25 SteveG Fw: Credo Action Petition: Fight Against Voter Suppression

from Credo Action:

For years, the right wing has been trying to stop people of color, young people, and seniors from voting in order to help Republicans get elected — and now some of America's biggest companies are helping them do it.

These companies have helped pass discriminatory voter ID legislation by funding a rightwing policy group called the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Voter ID bills linked to ALEC have already passed in seven states, and similar voter ID bills have been introduced in 27 other states.

That's why we're joining our friends at Color of Change and calling on "ALEC corporations" to remove their support of this rightwing organization.

Tell these companies to stop funding ALEC and its attempt to disenfranchise millions of voters.

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=5545775&id=37830-3891339-M6CL9Cx&t=10>

And momentum is on our side. Coca-Cola, an ALEC Corporation, announced yesterday that it will no longer support ALEC because of its support for discriminatory policies like voter ID bills.

Supporters of discriminatory voter ID laws claim they want to reduce voter fraud (individuals voting illegally, or voting twice). But such fraud almost never actually occurs, and never in amounts large enough to affect the result of elections. What is clear is that voter ID laws prevent large numbers of eligible voters from casting a ballot, and could disenfranchise up to 5 million people.

ALEC's voter ID laws are undemocratic, unjust and part of a longstanding right wing agenda to weaken the voting blocs that historically oppose Republican candidates. We have to expose the major companies who are helping ALEC suppress the votes of millions of Americans before it's too late.

Tell these companies to stop funding ALEC and its attempts to disenfranchise millions of voters.

The truth is that voter ID laws are discriminatory — African Americans, Latinos, seniors, students, and the poor are all less likely to have the photo IDs necessary to vote under these laws. For example, if you've recently moved because of foreclosure or some other economic circumstance, you're more likely to have an address that is not your current residence on your license. If you don't have a car, you're less likely to have a driver's license in the first place.

In many states, it can be expensive and time consuming to secure the proper ID. Even when the ID itself is free, it often requires supporting documents like a birth certificate which cost money to achieve. There are already stories of voters who have been eligible to vote for years who are now struggling to navigate a frustrating bureaucratic maze in order to vote.

Requiring ID to vote amounts to a modern day poll tax. And that's the real purpose of voter ID laws — they are an important part of the modern effort to suppress the votes of groups that usually vote against rightwing politicians.

Some of the companies supporting ALEC may simply be unaware that the group is involved in voter suppression. Others might think that voter suppression will benefit their political interests, and hope that they can get away with supporting it because so few people have even heard of ALEC.

Our friends at Color of Change have already started reaching out to these companies to make sure they know what they're supporting, and to demand that they stop. Adding your voice to this campaign will help us convince these companies that continuing to support ALEC will hurt their reputation with consumers.

We hope that many of them will simply do the right thing and stop supporting ALEC. If they don't, we'll be prepared to shine a spotlight on them and make sure the world understands what they're involved in.

Tell these companies to stop funding ALEC and its attempt to disenfranchise millions of voters.

Thank you for standing up against voter suppression.

Becky Bond, Political Director, CREDO Action from Working Assets

[20120405-03](#) 10:50 Pam Re: Powerful Speech on Climate Change (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #109)

The young lady is brave, smart, and absolutely correct. My guess is the vast majority of Americans (or anyone) who listened to her speech would be engaged and inspired. Certainly the vast majority of scientists would concur with her remarks. Will her speech affect policy? I very much doubt it. We can be inspired all we want, but until "the people" take it upon themselves to exert irresistible pressure on the higher-ups, five years will pass, and we will have passed the point of no return. I do not believe masses of people will go down without a fight. The deposed president of the Maldives is begging the international community to address climate change or else his nation will disappear beneath the waves. As the earth heats up, and water supplies shrink, oil will be the least of our worries. We're already used to paying a dollar or more for a bottle of the stuff. As the super-wealthy everywhere retreat further and further into their gated communities and privileged access to the earth's limited resources, they risk plunging the rest of the world population into barbarism, and it won't be long before the barbarians are at the gates.

I feel like that young woman: passionate and committed. But I know she does more in a week to address climate change than I have in a lifetime. It is her generation that will save us, and we should listen carefully to what they have to say. The only thing that keeps me from utter despair is belief in the smart young people who know no other world than an endangered one. Our generation was focused on space; theirs will be focused on something much closer. Our generation (the '60s--in both senses, time and age) was idealistic. Idealism belongs to the young; they don't yet know just how f---d up the world actually is and haven't given up. They have energy, and they have less to lose than a retiree on a fixed income. I spent my career working with young adults. To be sure, there were plenty of dunderheads among them. But even at my mid-size, mid-level university there were brilliant, ambitious, highly moral kids who were ready to take on any challenge. One of my students started a campus organization to "Save Darfur." It was very effective in making people aware of the crisis and raising money to help alleviate it. I was fortunate to end my career teaching Honors students, who are admittedly in a special category, but I know there are enough like them to make a difference. I'm going to trust them and hope for the best.

[20120405-04](#) 10:53 Pam Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #101)

Obama better spell all this out for the public when he campaigns. I'm tired of slogans about hope and change and American values and "real" conservatism. I want to hear the Democrats spell out exactly why the Republicans are wrong and exactly what it is they're trying to do. Why isn't this sort of information all over the mainstream news?

[20120405-07](#) 11:14 Art Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare (reply to Pam, above)

I think part of the problem is that some of us, me for one, think the eligibility age for Medicare and Social Security should be gradually raised. Those age limits were set some time ago when life expectancy was much shorter and people were not nearly as healthy as they are today. "50 is the new 30, 60 is the new 40"??? As near as my personal experience can tell "70 is still 70" but that's another story.

I think the President knows this and knows that any path to get out of the deficit bind leads to an increase in the age eligibility levels for Medicare and Social Security, so best to not get to holier than thou on this particular subject. What I do resent is the Republican's obvious duplicity in carefully trying to hide that fact in their goofy budget plan. What is even more egregious is the tax breaks for the rich, which eat up any deficit reduction opportunities, then the weak (and probably dishonest) claim that they will make this up but eliminating tax

loopholes. But, when asked what loopholes, they suddenly can't name any just now. It's the same crap with Bonehead back before the 2010 election when he claimed he would reduce spending by \$100B in the budget but, when asked where he would cut, refused to provide any details. In other words, he never really had a plan. Do all of these guys think we are all that stupid?

[20120405-08](#) 11:28 Pam Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Art, above)

Yeah, they do think we're that stupid. Romney keeps saying that Obama has been a disaster for the economy (he saved us from a Great Depression and a complete meltdown of the financial system, whether or not you admire what Wall St. did) and that he, Romney, knows how to fix it. And.... That's it. He "knows how." If he knows so much, why doesn't he let the rest of us in on it? If he has ideas, let us hear them. "I know what it's like to run a company," is not a reason to be President.

I agree, Art, that the age for retirement and SS should be raised, though I'm grateful as all get out that I was able to retire at 62, thanks to my sweet husband. I also agree that 60 is the new 40, but I beg to differ about 70 still being 70. Now that that milestone looms closer and closer (are you 70, Art?), I think of 70 as only the VERY early stages of getting old. I think it was V.S. Pritchett who said that one nice thing about getting older was that so many more women were attractive to you. Twenty-five year olds have pretty limited choices generally, when you come to think about it. But a 60 year old man can have his pick if he plays his cards right. Besides, that picture of you on the slopes doesn't look like a 70 year old to me.

[20120405-13](#) 12:08 SteveB Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Pam & Art, above)

Well...before we start lowering the age...let's remember:

Social Security is actually pretty solid. It only needs modest changes and Congress to stop raiding it to be fine for quite some time, based on what I've been reading (see FotM Newsletter #108, ref: Myths Conservatives Tell Each Other):

Beyond the fact that we're 'entitled' to Social Security and Medicare because we pay for them[!!!!], these two government-run programs have been largely self-sustaining while supporting the needs of millions of Americans.

Medicare is much less costly than private health care. Social Security, which functions with a surplus, would not be in danger of a long-term shortfall if the richest 10% (those making over the \$106,800 cutoff) paid their full share.

Medicare...well...the whole system needs fixing, right? Let President Obama do that. I mean, please allow him to do that, my Republican friends. Let him use his gigantic brain and the resources available to him to craft his historical legacy, a working, reasonable health care system that includes ALL Americans and legal immigrants. No one else. Period. All others pay top dollar.

We only need to Democratize Congress by electing Democrats (oh, and re-elect President Obama), then let the Supreme Court strike down Obamacare, which I'm afraid is going to happen, then let the big, dark guy have at it. I think he would do as good a job as can be done. I believe he is a smart, just, fair man. That's what this problem needs. Not the ignoramuses on the Right side of the SCOTUS.

Then let's get to work on this damned energy crap. Get 'er done! Private enterprise can never solve a problem like this alone. Correct government action is essential. Any other view is idiotic. Excuse me.

See how simply everything is when you make it sound simple? What...? But, seriously...there is much at stake, is there not?

20120405-14 12:18 SteveB Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to all, above)

There have been no gains at all in life expectancy since the last eligibility ages were put into effect...when...a few years ago?

In fact, with what we eat, what lazy pigs we are, global warming, GMOs, increasing pollution and background radiation levels, and our rapidly declining health care system, isn't life expectancy about due to decrease?

I'm in favor of calling the Republicans' bluff, digging our heels in, and saying, "Read my lips. No more conservatism! It nearly killed us!"

I'm not in favor of increasing the retirement age any more than I am in favor of reducing the minimum wage. And if the silver-haired block can't win this one, all is lost.

From the SS website (<http://www.ssa.gov/pressoffice/IncRetAge.html>)

- The 1983 Amendments phased in a gradual increase in the age for collecting full Social Security retirement benefits. The retirement age will increase from 65 to 67 over a 22-year period, with an 11-year hiatus at which the retirement age will remain at 66.
- The original Social Security Act of 1935 set the minimum age for receiving full retirement benefits at 65.
- Congress cited improvements in the health of older people and increases in average life expectancy as primary reasons for increasing the normal retirement age.
- Since the program first began paying monthly Social Security benefits in 1940 the average life expectancy for men reaching age 65 has increased nearly 4 years to age 81; for women reaching age 65, their average life expectancy has increased nearly 6 years to age 84.
- The average age for men retiring in 1998 was 64. The average age for women retiring in 1998 was 64. In 1998, nearly 69% of men and women retired and started taking Social Security benefits before age 65.

20120405-15 13:07 Pam Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to SteveB, above)

I'd be willing to compromise at, say, 66, but I guess that's where the retirement age already is, at least for people my age. I've been retired for three years, and I can't imagine still working today. People should go out while they're still ahead, before they inevitably decline. Ten years ago I was an energetic, enthusiastic teacher. The last couple of years, I'd lost my oomph. It was time to go. We should also move over and give the young ones a chance. It's very hard to find a job as a college professor. If more of the older ones would retire, there would be room for the next generation, or at least more room.

[20120405-17](#) 13:33 Art Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Pam & SteveB, above)

<u>Year of birth</u>	<u>Normal retirement age</u>
1937 and prior	65
1938	65 and 2 months
1939	65 and 4 months
1940	65 and 6 months
1941	65 and 8 months
1942	65 and 10 months
1943 to 1954	66
1955	66 and 2 months
1956	66 and 4 months
1957	66 and 6 months
1958	66 and 8 months
1959	66 and 10 months
1960 and later	67

[This represents the phasing in of the 1983 changes. Prior to that, it was 65 period. –SteveB]

Well, I'm probably outnumbered here but I think the age for retirement was 65 in 1937 and went up to 67 in 1970, so not a lot of change for the 75 years it's been around. To get out of the deficit mess, we will have to address social security and medicare/medicaid. I'll leave it at that.

[20120405-18](#) 13:46 SteveB Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Art & Pam, above)

But social security contributes not one penny to the deficit, so how bad can it be, even if it might contribute in the distant future, only because the Congress forgot the "insurance" part of Social Security. It's all a guess and a crap shoot based on economic forecasts...much worse than weather forecasts, especially when you get out a few years.

And, actually, the Social Security retirement age went up recently. I don't think you can retire at 62 any longer, or not for much longer. But all the more reason not to raise it again, with life expectancy possibly falling.

And I agree with Pam. If any of you aren't retired and don't absolutely love your job to death, get out, do something different, you'll be happy you did. Life is short.

[20120405-20](#) 14:31 Pam Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to SteveB, above)

I like your last paragraph. Maybe I'm wrong, but I have the feeling that retiring is harder for men than for women. Our work defines us in so many ways, and women, having multiple roles throughout their lives, find it easier to let one of them go. My theory anyway. Maybe it's like jumping into a swimming pool: at first you're reluctant, then you make the leap and it's shocking, and finally you feel comfortable in a new element and don't want to get out.

[20120405-25](#) 19:43 SteveB Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to Pam, above)

"I'm gonna tell you how it's gonna be!..." (Buddy Holly)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DOE-oGX8BA&feature=relmfu>

Don't fade away. "Rage!" "Courage!"

But I like the idea of the old stepping aside for the young, when they can...though there'd always be a lot of individual considerations there...

Most importantly, as you know and as the song says, "Love will not fade away." It is the one thing that will not. Not necessarily because of any Heaven or Afterlife, but because of what you have an opportunity to leave in the world, in the hearts of those who know you.

20120405-16	13:26	SteveG	Re: The Republican Plan for Medicare/Social Security (reply to all, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

In 2009 you could retire at 62, but I waited until I was 63. Good decision, left some money on the table for the next guy.

20120405-05	10:54	Art	Re: The Obligations of American Companies Like Apple (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #110)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Interesting article on Apple but not sure I agree. Apple is a corporation. It's sole purpose is to make money, period. How it does and where it does it is all secondary to the only real goal, 'to make money'. We need to recognize that and quite fooling ourselves that any corporation has any "obligation" other than that. Once we establish that as a fact (I always hesitate at these absolutes but this is pretty much one) then we can see what we as citizens and humans can do to make sure we don't get run roughshod over. There is a lot we could do with tax structure for overseas production, personal income taxes, which is where so much of the money goes, tax incentives for production in America, etc etc that would address these issues. Of course, that requires governmental actions and that is what separates from our conservative brethren. Hmmmm?

20120405-09	11:30	SteveB	Re: The Obligations of American Companies Like Apple (reply to Art, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

I agree with you. Corporations are things we invented to produce and make money as efficiently as possible. Like a robot or any common machine. And I think we want this monomaniacal nature of the beasts to continue.

But, just as with seatbelts, nutritional labeling, ingredients in medicines, or even paying modest taxes, corporations have to be dragged out into the public square and horse-whipped to get them to do anything beneficial to anyone but their investors.

Hence, correct action must be made to be beneficial to investors, and hence, your "government actions". So warranted. So necessary.

And, at the same time, we, as consumers, have the power of the marketplace at our disposal, should we care to use it. In the case of a company like Apple, with great products, that becomes a little more sacrificial, especially personally.

BUY AMERICAN! (Whenever humanly possible!) If that's not PC, sorry!

20120405-06	11:04	SteveB	Gomez
-----------------------------	-------	--------	-------

The most underrated band in the world. As one of the comments says:

Gomez= 5 amazing songwriters, 3 amazing vocalists, 13 yrs together, great live shows & gorgeous acoustic renditions of any song in their catalog.....they fly just under the radar whilst being true to their art.....GREAT BAND!!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvKGt05DOE0&feature=related> ("Whatever's on Your Mind" — live)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOeD6Rqn_y0&feature=related ("How We Operate" — live)

20120405-22 15:16 Norm Re: Gomez (reply to SteveB, above)

Pretty nice! I heard them somewhere else. Yet I cannot remember where. I would place them with my Blues Traveler. Hoping for setting 'da mood'. :)

20120405-24 16:01 SteveB Re: Gomez (reply to Norm, above)

Hey, I like Blues Traveler too. And for setting the mood you might like this Gomez cover:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bv9ifdhTc&feature=related>

Enjoy your listening. Ain't music great?

20120405-10 11:46 SteveG Fw: Daily Kos Petition: No Feces in My Food, Please!

from Daily Kos:

In an attempt to keep the American people from eating sh*t (literally), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently inspects all chicken and turkey carcasses for things like bruises, bile and feces before they are sent to further processing.

However, the USDA is now considering a pilot program that would eliminate that inspection and allow private poultry processing plants to do whatever they want. The USDA is holding a public commenting period on this proposed change through April 26.

Please, click here to sign our petition opposing the privatization of poultry inspection. We will submit your signatures and comments to the USDA before the April 26 deadline.

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=109

Why is the USDA considering this change? To cut government jobs and allow private companies to make millions:

In an article from early March, *Food Safety News* dug up a study [PDF] showing the program is projected to save FSIS up to \$95 million over three years, and to give a \$250 million boost to poultry companies.

And the result of this will be Americans eating shit, literally. When a privatization program like this was tried out in the 1990s, the crap that ended up in the food was gag-worthy:

The inspection category that had the highest error rate was for dressing defects such as feathers, lungs, oil glands, trachea, and bile still on the carcass. The average error rate for this category in the chicken slaughter facilities was 64 percent and 87 percent in turkey slaughter facilities.

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers, Daily Kos

20120405-11 11:48 SteveG Fw: Consumers Union Petition: Speak-Up for Medical Implant Tracking

Undeniable!

from Consumers Union:

Last week you showed the nation that consumers want fair, affordable health care, and that you will fight for your new rights. This week, show the lobbyists that you won't stand for their loopholes that make your health care less safe!

We recently asked Americans if medical implants should be tested for safety before they're put into our bodies. The results are undeniable – 91 percent of you want them to be safety tested first.

And 95 percent want implants tracked, so if they go bad or get recalled, Americans who have them can be quickly notified.

But are your leaders listening to what you want? Draft bills just released in Congress to revamp our medical device safety laws do neither. Instead, they keep many of our current safety loopholes, continuing to put us all at risk.

Tell your Senators to listen to the people! Your voice can help shape this law:

<https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=2643&JServSessionIdr004=128nrg1ip1.app244a>

You may not think this issue impacts your life, but think again. Some 47 percent of people Consumer Reports recently polled say a family member or friend has an implant. Yet lap bands, knee and hip replacements, pacemakers and heart stents aren't held to the same safety standards as prescription drugs – and you can stop taking those if there is a problem!

Congress' decision will dictate safety over the next five years as more of these products flood the market. Industry wants the status quo – which includes no pre-market safety testing of most medical devices, and no national registry so patients with implants can be notified if they go bad.

We must change this. The Senate bill is stronger than the House version, but still needs a lot of work. Your Senator sits on the committee shaping it. Industry lobbyists are knocking on their doors every day. We need you to do the same by sending a quick message now.

Send an email – your Senator is working on this bill, and what you say matters!

Numbers also matter in Washington, D.C., which is why it's so important we get as many consumers to weigh in as possible. If you have friends and family in your state who could lend their voice, please forward this to them. Thank you!

Sincerely, Lisa McGiffert, SafePatientProject.org

20120405-12	11:49	SteveG	Fw: The Daily Share
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---------------------

from The Daily Share:

Here are the three hottest progressive videos and graphics that we found on the web today:

Video: "A Message from Willie Nelson We Can't Afford to Ignore"

<http://front.moveon.org/a-message-from-willie-nelson-we-can%25E2%2580%2599t-afford-to-ignore/?rc=daily.share&id=38698-18997482-WnnF9Jx>.

Graphic: "These Five Guys Bribed Congress and Got \$20 Billion Dollars for It"

<http://front.moveon.org/these-five-guys-bribed-congress-and-got-20-billion-dollars-for-it/?rc=daily.share&id=38698-18997482-WnnF9Jx>.

Graphic: "The Secret That Colonel Sanders Gets But Women Who Vote Republican Don't"

<http://front.moveon.org/the-secret-that-colonel-sanders-gets-but-women-who-vote-republican-dont/?rc=daily.share&id=38698-18997482-WnnF9Jx>.



20120405-19 14:09 SteveG "The Assault on Public Education"

"The Assault on Public Education" by Noam Chomsky, NationofChange

Apr. 5, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/assault-public-education-1333634007>)

Public education is under attack around the world, and in response, student protests have recently been held in Britain, Canada, Chile, Taiwan and elsewhere.

California is also a battleground. The Los Angeles Times reports on another chapter in the campaign to destroy what had been the greatest public higher education system in the world: "California State University officials announced plans to freeze enrollment next spring at most campuses and to wait-list all applicants the following fall pending the outcome of a proposed tax initiative on the November ballot."

Similar defunding is under way nationwide. "In most states," *The New York Times* reports, "it is now tuition payments, not state appropriations, that cover most of the budget," so that "the era of affordable four-year public universities, heavily subsidized by the state, may be over."

Community colleges increasingly face similar prospects – and the shortfalls extend to grades K-12.

"There has been a shift from the belief that we as a nation benefit from higher education, to a belief that it's the people receiving the education who primarily benefit and so they should foot the bill," concludes Ronald G. Ehrenberg, a trustee of the State University system of New York and director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute.

A more accurate description, I think, is *Failure by Design*, the title of a recent study by the Economic Policy Institute, which has long been a major source of reliable information and analysis on the state of the economy.

The EPI study reviews the consequences of the transformation of the economy a generation ago from domestic production to financialization and offshoring. By design; there have always been alternatives.

One primary justification for the design is what Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz called the “religion” that “markets lead to efficient outcomes,” which was recently dealt yet another crushing blow by the collapse of the housing bubble that was ignored on doctrinal grounds, triggering the current financial crisis.

Claims are also made about the alleged benefits of the radical expansion of financial institutions since the 1970s. A more convincing description was provided by Martin Wolf, senior economic correspondent for *The Financial Times*: “An out-of-control financial sector is eating out the modern market economy from inside, just as the larva of the spider wasp eats out the host in which it has been laid.”

The EPI study observes that the *Failure of Design* is class-based. For the designers, it has been a stunning success, as revealed by the astonishing concentration of wealth in the top 1 percent, in fact the top 0.1 percent, while the majority has been reduced to virtual stagnation or decline.

In short, when they have the opportunity, “the Masters of Mankind” pursue their “vile maxim [**all for ourselves and nothing for other people**,” as Adam Smith explained long ago.

Mass public education is one of the great achievements of American society. It has had many dimensions. One purpose was to prepare independent farmers for life as wage laborers who would tolerate what they regarded as virtual slavery.

The coercive element did not pass without notice. Ralph Waldo Emerson observed that political leaders call for popular education because they fear that “This country is filling up with thousands and millions of voters, and you must educate them to keep them from our throats.” But educated the right way: Limit their perspectives and understanding, discourage free and independent thought, and train them for obedience.

The “vile maxim” and its implementation have regularly called forth resistance, which in turn evokes the same fears among the elite. Forty years ago there was deep concern that the population was breaking free of apathy and obedience.

At the liberal internationalist extreme, the Trilateral Commission – the nongovernmental policy group from which the Carter Administration was largely drawn – issued stern warnings in 1975 that there is too much democracy, in part due to the failures of the institutions responsible for “the indoctrination of the young.” On the right, an important 1971 memorandum by Lewis Powell, directed to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the main business lobby, wailed that radicals were taking over everything – universities, media, government, etc. – and called on the business community to use its economic power to reverse the attack on our prized way of life – which he knew well. As a lobbyist for the tobacco industry, he was quite familiar with the workings of the nanny state for the rich that he called “the free market.”

Since then, many measures have been taken to restore discipline. One is the crusade for privatization – placing control in reliable hands.

Another is sharp increases in tuition, up nearly 600 percent since 1980. These produce a higher education system with “far more economic stratification than is true of any other country,” according to Jane Wellman, former director of the Delta Cost Project, which monitors these issues. Tuition increases trap students into long-term debt and hence subordination to private power.

Justifications are offered on economic grounds, but are singularly unconvincing. In countries rich to poor, including Mexico next-door, tuition remains free or nominal. That was true as well in the United States itself when it was a much poorer country after World War II and huge numbers of students were able to enter college under the GI bill – a factor in uniquely high economic growth, even putting aside the significance in improving lives.

Another device is the corporatization of the universities. That has led to a dramatic increase in layers of administration, often professional instead of drawn from the faculty as before; and to imposition of a business culture of “efficiency” – an ideological notion, not just an economic one.

One illustration is the decision of state colleges to eliminate programs in nursing, engineering and computer science, because they are costly – and happen to be the professions where there is a labor shortage, as The New York Times reports. The decision harms the society but conforms to the business ideology of short-term gain without regard for human consequences, in accord with the vile maxim.

Some of the most insidious effects are on teaching and monitoring. The Enlightenment ideal of education was captured in the image of education as laying down a path students follow in their own ways, developing their creativity and independence of mind.

The alternative, to be rejected, is the image of pouring water into a vessel – and a very leaky one, as all of us know from experience. The latter approach includes teaching to test and other mechanisms that destroy students' interest and seek to fit them into a mold, easily controlled. All too familiar today.

Copyright 2012 Noam Chomsky

20120405-21	14:54	Charis	"US Man Sits 10 Months in Bolivian Jail, Uncharged"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

The future of the U.S.? Or the present?

[From the "You Think You've Got It Bad Department". –SteveB]

"US Man Sits 10 Months in Bolivian Jail, Uncharged" by Frank Bajak, AP

Apr. 5, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/us-man-sits-10-months-bolivian-jail-uncharged-155902559.html>)

(SANTA CRUZ, Bolivia) Jacob Ostreicher, a New York businessman, has been confined for 10 months in one of Bolivia's most unruly prisons without being charged. He has shed more than 30 pounds, helpless to do anything as, he alleges, the multimillion-dollar rice farming venture he managed has been plundered.

At more than two dozen hearings, prosecutors have presented no evidence to back their allegations that the 53-year-old American may have been laundering drug money.

And this week, the presiding judge quit the case, likely meaning more weeks of delay.

"This is the scam of the century," Ostreicher said by telephone afterward. "I feel like I've been hijacked and kidnapped by people who are hiding behind the law."

The prosecutor would not discuss Ostreicher's complaints with The Associated Press. Nor would senior Bolivian officials, though U.S. diplomats have appealed to them to try to extract Ostreicher from the legal labyrinth.

The troubles began when Ostreicher and a group of Swiss partners decided to invest \$25 million to grow rice in Bolivia's eastern lowlands four years ago.

Andre Zolty, one of the Swiss investors, said the idea came from a Colombian lawyer, Claudia Liliana Rodriguez, who had done some work for him in Geneva while a student.

"I made a big mistake to trust that woman," Zolty said.

Some of the land that Rodriguez bought for the venture turned out to belong to the brother of a drug trafficker who had escaped from a Brazilian prison and who, the investors say, became romantically and financially entwined with her.

When the investors suspected they were being defrauded, they dispatched Ostreicher to investigate. He wound up firing and suing Rodriguez.

The drug trafficker, Maximiliano Dorado, was deported in early 2011 to Brazil, where he is back in prison. Rodriguez was subsequently jailed in Bolivia, accused of money laundering.

The 32-year-old woman would not agree to an interview, though her lawyer, Oswaldo Flores, said her relationship with Dorado was strictly commercial and she did not know he was a drug trafficker when she bought the property.

Dorado's connection to the rice venture, led authorities to Ostreicher.

During the June 4 hearing at which he was ordered jailed, prosecutor Jeanette Velarde said the American had made investments with "capital of dubious origin."

But as the months have stretched out, officials have never produced enough evidence to warrant formal charges — and have ignored information to the contrary, the investors say.

According to a court transcript, Velarde said Zolty was under "investigation in Switzerland and other countries for the alleged laundering of money from illicit drug sales."

Zolty obtained a letter from Swiss federal police last year saying he faced no criminal investigations. The Associated Press confirmed its authenticity and also checked with New York police on Ostreicher, who said they found no record of wrongdoing.

Velarde told the AP last month that the case remained in a "preparatory phase" because she was waiting for bank records from Switzerland, Argentina and the United States detailing the investors' holdings.

Ostreicher and Zolty say they have provided all requested banking records, in Ostreicher's case more than 1,000 documents.

The New Yorker said that since his imprisonment, nearly 40 million pounds (18,000 metric tons) of his venture's rice was seized in the name of Dircabi, the government agency that manages assets frozen in criminal investigations.

"And nobody knows where it is and nobody knows who got the money and for how much money it was sold," Ostreicher said.

Arrest warrants were issued in January for three men accused of falsifying documents in the case. They include a former Dircabi employee who allegedly forged a letter allowing the rice to be taken. The agency's regional director has been suspended and is under investigation.

Ostreicher says his only guilt is in being naive about doing business in the poor, landlocked South American nation.

He has been through five lawyers and two judges, had more than 30,000 acres (15,000 hectares) of land frozen and has been unable to prevent rice worth more than \$4 million being confiscated and sold. Ostreicher says his attorneys fees have reached \$500,000.

"The injustice that was done to him here is consuming him," said his wife, Miriam Ungar, 47. "He cannot sit still. He paces back and forth in a five-foot space in his cell all day. He doesn't sleep nights."

He chain smokes and says he often stares blankly at a single page for several hours when he tries to read. At least he has a cell to himself in a prison teeming with 3,500 inmates. He does his best to avoid the hoodlums who run things inside Palmasola, where he says he is the only U.S. citizen.

As an Orthodox Jew, Ostreicher keeps a kosher diet, which is not an option in the prison cafeteria. So he often goes days without meat. He says he plans to begin a hunger strike April 14, when Passover ends.

"He is slowly losing his mind," his wife said.

A few other countries in the region rank lower than Bolivia on Transparency International's index of perceived corruption, but human rights groups say bribes and case-fixing are common in Bolivia's legal system. Last year, five Bolivian prosecutors were dismissed for irregularities including alleged corruption, the Interior Ministry says. Currently, 15 prosecutors are under investigation.

The judiciary also suffers from disorganization and a shortage of judges.

In September, a judge ordered Ostreicher freed, only to retract his order a week later, saying he had erred. That judge was later promoted and a new judge was named to the case.

Then, on Monday, the new judge removed himself from the case, saying Rodriguez accused him in court papers of favoring Ostreicher at her expense. Another problem adds to delays: the court's judges are handling double their normal caseload because so many judicial posts are unfilled.

The U.S. government has tried to help Ostreicher but doesn't have much influence, being without an ambassador since its last one was expelled in 2008 for allegedly inciting opponents of leftist President Evo Morales.

The U.S. Embassy said there has been "frequent contact with Bolivian officials at the highest possible level regarding the case (and seeking) to ensure that Mr. Ostreicher is afforded due process." Its statement said U.S. officials had visited Ostreicher and were concerned for his health.

Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca acknowledged receiving diplomatic notes from the U.S. State Department but would not say whether the Bolivian government was acting on them.

When Interior Minister Carlos Romero was asked about the case, he said only that he would look into it.

While investment in big Bolivian energy and mining projects has risen recently, investment in agriculture has suffered because of disputes over land ownership and government confiscations of several major tracts.

"Domestic and international investors alike are afraid," said Ronald Nostas, vice president of the Bolivian Federation of Private Businessmen.

Another American who ran into trouble over land is longtime Bolivia resident Ronald Larsen, who was stripped in 2010 of his 58-square-mile (15,000-hectare) cattle ranch after authorities accused him of exploiting his workers. Larsen called the charges trumped up. He now lives mostly in Brazil, where his son Dustin says he is fixing up a seaside hotel.

Dustin Larsen expresses sympathy for Ostreicher, but says the New Yorker clearly was not prepared for doing business in Bolivia.

"Americans take everyone at face value. Unfortunately, down here you can't do that," he said. "A lot of deals have gone bad down here."

(Associated Press writer Paola Flores reported from Santa Cruz and Frank Bajak from Lima, Peru. AP writers Carlos Valdez in La Paz, Bolivia, and Ian James, in Caracas, Venezuela, contributed to this report.)

20120405-23 15:58 Art Fw: Video: Moscow University Flashmob

From Art (Apr. 5, 2012, 3:58 pm)—Fw: Moscow University Flashmob

Little change of pace. I was actually at this overlook. Always fun to recognize some exotic place when you see it on film. :-)

from: Mac:

This is huge. When the young folks of Russia have embraced our culture the old commies are dead.....

Could we ever imagine in the old days of the Cold War that we would see something like this (video link below) in Russia? (Ans. No way!)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oacelnX3VSQ>

20120405-26	21:43	Jim	Fw: <i>New York Times</i> U.S. Census Map
-------------	-------	-----	---

From Jim (Apr. 5, 2012, 9:43 pm)—Fw: *New York Times* U.S. Census Map

Check out where you live.

Subject: 2010 U.S. Census Map

Remember about a year ago you filled out a census form? Well ---- here are the result of this process. What you will see is a Map of the US - not just the 48 states but all of the 50 states. Territories are not in the census - but they did provide information during this process.

So let us say you are in Virginia , you can go by county and as you zoom in by city to see the increase or decrease and then you can see the changes of the various races within these cities.

Look at places you know and also look at the map at the darker brown location. You can zoom in and out to get the information on the places you know.

Use your cursor can move map around and you can zoom in on specific counties to get current stats. It is very interesting!

Fascinating!!! Just glide your cursor over the map and it displays every county. Can't imagine how long it took to create this map!! Amazzzzzing!!!

2010 U.S. CENSUS MAP: <http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/map?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=thab1>.

<http://klap4music.com/tag/gomez/>

<https://www.facebook.com/gomez>

NOT Selena Gomez—The BAND, Gomez! (British self-effacement, get it?)



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #112 — APR. 9, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

News Explainer: The Essence of the News (#1)

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 9, 2012)



(Above: Ukrainian Easter Eggs, Daily Kos)

Sometimes the news can be pretty depressing. I can't do anything about that, but maybe I can illustrate just how depressing (or uplifting, or funny) the news can truly be. Let's look "inside" the headlines of today (Apr. 8), shall we? Who knows? Perhaps patterns can be perceived.

1. **"National Review's John Derbyshire Pens Racist Screeed: 'Avoid Concentrations Of Blacks,' 'Stay Out Of' Their Neighborhoods"** (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/06/national-review-writer-race_n_1409413.html?ref=media).

Apparently, since the Trayvon Martin case, for some mysterious reason, black parents have been giving "talks" to their teenage children about how to avoid being killed by a white (Or Hispanic? Not black?) man

carrying a gun. This is why the NRA says that "carrying" can lead to a more civil society. Now, let me admit that I do not know what happened that night, nor do any of the news media, but the theory is that Trayvon might have been more reluctant to confront Zimmerman if he had just been more sure that the a*s-hole was carrying a gun and was possibly itching to use it. That added caution might have saved the day.

Oh course, not carrying the gun might have saved the day too.

And think about road rage incidents. Are you really going to go hit that dude's car who cut you off if you truly realize he has a gun under the seat and wouldn't mind using it, especially on someone of a "lesser" race acting like an a*s-hole?

Maybe if we try hard and vote for lots of Republicans, we could return to the days of the Old West, when every property-owning white man could openly carry a gun, was duty-bound to stand his ground, and the "quick draw" was treasured more than the ambush. Glory days!

Anyway, conservative journalist John Derbyshire has been summarily fired from the *National Review* for his incredibly racist column. I think he was really trying to support the conservative argument that it's really the racism of black people against whites that lies at the heart of our racial problems. NOT!
(http://takimag.com/article/the_talk_nonblack_version_john_derbyshire#axzz1rJPIABLB).

2. "NBC News Reportedly Fires Producer of Edited George Zimmerman Tape"

(<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/04/07/nbc-news-reportedly-fires-producer-edited-george-zimmerman-tape/>).

This one sort of comes down on the other side of the fence because the producer made the 911 tape sound like Zimmerman was racially profiling Martin, when he apparently was not. The news media as an institution worked well here, and we should be thankful. When the stories coming out failed to match, everyone piled on. First: bad editing. Finally: better journalism, we hope.

3. "Current TV Countersues Keith Olbermann" (<http://wtvr.com/2012/04/06/current-tv-countersues-keith-olbermann/>)

Al Gore is not going to take a defeat lying down (but he just might take it with the facial expressiveness of a robot, which does not mean he is not truly **pi*sed-off!**). This should be interesting in court. Something makes me think that Al Gore just might be Keith's true "Worst person IN! THE! WORLD!!" Meanwhile, I read that Current TV could go bankrupt because of the loss of Olbermann. That would be cutting off your nose to spite your face, but, apparently, even Al "Cardboard" Gore can only take so much sarcasm.

4. "Mike Huckabee Takes Aim at Rush Limbaugh" (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0412/74907.html>).

Huckabee will host a radio program with "more conversation, less confrontation" to compete head-to-head with Limbaugh's airtime. Perhaps forces can conjoin to get this worthless rascal fired, like the three actual journalists, above, who have probably offended 6 billion or so fewer people than Limbaugh has.

Isn't civilization really all about imposing norms on individual behavior? I don't think we need Republicans telling us we can't do that, just like we don't need them telling us we have to give up taxes on the rich, unions, the minimum wage, Social Security, Medicare, welfare, education, fair elections, and birth control. Throw masturbation in there if you live in Delaware.

5. "The 5th Circuit Court's Insult to Obama" (<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/04/06/opinion/tribe-obama-remarks/index.html>)

This judge needs to be fired. I just have to give you the whole story on this one. Amazing! Historical!

(by Laurence H. Tribe, Apr. 6, 2012, CNN) There has never been any doubt that President Obama fully accepts the Supreme Court's authority to render a definitive ruling on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act.

Chief executives during our history, including President Andrew Jackson in the 1830s and President Harry Truman in the 1940s, have in fact challenged or threatened to challenge the court's right to command obedience to its understanding of the Constitution, but Obama certainly is not among them.

As a brilliant constitutional lawyer deeply devoted to the rule of law, he has nothing but respect for the critical function that judicial review performs in preserving the American system of constitutional government. Efforts to divine a contrary theory in his remarks were strained at the outset and have grown only more untenable.

The "unprecedented, extraordinary" step he noted the justices would be taking if they were to overturn the Affordable Care Act was, of course, not the step of exercising judicial review, as the court has done ever since *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803, but the step of second-guessing congressional judgments about how best to regulate a vast segment of the national economy. No one in the world -- certainly none of the justices -- can have been surprised to learn that Obama believes his signature domestic achievement fully complies with the Constitution and ought to be upheld -- or that the Supreme Court has a decades-old tradition of treading lightly when major regulations of interstate commerce come before it.

After the president made that entirely clear Tuesday, some suggested that it would be best for presidents not to comment on cases pending before the Supreme Court even while the rest of the nation continues to debate the underlying constitutional issues.

I was among those who took that view while others suggested that, as the entire nation continues to discuss the constitutionality of a vital economic measure, artificially muzzling the nation's chief executive ill serves the purposes of open public debate on important issues.

That's something about which people can reasonably differ. But there's no reasonable basis for seeing in the president's comments either a challenge to the court's authority as an independent branch of government or a clumsy attempt to pressure it politically or to influence its deliberations.

"This president knows as well as anyone how utterly implausible it would be to think that the justices might be swayed in their constitutional views by his brief remarks."

Laurence H. Tribe This president knows as well as anyone how utterly implausible it would be to think that the justices might be swayed in their constitutional views by his brief remarks, which did little more than reiterate a core theme of the government's legal briefs (namely, the critical importance of strong judicial deference to the elected branches on complex matters of economic regulation like national health care policy). This theme has received a full airing in media commentary, congressional hearings, legal scholarship and lower court judicial opinions. Nobody could really believe that the president's candid expression of a view that everyone already attributed to him would move the judicial calculus even a micrometer.

The justices have spent months steeped in more than a hundred legal briefs, presided over one of the most dramatic oral arguments of the past century and are currently engaged in robust internal deliberations. They also live in a world awash with op-eds, heated commentary and all the markers of fiercely divided public opinion. These are men and women accustomed to dealing with politics. They ordinarily approach their duties with the utmost seriousness and, we must hope, are exercising their very highest faculties of judgment and constitutional commitment in this case.

There was no disrespect in the president's entirely correct observation that precedent and historical practice alike would lead a suitably cautious court to uphold rather than overturn his signature first-term achievement in providing health insurance to millions of Americans. The fact that health care reform has represented a pressing issue for the nation over the course of a century would indeed make a decision to strike down the law all the more jarring. But the notion that the president's recognition of that fact

somehow crossed the Rubicon in our separation of powers by seeking to diminish the court's independence is patently absurd.

That said, we have recently witnessed a shocking misuse of power in relation to these events. But it came from the judiciary rather than the president. Judge Jerry Smith of the 5th Circuit responded to the president's comments by ordering the Department of Justice to submit a three-page, single-spaced memo stating the administration's position on judicial authority to invalidate unconstitutional laws. Attorney General Eric Holder filed that memo Thursday, reiterating the plain import of the president's remarks and stating that "the power of the courts to review the constitutionality of legislation is beyond dispute."

6. "The Fastest-Growing Job in America" (<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/13/opinion/granderson-hustling-for-work/index.html?iref=obinsite>)

It's "hustling" because there simply are not enough jobs and fresh college graduates are making an average of \$27,000/year, down \$3000 from 2007.

7. "Is It Too Late for Mitt Romney and Republicans?"

(<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/04/06/meghan-mccain-is-it-too-late-for-mitt-romney-and-republicans.html>)

This piece is by John McCain's daughter, Meghan, now a Republican-leaning journalist. She sounds amazingly like one of us:

"Right now, I'm in the middle of a 2012 election hangover, where I wonder what exactly has happened to make this election cycle seem like a long journey of lambs to the slaughter. Somewhere between the frighteningly delusional Santorum campaign and Mitt Romney's incapability of doing anything spontaneous, we are actually having a debate about if birth control should be banned or if women that use birth control are "sluts." I've hit my limit here."

"As I sit on my couch watching the commentators night after night, I am overwhelmed by a sense of panic that this election is quite possibly already over. There are too many questions and not enough answers: What is the point in waiting to see how the next seven months play out? How have Republicans already blown such a golden opportunity? Why has my party not come together and united for the greater cause, which at the end of the day is defeating President Obama? Why do Republicans continue to value "purification" and bloodletting over winning elections? What the hell is wrong with the Republican Party!?"

OK, Meghan, here is the piece of the puzzle you are missing: Yes, it is too late for Romney and the Republicans, even you seem to be disgusted and against them. It sounds to me like President Obama's your man!

8. "Austerity Drives Up Suicide Rate in Debt-Ridden Greece"

(http://edition.cnn.com/2012/04/06/world/europe/greece-austerity-suicide/index.html?hpt=hp_c1).

"I don't feel proud about it, no way, but all these situations made me lose my self-respect and feel like I've been deprived of my rights," says Polyzonis, "because being able to pay your taxes is not only an obligation but also a right. **People should have the possibility to pay their taxes, to pay their obligations to others, to offer the basic goods to their family so they can feel that they live with self-respect and dignity.**"

Shouldn't that sentence in bold type be made the core principle of the Democratic Party? Doesn't society have an obligation to its citizens to do its best to see that everyone who want to work has a job? Don't people who want to be productive have some right to be so? I know we're a long way from there, but can't we get closer? This Greek has a very good point, I think.

Anyway, look at Greece to see the future of America, unless we get serious pretty damned soon.

9. "In Defense of Superstition" (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/08/opinion/sunday/in-defense-of-superstition.html?_r=1&hp)

"...to believe in magic — as, on some deep level, we all do — does not make you stupid, ignorant or crazy. It makes you human."

10. "Pagan Roots of Easter" (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/04/08/1081429/-Pagan-roots-of-Easter>)

"I celebrate renewal. Join with me today in thoughts of peace. No matter your faith tradition, or your secular positions as progressives, we can find a common ground in a shared humanity and desire for a spring of renewal for us all. Let us all be re-energized. We have much to accomplish in the years ahead."

20120406-01	08:48	Norm	Re: Gomez (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #111)
-------------	-------	------	---

Thank you! Keep up the political news. :)

20120406-02	10:22	SteveG	"Strip Searches: The Supreme Court's Disturbing Decision"
-------------	-------	--------	---

Supremes...at it again...

"Strip Searches: The Supreme Court's Disturbing Decision" by Adam Cohen, *Time*

Apr. 6, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/strip-searches-supreme-courts-disturbing-decision-101205560.html>)

It might seem that in the United States, being pulled over for driving without a seat belt should not end with the government ordering you to take off your clothes and "lift your genitals." But there is no guarantee that this is the case -- not since the Supreme Court ruled this week that the Constitution does not prohibit the government from strip searching people charged with even minor offenses. The court's 5-4 ruling turns a deeply humiliating procedure -- one most Americans would very much like to avoid -- into a routine law enforcement tactic.

This case arose when a man named Albert Florence was pulled over by New Jersey state troopers while he was driving to his parents' house with his wife and young son. The trooper arrested him for failing to pay a fine -- even though, it turned out, he actually had paid the fine. Florence was thrown into the Essex County Correctional Facility, which has a strip search policy for all new arrestees.

Florence -- who had not even violated the law -- was subjected to one of the more degrading interactions a citizen can have with his government. He was made to disrobe, lift his genitals for the guards to show that he was not hiding anything, and cough in a squatting position. Florence said he was strip searched twice.

After he was released, Florence sued, arguing that strip searches of people arrested for minor offenses violate the Fourth Amendment. There is a lot of support for the view that strip searches are an extreme measure that should only be used when the government has reason to believe the specific person they want to search is concealing weapons, drugs, or other contraband. The American Correctional Association -- the oldest and largest correctional association in the world -- has a standard saying that strip searches should only be used when there is individualized suspicion. Law enforcement groups -- including the U.S. Marshals Service and the Immigration and Custom Services -- adhere to this standard.

Many courts have said just what Florence argued -- that the Constitution prohibits strip searches of people arrested on minor offenses unless there is individualized suspicion. That includes at least seven U.S. Courts of Appeals -- the powerful federal courts that are just one rung below the Supreme Court. Ten states -- including Florida and Michigan -- actually make suspicionless strip searches illegal.

But the Supreme Court, by a 5-4, has now given its blessing to strip searches of people who are charged with minor crimes -- even if the government has no specific reason to believe they are concealing anything. The majority focused on how hard jailers have it. "The difficulties of operating a detention center must not be underestimated by the courts," the majority opinion said. Strip searches can help keep weapons out of prisons -- and disease -- and lice.

But the dissenters make a much more compelling case. Justice Stephen Breyer makes the most important argument: that being forced to get naked and be stared at by strangers is inherently "humiliating and degrading." He then set out some of the many disturbing ways in which the government has used this troubling power -- including to strip naked a nun, who had served for 50 years as a Sister of Divine Providence, when she was arrested during an anti-Vietnam War protest. Justice Breyer also noted the kinds of offenses that people have committed that have led to them being strip searched: driving with a noisy muffler, failing to use a turn signal, and riding a bicycle without an audible bell.

Finally, the dissent demolishes the main point made in favor of strip searching every arrestee: that it is necessary to keep prisons secure. In fact, there are many ways of keeping weapons and contraband out that are far less degrading. The prison Florence was admitted to also does pat-frisks of inmates and makes them go through metal detectors. One of these detectors is something called the Body Orifice Screening System chair, which can detect metal hidden in the body when inmates sit on it.

People do not like being physically humiliated by their government. The outraged reaction of many Americans to the TSA's post-9/11 airport screening procedures shows how deeply people feel about it -- even when the purpose is the very important one of stopping armed terrorists from getting on airplanes. The Supreme Court majority, however, does not seem to get it -- or to appreciate the fact that when the government can strip search people who do not wear a seat belt it can strip search any of us.

The conservative Supreme Court majority has been on a crusade in the last few years on behalf of its own very peculiar ideal of freedom. In 2010 in *Citizens United v. F.C.C.* the court upheld the freedom of large corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money to decide federal elections. At the health care arguments last month, the Justices seemed like they may be inclined to stand up for people's freedom not to participate in a government health care plan. But when there is a case in which the freedom at stake is crystal clear -- the right not to needlessly lift one's genitals or squat while coughing for a law enforcement official -- this court is firmly focused on the government's important interests in taking it away.

Wow...



"Bosnia Remembers War, Still Scarred and Divided" by Reuters

Apr. 6, 2012, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46949544>)

(SARAJEVO) With row upon row of empty red chairs, one for each of the 11,541 victims of the siege of Sarajevo, Bosnia on Friday remembered when war broke out 20 years ago and the West dithered in the face of the worst atrocities in Europe since World War Two.

The anniversary finds the Balkan country deeply divided, with power shared uneasily between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in an unwieldy state ruled by ethnic quotas. It languishes behind ex-Yugoslav neighbors on the long road to the European Union.

"The victims fell here because we wanted to preserve the state, but I fear they fell in vain," said 32-year-old social worker Kanita Husic, one of thousands gathered in central Sarajevo for a memorial concert.

Some 100,000 people died and 2 million people were forced from their homes as Bosnia gave the lexicon of war the term "ethnic cleansing". Slow-motion intervention eventually brought peace, but at the cost of ethnic segregation.

Underscoring the disunity, Bosnia's autonomous Serb Republic ignored Friday's solemn remembrance of the day shots fired on peace protesters in downtown Sarajevo marked the start of the war.

In a blood-red symbol of loss, empty chairs stretched 800 meters down the central Sarajevo street named after socialist Yugoslavia's creator and ruler for 35 years, Josip Broz Tito.

Smaller chairs represented the more than 600 children killed in the 43-month siege by Serb forces that held the hilltops. Thousands of people gathered for a concert in remembrance with a choir of 750 Sarajevo schoolchildren.

On Thursday, cellist Vedran Smailovic, who became an icon of artistic defiance when he played on a central Sarajevo street as the city was shelled, played again for the first time in his hometown since he left in 1993 as part of an exodus of thousands.

Queuing for water or shopping at the market during the siege, Sarajevans were picked off by snipers and random shelling. Running out of burial places, many of the bodies were interred beneath a hillside football pitch.

"We were moving targets with only one principle left - that we would stay in the city," said Bosnian artist Suada Kopic.

The war happened on NATO's doorstep, a few hours' drive from Vienna or across the Adriatic from Italy. Its grisly imprint survives today in the bodies still being dug up in eastern Bosnia and the million people who never returned to their homes.

Politics still runs along ethnic lines, spawning bloated networks of patronage that resist reconciliation or reform.

"Ethnic division is catastrophic for Bosnia," said retired lawyer Marko Petrovic.

"Bosnia can't survive unless we are united, based on humanity and the kind of people we are, not what our names are."

Bosnia was Yugoslavia in a bottle, a mix of mainly Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosniaks.

But as Yugoslavia began to fall apart, and Bosnia's Muslims and Croats voted in a referendum in favor of independence, Serb forces with the big guns of the Yugoslav army seized 70 percent of Bosnian territory, driving out non-Serbs.

The Muslims and Croats fought back, and against each other.

The United Nations sent blue-helmeted peacekeepers but gave them no mandate to shoot back. It was only after the so-called U.N. safe haven in Srebrenica fell in July 1995 to Serb forces, who then massacred 8,000 Muslim men and boys, did NATO use force, eventually bombing the Serbs to the negotiating table.

Bosnia taught the world tough lessons in humanitarian intervention that could yet be echoed in Syria, where the United Nations is probing the deployment of unarmed monitors under a peace plan to end the conflict between rebels and forces under President Bashar al-Assad.

Bosnia's U.S.-brokered peace deal silenced the guns but created a state of 120 ministers that has absorbed nine billion euros (\$11.76 billion) in foreign aid.

Ethnic bickering left the country without a central government for the whole of 2011, and the Serb Republic regularly forecasts the country's disintegration if it is pushed to cede more powers to Sarajevo.

The West "can only delay it, but it will never stop it", Serb Republic President Milorad Dodik said of the possibility of collapse in an interview with the Banja Luka daily Nezavisne Novine.

"They have to understand that Serbs want the Serb Republic, and not Bosnia."

The West hopes the pull of the EU on the region and greater economic cooperation will nudge Bosnia towards a more functional form of government.

Neighboring Croatia will join the EU in July next year. Serbia, which under strongman Slobodan Milosevic conspired with Croatia to dismember Bosnia, became an official candidate for EU accession last month, in part as reward for capturing Bosnian Serb wartime commander and genocide suspect Ratko Mladic.

Bosnia is yet to apply. To do so, it must amend its Dayton-era constitution to reflect a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights that its strict system of ethnic quotas is discriminatory.

"I think the majority of the people of this country realizes that all of us came out of this war as losers, but I fear the majority has also failed to learn the lessons," said 46-year-old Radoslav Zivkovic, a Serb in the wartime Serb stronghold of Pale.

Copyright 2012 Thomson Reuters.

20120406-04	11:12	SteveB	Friends of the Middle Archive
-------------	-------	--------	-------------------------------

I have finished the hierarchical hypertext indexing of the *FotM Archive (2007-2011)* through the end of 2010—almost 1000 pages out of about 1570. The file is rather large, but there are advantages to having it all together (like for Acrobat searches), for perusing...16.8 Mb. I want to index the FotM Newsletter like this in the future.

You might want to download the file to save browser/internet loading time. On the main FotM Webpage (<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org>), down a little, past today's Newsletter, right-click on the "FotM Archive" wording or the picture of the first page, then select "Save target as..." and go from there.

To read online (or FTP): <http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/archives/FotM-Archive-1.pdf>.

I was able to reduce those articles and conversations into 39 categories, subdivided into three further categories: Politics, Government, Other.

Everything is linked. All the links go back and forth, yo-yo style, or maybe think of Mitt Romney. Try some, you'll see what I mean.

I have to apologize that much of the early stuff from all of us was not preserved as carefully as I am doing now. There are gaps and lulls in some conversations that were really not there. I was just lazy, or careless, or thought another email covered the exchange. As time passed, I started being a better preserver of the dialogue and materials. At all times, a large per cent of my email is personal and missing from this record.

I can't explain the strange lull around the 2010 elections, other than to say we must have all felt a collective sense of dread that suppressed communications in that direction. Maybe we all knew, so nothing needed to be said, maybe I got pi*sed and tossed it all, but I can't remember doing any such thing, nor is that like me.

Now...I want everyone out there to get up out of your chair and go out and hug a right-winger and tell them to send us some damned arguments as to why we're all wet and a bunch of damned but lovable socialists.

Have a Good Friday, a Happy Easter, and a Great Weekend!

20120406-05	12:18	Pam	Re: Friends of the Middle Archive (reply to SteveB, above)
-------------	-------	-----	--

Incredible job, SteveB. Happy Easter to you and yours,

20120406-06	15:14	Art	Re: Friends of the Middle Archive (reply to SteveB, above)
-------------	-------	-----	--

Great work Steve. Thanks for all you do and Happy Easter. I will say I am a little disappointed about the cookie business, as I was thinking of coming down to buy one. Now I'll have to wait.

20120407-11 20:52 Larry Re: Friends of the Middle Archive (reply to SteveB, above)

I spent some time in your archives and realized that I hadn't fully appreciated the monumental task that you have undertaken; writing congress etc. etc.

I am going to try to swing into action a little bit to join in the fun and maybe embarrass myself. At IU several professors let me get by with a lot because I was pretty good at comedy and used it a lot to get across various points. They went too easy on me, giving me higher grades than I deserved I think. Another hindrance is that my pinkies are quite crooked with the top of my finger veering into my ring finger; also, my forefingers are quite short. This certainly makes typing somewhat labored and my word count disappointing. Now that I am through talking about me let's talk about... ;-)

I am thinking about what I could write that would fit in with "Friends of the Middle," staying far away from any subject that could be taboo still using as few cusswords as possible.

Again, I sure enjoyed the archives.

20120407-12 21:25 SteveB Re: Friends of the Middle Archive (reply to Larry, above)

I always love hearing from you and do appreciate every word you peck out.

I operate much the same way you do at the keyboard, but only because I never learned to type properly, leaving me with these two calloused fingertips. Fortunately, I've avoided arthritis so far, but I do have those crooked little fingers like my Dad, remember? Haha

Thank you, and all my friends, for your too kind words. I have to smile a little because I only ever do anything because I love to do it. That's how spoiled I've been lucky enough to become. What I do is fun to do and so is Friends of the Middle. It is, too, more rewarding in a deeper sense, just staying in touch with people who also care about the important things—life and art and trying to live a good life, whatever that may mean to each of us.

If you tell the group any of your stories the way you have to me, personally, or to your Congregation, I'm sure they would be much appreciated. And I know there are so many I've never heard, some of them probably even fit for mixed company. :-) Now...stories involving any of our many uncles might have to be censored just a little...

Take care. Good gardening! Take it easy, though, and supervise Sandy instead of doing all the work yourself. :-)

P.S. Only a little of my correspondence with politician and bureaucrats appears in the archive, to represent the category, I guess. Mostly, none of it ever got anywhere, but at least I made my views known. I sent the FotM Newsletter to all of Congress for awhile, but working Congressional email addresses have gotten rare because of the spam problem. They all use webforms now for correspondence from constituents. But a few Congressmen and President Obama still get the Newsletter.

20120406-07 15:16 SteveG Fw: How to Fight the People Who Don't Want You to Vote

from American Federation of Government Employees:

Right Wing and Their Attempts to Stop People from Voting:

In the 2008 elections, we saw the highest voter turnout in four decades. The electorate was the most racially and ethnically diverse in U.S. history, with nearly one- in- four votes cast by non-whites, according to Census Bureau data by the Pew Research Center. As a result of this expansion in the participation of the electorate, there has been a concerted effort to suppress the right to vote. Some of these states used boiler plate language provided by a

right-wing group, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), whose founder/conservative icon Paul Weyrich has stated, "I don't want everybody to vote. Elections are not won by a majority of people. They never have been from the beginning of our country and they are not now. As a matter of fact, our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down." Weyrich also co-founded the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think-tank that has repeatedly attacked the middle class and working families. To suppress voting rights, these new laws:

- **Toughen voter ID requirements:** This will lead to fewer people at the polls on Election Day because 15% of voters earning less than \$35,000 per year do not have a state-issued ID; 18% of 18-24 year olds do not have an ID with their current address; 18% of senior citizens do not have a current state issued photo ID; 25% of eligible African Americans do not have state-issued ID; and people with disabilities are burdened by voter ID legislation because they often lack access to transportation and often need additional assistance to obtain identification. In 2011, legislatures in 34 states introduced voter ID laws that would make it a lot harder for about 5 million eligible voters to vote. Kansas' and Tennessee's new strict photo ID laws passed and already took effect. Wisconsin's new strict photo ID law was held unconstitutional last month, but it could take effect before November if that ruling is reversed by a higher court. South Carolina and Texas have new strict photo ID laws which may take effect before November if they receive pre-clearance under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. The Justice Department denied pre-clearance and they are appealing.
- **Curtail early voting:** Although early voting days provide the flexibility workers need in order to cast their ballots and in the 2008 elections 30% of Florida's eligible voters voted early, in 2011 Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee and West Virginia enacted bills reducing the number of days of early voting. Georgia's law, for example, reduces early voting from 45 days to 21 days.
- **Make it more difficult to register voters:** Although voting rights advocates point to increased voter registration rates, especially among minority, low income, and younger citizens, as a positive effect of voter registration drives and a reason to expand them, Texas and Florida passed laws that restrict voter registration drives by third-party groups. New registration requirements make it perilous for volunteers seeking to register voters, as they could lead to criminal or civil penalties in some situations. Florida's new law is so restrictive that the nonpartisan League of Women Voters announced it no longer would be able to conduct voter registration drives in the state.

Besides these laws, there are right-wing groups like True the Vote that are ready to challenge voters' eligibility at the polls. True the Vote has a goal to recruit one million volunteers to challenge voters' eligibility across the country on Election Day. The group is having a national summit in Houston on April 27-28.

The Solution:

Support H.R. 3316, Voter Access Protection Act of 2011, that would prohibit election officials from requiring individuals to provide photo ID as a condition of obtaining or casting a ballot in an election.

American Federation of Government Employees, (AFGE) Defends Democracy Brigade is seeking volunteers to participate in election administration advocacy, voter education and voting rights protection at the polls. To get involved, send your name, address, Local #, phone number, and e-mail address to voterprotection@afge.org. For more information contact Mark Vinson, Voter Protection Coordinator, at vinson@afge.org.

Registration Is Now Open for Y.O.U.N.G. AFGE's First Training Summit: All throughout America's labor movement, young workers are facing record unemployment, soaring education costs and widespread attacks on workplace and voting rights. Young workers need all of the talent, leadership skills, mobilization know-how and partnerships possible to shape a future based on social and economic justice. That's why AFGE is holding our first training summit for our younger members on August 11-12, 2012 in Las Vegas, just before AFGE's National Convention. The summit will have workshops on union empowerment, the young worker's political outlook, leadership development, social media training, updates on social justice campaigns, and much more. Attendees will engage in meaningful education and conversations empowering and mobilizing young workers to become true grassroots activists for AFGE and the labor movement. The summit will also include a happy hour, after party, and comedy club!

We welcome AFGE members who are under 40 and those mentors that are over 40. You can find out more information and register online at www.afge.org/youngsummit. You do not have to be attending AFGE's convention in order to attend the summit. Don't miss this unique opportunity for you or the young workers you know. If you have any questions about the Y.O.U.N.G. AFGE program or training, you can send an email to young@afge.org.

[Also see: http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/alec_id/. -SteveB]

20120406-09	17:26	Dale	Re: How to Fight the People Who Don't Want You to Vote (reply to SteveG, above)
-----------------------------	-------	------	---

Paradoxical Quote of the Day from Ben Stein: "Fathom the Hypocrisy of a Government that requires every citizen to prove they are insured... but not everyone must prove they are a citizen."

Even though not all citizens are required to vote, it would be nice if they could demonstrate they are qualified as to citizenship. It's interesting that Mexican citizens don't think it is such a big deal to have a picture ID requirement in order to vote. They may not be the ultimate model for voting integrity, but at least they have made positive strides in this area.

20120407-04	12:49	SteveB	Re: How to Fight the People Who Don't Want You to Vote (reply to SteveG & Dale, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

The Republicans have fought hard to reduce racial minority voting as much as they possibly can. I keep saying that voting is important enough to have a uniform national ID card and uniform, verifiable elections with paper trails, even if votes are tabulated by computer.

But it hasn't happened because, then, even more Democrats would be able to vote. It's those darned demographics the GOP is up against, and now they've pi*sed off 100,000,000 or so women...

Ah...if only those with at least \$1,000,000 could vote, or maybe just property owners (and maybe only if they're white men, the way it used to be)... We must go back in time for the GOP to be at all viable again.

But about all they've been able to manage is dragging their feet. Funny...they haven't even managed to reduce their all-important federal deficit. The politicians have sold out and won't let the rich pay more, and the rest of us certainly aren't going to allow the poor to be made to pay instead. Politicians don't dare go against the Pentagon and cut military spending. Politicians don't dare cut Congressional salaries and benefits. Oh, and the problem is President Obama, who is out to destroy the country. He's such a dangerous socialist! LOL!

We need nearly complete election and campaign finance reform, next year!

Corporations are no more "people" than insurance policies are!

20120406-08	15:17	SteveG	Video: The World According to Monsanto
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Think about whether or not all this chemical standardizing of everything and food is good for the world.

Does natural diversity of the natural world exist for nothing or does it exist for a purpose.

Should all of the world be the same?as described by who?

Video: <http://documentaryheaven.com/the-world-according-to-monsanto/>

Monsanto is a world leader in industrial agriculture, providing the seeds for 90 percent of the world's genetically modified crops. Once a chemical company based in the US, Monsanto has transformed into an international life sciences company, aiming to solve world hunger and protect the environment.

Filmmaker Marie-Monique Robin, however, exposes the company's troubling past, in her recent film, *The World According to Monsanto*. In an interview with The Real News Network, she discusses Monsanto's controversial practices from a producer of PCBs and Agent Orange to genetically modified seeds and related herbicides.

Starting from the Internet over a period of three years Robin has collected material for her documentary, going on to numerous interviews with people of very different backgrounds. She traveled widely, from Latin America, to Asia, through Europe and the United States, to personally interview farmers and people in influential positions.

As an example of pro-Monsanto interviews, she talked at length with Michael Taylor who has worked as a lawyer for Monsanto and also for the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), where he had great influence on the legalization of the genetically modified bovine growth hormone (BGH). It also became FDA policy during Taylor's tenure that GM seeds are declared to be "substantially equivalent to non-GM seeds, hence proclaiming proof of the harmlessness of GMs to be unnecessary. Michael Taylor is a typical example of technocrats employed via 'the revolving door policy'. He is now head of the Washington, D.C. office of Monsanto Corporation.

[SteveG, I love the documentaryheaven.com website. Good find. –SteveB]

20120406-10	18:58	Bill	"Why the Soul of Mitt Romney's America Can Be Found at Williams-Sonoma"
-----------------------------	-------	------	---

Williams-Sonoma Republican...

"Why the Soul of Mitt Romney's America Can Be Found at Williams-Sonoma" by Virginia Heffernan, Yahoo! News

Apr. 6, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/why-the-soul-of-mitt-romney%E2%80%99s-america-can-be-found-at-williams-sonoma.html>)

(Virginia Heffernan is the national correspondent for Yahoo! News, covering culture and politics from a digital perspective. She wrote extensively on Internet culture during her eight years as a staff writer for The New York Times, and she has also worked at *Harper's*, the *New Yorker* and Slate. Her new book, *Magic and Loss: The Pleasures of the Internet*, will be published in early 2013.)

For Mitt Romney, the acquisition and cultivation of data was time and money well spent. Having all but clinched the Republican nomination with his win in Wisconsin this week, the ludicrously handsome Mormon chief executive has coalesced something that might credibly be called Romney's America. And he did it with data—digital, hypergranular data, not mere polling. Back in January when Gingrich and Santorum were still on his heels, Romney set loose a team of metadata-crunchers to find out who was persuadable. Who belonged to his righter-wing rivals. Who was sticking with Barack Obama.

That's how he came to learn about his people's online browsing habits. As *The New York Times* reported this week, would-be Romniacs evidently like to take online quizzes. They also poke around the Internet looking for lore on technology, literature, home repair and child care. To find out still more, the campaign brought on board a private company that uses data about browsing habits to craft advertising tailored to individual Web users.

But for its capacity to sum up the vibe of the Romney voter, no data point has been more resonant than the one that surfaced back in January, when the *L.A. Times* cited it: Williams-Sonoma. That's the housewares emporium that Romney people seem to favor. With that bit of information came the invaluable concept of "Williams-Sonoma

Republicans”—a handy way to envision the well-heeled, home-owning families who are unhappy with Obama, amenable to Romney’s message and eager to keep shopping for, you know, Williams-Sonoma stuff.

Tortilla warmers. Walnut muddlers. Four-person raclettes.

Williams-Sonoma Republicans—what a phrase! Snatching consumerism back from the “latte-drinking, sushi-eating, Volvo-driving” Howard Dean liberals who drew disdain for their spending habits back in 2004, the Williams-Sonoma Republicans are rich, pro-business and tasteful. Not bad.

Certainly the actual Williams-Sonoma has quietly convened a big, proud set of Americans who strongly identify with the brand. If Williams-Sonoma people were also Romney people, a canny campaigner could—in part—ride the Williams-Sonoma research wave, and designate in the brand’s consumers a silent majority—silent, this time, because they’re busy shopping for tumblers and wedding gifts.

When Romney’s iPhone-wielding team started mining and sluicing the data, the campaign figured out that potential Romney voters were flush. The people they went on to micro-target with special phone calls had household incomes of between \$75,000 and \$150,000.

Romney’s team leveraged this info with what the *L.A. Times* called a “sophisticated and relentless” voter contact program. In other words, they called the heck out of rich people. Still more microtargeting was made possible when the research zeroed in on Williams-Sonoma.

It’s a reasonable guess that Romney’s America is in possession of unreforeclosed houses—those non-condo, non-trailer, non-apartment things with big kitchens—into which they plow a goodly amount of their nice annual incomes.

And they don’t just pay the mortgage. Romney people seem to be devotees of the ideology of foodie-ism—the peculiar institution of the modern high-middle class that combines hedonism, sanctimony, and hand-over-fist consumerism. How else to cover the vast smooth granite plains of American countertops except with juicers and Panini presses and Beaba Babycook baby food makers from Williams-Sonoma?

Williams-Sonoma caters to married people and people getting married. Its customers like personal property. They own real estate. Unlike latte-drinkers and sushi-eaters, they take their entertainments mostly at home. They’re exceptionally house proud. And they’re also concerned with health, to the extent that food preparation is implicated. (Joe Cross, of the popular weight-loss documentary *Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead*, preaches juicing in a lavish video franchise called *Reboot Your Life* on Williams-Sonoma.com.)

A passion for Williams-Sonoma might even speak to a religious affiliation, associated with family gatherings and non-urban spaces. Lately the Williams-Sonoma site has an Easter cover. “Celebrate the best of Spring with an elegant sit down dinner,” reads the cover line to a photo of a trussed roast. The Williams-Sonoma site, in April anyway, is for Christians who prize tradition (leg of lamb) as well as the finer things (“sea salt” and “shallot butter” are recommended as accompaniments). Deeper in the Easter supplement is a girl who looks to be African-American and a sandy-haired boy exclaiming over a table set with handmade chick dolls and mint-green Easter eggs in egg cups.

A search for “Passover,” which starts Saturday, turns up two wan, small-print menus with recipes for matzoh-ball soup.

Some observers have read “Williams-Sonoma Republicans” as nothing more than “Republican women,” but that misses the fact that Williams-Sonoma explicitly targets men, too, with barware and barbecue paraphernalia. The Votaggio brothers—manly “Top Chef” winners Michael and Bryan—have been brought to Williams-Sonoma.com by an “entertainment marketing” firm, explicitly to attract bachelors thought to be enchanted by the current trend for smoke-and-fire tough-guy cooking. Might the same bait be used to lure voting bros to the Romney table? Maybe one day soon the company can bring Romney to the site, where his platform can be turned into special content, like the videos by Joe Cross and the Votaggio brothers.

In any case, something is working. The Williams-Sonoma factor might even be predictive. Yahoo News has turned up an astonishing correlation between number of Williams-Sonoma stores in a given state and Romney's performance there in the Republican primaries. In short, Romney has won every state that boasts at least one Williams-Sonoma store for every 1 million residents. If the correlation holds, Romney will take the Williams-Sonoma-heavy states of California, Delaware, New Jersey, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

But what about Rick Santorum's home state of Pennsylvania? Will it go to Romney? Well, it just misses the mark. Pennsylvania has one Williams-Sonoma store for every 1,059,000 residents. Which means it's not in the bag yet.

Thinking of the cross-branding potential, I put in a call this week to the Williams-Sonoma store in Madison, Wisc. I asked the manager if she had seen Romney supporters out in force in the store on primary day, or if the store would consider creating Romney casserole dishes. She hung up on me.

20120407-01 07:21 MarthaH "Poll: Trayvon Martin Case Divides U.S. by Race, Age, Wealth & Politics"

"Poll: Trayvon Martin Case Divides U.S. by Race, Age, Wealth, and Politics" by Brad Knickerbocker, *Christian Science Monitor*

Apr. 7, 2012, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46981884/ns/us_news-christian_science_monitor/)

(Survey shows distinct differences in how Americans view shooting death.)

The Trayvon Martin case is dividing the country racially, generationally, politically, and by economic status.

That's the finding of public opinion polls taken since the Feb. 26 killing of a black teenager by neighborhood-watch volunteer George Zimmerman in Sanford, Fla.

"How Americans perceive this case is divided on several variables," says Raghavan Mayur, president of TechnoMetrica Market Intelligence, which conducted a recent Christian Science Monitor/TIPP poll. "A similar pattern emerges when asked if blacks should be concerned about racial profiling in predominantly white areas."

For example, twice as many blacks and Hispanics as whites say race played a major role in the shooting death of Trayvon (73 to 36 percent). The Monitor/TIPP poll of 906 adults taken from March 30 to April 5 finds other disparities as well.

- Younger respondents are more likely to see race as playing a major role in the case than those of middle age (66 to 43 percent).
- Women more so than men (48 to 39 percent).
- Those of modest income more than the wealthy (51 to 37 percent).
- Democrats much more so than Republicans (64 to 32 percent).

Asked in this survey "to what extent should blacks be concerned about racial profiling by police or law enforcement in predominantly white areas," 69 percent say to "a great" or "some" extent. Here too, younger respondents, women, blacks and Hispanics, and Democrats are more likely to see racial profiling as a problem.

A recent USA Today/Gallup poll finds similar results:

Trayvon Martin Case

	National adults	Blacks	Nonblacks
	%	%	%
How closely are you following the news about the fatal shooting in Florida of an African-American teenager named Trayvon Martin by a neighborhood watch volunteer named George Zimmerman?			
Very closely	22	52	19
Somewhat closely	39	28	40
Not too closely/Not at all	37	19	40
No opinion	1	1	1
Is George Zimmerman guilty of a crime?			
Definitely guilty	15	51	11
Probably guilty	21	21	21
Definitely/Probably not guilty	7	1	7
Unclear from available information/No opinion	52	27	61
How much of a factor did racial bias play in the events that led up to the shooting and the shooting itself?			
Major factor	35	72	31
Minor factor	25	13	26
Not a factor	23	8	25
No opinion	17	7	18
Would Zimmerman have been arrested if the person he shot was white, or do you think Martin's race did not make a difference?			
Would have been arrested	39	73	35
Martin's race did not make a difference	46	20	49
No opinion	16	8	16

USA Today/Gallup, April 2-4, 2012

GALLUP®

Given what's known about the case, for example, blacks are more than twice as likely as nonblacks (72 to 32 percent) to believe that Mr. Zimmerman (who is white and Hispanic) is guilty of a crime in shooting Trayvon, according to an April 2-4 Gallup survey of 3,006 Americans.

"Blacks are paying much closer attention to the news of the incident; overwhelmingly believe that George Zimmerman ... is guilty of a crime; believe that racial bias was a major factor in the events leading up to the shooting; and believe that Zimmerman would already have been arrested had the victim been white, not black," writes Gallup editor in chief Frank Newport in an analysis of the findings.

The Pew Research Center finds similar racial and political differences in the extent to which Americans are paying attention to the unfolding story.

Blacks and Democrats are much more likely to be following the story than whites or Republicans, Pew finds, and whites and Republicans are much more likely to say there's been too much coverage of Trayvon's death.

Some major corporations apparently are paying close attention to the Trayvon Martin story as well.

On Thursday, Kraft Foods Inc. joined Coca-Cola and Pepsico in pulling its membership from the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

The ALEC is a conservative nonprofit policy organization whose major funders include billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch. It's been associated with laws like Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law (allowing citizens to use deadly force rather than retreat in the face of a potentially life-threatening encounter) as well as with efforts to restrict voter registration – neither of which has much to do with the organization's stated probusiness agenda.

Gallup's Mr. Newport finds similarities between the Trayvon Martin case and that of O.J. Simpson in Los Angeles in 1995.

"The situation in the Trayvon Martin case is different from the Simpson situation, however, because the victim, rather than the alleged perpetrator, is black," writes Newport. "Still, both situations, even though 17 years apart, apparently tap into the same deeply felt views of the average black American that the criminal justice system in America is biased against blacks."

Other observers see the split in public opinion over Trayvon's shooting death in a troubling context.

"Half the nation, generally younger and more minority, believes a grave injustice has been done. The other half, generally older and whiter, believes that a mob led by professional agitators is trying to railroad Zimmerman for their own political purposes," writes broadcaster Geraldo Rivera on the Fox News Latino website. "The case has fractured the country along the undeniable racial fault line that is always there, but is most apparent in charged cases like this and Rodney King, Amadou Diallo, Lamarley Graham, Sean Bell and a hundred others."

20120407-02

07:33

SteveB

Cartoon: Mitt Romney—Candidate Extraordinaire! (“I’m the King of the World!”)



Cam Cardow / Ottawa Citizen

<http://www.cagle.com/author/cagle/>

20120407-03

11:09

SteveG

“Romney’s Gaffes Won’t Cost Him as Many Votes as His Views”

“Romney’s Gaffes Won’t Cost Him as Many Votes as His Views” by Jonathan Alter, *The National Memo*

Apr. 6, 2012, (<http://www2.nationalmemo.com/romney-gaffes-alter-cost-votes/>)

If Barack Obama prevails this November, it will be in large part because of what has come out of Mitt Romney’s mouth in the last year.

I’m not talking about gaffes, for which the presumptive Republican nominee has a Freudian propensity. It’s as if the gaffe that ended his beloved father’s 1968 presidential campaign (George Romney said he had been subject to “brainwashing” on a trip to South Vietnam) puts Mitt Romney into “Don’t think of an elephant” mode. He’s so conscious of not making a gaffe that his subconscious insists on one every couple of weeks.

But gaffes are overrated as decisive campaign events. With the possible exception of President Gerald Ford saying during a televised debate a month before the 1976 election that Poland was not under Soviet domination (a howler that slowed an amazing comeback against Jimmy Carter), it’s hard to think of a misstatement that has determined the outcome.

Romney letting slip that he pals around with Nascar owners, or that corporations are people, too, or that his wife drives a couple of Cadillacs may cement his position as the out-of-touch poster boy of the 1 percent. But if he convinces people he can fix an ailing economy, not much else will matter. Swing voters rarely vote against someone just because he’s rich.

Between now and the election, these and other cable-ready boo-boos will become distant memories. Web ads about them may go viral, but they aren't likely to sway anyone who hasn't already decided against Romney.

The bigger problem is what the soon-to-be Republican nominee has said on substance. The news media doesn't focus much on issues, which are duller than the circus but usually more lethal politically. Unlike gaffes, political positions are fair game for Obama to exploit in front of 60 million voters watching the fall debates.

Romney has flip-flopped so much that he now has little room to back away from what he said during the primaries. The "lamestream media" would crucify him for it; so would conservative base voters. Their "meh" on Mitt would quickly morph into a sense of betrayal. (The same logic explains why Romney, whatever his background, can't possibly govern as a moderate.)

Obviously, Romney needed to prove during the primaries that he was a stout conservative, but he went overboard. He was never going to convince right-wingers he was the most conservative candidate in the race, so why harm his chances in the fall by trying? If Romney loses, historians will ask whether he really had to box himself in so tightly to win the Republican nomination.

Let's say that instead of repeating his 2009 flat-out opposition to the successful auto bailouts, Romney had said they were structured wrong. Or instead of declaring Representative Paul Ryan's budget plan "marvelous" (a word Obama mocked in his speech attacking the plan this week), Romney had said that Ryan had many good ideas but that if he was elected, he would have his own budget blueprint. I'm not defending this kind of politically convenient fudge, but would it have destroyed his chances of being nominated?

Romney went the other way. He has so lashed himself to Ryan, an Ayn Rand libertarian, that there's talk of Ryan going on the ticket. The Ryan-Romney plan — from slashing federally funded scientific research to forcing seniors from nursing homes because of draconian Medicaid cuts — will be wildly unpopular if Obama and his team find the resonant language to exploit it.

Even if one argues that fudging the Ryan plan was impractical (after all, Republicans in Congress overwhelmingly approved it), on two other critical issues — women's health and immigration — Romney clearly went further than was necessary to claim the nomination. These issues happen to be of great concern to the two constituencies that account for his lagging behind Obama in the polls. If Romney can't break 40 percent with women and Latinos, it's hard to see how he wins.

Let's stipulate that Romney's history left him no room to dissent on the Blunt amendment, which would permit employers to strip their health plans of birth control or anything else they find objectionable to their religious beliefs or moral convictions. Romneycare in Massachusetts gave employers (including religious institutions) no such exemptions. Conservatives would have endlessly hassled Romney if he fell short of a full repudiation of everything he did on health care as governor.

But does his attendance at a Planned Parenthood fundraiser in 1994 and previous support of abortion rights really compel him to race to the other extreme and proclaim that he would "get rid of" Planned Parenthood? (His spokesman later clarified that he meant all federal support for Planned Parenthood.) Over the last 40 years, this organization provided the first birth control to millions of middle-class swing-vote suburban women. They haven't forgotten.

It's hard to believe that Romney would have lost the Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin primaries to Rick Santorum if he had refused to attack Planned Parenthood hammer and tong. By pandering unnecessarily, he worsened his chances with women in these and other battleground states in the fall.

Immigration put Romney in a similar pickle. Attacked during the 2008 campaign for hiring a lawn care agency that employed undocumented workers, Romney tried to be tougher than all the other Republican candidates on this issue. He was so worried about Rick Perry that he cold-cocked him during an early debate for allowing the innocent children of undocumented immigrants to attend the University of Texas. Even after Perry had been marginalized, Romney was still touting "self-deportation" and other anti-immigrant ideas.

Suppose instead that Romney had talked tough on border enforcement but, like Gingrich, left the door open to working out a solution for the children of immigrants. (His current position of making allowances only for those who join the military satisfies no one.) A more vague position would hardly have cost him the Republican nomination. But it would have protected him against Obama clobbering him with the Dream Act in a debate.

What Romney thought was de rigueur in the primaries may bring rigor mortis in the general. He seems to have forgotten that everything he said to win the nomination is now etch-a- sketched in stone.

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

Copyright 2012 Bloomberg

20120407-05	13:26	SteveB	"As He Runs from His Record Mitt Romney Lies About Obama's"
-------------	-------	--------	---

Romney's lies about President Obama's record = President Obama's reelection...

Yet once again, a Republican follows the familiar pattern: Telling the exact lies that impute their own faults to their opponent. If I'm an adulterer, then that's what I attack in my opponent. If I'm a weirdo like Santorum, I attack sexuality. If I'm corrupt like Newt, I attack corruption.

As for Mitt, he's claiming that it's President Obama, not Mitt, who is running away from his record, won't take a stand on anything, has no policy details or experience, is out to destroy the country, has already nearly done so, and is like an Etch-A-Sketch, a flip-flopper with no moral core. These things are all true about Romney, but lies about President Obama. Always the Republican irony is a giant part of their lies. And it's not just Romney who is a compulsive liar, it's nearly the entire party.

Sorry, Mitt, it ain't gonna work and everyone know it. Why not just grow up and be honest? That might actually work, if you knew of something you stood for.... So, forget it!

"As He Runs from His Record Mitt Romney Lies About Obama's" posted by Rmuse, PoliticusUSA

Apr. 6, 2012, (<http://www.politicususa.com/romney-obama-record/>)



A sociopath is usually defined as a person who lies incessantly to get their way and related to a compulsive liar who lies out of habit. For compulsive liars and sociopaths, lying is the normal way of responding to questions because telling the truth is extremely awkward and uncomfortable while lying just feels right. There is nothing quite as pathetic as watching a sociopathic liar stand straight-faced and spout drivel that the audience knows without a doubt is false, but that is the peril of listening to Willard Romney.

On Wednesday, Romney addressed a group of media professionals at a Newspaper Association of America conference luncheon and, true to form, he lashed out at President Obama with his typical formula of lying about the

President's record. Romney's entire speech was rife with fallacious statements, but one in particular stood out and it calls into question whether or not he is aware of recent history and current events, or is so delusional that he expects everyone to believe what they know are lies. Willard was attempting to make a point that President Obama did not want to "share his real plans" with Americans and that he was attempting to "distract us from his record because he doesn't want to run on his record." Romney emphatically stated that the President did not cause America's economic crisis, "but he made it worse," and that Obama failed to "turn around the economy and to lead us back to full employment."

If Romney thinks the economy is worse today than when President Obama took office, he is lying because the Great Recession's duration is acknowledged to be from late 2007 to the middle of 2009, and although growth is slower than desired, Romney knows the economy has improved. Only a fool, or a liar, would assert that today's economy is worse than during the midst of the recession, but that is Willard; a fool and a liar. In fact, in a report released Wednesday, new figures showed unemployment claims fell to their lowest level since 2008 just prior to the Great Recession's massive job losses. According to experts, when jobless claims drop below 400,000 it signals an improving jobs landscape, but March's figures were below 370,000 that suggest jobs are being created at a rapid pace. The downward trend in unemployment claims coincides precisely with when the President's Recovery Act (stimulus) began spending money early in 2009 which, by the way, was still during the Great Recession. Romney cannot possibly be unaware of the improving economy, but his penchant for lying prevents him from acknowledging any good news attributed to the President's policies.

The most interesting point of Willard's speech was his assertion that Americans "looked to him (President Obama) to turn around the economy and to lead us back to full employment." Americans are pleased then, because the economy has turned around, but this notion of full employment within two years of a major recession informs that Romney's alleged business acumen, like his statements, is a lie; but then again, he is a compulsive liar and cannot help himself.

According to a McKinsey Global Institute report from June 2011, the mythical "full employment" will not occur until 2020, and it means creating 21 million new jobs in McKinsey's "most optimistic job-growth scenario." McKinsey notes that under current trends, many workers will not possess the right skills for available jobs because of technological changes such as virtual work, jobs being disaggregated into tasks, and that companies are relying on contract and temporary labor. Romney claims the President is not sharing his plans with the American people, but the President has outlined areas of focus to spur job growth and manufacturing here in America. McKinsey cited "four dimensions that will be essential for reviving the U.S job-creating machine" that are reiterations of President Obama's expressed plans for the economy. McKinsey's four dimensions are; develop the U.S. workforce's skill to better match what employers are looking for, expand US workers' share of global economic growth and spur exports, support emerging industries and ensure they scale up in America, and revive new business start-ups. Now, if any of those "dimensions" sound familiar, it is because the President has hammered on those factors as necessary for substantial job growth since he took office, and Republicans have blocked or obstructed Democrats' efforts to pass legislation to expedite them since January 2009. Romney's claim that the President is hiding his plans for the economy is fallacious and he, and anyone with a pulse, knows it.

The most crucial aspect to job creation is education, and the Ryan/Romney budget plans rape funding out of education at every level from elementary school to university Pell Grants. Both Republicans also plan to slash infrastructure spending, investments in clean energy, and scientific and medical research funding which will cost jobs, affect the future, and discourage businesses from investing here in America. Romney has shared his plan to create jobs, but it entails more "trickle-down" tax cuts for the wealthy and repealing the Wall Street Reform law that, by the way, does not offer any budget savings, but gives banks and Wall Street free reign to demolish the economy again with impunity. Romney said the President "doesn't want to run on his record," but the President's record has positive results for the economy and job creation unlike Romney's trickle-down theory that has never worked under any administration.

Americans have two distinct records to compare and contrast to determine whether Romney or President Obama's economic plans are successful, and the President is not running and hiding from his record. Conversely, Romney has been running and hiding from his record from the second he entered the Republican sweepstakes for the presidential nomination and it will cost him dearly in the general election. His most damaging record though, is not the jobs he eliminated in America or created in China, but his propensity for lying. Romney is a sociopath and a

compulsive liar, but he is also incredibly stupid if he thinks President Obama's campaign team will not use myriad video clips and recorded statements Romney made that contradict the facts and his own false assertions.

President Obama turned the economy around in spite of GOP attempts to sabotage job creation and economic growth and it must drive Republicans like Romney crazy. Romney's lie that the economy is worse than during the midst of the Great Recession does not ring true to most Americans, and even some Republicans agree that job numbers and economic growth are improving, but not fast enough. The job numbers would be significantly better if Republicans had not obstructed job creation and eliminated millions of public-sector jobs with their Draconian spending cuts that Romney intends to increase to pay for a fraction of the \$6.5 trillion in tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations that outsource American jobs.

Romney's entire campaign is wrought with lies and misinformation that brand him as a compulsive liar that are made worse because he knows what the facts are, but the sociopath in him forces him to lie to get his way. He makes a grave error, though, by lying about President Obama's economic record because although the economy is not growing at a breakneck pace, it is improving and the downward trend in jobless claims is encouraging to all but Republicans and liars like Willard Romney which brings up an important point. If Romney lies about the state of the economy and jobs to an audience that knows the truth, what manner of lies will he tell the American people to enrich his wealthy corporate friends and incite a war with Iran?

20120407-08	15:24	Art	Re: "As He Runs from His Record Mitt R0mney Lies About Obama's" (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Think the classic was Ann Coulter claiming on some TV show recently that liberals and progressives are anti science. By inference I guess she was also saying conservatives are pro science????????????

In a little discussion with my right wing Tea Party neighbor the other day reference global warming, he informed me he had actually spent considerable amount of time studying the issue and has reached the conclusion the issue is all a liberal government induced sham. I replied I found that very interesting and asked for a few references, so I too could learn from his sources. He advised me to look up Anthony Watts, his major source of information.

I did. Watts was a TV/radio weatherman in Lafayette, IN and Chico, CA a few years back who began a weather blog. Among other things, he challenged the readings from NOAA ground weather stations throughout the USA because of their location. NOAA responded by saying, "OK, we'll run the temperature curve (rising) without the data from these collection station you object to." The increase in temperature averages was exactly the same. So much for that fourth grade level theory.

A little further digging revealed that not only is Mr. Watts not a climatologist, he is not even a college graduate. Apparently he attended Purdue between the years 1975 and 1982, but never received a degree. So, what we have is the bulk of the conservative movement in the USA getting their scientific climate change data from a college dropout with no actual credentials in climate study. Oh yeah, I almost forgot, he receives funding from the Heartland Institute. It is indeed the Age of Misinformation.

And still, the hunt for any intelligence from the Republican side goes on.

Just unbelievable.

20120407-09	15:57	SteveG	Re: "As He Runs from His Record Mitt R0mney Lies About Obama's" (reply to Art & SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Back in the mid 90's we were in Panama City, FL. A hurricane was coming and the local weatherman kept telling us the NOAA was wrong, the hurricane would miss us and we needed to go to bed. After hearing the same story until 1 AM, we went to bed. At 5 AM we were awakened by banging on the door, loud noises, and water pouring in under the door. The hurricane was a direct hit on Panama City. The next night there was a new weather person – the old one was fired.

Usually when I ask people where they got their information I hear "Fox news", "that is what I read", "that is what I was told", etc. Details are hard to come by.

Ever notice Ann Coulter's Adam's apple?

20120408-03	16:43	SteveB	Re: "As He Runs from His Record Mitt R0mney Lies About Obama's" (reply to Art & SteveG, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

I just read a thing about how all the Republican are running away from the Tea Party right now. That didn't last very long.

Good sleuthing work on Anthony Watts. I guess I have to hand it to him for being a high school graduate. So this is where the Right gets its "fair and balanced" research on Climate Change? Interesting!

Please report any success with "the hunt" to us immediately.

20120407-06	14:19	Dennis	"Opportunity for All? Van Jones Discusses His New Book <i>Rebuild the Dream</i> "
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Van Jones was demonized on Fox News. Not surprising considering his progressive ideas to rebuild the American middle class.

"Opportunity for All? Van Jones Discusses His New Book *Rebuild the Dream*" by Lynn Parramore, AlterNet

Apr. 4, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/154843/>)

We caught up with Van Jones, former special adviser to the Obama White House and long-time activist, to talk about his much-anticipated new book, *Rebuild the Dream*. Part memoir and part blueprint for an economy that works for the 99 percent, the book analyzes mistakes made by Democrats and presents a vision for how to energize a mass movement to restore the American Dream.

AlterNet: There's a belief in America that if you're rich, you must be smart and industrious. And on the flip side, if you're poor, you're lazy and stupid. Why is this way of thinking so delusional today?

Van Jones: Because the people who are working the hardest are the ones who are falling the furthest behind. And the laziest, most unworthy people are the ones who are getting ahead. The worst folks on Wall Street, who are letting their computers do lightning trades for them half the time, who make profits without making any tangible products, are the ones who are making out like bandits. They get the tax breaks, bailouts and bonuses. They are the real socialists, because they privatize their gains and then socialize the pain.

Meanwhile, honest middle class and working people are putting in more hours and bringing in the same or less money as they did 20 years ago.

A: We want to believe that America is a land of opportunity with a level economic playing field where anyone can make it. Your dad bootstrapped himself up out of a poor neighborhood in Memphis, Tennessee to join the Air Force and later build a successful career as an educator. What changed? What's the single biggest obstacle to the Land of Opportunity dream that today's young people face?

VJ: It used to be the case that the pathway out of poverty and into the middle class was going to college and buying a home. Today, it turns out that trying to go to college and get a home are the trap doors through which people are falling out of the middle class and into poverty. Massive student debt and underwater mortgages are making a mockery of what is left of the American Dream. The financial sector is sucking every spare penny, nickel

and dime out of the pockets and purses of working America. Wall Street is preying on Main Street -- as well as the side streets, back alleys and country roads -- and we have to do something about it.

A: What specific things is your Rebuild the Dream strategy center doing to restore our meritocracy and address the problem of economic inequality? How can people get involved?

VJ: Our long-term goal is to push America's government to play a bigger role in job creation -- through investment in infrastructure, green jobs and education. But it will be awhile before our campaigns create enough jobs to put money INTO people's pockets. So our main fights right now are to keep the financial sector from sucking money OUT of people's pockets.

Specifically, our organization, Rebuild the Dream is working with the New Bottom Line organization to get Fannie and Freddie to reduce the principal on underwater mortgages. Bush administration holdover Ed DeMarco, acting director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, should reassess the value of America's homes. Doing so would probably save Americans \$90 billion. So far, he won't allow Fannie and Freddie to do it. With 25 percent of American houses underwater DeMarco should change his mind -- or change his job.

Our other big fight is to stop Congress from letting the interest rate on subsidized Stafford student loans double from 3.4 to 6.8 percent on July 1. At a time when banks are getting their money for practically free, it makes no sense to make the next generation of struggling students pay through the nose for an education. Such a policy is not just bad for our kids. The next generation of Americans must be educated to compete in a global marketplace; erecting price barriers to education is bad for the country. A victory here could save 8 million students collectively about \$20 billion -- and begin to restore American competitiveness for decades to come.

Anyone can join by signing up at <http://www.RebuildTheDream.com>.

A: You emphasize in the book that a mass movement is required to address the needs of working- and middle-class people. How do we keep the energy of Occupy Wall Street and other protest initiatives going and expand their impact? How is the Rebuild the Dream movement connected to other recent protest movements, like OWS and the Tea Party movement?

VJ: Rebuild the Dream is focused on candidates, community-building and campaigns (like cutting student debt and the principal on underwater mortgages). The new book lays out our whole game plan for energizing the movement to empower ordinary people -- "the 99 percent," as folks now say. We have 600,000 online members, and we are in every congressional district. And we are only nine months old!

Let me be clear about something: I am a huge fan of Occupy. But I am not an occupier and I don't speak for Occupy. I do try to speak UP for Occupy, when they are defamed in the press. But Occupy is an autonomous movement, and many of its members are very sensitive about anyone speaking for it. So I am careful to let that organization speak for itself.

That said, I believe that the broader movement of the "99 percent" is, by definition, much larger than the individuals who make up Occupy Wall Street. In my new book, I make the case that the occupiers- - those brave souls who were actually sleeping outside, attending General Assemblies, actively playing a hands-on role -- probably numbered about 250,000 people nationwide, at the height.

But polls showed that about one third of Americans strongly identified with the concerns raised by the protests. That is about 100 million people. No one group, be it Occupy or Rebuild or anyone else, can claim the exclusive right to speak for all of those people. Only occupiers can speak for Occupy. But all of us fighting against the corporate takeover of America can speak for the 99 percent.

That is why Rebuild is proud to be one of the organizations that is promoting 99% Spring, a mammoth effort to train 100,000 people in non-violent civil disobedience from April 9-15. Other groups like Domestic Workers' Alliance, the New Bottom Line, the NAACP, Moveon, the New Organizing Institute, Green For All, and many more are taking part.

In many ways, I see Occupy as representing the most determined and idealistic fighters, kind of like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee did in the early 1960s. In fact, the SNCC youth "occupied" lunch counters, "occupied" segregated busses and helped people "occupy" voting booths in Mississippi. So the comparison is apt.

Yet the civil rights movement was much bigger than SNCC. And I see the movement of the 99 percent as being much bigger than Occupy. Millions of people oppose the division of America into the rising rich and the falling middle- and working-class.

A: With a dysfunctional political system and massive corporate powers mobilized against us, can ordinary citizens really make a difference? Does signing a petition or going to rallies solve anything?

VJ: You never know what is going to break through. For example, Molly Katchpole put up a petition on Change.org to tell Bank of America not to slap a \$5 a month fee on our debit cards. Nobody thought that small act would amount to much. But the petition went viral, and BofA cried uncle -- forgoing billions of dollars in extra profits. Then Molly put up another petition, telling Verizon not to raise its fees by \$5 a month. Verizon folded in 48 hours. She has single-handedly saved Americans billions of dollars, and she did it as an individual. I was so excited when she joined Rebuild the Dream and agreed to help lead our campaign to cut student debt. But you really never know what is going to break through and make a difference.

A: What does the future look like if we don't address current levels of economic inequality?

VJ: Bleak. After all, there are only two ways to build a middle class. Either you have well-paid manufacturing jobs, or you educate a generation for jobs in the highly skilled knowledge sector. We are doing neither very well.

Free-market fundamentalists won't let us have an industrial policy, to ensure that we have high-quality manufacturing jobs. The corporate elite won't let the rich be taxed sufficiently to pay for massive investments in education and physical infrastructure. So we are essentially throwing a generation of young Americans overboard into the global economy, with no protection and no viable rope to climb up into the middle class. Every fight for the next 10-15 years will be a fight about whether we are going to make the rich pay America back by reinvesting in the country that helped them get rich, or whether we are going to let them build their own little castles and moats, while the rest of the country sinks.

A: Why do you believe so strongly in the American Dream?

VJ: Because it was the dream that sustained my great grandparents, my grandparents and my parents. It is the dream I have for my sons, even now. My community has put too many martyrs in the ground in this country to walk away from the American Dream of opportunity for all. We certainly should not throw an idea like that in the garbage can, just so that the richest people ever born don't have to pay a penny more in taxes. We built this country by pooling our resources and working together, sacrificing for the next generation. At our best, we are a nation of neighbors. I reject Social Darwinism as barbarism. We are either going to turn to each other -- or on each other. Rebuild the Dream is working to create a way for us to work together -- the 99 percent fighting for the 100 percent.

(Lynn Parramore is an AlterNet contributing editor. She is cofounder of Recessionwire, founding editor of New Deal 2.0, and author of *Reading the Sphinx: Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture*.)

© 2012 Independent Media Institute.

20120407-07	15:07	Pam	"The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage"
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Interesting article.

"The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage" by Theodore B. Olson, *Newsweek*

Jan. 8, 2010, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/01/08/the-conservative-case-for-gay-marriage.html>)

(Why same-sex marriage is an American value.)

Together with my good friend and occasional courtroom adversary David Boies, I am attempting to persuade a federal court to invalidate California's Proposition 8—the voter-approved measure that overturned California's constitutional right to marry a person of the same sex.

My involvement in this case has generated a certain degree of consternation among conservatives. How could a politically active, lifelong Republican, a veteran of the Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush administrations, challenge the "traditional" definition of marriage and press for an "activist" interpretation of the Constitution to create another "new" constitutional right?

My answer to this seeming conundrum rests on a lifetime of exposure to persons of different backgrounds, histories, viewpoints, and intrinsic characteristics, and on my rejection of what I see as superficially appealing but ultimately false perceptions about our Constitution and its protection of equality and fundamental rights.

Many of my fellow conservatives have an almost knee-jerk hostility toward gay marriage. This does not make sense, because same-sex unions promote the values conservatives prize. Marriage is one of the basic building blocks of our neighborhoods and our nation. At its best, it is a stable bond between two individuals who work to create a loving household and a social and economic partnership. We encourage couples to marry because the commitments they make to one another provide benefits not only to themselves but also to their families and communities. Marriage requires thinking beyond one's own needs. It transforms two individuals into a union based on shared aspirations, and in doing so establishes a formal investment in the well-being of society. The fact that individuals who happen to be gay want to share in this vital social institution is evidence that conservative ideals enjoy widespread acceptance. Conservatives should celebrate this, rather than lament it.

Legalizing same-sex marriage would also be a recognition of basic American principles, and would represent the culmination of our nation's commitment to equal rights. It is, some have said, the last major civil-rights milestone yet to be surpassed in our two-century struggle to attain the goals we set for this nation at its formation.

This bedrock American principle of equality is central to the political and legal convictions of Republicans, Democrats, liberals, and conservatives alike. The dream that became America began with the revolutionary concept expressed in the Declaration of Independence in words that are among the most noble and elegant ever written: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Sadly, our nation has taken a long time to live up to the promise of equality. In 1857, the Supreme Court held that an African-American could not be a citizen. During the ensuing Civil War, Abraham Lincoln eloquently reminded the nation of its founding principle: "our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

At the end of the Civil War, to make the elusive promise of equality a reality, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution added the command that "no State É shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person É the equal protection of the laws."

Subsequent laws and court decisions have made clear that equality under the law extends to persons of all races, religions, and places of origin. What better way to make this national aspiration complete than to apply the same protection to men and women who differ from others only on the basis of their sexual orientation? I cannot think of a single reason—and have not heard one since I undertook this venture—for continued discrimination against decent, hardworking members of our society on that basis.

Various federal and state laws have accorded certain rights and privileges to gay and lesbian couples, but these protections vary dramatically at the state level, and nearly universally deny true equality to gays and lesbians who wish to marry. The very idea of marriage is basic to recognition as equals in our society; any status short of that is inferior, unjust, and unconstitutional.

The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly held that marriage is one of the most fundamental rights that we have as Americans under our Constitution. It is an expression of our desire to create a social partnership, to live and share life's joys and burdens with the person we love, and to form a lasting bond and a social identity. The Supreme Court has said that marriage is a part of the Constitution's protections of liberty, privacy, freedom of association, and spiritual identification. In short, the right to marry helps us to define ourselves and our place in a community. Without it, there can be no true equality under the law.

It is true that marriage in this nation traditionally has been regarded as a relationship exclusively between a man and a woman, and many of our nation's multiple religions define marriage in precisely those terms. But while the Supreme Court has always previously considered marriage in that context, the underlying rights and liberties that marriage embodies are not in any way confined to heterosexuals.

Marriage is a civil bond in this country as well as, in some (but hardly all) cases, a religious sacrament. It is a relationship recognized by governments as providing a privileged and respected status, entitled to the state's support and benefits. The California Supreme Court described marriage as a "union unreservedly approved and favored by the community." Where the state has accorded official sanction to a relationship and provided special benefits to those who enter into that relationship, our courts have insisted that withholding that status requires powerful justifications and may not be arbitrarily denied.

What, then, are the justifications for California's decision in Proposition 8 to withdraw access to the institution of marriage for some of its citizens on the basis of their sexual orientation? The reasons I have heard are not very persuasive.

The explanation mentioned most often is tradition. But simply because something has always been done a certain way does not mean that it must always remain that way. Otherwise we would still have segregated schools and debtors' prisons. Gays and lesbians have always been among us, forming a part of our society, and they have lived as couples in our neighborhoods and communities. For a long time, they have experienced discrimination and even persecution; but we, as a society, are starting to become more tolerant, accepting, and understanding. California and many other states have allowed gays and lesbians to form domestic partnerships (or civil unions) with most of the rights of married heterosexuals. Thus, gay and lesbian individuals are now permitted to live together in state-sanctioned relationships. It therefore seems anomalous to cite "tradition" as a justification for withholding the status of marriage and thus to continue to label those relationships as less worthy, less sanctioned, or less legitimate.

The second argument I often hear is that traditional marriage furthers the state's interest in procreation—and that opening marriage to same-sex couples would dilute, diminish, and devalue this goal. But that is plainly not the case. Preventing lesbians and gays from marrying does not cause more heterosexuals to marry and conceive more children. Likewise, allowing gays and lesbians to marry someone of the same sex will not discourage heterosexuals from marrying a person of the opposite sex. How, then, would allowing same-sex marriages reduce the number of children that heterosexual couples conceive?

This procreation argument cannot be taken seriously. We do not inquire whether heterosexual couples intend to bear children, or have the capacity to have children, before we allow them to marry. We permit marriage by the elderly, by prison inmates, and by persons who have no intention of having children. What's more, it is pernicious to think marriage should be limited to heterosexuals because of the state's desire to promote procreation. We would surely not accept as constitutional a ban on marriage if a state were to decide, as China has done, to discourage procreation.

Another argument, vaguer and even less persuasive, is that gay marriage somehow does harm to heterosexual marriage. I have yet to meet anyone who can explain to me what this means. In what way would allowing same-sex partners to marry diminish the marriages of heterosexual couples? Tellingly, when the judge in our case asked our opponent to identify the ways in which same-sex marriage would harm heterosexual marriage, to his credit he answered honestly: he could not think of any.

The simple fact is that there is no good reason why we should deny marriage to same-sex partners. On the other hand, there are many reasons why we should formally recognize these relationships and embrace the rights of gays and lesbians to marry and become full and equal members of our society.

No matter what you think of homosexuality, it is a fact that gays and lesbians are members of our families, clubs, and workplaces. They are our doctors, our teachers, our soldiers (whether we admit it or not), and our friends. They yearn for acceptance, stable relationships, and success in their lives, just like the rest of us.

Conservatives and liberals alike need to come together on principles that surely unite us. Certainly, we can agree on the value of strong families, lasting domestic relationships, and communities populated by persons with recognized and sanctioned bonds to one another. Confining some of our neighbors and friends who share these same values to an outlaw or second-class status undermines their sense of belonging and weakens their ties with the rest of us and what should be our common aspirations. Even those whose religious convictions preclude endorsement of what they may perceive as an unacceptable "lifestyle" should recognize that disapproval should not warrant stigmatization and unequal treatment.

When we refuse to accord this status to gays and lesbians, we discourage them from forming the same relationships we encourage for others. And we are also telling them, those who love them, and society as a whole that their relationships are less worthy, less legitimate, less permanent, and less valued. We demean their relationships and we demean them as individuals. I cannot imagine how we benefit as a society by doing so.

I understand, but reject, certain religious teachings that denounce homosexuality as morally wrong, illegitimate, or unnatural; and I take strong exception to those who argue that same-sex relationships should be discouraged by society and law. Science has taught us, even if history has not, that gays and lesbians do not choose to be homosexual any more than the rest of us choose to be heterosexual. To a very large extent, these characteristics are immutable, like being left-handed. And, while our Constitution guarantees the freedom to exercise our individual religious convictions, it equally prohibits us from forcing our beliefs on others. I do not believe that our society can ever live up to the promise of equality, and the fundamental rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, until we stop invidious discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

If we are born heterosexual, it is not unusual for us to perceive those who are born homosexual as aberrational and threatening. Many religions and much of our social culture have reinforced those impulses. Too often, that has led to prejudice, hostility, and discrimination. The antidote is understanding, and reason. We once tolerated laws throughout this nation that prohibited marriage between persons of different races. California's Supreme Court was the first to find that discrimination unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously agreed 20 years later, in 1967, in a case called *Loving v. Virginia*. It seems inconceivable today that only 40 years ago there were places in this country where a black woman could not legally marry a white man. And it was only 50 years ago that 17 states mandated segregated public education—until the Supreme Court unanimously struck down that practice in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Most Americans are proud of these decisions and the fact that the discriminatory state laws that spawned them have been discredited. I am convinced that Americans will be equally proud when we no longer discriminate against gays and lesbians and welcome them into our society.

Reactions to our lawsuit have reinforced for me these essential truths. I have certainly heard anger, resentment, and hostility, and words like "betrayal" and other pointedly graphic criticism. But mostly I have been overwhelmed by expressions of gratitude and good will from persons in all walks of life, including, I might add, from many conservatives and libertarians whose names might surprise. I have been particularly moved by many personal renditions of how lonely and personally destructive it is to be treated as an outcast and how meaningful it will be to be respected by our laws and civil institutions as an American, entitled to equality and dignity. I have no doubt that we are on the right side of this battle, the right side of the law, and the right side of history.

Some have suggested that we have brought this case too soon, and that neither the country nor the courts are "ready" to tackle this issue and remove this stigma. We disagree. We represent real clients—two wonderful couples in California who have longtime relationships. Our lesbian clients are raising four fine children who could not ask for better parents. Our clients wish to be married. They believe that they have that constitutional right. They wish to be represented in court to seek vindication of that right by mounting a challenge under the United States Constitution to the validity of Proposition 8 under the equal-protection and due-process clauses of the 14th Amendment. In fact,

the California attorney general has conceded the unconstitutionality of Proposition 8, and the city of San Francisco has joined our case to defend the rights of gays and lesbians to be married. We do not tell persons who have a legitimate claim to wait until the time is "right" and the populace is "ready" to recognize their equality and equal dignity under the law.

Citizens who have been denied equality are invariably told to "wait their turn" and to "be patient." Yet veterans of past civil-rights battles found that it was the act of insisting on equal rights that ultimately sped acceptance of those rights. As to whether the courts are "ready" for this case, just a few years ago, in *Romer v. Evans*, the United States Supreme Court struck down a popularly adopted Colorado constitutional amendment that withdrew the rights of gays and lesbians in that state to the protection of anti-discrimination laws. And seven years ago, in *Lawrence v. Texas*, the Supreme Court struck down, as lacking any rational basis, Texas laws prohibiting private, intimate sexual practices between persons of the same sex, overruling a contrary decision just 20 years earlier.

These decisions have generated controversy, of course, but they are decisions of the nation's highest court on which our clients are entitled to rely. If all citizens have a constitutional right to marry, if state laws that withdraw legal protections of gays and lesbians as a class are unconstitutional, and if private, intimate sexual conduct between persons of the same sex is protected by the Constitution, there is very little left on which opponents of same-sex marriage can rely. As Justice Antonin Scalia, who dissented in the *Lawrence* case, pointed out, "[W]hat [remaining] justification could there possibly be for denying the benefits of marriage to homosexual couples exercising '[t]he liberty protected by the Constitution'?" He is right, of course. One might agree or not with these decisions, but even Justice Scalia has acknowledged that they lead in only one direction.

California's Proposition 8 is particularly vulnerable to constitutional challenge, because that state has now enacted a crazy-quilt of marriage regulation that makes no sense to anyone. California recognizes marriage between men and women, including persons on death row, child abusers, and wife beaters. At the same time, California prohibits marriage by loving, caring, stable partners of the same sex, but tries to make up for it by giving them the alternative of "domestic partnerships" with virtually all of the rights of married persons except the official, state-approved status of marriage. Finally, California recognizes 18,000 same-sex marriages that took place in the months between the state Supreme Court's ruling that upheld gay-marriage rights and the decision of California's citizens to withdraw those rights by enacting Proposition 8.

So there are now three classes of Californians: heterosexual couples who can get married, divorced, and remarried, if they wish; same-sex couples who cannot get married but can live together in domestic partnerships; and same-sex couples who are now married but who, if they divorce, cannot remarry. This is an irrational system, it is discriminatory, and it cannot stand.

Americans who believe in the words of the Declaration of Independence, in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, in the 14th Amendment, and in the Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and equal dignity before the law cannot sit by while this wrong continues. This is not a conservative or liberal issue; it is an American one, and it is time that we, as Americans, embraced it.

20120408-02	16:30	SteveB	Re: "The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage" (reply to Pam, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

This makes a lot of sense. Once again, the Right shoot themselves (and all of us) in the foot.

20120407-10	15:59	SteveG	"Intuit Is Now the Fourth Company to Drop Voter Suppression Group ALEC"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

"Intuit Is Now the Fourth Company to Drop Voter Suppression Group ALEC" by Ian Millhiser, Think Progress / NationofChange

Apr. 7, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/intuit-now-fourth-company-drop-voter-suppression-group-alec-1333813023>)

(ALEC is one of the leading proponents of so-called Voter ID legislation that potentially disenfranchises millions of low-income, minority, student and elderly voters in an effort to exclude groups that tend to vote Democratic from the franchise.)

Software company Intuit, the makers of programs such as Turbo Tax and Quicken, announced today that they will join Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and Kraft as the fourth company to end their partnership with the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council this week.

The Center for Media & Democracy, which launched ALECexposed.com last year, broke the news:

A stampede seems to be on the way as more and more groups break ties and dump ALEC. Intuit, Inc. (maker of Quicken and QuickBooks accounting software) told the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) that Intuit also decided not to renew its membership after it expired in 2011. That comment came from Bernie McKay, Vice President of Government Affairs. He gave this response when CMD identified that Intuit was no longer listed on the board and contacted the company. CMD began its effort to spotlight Intuit and other corporate funders and tie these corporations to the ALEC agenda when it launched ALECexposed.org in July 2011. ... Intuit's McKay explained to CMD that the company doesn't "usually issue statements about membership in any organization" and declined to comment further.

Although Pepsi quietly left ALEC as recently as last January, the growing exodus of companies' from ALEC's began earlier this week when the progressive group Color of Change announced a petition and boycott campaign targeting ALEC's corporate supporters. Other corporations that have not yet publicly renounced their support of ALEC include Koch Industries, Wal-Mart, Pfizer, Reynolds American, Altria/Philip Morris, Procter & Gamble, Exxon Mobil and British alcohol firm Diageo (makers of Smirnoff and Johnnie Walker).

As a recent Center for American Progress report explains, ALEC is one of the leading proponents of so-called Voter ID legislation that potentially disenfranchises millions of low-income, minority, student and elderly voters in an effort to exclude groups that tend to vote Democratic from the franchise. ALEC is also linked to state "Stand Your Ground" laws that can potentially enable accused murders such as Trayvon Martin's accused assailant George Zimmerman to remain free.

20120407-13	23:01	Bill	Video: Mr. Bean & Charles Trénet
-----------------------------	-------	------	----------------------------------

No politics. Just Mr. Bean and Georges Trenet's music and voice.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=2LspsMJ486w&feature=endscreen>

20120408-01	12:53	SteveG	"CIA Unlawfully Withholds Documents"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--------------------------------------

"CIA Unlawfully Withholds Documents" by Lindsey Needham, NationofChange

Apr. 8, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/cia-unlawfully-withholds-documents-1333892972>)

(One of seven FOIA exemptions, the (b)(3) exemption allows an agency's director to refuse disclosure of documents to protect "intelligence sources and methods.")

A federal lawsuit has charged the CIA with refusing to comply with requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), contending that the agency has repeatedly cited an exemption it does not have the authority to use.

Over the years, government watchdogs have requested records relating to the CIA's treatment of detainees and policies related to the "war on terror," but the CIA withheld many of these documents by invoking a (b)(3) exemption. One of seven FOIA exemptions, the (b)(3) exemption allows an agency's director to refuse disclosure of documents to protect "intelligence sources and methods."

When Congress passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act back in 2004, the authority of protecting intelligence sources and methods shifted from the Director of the CIA to the newly created Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). In other words, the ODNI (not the CIA) is in charge of invoking the (b)(3) exemption and has been for eight years. Interestingly, it appears that the CIA has only once received authorization from the ODNI to cite (b)(3), indicating that many uses of this exemption were purely illegitimate.

Such disregard for the law is not a first for the CIA. In spite of a well-established law that prohibits the agency from spying here in the US, the CIA trained the New York Police Department to carry out targeted surveillance of Muslims. An internal "review" later found no violation of law.

Kel McClanahan, executive director of the law firm filing the suit, suggests that the CIA's actions follow a pattern of defiance:

As important as protecting intelligence sources and methods is, you'd think that someone would have wanted to cross all the t's and dot all the i's to make sure that they stayed protected after the authority to do so changed hands. Or perhaps the CIA just decided to keep on doing what it had always done, expecting that nobody would notice the difference and call them out on it.

It appears that the deeper we delve into the CIA's actions, the more questions we find. But somehow the CIA keeps finding a way to cover up its tracks.

20120408-07 22:00 Ann Cartoon: Happy Easter!



20120408-08 22:42 SteveG Pandora Internet Radio

A "vast trove of music and comedy": <http://www.pandora.com>.

20120408-09 23:45 SteveG "Gov. Mitch Daniels Doesn't Break a Sweat Over Stray \$526 Million"

Indiana's Governor Mitch "The Blade" Daniels is a Loser!

Does this kind of stuff happen in other states or just Indiana? Does this happen in the federal government?

"Gov. Mitch Daniels Doesn't Break a Sweat Over Stray \$526 Million" by Matthew Tully, *Indianapolis Star*

Apr. 7, 2012

(<http://www.indystar.com/article/20120408/NEWS08/204080344/?odyssey=mod|newswell|text|IndyStar.com|p>)

Hey, what's a half-billion dollars or so?

These days, it's about the size of a Mega Millions jackpot or the collective amount of the Daniels' administration's screw-ups?

In recent months, the administration has announced misplacing \$320 million in tax collections and, now, shortchanging cash-strapped local governments by a whopping \$206 million. I should probably help the administration do the math here: that's \$526 million worth of oops.

That's a lot of oops. Or as Democratic gubernatorial candidate John Gregg said Thursday, as he understandably exploited the situation: "Where this old boy is from, a half-billion dollars is a ton of money."

In Marion County, where police ranks are too thin and bean counters have spent years desperately trying to close budget gaps, the latest mistake means local government since the start of 2011 received about \$34 million less in local income tax disbursements from the state than it deserved.

In other words, as decisions that affect everything from parks to public safety were made, Indianapolis officials were forced to work with numbers as accurate as Uncle Ernest's tale about the size of a catfish he caught 20 years ago. Counties across the state suffered under similar inaccuracies.

You have to give it to Gov. Mitch Daniels, though. As his administration announced another mega-mess, he wasn't humbled. Nope. The governor seemed downright indignant at criticism coming from Democratic House Leader Pat Bauer, saying in a statement that, "When I want management advice, I won't start with Bauer."

OK, that's a funny line. But snootiness isn't an appropriate strategy for a guy who now has responsibility for \$526 million worth of accounting mistakes. As I read his words Thursday, I recalled the jokes he relentlessly unleashed as a candidate in 2004 about the previous administration's management errors.

Defend Daniels all you want, but his administration has racked up a hefty record of foul-ups -- from the bungled welfare privatization to what seems to be an inability to count.

Not that he's apologizing. When the state realized it had misplaced \$320 million several months ago, Daniels treated it like a joke, talking like a college student who'd just found \$20 worth of beer money in an old pair of jeans, as if important budget decisions hadn't been made on the faulty numbers.

And on Thursday the state put out a news release that downplayed the newest mistake, writing of "programming errors" and mentioning not the \$206 million but the smaller "\$13 million per month" mistake. That's like Tiger Woods telling his wife, "Hey, I averaged only one affair a month!"

Thankfully, Daniels and other Republicans finally accepted the need for an independent audit. If they've found this much without such an audit, who knows what they'll find with one. Perhaps Jimmy Hoffa's body, Amelia Earhart's plane and the hair that so mysteriously disappeared from my head.

The strangest reaction to the whole episode came from Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard. Once again exposing his unrequited man-crush on the governor, Ballard actually thanked Daniels in a statement, even though the error hurt his city and forced him to run for re-election last year with one wallet tied behind his back.

Now, I should note that on balance Daniels has been a fine governor. You probably can't find an administration that has survived two terms without a few huge mistakes. And state budget director Adam Horst is as sharp as they come; if anything, he appears to have helped fix a situation caused by others. That explains why the Department of Revenue's top honchos have left the administration in recent days.

Still, this foul-up might expose a problem that haunts many executives late in their tenure -- the inability to close strong and stay focused. Perhaps Daniels shouldn't have spent the past year writing a book about the federal government, flirting with a presidential run, and traveling from coast to coast and beyond to build his name recognition. Every organization needs a leader who is fully focused on the job at hand -- not the next one.

They used to call Daniels "The Blade" for his budget-cutting enthusiasm. If things don't improve, he'll soon be known as "The Broken Calculator."

20120406-11	19:58	SteveB	Now, <i>HERE'S</i> a Sailin' Song!
-----------------------------	-------	--------	------------------------------------

"Here Comes the Breeze" (Gomez)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvr44d_m3Tw&feature=

20120408-04	18:43	SteveB	3,868
-----------------------------	-------	--------	-------

3,868 hits on YouTube. Amazing! Are people stupid or deaf or what?

The crap gets 50,000,000 hits!

This is your chance to be a true elitist (and hear some great music)!

Listen to the lead voice and the harmonies, the guitar work, the understated twists that make the song listenable for a long time. You don't get sick of this stuff very soon. The lyrics are smart. The emotionality is richly textured. At the end, how can you not dance? And this is just one of their "little" songs, not one of the "major works".

Gomez (you knew it) "Pick Up the Pieces": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rlvtkqpgO8&feature=relmfu>.

I am not kidding. This rocks! The Beatles of the early 21st Century, minus the legion of adoring fans. Don't ask me why.

20120408-05	18:54	Dennis	Re: 3,868 (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	------------------------------------

So can I get a 45 of this?

20120408-06	19:22	SteveB	Re: 3,868 (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	------------------------------------

No, everything is now ephemeral. Maybe an MP3...

From SteveB (Apr. 8, 2012, 12:59 pm)—Sarajevo

<http://www.wayby.com/articles/city-information/sarajevo-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina—After and Before





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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #113 — APR. 10, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

Stop Pure Speculation in the Oil Markets

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 10, 2012)

All that has to happen is that, if you buy oil futures, you must take delivery of that oil or pay a hefty penalty at the time any future is re-sold. This principle should be applied to all commodities markets, but oil is obviously the most crucial at this moment. This action would impose nothing but fairness on any participant and would lower the apparent demand and price.

"Sen. Bernie Sanders: Oil Speculators Must Be Stopped and the CFTC 'Needs to Obey the Law'" by Morgan Korn, The Daily Ticker/Yahoo! Finance

Mar. 7, 2012, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/daily-ticker/oil-speculators-must-stopped-ctfc-needs-obey-law-182903332.html>)

The recent rise in gasoline prices has prompted Congressional hearings and a call to federal regulators to curb what many see as the cause for the spike: oil speculators.

A House subcommittee held a hearing on "The American Energy Initiative" Wednesday morning that focused solely on rising pump prices. Seventy members of Congress signed a letter this week to regulators at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), urging immediate action on oil speculation by enacting "strong position limits" and to "utilize all authorities available to...make sure that the price of oil and gasoline reflects the fundamentals of supply and demand."

The CFTC was given authority in the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to impose position caps on oil traders beginning in January 2011. These limits have not yet been implemented by the CFTC. In an interview Wednesday with The Daily Ticker, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) says the CFTC doesn't "have the will" to enact these limits and "needs to obey the law."

"What we need to do is...limit the amount of oil any one company can control on the oil futures market," says Sanders, who has long advocated limits on speculation. "The function of these speculators is not to use oil but to make profits from speculation, drive prices up and sell."

The average price of a gallon of gasoline in the U.S. has increased nearly 30 cents in one month according to the AAA's Daily Fuel Gauge Report. U.S. oil prices have jumped more than six percent since Feb. 1 even though oil demand in the U.S. is at its lowest level since April 2007. The International Energy Agency (IEA) reported that the

world's oil supply rose by 1.3 million barrels a day in the last three months of 2011 while world demand increased just 0.7 million barrels per day during that same time period.

This is not the first time oil speculators have been blamed for higher energy prices. In 2008 U.S. oil prices skyrocketed to \$145 per barrel and gasoline prices averaged well above \$4 per gallon. There were calls to increase domestic offshore drilling and legislation was proposed that would have required buyers of oil to physically own and store the oil barrels. Then the 2008 financial crisis hit causing oil and gasoline prices to plummet.

Blaming the speculators may seem like scapegoating to some (namely, oil traders) but speculators control more than 80 percent of the energy futures market, up from 30 percent a decade ago, and there is mounting evidence that speculation contributes to higher prices:

- At a Senate hearing last June, Rex Tillerson, the CEO of ExxonMobil, said speculation was driving up the price of a barrel of oil by as much as 40 percent.
- A study conducted by the nonpartisan consumer advocacy group Consumer Federation of America found that speculation caused the average American household to spend an additional \$600 on gasoline expenditures in 2011. Moreover, the report concluded that excessive speculation (which the organization estimated added about \$30 per barrel to the cost of oil in 2011) drained the U.S. economy of more than \$200 billion in consumer spending in 2011.
- The St. Louis Federal Reserve has also recommended that the CFTC do more to prevent oil speculators from driving up the price of oil. Fed officials studied the effect of oil traders on the price of oil over five years and determined that "speculation contributed to around 15 percent to oil price increases."
- CFTC Chair Gary Gensler declared last year that "huge inflows of speculative money create a self-fulfilling prophecy that drives up commodity prices."

There are many components reflected in the current price of oil, including old-fashioned supply and demand and geopolitical factors (such as a possible attack on Iran). Rising gasoline prices are a huge pocketbook issue for many Americans, a reason alone for politicians to focus on the role of the speculators.

20120409-08	16:55	SteveB	"Obama Campaign Mocks Romney's 'Car Elevators'"
-------------	-------	--------	---

Romney's 'car elevator' problem...

"Obama Campaign Mocks Romney's 'Car Elevators'" by posted by Byron Tsu, Politico

Apr. 9, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/04/obama-campaign-mocks-romneys-car-elevators-120020.html#comments>)

President Obama's campaign manager Jim Messina Monday slammed Mitt Romney as a hypocrite for trying to paint President Obama as an out-of-touch Harvard elitist.

"I would brand it simply hypocrisy," Messina said on a conference call with reporters. "I mean, come on, Romney's also a Harvard graduate"

"Romney trying to say someone's out of touch is a little difficult when he's shopping for car elevators," Messina said, referring to POLITICO reporter Reid Epstein's revelation that Romney's La Jolla, Calif. home will have elevators for his cars.

"We have a president, who I think is a nice guy, but he spent too much time at Harvard," Romney, who himself earned two degrees at Harvard, said recently about Obama.

The Obama campaign also pointed to Romney's defense of lower tax rates for investment income as an example of his lack of a common touch.

"It all goes back to one simple questions: **why should Mitt Romney pay a lower tax rate than average Americans?**" Messina said. "Romney's a beneficiary of a broken tax system. He wants a system where firefighters, cops, teachers and middle class Americans all pay a higher tax rate than he does."

20120409-01	12:05	SteveB	See What I Mean? The Beatles.
-----------------------------	-------	--------	-------------------------------

The best Beatles song in the lot is the first one, written by Gomez.

Gomez - Whippin' Piccadilly:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKrIkfIT_YY&feature=relmfu.

Gomez - Getting Better (Beatles cover):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VKDfWJsjnA>.

Gomez - Hey Bulldog (Beatles cover):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8_BO1uaPkc.

Gomez - Sun King (Beatles cover):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhqayG1NNE0&feature=related>.

20120409-02	12:38	Pam	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

The Beatles rock.

20120409-04	13:33	SteveB	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to Pam, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

The Beatles rock(ed).

20120409-05	13:44	Pam	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Well, yeah. I heard Paul McCartney sing recently, and he was awful. They were great once though.

20120409-06	14:04	SteveB	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to Pam, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

They were...and genius lives. It will not be denied.

Now, don't get me wrong. I love old music too. And I find it sort of cool to relive the spirit of past times evoked by music, which works even better than smells, I think.

And many of those times music evokes in me were very good times. When I was younger I didn't realize so much how gone the past is. I wasn't entirely free of the idea that there was plenty of time to bring them back, if I so desired. So they were not so lost, if you know what I mean. But as time goes on, one realizes that those particular moments, even the golden ones, are gone. There might still be some sense of enjoyment in going back, but it is now tinged with a sense of loss that I don't always want with my music.

I guess I'm lucky because I have been able, somehow, to avoid becoming what I call "stuck in time" as far as music goes. There seems to be a formative time in most people's lives, usually when they are teenagers, when the

Dennis: Guess I'm stuck watching American Idol for my premier musical entertainment.

SteveB: You don't like music? Otherwise, unless you have a \$30,000 system and are just blowing me off (which I suspect), buy a \$20 set of headphones, plug them into your laptop, and listen to Youtube or internet radio. It's all on there. Even exotic stuff like:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zhmq5963Gk&feature=related>.

20120409-07	15:47	SteveB	"Why the Insurance Industry Needs Obamacare to Stay in Business"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Why Obamacare is necessary...

"Why the Insurance Industry Needs Obamacare to Stay in Business" by Wendell Potter, NationofChange

Apr. 9, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-insurance-industry-needs-obamacare-stay-business-1333986118>)

If there is a group of people more anxious about how the Supreme Court will rule on the health care reform law than President Obama and the millions of Americans who are already benefiting from it, it is health insurance executives.

Not only have their companies been spending millions of dollars implementing the parts of the law that pertains to them — and most of them do — but they also have been counting on the law as very possibly the only thing that can preserve the free market system of health insurance in this country. This is why it is so ironic that defenders of the free market are the most vocal critics of the law and the ones hoping most ardently that the Court will declare it unconstitutional.

Health insurers have known for years that their business practices of excluding growing numbers of Americans from coverage and shifting more and more of the cost of care to policyholders are not sustainable over the long haul. That's why their top priority during the health care reform debate was to make sure whatever bill Congress passed included the much-vilified individual mandate. And it's also why the big insurance companies have been working almost frantically to reinvent themselves lately.

Cigna and Aetna recently became the latest of the biggest national firms to rebrand themselves and roll out new logos and self-descriptions. Cigna is now "a global health service company" while Aetna is now "one of the nation's leading health care benefits companies." What this means is that these companies and their competitors have come to understand that the very policies that enabled them to make Wall Street-pleasing profits over several years has led to a health insurance marketplace that is shrinking. And as it continues to shrink, so will their profit margins.

Cigna and Aetna and a handful of other companies got to be the giants they are today largely by acquiring scores of their smaller competitors in the 1990s and 2000s. Their acquisition strategy now is very different because they know the glory days of being able to report profits every quarter that are greater than what they reported a year earlier, which shareholders demand, are over. So instead of acquiring other insurers, the big firms are now diversifying by buying data and care management businesses and, to the alarm of many consumer advocates, hospitals and physician groups.

They are doing this because they have failed miserably at expanding coverage and controlling skyrocketing medical costs, as they promised they could do as they were torpedoing Bill and Hillary Clinton's health care reform bill two decades ago. Even though they hated many of the Clintons' proposals, they recognized even then that government intervention in the health insurance business would be necessary, that we couldn't rely solely on them or the free market to fix our broken system.

Here's what Karen Iagni, who heads America's Health Insurance Plans, the industry's largest PR and lobbying group, told a Congressional panel in the fall of 1993:

The need for national health care reform has been well documented ... Universal coverage at broadly affordable cost becomes possible only when insurance risks are spread across a large community. Currently, most health coverage is priced using 'experience rating,' where high premiums are set for high cost groups and low premiums are set for low cost groups. Experience rating financially discriminates against populations that experience high costs: the very young, the very old, the chronically ill, and those with pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes.

And here's what Larry English, the former president of Cigna HealthCare, told that same Congressional committee:

There are many specifics in the President's plan we believe should be supported enthusiastically. Among them are universal coverage, portability, the elimination of pre-existing condition limitations, the elimination of cream-skimming and cherry picking underwriting practices, the use of community rating, a standard benefit plan and malpractice reform.

When it became clear, however, that some of the regulations the Clintons were proposing might curtail profits, the insurers began to disown what they had told Congress. They embarked on a campaign to persuade the public that the "invisible hand of the market," as English said in a speech the next year, would do a much better job of controlling costs and expanding coverage than the Clinton plan.

When the Clinton bill died in Congress, that invisible hand went to work. But it proved to be so ham-fisted that physicians and patients soon rebelled. As it turned out, people didn't like being required to change doctors, as many of them had to do. And women didn't like being forced out of the hospital within hours of having a baby or undergoing a mastectomy. So insurers had to ditch many of the practices that presumably would bring down health care costs.

The free-market solution the insurers came up with after the failure of managed care was to herd people into high-deductible plans, just as they herded us into restrictive HMOs 20 years ago. The problem, of course, is that the insurers have to keep increasing both premiums and deductibles to keep meeting Wall Street's profit expectations. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see how that is not a sustainable strategy — unless, of course, the government requires all of us buy coverage and gives subsidies to people who can't afford the premiums on their own.

Without the individual mandate, so loathed by free market lovers, the pool of people willing and able to buy coverage will continue to shrink, as will insurers' profit margins. Over the coming years, that pool will become increasingly older and sicker, meaning premiums will soar. Insurers will begin to desert the marketplace. They will not go out of business, but, as their acquisition strategy shows, they will be very different companies.

Insurance executives know they will have to transform their companies even more rapidly — and get out of the risk business sooner rather than later — if the individual mandate is struck down. They have run out of silver bullets. As for those who believe the free market can work in health care just as well as any other sector of the economy, they will see, if the Court declares the law unconstitutional, that it simply does not.

Wendell Potter is a former CIGNA executive-turned-whistleblower, writing about the health care industry and the ongoing battle for health reform. Potter is the author of *Deadly Spin: An Insurance Company Insider Speaks Out on How Corporate PR is Killing Health Care and Deceiving Americans.*)

20120409-09	17:17	Dennis	Video: How Conservatives (and Liberals?) Think
-------------	-------	--------	--

Okay conservatives (and liberals), is this really how you think?

Video: <http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/04/09/how-conservatives-think-this-video-needs-to-go-viral-video/>

Adam Strange (no relation to Dr. Strange) put together this short video describing the fundamental difference between the conservative world view and the liberal world view. It's another take on the Authoritarians and puts the actions of the right into perspective. Essentially, conservatives NEED winners and losers in order for the world to make sense. It doesn't matter if they happen to be the losers and if the winners got to the top through immoral, illegal or just downright inhumane means, as long as a hierarchy is preserved. Liberals desire equality of opportunity (as opposed to equality of result which would be Communism, something only people looking for excuses to complain about liberals think we stand for).

Add that to the Steak Rule, "Conservatives cannot enjoy a steak unless they know that, somewhere, someone else can't have a steak of their own" and you can understand the majority of conservative social and economic policies.

(If you're unfamiliar with the woman laying on the floor while the police step over her [in the above video], her name was Anna Brown and she was left to die on the floor from an easily treatable condition. The hospital had her dragged away by the police because she was black and poor. Proof that not only do hospitals not always provide emergency care if they think they won't get paid (they didn't run a single test on her) but that there are death panels. Not the paranoid delusional ones of the right, but the very real ones brought about by the profit motive of our current system.

[I love these quotes from the comments section. —SteveB]

from Richard Bellacera:

"If by a 'Liberal' they mean someone who looks ahead and not behind, someone who welcomes new ideas without rigid reactions, someone who cares about the welfare of the people — their health, their housing, their schools, their jobs, their civil rights, and their civil liberties — someone who believes we can break through the stalemate and suspicions that grip us in our policies abroad, if that is what they mean by a 'Liberal,' then I'm proud to say I'm a 'Liberal.'" —John F. Kennedy, 1960

"We're all connected to each other biologically. To the Earth, chemically. To the Universe, atomically." —Neil deGrasse Tyson.

"Many people, especially ignorant people, want to punish you for speaking the truth, for being correct, for being you. Never apologize for being correct, or for being years ahead of your time. If you're right and you know it, speak your mind. Speak your mind. Even if you are a minority of one, the truth is still the truth." —Mohandas Gandhi

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." —Mohandas Gandhi

Decisions for civil behavior, society & global economy should be "arrived at" via Science, best ever-emerging technologies, reason/logic, what is best for the individual, group and the planet as a whole (i.e., what brings least harm & most benefit), Earth's carrying capacity & available resources & the Ethic of Reciprocity; NOT based on any leader, bureaucracy, money/profit, personal, religious or political belief or ideology, opinion or popular vote. A better world's possible. —me

Please stop thinking like a slave to the Wealthy elite. Its time we, as a HUMAN SPECIES consciously, selflessly and CONSCIENTIOUSLY EVOLVE to value life over greed. Our current monetary system promotes corruption by INCENTIVE. The Earth is the ONLY home we have right now and the faster corporate greed develops the faster we are destroying our home. Christians don't care 'cause they delusionally think "So what, Jesus is coming back and he'll give us a New Earth". WAKE UP. Its an extremely short-sighted CON! —me

Never stop asking questions and never stop learning. When you stop asking questions you cease your path to enlightenment. Consciously evolve. —me

"The old appeals to racial and sexual and religious chauvinism, to rabid nationalist fervor, are beginning not to work. A new consciousness is developing which sees the Earth as a single organism, and recognizes that an organism at war with itself is doomed. We are One Planet." —Carl Sagan

"This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career." —Albert Einstein

"A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it." —Max Planck (Father of Quantum Mechanics)

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." —Margaret Mead

"Reason obeys itself; Ignorance submits to what is dictated to it." —Thomas Paine

MORALITY IS DOING WHAT IS RIGHT, NO MATTER WHAT YOU ARE TOLD. FAITH IS DOING WHAT YOU ARE TOLD, NO MATTER WHAT IS RIGHT.

"May the Great Bird of the Galaxy bless your planet" —Hikaru Sulu (Star Trek)

20120409-10	17:45	MarthaH	"Dick Lugar: Too Mild to Be Memorable?"
-------------	-------	---------	---

From MarthaH (Apr. 9, 2012, 5:45 pm)—Mild Dick Lugar

"Dick Lugar: Too Mild to Be Memorable?" by Melinda Henneberger, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 9, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/dick-lugar-too-mild-to-be-memorable/2012/04/09/gIQASHKL6S_story.html)

(COLUMBUS, Ind.) The lead story in the morning paper had delivered just the latest kick in the shins to Dick Lugar in the hottest Senate primary in the country. "Like many Senate Republicans who have spent a few decades in Washington," it said, "U.S. Senator Richard Lugar was for the individual health mandate before he was against it."

Ouch!

Yet a far worse sign for Lugar, who turned 80 this week, was that nobody at the Rotary Club luncheon where he was speaking asked him about the story — or about the controversy over whether he has a legal address in Indiana, where he last owned a home in 1977.

Instead, the Q&A that followed his remarks was about the geopolitics of food security and his early days running his family's black walnut farm. It was not just polite, but too polite, especially this close to the May 8 primary.

How does polling work?

Is Super PAC money good or bad?

Will the Ryan budget pass, do you think?

Sure, this was Rotary, not "Hardball." But even here, tougher questions would have suggested voters were still deciding between the icon and his challenger, tea party favorite and State Treasurer Richard Mourdock.

Lugar, the ranking member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is a gentleman of the old school, referring to the Affordable Care Act as "so-called Obamacare," in campaign speeches and even correctly identifying Harry Reid as a member of the Democratic, rather than "Democrat" Party. At a time when Republicans routinely insist on denying Democrats that courtesy, hearing the proper usage from a Republican's lips is a reminder of how unusual it's become.

Yet if the question is whether Lugar is too mild for this highly polarized moment, his answer has not been to reinvent himself. Instead, his pitch about making the world safer by helping African farmers get better yields is a double-shot of decaf, resolutely out-of-sync with the anger of the moment.

The ad war here is well funded but within bounds so far, with Lugar accused of being open to raising the gas tax at one point, which is true, and Mourdock of counting on outside money, also true.

The race is, however, unpredictable, **as a result of that outside money, from groups including the Club for Growth and FreedomWorks, both of which are supporting Mourdock.** In the middle of the country and the middle of the political spectrum, Indiana's governorship and Senate seats tend to swing back and forth between the parties, and a Mourdock victory could also open a path for moderate Democrat Joe Donnelly, the congressman from South Bend, who narrowly won reelection in his bellwether district two years ago.

Murdock, the primary challenger who threatens to end Lugar's long career, is an introverted 60-year-old geologist who hates parties and loves marathon-running and motorcycles. He is a bomb-thrower only by Hoosier standards.

Most Saturdays since October, Mourdock has been out knocking on doors, asking registered Republicans to vote for him in the primary, though his natural inclination is hermetic, and by his own account he'd prefer to be doing "something normal."

On a recent such outing, in his home territory in Evansville, in southern Indiana, he got a generally positive reception, and only one outright no. "It's time for a change," said Dianne Hensley, who answered her door and promised him her vote. "Even I had to retire."

Over coffee later at the Donut Bank, the compact, quiet challenger described himself as a thoroughly reluctant politician, though he has been campaigning pretty much nonstop since 1988 – and three times ran unsuccessfully for a House seat. In 2010, however, he improbably led his party's ticket, even from way down-ballot, and as state treasurer has some establishment as well as tea party support.

To those who first encouraged him to challenge Lugar, he said his reaction was, "What did I ever do to you? That's an awfully big bus to throw me under." Not because he thought he couldn't win, but because he knew he'd have to sacrifice his privacy: "I hate that part of it! My wife and I are very private people, and I know the next 30 days are going to change my life forever. My wife says, 'What happened to my shy geologist?' I loved looking through a microscope because it meant I didn't have to deal with people."

When a motorcycle roared by, Mourdock looked out the window and said, "That's what I'd rather be doing" — especially because out on the open road, he's anonymous. "I have a full-mask helmet and nobody knows who I am. I have a flaw as a politician — emotionally, for my ego, I don't have to do this."

He said he realized years ago that he'd gotten into a bad habit: "Go to work, go home, watch TV, go to bed," repeat. With TV eating so many hours and brain cells, "I gave myself the goal of reading 10 pages of history a night" instead, and as a result, he began thinking more about politics.

His eyes filled with tears repeatedly during the interview — when talking about his feelings about his country, his wife, whom he introduces as "Saint Marilyn," and "all those nights" he pondered a certain quote from Lincoln, who as a kid spent 14 years in Southern Indiana.

"This is essentially a people's contest," Lincoln said of the Civil War. "On the side of the Union, it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men ... to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life."

Today, as Mourdock sees it, the "government picks winners and losers, and that infuriates me." How so? With bailouts, giveaways and attempts to "give the children of immigrants special rights." In fact, he sees the current moment as strikingly similar to the Civil War era, with the question of the proper role of government dividing Americans.

At bottom, he said, the split is between "those who say, 'You can't have my stuff,' and those who say, 'I want your stuff,' though they don't know that's what they're saying."

Dick Lugar is an artisan of understatement. He tells supporters at a fundraiser at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis that "this has not been a very productive period," in terms of passing a budget, that our dependence on foreign oil has been "lamented by the last five presidents without visible activity," and that, in his current primary race, "we are involved in obviously a very vigorous and strenuous effort."

He told some 200 old friends at the event that although he understands the public's anger, anger in itself is no answer: "It takes no talent to flail about," shouting about jobs, he said, and held up Indiana training programs inside companies as a model for the country, and Indiana genetically modified seed as a farming model to the world.

Twice during his remarks, he referred to Paul Ryan as "Jim Ryan," and in conclusion, said he'll hopefully be around for six months more, when of course he meant six years.

But after the event, on a barstool in the empty hall outside where the Pacers play, he had no trouble articulating why voters should renew his contract: "I believe I can make a significant difference in American foreign policy, ag policy and economic policy. I hope it's not too grandiose a vision to say we have an opportunity to help people all over the world." Then he went back to talking about world hunger.

Grandiose, no. But in the primary fight of his life, such talk is as radical in its way as anything tea party or Occupy protesters could write on a sign.

When asked about the residency controversy, he didn't try to minimize the impact of the issue, but on the contrary went on a little bit about his awe at the stacks and stacks of press clips on the subject: "It's all about residency, and almost nothing about the campaign!"

So how did a 35-year-veteran of the Senate wind up using the address of a home he sold in 1977 on his license and voter registration until just recently? The answer is nothing if not old-fashioned.

"At the time I left to serve in the Senate — and I don't want to go too far with this, but it's somewhat like going off to the military," which as a Navy vet he's also done, "I followed the legal advice of the AG" of Indiana to use the last address he'd had before his election. Now that he's been cleared to use the address at his family farm, though he's never lived there, he said, "I was out there yesterday — a sentimental journey — just to make sure no one had destroyed the house, and my son Bob had done a good job cleaning out the rubbish." The place is impossible to miss, he said with a smile, "because there's a sign on the gate, Richard G. Lugar, Tree Farmer of the Year, 2005."

Lugar recently repaid the state for the \$14,000 he'd charged taxpayers for the hotels he's always stayed in during trips back to Indiana and says he had no idea he'd been flouting the "arcane" Senate rule that members can't be compensated for stays within 35 miles of their home — or in his case, former home.

He not only makes no apology for selling his Indiana home 35 years ago, but notes that the Congress functioned better when more of its members spent enough time in Washington to get to know one another better.

When asked about the much-discussed charge that he "let" Obama use a photo of the two of them together in an '08 ad in the state, he said facetiously, "Maybe I'm just not alert enough to the possibilities, and should have threatened a lawsuit." But more was accomplished, he said, when it was less scandalous to be seen standing next to someone from across the aisle. And if this campaign does turn out to mark the end of Lugar's long career, no one will be able to say he didn't stay true to himself, in its final weeks.

(Melinda Henneberger anchors the She the People blog on washingtonpost.com.)

Holy cr*p. It's kinda hard to decide who to vote against.

20120409-13 23:59 SteveB Photo: Car Elevator Like R0mney's?

<http://www.gadgetreview.com/2010/03/indoor-car-elevator-is-beyond-practical-but-so-cool.html>



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #114 — APR. 11, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

Bicycle Seats: Republican/Evangelical Anti-Sex Plot?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 11, 2012)

Yep, they're at it again, doing anything they can to destroy your sex life! Just a friendly warning, ya know? This is why I walk instead of ride. Notice too that motorcycles don't have the problem, only bicycles with conventional Republican "nosed" seats. But the Democratic "no-nose" seats make you look like a big-butted dork with a possible sexual problem already. A truly macho guy, like Lance Armstrong, uses the nose. I guess you have three choices: a Republican seat (based on an Old Testament model, limited or no sex), a Democratic seat (scientifically researched, makes you look like a dork, but at least you know you're a virile, sensitive dork), or Independent (no seat, walk and have sex, though maybe not at the same time). It only makes sense to try to preserve as many nerves and as much circulation as possible in that, shall we say, vital, area. Now, pass me a cigarette, please...cough, cough...GACK! :-)



Whatever you do and whatever lies you hear on Rush or Glenn, you'll be better off if you don't "crush your crotch."
It's just not natural.

"Riding Bikes Harmful to Female Sexual Health" by Laura Shin, SmartPlanet

Apr. 5, 2012, (<http://www.smartplanet.com/blog/science-scope/riding-bikes-harmful-to-female-sexual-health/12570?tag=nl.e550>)

If you love riding bikes and you're a woman, you're in for some bad news: It could be hurting your sexual health.

It's long been known that bike saddles, which put pressure on sensitive areas of the body, can harm the sexual performance of men, but cycling's effect on the female anatomy was less well-known.

Until now.

A new study at Yale, published in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, shows that riding bikes decreases women's sexual sensation.

The theory behind the connection is that riding on a bike saddle places a lot of pressure on the nerves and blood vessels in the genital area — and it turns out this happens whether you are man or woman.

The study builds on a 2006 study at Yale that showed, compared to female runners, female cyclists had less genital sensation.

The latest study looked specifically at what about bikes affect soreness and numbness in women. The participants were 48 female bike riders who cycled at least 10 miles a week, though many biked much more.

The riders brought to the lab their own bikes, which were then mounted onto a stationary machine. The subjects were hooked up to a device that measured sensation in the pelvic floor, and they then rode on the bikes while reporting on feelings of numbness, soreness and tingling.

The main finding was that the lower the handlebars, the more physical effects the women experienced, likely because low handlebars required the women to lean forward, which in turn put more pressure on the perineum, which is made of soft tissue. The problem was most likely to occur when the rider assumed an aerodynamic racing position in which she leaned far forward with her back flat.

"We're basically showing that there may be modifiable risk factors associated with female riders," Dr. Marsha K. Guess, an author of the study and an assistant professor of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences at the Yale School of Medicine, told *The New York Times*. "This better positions us to educate riders on safe riding practices that may actually be beneficial to reduction of pressure and lost sensation in the pelvic floor."

In addition to raising handlebars, no-nose bike saddles (which you can see pictured here) also alleviate or eliminate the problem. Such bike saddles, in which the rider rests only on the pelvic "sit" bones, don't require the rider to put any pressure on the perineum. As Dr. Steven M. Schrader, who pioneered the use of no-nose bike saddles for men, believes they would also help women. As he explained the *The Times*, "If you don't put weight there," he said, "there's no pressure."

["The No-Nose Bike Saddle Faces a Marketing Problem" by Laura Shin, SmartPlanet](#)

June 28, 2011, (<http://www.smartplanet.com/blog/science-scope/the-no-nose-bike-saddle-faces-a-marketing-problem/8975?tag=content;siu-container>)

History is full of famous examples of science fighting against culture and losing early battles but eventually winning the war. For instance, both Copernicus and Galileo were mocked for thinking the planets revolved around the sun. Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection was originally met with disbelief (and sometimes still is).

Today, there's a new front in the science vs. culture wars: the no-nose bicycle saddle against bike riders everywhere.

A no-nose bicycle saddle doesn't seem like it would be an advancement in bike-riding technology. It can often be more unwieldy than a regular saddle and nowhere near as sleek-looking. (They come in a variety of styles; below is just one. To see more, check out some no-nose saddle web sites, such as the BiSaddle, the Spiderflex, the I.S.M. and others at Healthy Cycling.)

But a noseless saddle has one major benefit: It removes a great deal of pressure from one of the most sensitive areas of the body. (This video explains how: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cctJfG_HWY.)

A traditional bike saddle puts 25% to 40% of your body's weight on the nerves and blood vessels down there, but a no-nose saddle shifts that weight toward the sit bones.

The New York Times quotes Steven Schrader, a reproductive physiologist at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, who conducted a study on the effect of no-nose saddles on Seattle police officers:

"That part of the body was never meant to bear pressure," Dr. Schrader said. "Within a few minutes the blood oxygen levels go down by 80 percent."

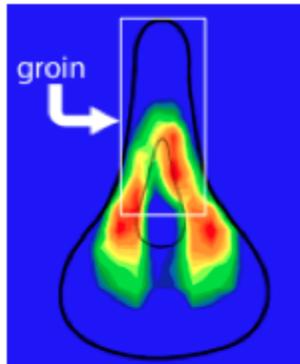


Figure 2. Example of pressure measured on a traditional saddle with a protruding nose. The white box shows the groin region. The blue color is the lowest pressure, followed by green, yellow, orange, and red (highest pressure). This saddle has a cut-out hole as shown by the thinner dark outline of the saddle.

No-nose saddles improve bodily function.

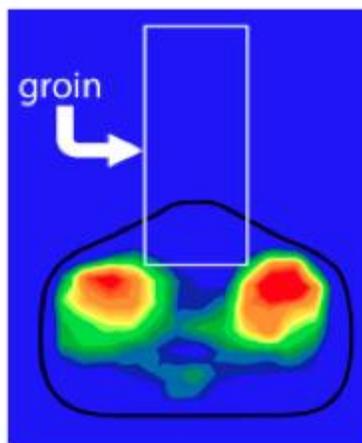


Figure 4. Example of pressure measured on a no-nose saddle. In this example there is almost no pressure in the groin region.

His study, titled *Cutting Off the Nose to Save the Penis*, used two devices to record physiological improvements in the officers who switched to a no-nose saddle for six months.

"The biothesiometer is a device in which the men set their penis into a trough, and it slowly starts to vibrate," he explained. "They push the button when they can feel the vibration. While it sounds delightful, it's actually not. The Rigiscan is a machine the men wear at night that grabs the penis about every 15 seconds to see if it's erect. It's not as pleasant as it sounds, either."

After the six-month study, the percent of officers who felt numbness while riding dropped from 75% to less than 20%. They also showed improved sensitivity to the biothesiometer and reported better erectile function.

However, on average, they did not improve in the Rigiscan measure, which Dr. Schrader believes shows that riding a conventional saddle could have lasting effects on the body.

Still, the benefits were apparent enough that 90% of the police officers in the study continued to ride the no-nose saddle even after the experiment was over.

No-nose saddles could also have benefits for women. In a study on female cyclists, Yale urogynecologists Dr. Marsha Guess and Dr. Kathleen Connell found that more than 60% of those using nosed saddles reported experiencing genital pain, numbness and tingling. They also were shown to have lower levels of genital sensation during lab tests compared to a control group of runners.

Considering how sensitive this area of the body is and what it's used for, why aren't no-nose saddles speeding past traditional saddles in sales? As the Times's John Tierney puts it:

Why, if you had an easy alternative, would you take any risk with that part of the anatomy? Even if you didn't feel any symptoms, even if you didn't believe the researchers' warnings, even if you thought it was perfectly healthy to feel numb during a ride — why not switch just for comfort's sake? Why go on crushing your crotch?

The answer comes from a bike shop owner quoted in the article who said, "This saddle screams out: I've got a problem."

That could be why so few cyclists — from hard-core racers to spinning-class addicts — are rushing to buy noseless saddles.

It looks like, for now, culture is winning out over science.

What do you say? Would you go with the science, risk ridicule and buy a no-nose saddle, or would you rather avoid mockery and stick to your regular saddle — numbness, pain and all?

Source: *The New York Times*.

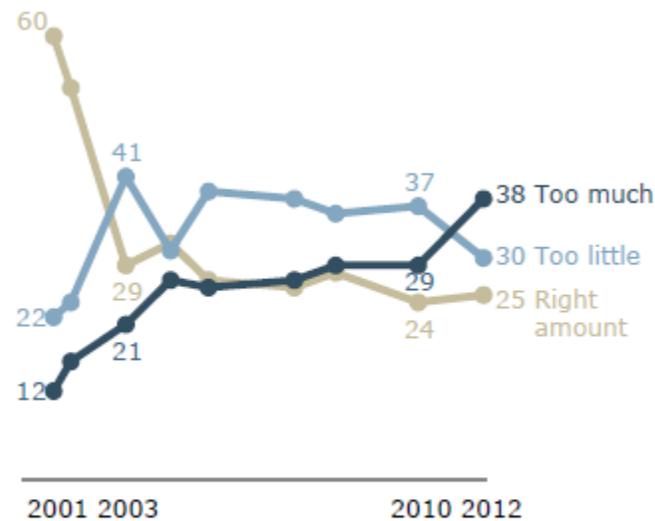
20120410-01 08:15 MarthaH "More See 'Too Much' Religious Talk by Politicians"

"More See 'Too Much' Religious Talk by Politicians" by Pew Research Center

Mar. 22, 2012, (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2227/religion-politics-mitt-romney-rick-santorum-churches-conservatives-obama-administration>)

(Santorum voters disagree.)

Expressions of Religious Faith and Prayer by Politicians ...



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012.

The public is uneasy about the mixing of religion and politics. The number of people who say there has been too much religious talk by political leaders stands at an all-time high since the Pew Research Center began asking the question more than a decade ago.

Nearly four-in-ten Americans (38%) now say there has been too much expression of religious faith and prayer from political leaders, while 30% say there has been too little. The percentage saying there is too much expression of religious faith by politicians has increased across party lines, but this view remains far more widespread among Democrats than Republicans.

Slightly more than half of the public (54%) says that churches should keep out of politics, compared with 40% who say religious institutions should express their views on social and political matters.

Among Republicans, there is a divide among supporters of Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum on these questions. Most Romney backers say churches should keep out of politics, and just a quarter of them believe there is too little expression of religious faith and prayer by political leaders. By contrast, a majority of Santorum supporters say churches should express their views on social and political issues, and that there is too little expression of faith by politicians.

Read the full report, which includes these findings (<http://www.pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/more-see-too-much-religious-talk-by-politicians.aspx?src=prc-headline>):

- Views of different religious groups on the intersection of religion and politics
- Partisan divisions on political involvement by churches
- Views of political parties' friendliness to religion
- The Obama administration and religion
- Reporters, professors and religion
- Religious conservatives' influence on the GOP

Great saying...



Just in case you were able to sleep at night, here's your insomnia attack:

This week in Guns & Patriots...Neil W. McCabe, Editor

(http://www.humanevents.com/search.php?topic_name=Guns+%26+Patriots):

Dear Guns & Patriots reader,

This week, I want to share with you my conversation with Kurt Mueller, a board member for **one of the great organizations working to restore our gun rights in America**, Students for Concealed Carry.

Mueller, the chief liaison to other gun rights groups, said he joined the SCC 2007, its first year, the same year he graduated from Clemson, and he is the only board member who is not currently a student.

Many students first learn about SCC when they see one of their "Empty Holster" protests, he said. **In these protests, students wear empty holsters over their clothing to class.** "Obviously, the holster is meant to have something in it, and the empty holster protests visually demonstrate that one of our rights has been denied."

The empty holster demonstrations are SCC's most effective messaging tool, he said. Too often, students are unaware of the issues surrounding campus concealed carry and these protests begin that conversation and engagement.

As SCC closes out the spring 2012 semester, Mueller said the group's biggest recent success is its victory in the Colorado Supreme Court. The court sided with SCC's lawsuit, it filed three years ago, challenging the authority of the University of Colorado to pre-empt that state's 2002 law granting a right to concealed carry on its grounds.

Despite the warnings of gun control activists, he said the results in **Colorado will be no different from other states where gun rights have been restored to students, such as Utah, where guns have been allowed in all public colleges since 2006.**

It is important to say what SCC is and is not, he said. The group does not weigh in on who should carry, rather where someone can carry.

"We are focused on people, who have already chosen to carry and proved themselves responsible," he said. "There is no reason to think that these people would act irresponsible on campus."

Mueller said whenever there is a publicized campus spree shooter, the group has to deal with a flurry of articles that attempt to draw the group into the controversy, but that is not their focus.

The actual occurrences of campus mass shootings are very rare, he said. It is more productive to focus on one-on-one crime on campuses.

"You can read every day about crimes on campuses," he said.

Students, faculty and staff all spend the majority of their time on a campus and they are all vulnerable, especially night and part-time students, he said. "Most night classes get out at 9:30 or 10, and if someone has to walk 10 to 20 minutes across campus in the dark, you can see how that can be dangerous."

As someone who took many night courses when I was on active-duty, I was immediately locked into what Mueller was talking about. Some of those vacant lots I crossed might as well have been on Mars and if anything happened to me, no one would have known until the morning.

Students for Concealed Carry has members and supporters in all 50 states and the District of Columbia—including our good friend Dick Heller, who is very active in the group's activities in the Washington area. Please visit their website and consider joining or supporting them yourself.

Neil W. McCabe, Editor, Guns & Patriots

20120410-04	13:18	SteveB	"Why the 'Buffett Rule' Sets the Bar Too Low"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

"Why the 'Buffett Rule' Sets the Bar Too Low" by Robert Reich, Huffington Post

Apr. 10, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-reich/buffett-rule_b_1415706.html)

Next Monday most Americans will be filing their income taxes for tax year 2011. This year, though, tax day has special significance. If there's one clear policy contrast between Democrats and Republicans in the 2012 election, it's whether America's richest citizens should be paying more.

Senate Democrats have scheduled a vote Monday on a minimum 30 percent overall federal tax rate for everyone earning more than \$1 million a year. It's nicknamed the "Buffett Rule" in honor of billionaire Warren Buffett who has publicly complained that he pays a lower tax rate than his secretary.

No one in Washington believes the Buffett Rule has any hope of passage this year. It's largely symbolic. The vote will mark a sharp contrast with Republican Paul Ryan's plan (enthusiastically endorsed by Mitt Romney) to cut the tax rate on the super rich from 35 percent to 25 percent -- rewarding millionaires with a tax cut of at least \$150,000 a year. The vote will also serve to highlight that Romney himself paid less than 14 percent on a 2010 income of \$21.7 million because so much of his income was in capital gains, taxed at 15 percent.

Hopefully in the weeks and months ahead the White House and the Democrats will emphasize three key realities:

1. The richest 1 percent of Americans are now taking in over 20 percent of total national income, and so far have raked in almost all the gains from this recovery. Thirty years ago, the richest 1 percent got 9 percent of total income. Income and wealth are now more concentrated at the top than they've been since the 1920s.

2. The richest 1 percent are paying a lower tax rate than they've paid since 1980. For three decades after World War II, their tax rate never dropped below 70 percent. Even considering all deductions and tax credits, they paid close to 55 percent. Under Eisenhower, the top rate was 91 percent and the effective rate was 58 percent.

3. Right now the nation faces two yawning deficits -- an investment deficit and a federal budget deficit. The investment deficit includes deferred maintenance on America's infrastructure -- roads, bridges, public transit, water and sewer systems that are all crumbling -- and an educational system that's being starved for resources (the federal government pays for 8 percent of K-12 education and about 5 percent of public higher education, but could do much more). The federal budget deficit is projected to mushroom to \$6.4 trillion over the next ten years, mostly because of aging boomers and soaring health care costs.

Any serious person looking at these three realities would conclude that the rich should be paying far more. It's not just a matter of fairness; it's also a matter of patriotism.

In fact, given these realities, the Buffett Rule sets the bar too low. For most Americans, wages and benefits are declining (adjusted for inflation), net worth has been plummeting (their only asset is their homes), and the public services they rely on have been disappearing. For the top, it's just the opposite: Their incomes are rising, their stock-market portfolios have been growing, and a growing portion of their earnings has been subject to a capital-gains tax of just 15 percent.

The Buffett Rule would generate only about \$47 billion in extra revenues over the next decade, according to Congressional estimates. Why not restore top rates to what they were before 1980, and match the capital-gains rate to the income-tax rate?

(Robert B. Reich, one of the nation's leading experts on work and the economy, is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has served in three national administrations, most recently as Secretary of Labor under President Bill Clinton. *Time Magazine* has named him one of the ten most effective cabinet secretaries of the last century. He has written thirteen books, including his latest best-seller, *Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future*; *The Work of Nations*, which has been translated into 22 languages; and his newest, an e-book, *Beyond Outrage*. His syndicated columns, television appearances, and public radio commentaries reach millions of people each week. He is also a founding editor of the *American Prospect* magazine, and Chairman of the citizen's group Common Cause. His widely read blog can be found at <http://www.robertreich.org>.)

20120410-06

15:53

MarthaH

"Reagan White House Counsel Makes Case Against Mourdock's Distortions" & "Lugar Attacks Growing Surreal"

"Reagan White House Counsel Makes Case Against Mourdock's Distortions" posted by Lugar for Senate

Apr. 10, 2012, (<http://www.dicklugar.com/2012/04/reagan-white-house-counsel-makes-case-against-mourdocks-distortions/>)

Former Reagan White House counsel Peter J. Rusthoven this week said challenger Richard Mourdock's distorted attacks of Sen. Dick Lugar's record "typify what most Americans now despise about today's politics."

Rusthoven and other state and national figures regularly write columns for the *Indianapolis Business Journal*. In the April 2-8 issue, Rusthoven's column encourages Indiana primary voters to "send a message rejecting such poisoning of our political discourse." (To read or print the full IBJ article, see below.)

"The silliest (Mourdock) attack charges that lifelong Hoosier Lugar is not a resident. Indiana's constitution, a state statute, opinions by attorneys general and a unanimous, bipartisan Indiana Election Commission vote reject what *The Indianapolis Star* rightly calls nonsense," he writes.

"While rank-and-file Hoosier Democrats respect Lugar, partisan Democratic activists jump on this phony issue, knowing they cannot win this fall unless Lugar falls in the primary."

Rusthoven also criticizes Mourdock's use of money from out-of-state special interests that politically intimidate to enhance their own power. He questions a group called Club for Growth, which inaccurately claims Lugar voted for higher gas and Social Security taxes and blames Lugar for the \$15 trillion national debt.

"Astounding. The last major gas-tax increase was 20 years ago; Lugar opposed it," Rusthoven points out. "The last big change in Social Security taxes was the 1983 Reagan plan saving the system (supported by Lugar)."

Rusthoven goes on to brag about some of Lugar's recent accomplishments. "Partial list: No. 1 voting in support of Reagan. Seventeen-time co-sponsor of Balanced Budget Amendment. Opposed Obamacare on all votes. Spurred Indiana's involvement in the current Supreme Court challenge. Supporter of the Bush tax cuts. Leader of Keystone XL pipeline effort. Respected worldwide for foreign policy leadership. The man responsible (with Sam Nunn) for destroying over 7,000 Russian nuclear warheads that terrorists will never use."

As a matter of GOP tactics, Rusthoven says, attacks on Lugar are unwise. "Republicans would have won Senate control in 2010 absent primaries yielding supposedly 'pure' but unquestionably unelectable Nevada and Delaware nominees (e.g., 'Ms. I Am Not A Witch'). The only way Republicans can lose Lugar's seat in 2012 is by not nominating Lugar.

But the problems go far deeper than tactics, Reagan's counsel concludes. "Lugar is indeed one of the nation's few remaining statesmen. He deserves better. More important, the Hoosiers he represents so well deserve better. Let's hope they send the right message on May 8."

"Lugar Attacks Growing Surreal" by Peter J. Rusthoven, *Indianapolis Business Journal*

Mar. 31, 2012, (<http://www.dicklugar.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Rusthoven040212.pdf>)

The distorted attacks on Sen. Dick Lugar typify what most Americans now despise about today's politics. On May 8, Hoosier primary voters can send a message rejecting such poisoning of our political discourse.

The silliest attack charges that lifelong Hoosier Lugar is not a resident. Indiana's constitution, a state statute, opinions by attorneys general, and a unanimous, bipartisan Indiana Election Commission vote reject what *The Indianapolis Star* rightly calls "nonsense."

Yet Marion County's Election Board, on a 2-1 party-line vote, has resurrected this childishness. Some supporters of Lugar's primary opponent applaud. While rank-and-file Hoosier Democrats respect Lugar, partisan Democratic activists jump on this phony issue, knowing they cannot win this fall unless Lugar falls in the primary.

As the *Star* notes: "Lugar's political opponents on the left and right have succeeded in their true goal—which is to embarrass an Indiana icon and one of the nation's last true statesmen to the point that it distracts voters from the truly substantive questions facing this nation."

The *Wall Street Journal* agrees, saying attacks from the right on Lugar's residency "resort to the sort of Mickey-Mouse campaign tactics one expects from activists at the other end of the political spectrum."

The *Journal* concludes: "If the new conservative opposition makes a habit of routinely using low-rent political tactics to prevail against members of their own party, it will become difficult to argue that it is the enemy of business-as-usual." Indeed.

Other examples of low-rent politics are outside groups pouring money into Indiana, seeking Lugar's defeat to enhance their power to intimidate anyone insufficiently pure. Thus, the Club for Growth is spending \$250,000 on an ad that asks, "What's Lugar Done?," says "he voted for higher gas taxes and Social Security taxes," and blames Lugar for the \$15 trillion national debt!

Astounding. The last major gas-tax increase was 20 years ago; Lugar opposed it. What he voted for was a 1982 Reagan highway maintenance improvement plan, and a 1990 increase to reduce the deficit during military buildup for the first Gulf War. The last big change in Social Security taxes was in the 1983 Reagan plan saving the system (supported by Lugar). Payroll taxes are unchanged since 1990, save for the recent "holiday" (supported by Lugar).

As for "What's Lugar Done?"—where to start? Partial list: No. 1 voting record in support of Reagan. Seventeen-time co-sponsor of Balanced Budget Amendment. Opposed Obamacare on all votes. Spurred Indiana's involvement in the current Supreme Court challenge. Supporter of Bush tax cuts. Leader of Keystone XL pipeline effort. Respected worldwide for foreign policy leadership. The man responsible (with Sam Nunn) for destroying over 7,000 Russian nuclear warheads that terrorists will never use.

The Club for Growth attack is astonishing for a group whose focus is eliminating tax and other barriers to growth, on which Lugar's record is stellar. It is more astonishing because its president is former Indiana Rep. Chris Chocola, whom Lugar supported—and who knows better about Lugar's record. Chocola should be ashamed.

As a matter of GOP tactics, attacks on Lugar are unwise. Republicans would have won Senate control in 2010 absent primaries yielding supposedly "pure" but unquestionably unelectable Nevada and Delaware nominees (e.g., "Ms. I Am Not A Witch"). The only way Republicans can lose Lugar's seat in 2012 is by not nominating Lugar.

But the problems go far deeper than tactics. Lugar is indeed one of the nation's few remaining statesmen. He deserves better. More important, the Hoosiers he represents so well deserve better. Let's hope they send the right message on May 8.

(Rusthoven, an Indianapolis attorney and graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, was associate counsel to President Reagan.)

[Gee, this article makes Republicans sound like not very nice people, even to their own elders. Somehow, I'm not surprised. Anything for power, right? –SteveB]

20120410-07	17:15	Pam	Emotion vs. Fact
-----------------------------	-------	-----	------------------

I had dinner with a good friend last night, a woman who has, over the years, moved from rabid Republicanism to a rather mellow Libertarianism. I remain where I have always been: liberal and proud of it. We're both smart, educated, and come from somewhat similar backgrounds, and we are the very best of friends, despite our political differences. At the end of the day, we have the same values--we both support gay marriage, are pro-choice, dislike racism, and worry about the Middle East. But before we get to the end of the day, we do disagree on some things.

She told me last night about an evening she and her husband spent recently with some old friends who are dyed-in-the-wool Republican conservatives. The wife's brother is gay, but when my friend mentioned something about gay marriage, the wife recoiled. It was obvious she didn't want to discuss it. This couple's chief complaint about liberals was that liberals are all about "emotion," while conservatives want facts. I found this astounding, to say the least. I do believe that morality is founded in emotion, but I am a pragmatist who wants to see good evidence before I believe something. To me it seems the far Right is the most emotional group in America. They hate with a vengeance and demonstrate little charity for those who are struggling. I overheard an older gentleman in the drugstore the other day complaining about all the people who don't want to work and want the government to support them. I wonder what facts he has to back up his opinion. Maybe the Left is sometimes squishy, touchy-feely, and overly idealistic, but there are worse things: attacking black people, cutting benefits to the disabled, illegally foreclosing on strapped homeowners. I could go on.

My friend is more conservative politically than I, but we agree on all the social issues I can think of. Perhaps the problem Americans face is that we try to talk about fiscal and military policy in the same breath as personal behavior. She finds it difficult to concede that the Left is anything other than unrealistic and just as bad as the Right when it comes to duplicity and corruption. There is blame enough to go around, but I don't think the Left is "just as bad as the Right." Bill Maher and Keith Olbermann can be annoying, sure, but they're a far cry from Rush

Limbaugh, who is going to give himself a stroke one of these days. I intend to continue defending liberalism, without excoriating the other side. Honey catches more flies than vinegar, even if it does occasionally contain the odd bee.

[20120410-08](#) 17:23 Art Re: Emotion vs. Fact (reply to Pam, above)

Good for you Pam, but sometimes secretly deep in your heart, wouldn't you just like to burn'm out?

[20120410-09](#) 18:15 Art Fw: Fantastic 360 Degree Pictures

Kind of interesting...

Note it is not just 360... it is 360 at every latitude...try going up or down!

360 degree pictures . . . next generation photography . . . amazing!!

Don't get dizzy!!

You can also look straight up and down too.

Click on the pictures below; when they come up, click again and drag your mouse in any direction and the picture will give you a 360 degree view --- Amazing Photography!!!

PICTURE NUMBER 1 — http://www.utah3d.net/panoramas/SulpherCreek_swf.html.

PICTURE NUMBER 2 — http://www.utah3d.net/panoramas/DoubleArch1_swf.html.

PICTURE NUMBER 3 — http://www.utah3d.net/panoramas/PaysonC_swf.html.

PICTURE NUMBER 4 — http://www.utah3d.net/panoramas_2/AztecButte_swf.html.

PICTURE NUMBER 5 — http://www.utah3d.net/panoramas_3/GrandView.html

[20120410-05](#) 13:26 SteveG Sen. Joe McCarthy

Below are pieces in regards to McCarthyism and how we got to where we are today. Interesting suggestion from a priest and dirty politics. An amazing right turn.

from "Joseph McCarthy" (<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAmccarthy.htm>):

1. Joseph McCarthy was born on a farm in Appleton, Wisconsin, on 14th November, 1908. His parents were devout Roman Catholics and Joseph was the fifth of nine children. He left school at 14 and worked as a chicken farmer before managing a grocery store in the nearby town of Manawa.

McCarthy returned to high school in 1928 and after achieving the necessary qualifications, won a place at Marquette University. After graduating McCarthy worked as a lawyer but was fairly unsuccessful and had to supplement his income by playing poker.

McCarthy was originally a supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. However, after failing to become the Democratic Party candidate for district attorney, he switched parties and became the Republican Party candidate in an election to become a circuit court judge. McCarthy shocked local officials

by fighting a dirty campaign. This included publishing campaign literature that falsely claimed that his opponent, Edgar Werner, was 73 (he was actually 66). As well as suggesting that Werner was senile, McCarthy implied that he was guilty of financial corruption.

When the United States entered the Second World War McCarthy resigned as a circuit judge and joined the U.S. Marines. After the war McCarthy ran against Robert La Follette to become Republican candidate for the senate. As one of his biographers has pointed out, his campaign posters pictured him in "full fighting gear, with an aviator's cap, and belt upon belt of machine gun ammunition wrapped around his bulky torso." He claimed he had completed thirty-two missions when in fact he had a desk job and only flew in training exercises.

In his campaign, McCarthy attacked La Follette for not enlisting during the war. He had been forty-six when Pearl Harbor had been bombed, and was in fact too old to join the armed services. McCarthy also claimed that La Follette had made huge profits from his investments while he had been away fighting for his country. The suggestion that La Follette had been guilty of war profiteering (his investments had in fact been in a radio station), was deeply damaging and McCarthy won by 207,935 to 202,557. La Follette, deeply hurt by the false claims made against him, retired from politics, and later committed suicide.

On his first day in the Senate, McCarthy called a press conference where he proposed a solution to a coal-strike that was taking place at the time. McCarthy called for John L. Lewis and the striking miners to be drafted into the Army. If the men still refused to mine the coal, McCarthy suggested they should be court-martialed for insubordination and shot.

McCarthy's first years in the Senate were unimpressive. People also started coming forward claiming that he had lied about his war record. Another problem for McCarthy was that he was being investigated for tax offences and for taking bribes from the Pepsi-Cola Company. In May, 1950, afraid that he would be defeated in the next election, McCarthy held a meeting with some of his closest advisers and asked for suggestions on how he could retain his seat. Edmund Walsh, a Roman Catholic priest, came up with the idea that he should begin a campaign against communist subversives working in the Democratic administration.

2. While he may not have caused genocide or murdered a prophet, he was able to whip up hysteria in America in the early 1950s. Joseph McCarthy's issue of choice? Communism.
3. The American Heritage Dictionary defines McCarthyism as "the political practice of publicizing accusations of disloyalty or subversion with insufficient regard to evidence."
4. The American Pledge of Allegiance has been embroiled in controversy ever since the phrase "under God" was added by Congress in 1954, following a campaign by the Knights of Columbus to change it. The Pledge, as it was conceived initially by Francis Bellamy in 1892, did not include the phrase. It read: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and (to*) the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." From 1954 onward, the pledge would read: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands: one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all."
5. The Knights was formed to render financial aid to members and their families. Mutual aid and assistance are offered to sick, disabled and needy members and their families. Social and intellectual fellowship is promoted among members and their families through educational, charitable, religious, social welfare, war relief and public relief works.
6. During the height of the cold war, on July 11, 1955, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed Public Law 140 making it mandatory that all coinage and paper currency display the motto.

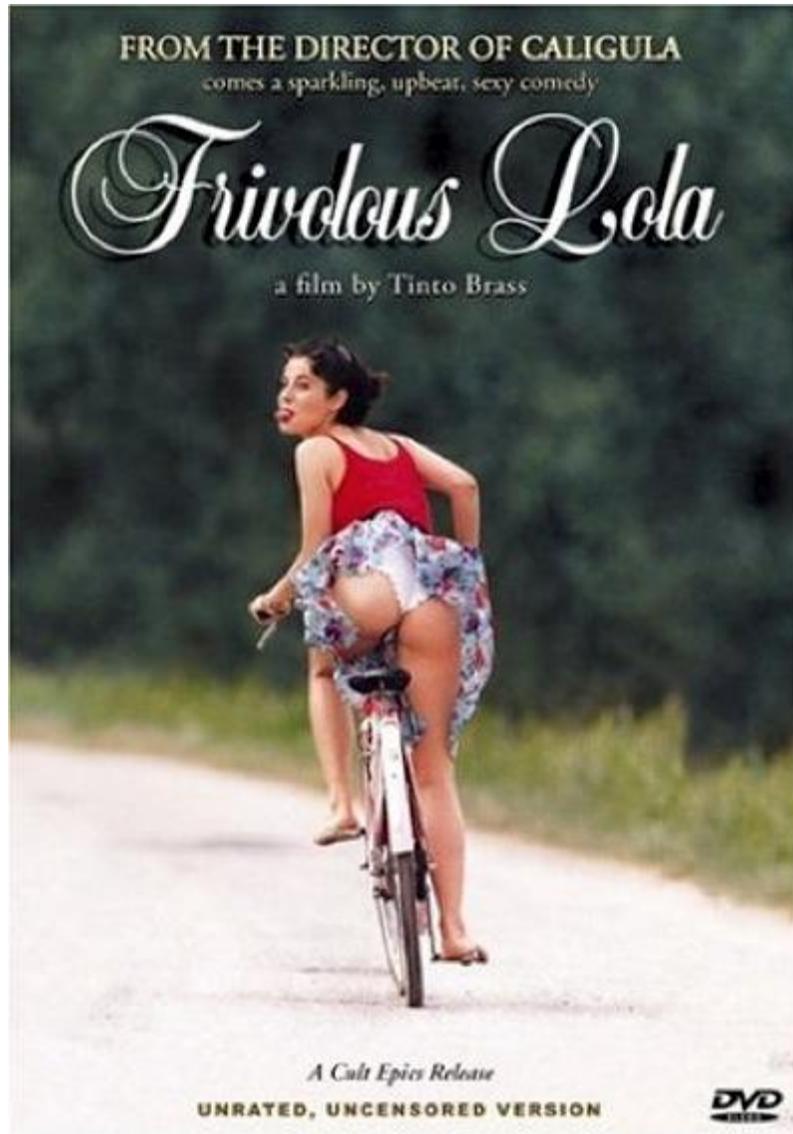
[He certainly sounds like a modern 2012 Republican to me. Maybe he was the first? What an example! –SteveB]

20120410-10 23:59 SteveB

Photo: "Lady" Riding a Bicycle (on nosed saddle...I hope she's not a Republican...no, not a chance!)

<http://bikehugger.com/2009/08/>

Great biking music: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ago5SAGV3E>.



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #115 — APR. 12, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

President Obama's Zingers

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 12, 2012)

I think these show just how reasonable, restrained, and diplomatic the Big Guy is, but maybe that's just me...

"Obama's Top 20 Jabs at the GOP" by Politico

Apr. 12, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/gallery/2012/04/obamas-top-20-jabs-at-the-gop/000060-000590.html>)

Since taking office, President Barack Obama has unleashed dozens of arrows at Republicans, sometimes calling them out individually by name, sometimes just as a party. Here are 20 of his best barbs.

1. Over: "We're not campaigning anymore. The election is over." — Obama, Feb. 25, 2010, to Sen. John McCain at the health care summit.
2. Along for the ride: "We don't mind the Republicans joining us. They can come for the ride, but they gotta sit in back." — Obama, Oct. 25, 2010, during a midterm election campaign stop in Rhode Island.
3. Armageddon: "I'm not exaggerating, leaders of the Republican Party, they called the passage of this bill Armageddon! Armageddon. End of freedom as we know it. So after I signed the bill, I looked around to see if there were any asteroids falling, or some cracks opening up in the Earth. Turned out it was a nice day." — Obama, March 25, 2010, at an Iowa City rally promoting health care.
4. Marvelous: "He said that he's very supportive of this new budget. And he even called it 'marvelous,' which is a word you don't often hear when it comes to describing a budget. It's a word that you don't often hear generally." — Obama, April 3, 2012, speaking at the Associated Press annual meeting in reference to Mitt Romney's support of Rep. Paul Ryan's budget.
5. 'Radical': "In fact, that renowned liberal, Newt Gingrich, first called the original version of the budget 'radical' and said it would contribute to right-wing social engineering." — Obama, April 3, 2012, referencing Newt Gingrich's line about the Paul Ryan budget during his speech at the AP luncheon.
6. Democrats and Republicans: "Democrats are an opinionated bunch. You know the other side, they just kind of sometimes do what they're told." — Obama, Oct. 20, 2009, during a fundraiser in New York City.

7. 'I won': "I won." — Obama, Jan. 23, 2009, to Republicans during a meeting with congressional leaders about his stimulus package, according to sources familiar with the conversation.
8. People of color: "We have a lot in common. He is a person of color. Although not a color that appears in the natural world." — Obama, May 9, 2009, making fun of John Boehner at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner.
9. Pawlenty: "Tim Pawlenty's not here, but he's hit the campaign trail hard. And to be honest, I think the American people are going to have some tough questions for Tim. Specifically, 'Who are you and where do you come from?' Which is okay — two years into my presidency and I'm still getting those questions." — Obama, March 12, 2011, joking about former Minnesota Gov. candidate Tim Pawlenty during his speech at the 2011 Gridiron Club dinner.
10. Columbus: "If some of these folks were around when Columbus set sail, they must have been founding members of the Flat Earth Society... They would not have believed that the world was round." — Obama, March 15, 2012, speaking at Price George's Community College in Largo, Md. about Republicans' rhetoric on gas prices and energy.
11. Troubled asset: "Michael Steele is in the house tonight. Or as he would say, 'In the heezy.' Wassup? Michael, for the last time, the Republican Party does not qualify for a bailout. Rush Limbaugh does not count as a troubled asset, I'm sorry." — Obama, May 9, 2009, making fun of then RNC chair Michael Steele at the 2009 White House Correspondents' Association dinner.
12. Drilling: "Well, the American people aren't stupid. They know that's not a plan, especially since we're already drilling. That's a bumper sticker. It's not a strategy to solve our energy challenge. That's a strategy to get politicians through an election." — Obama, Feb. 23, 2012, during an address on energy policy at the University of Miami.
13. The Donald: "Now I know he's taken some flak lately, but no one is happier to put the birth certificate matter to rest than The Donald. And that's because he can finally get back to focusing on the issues that matter, like 'Did we fake the moon landing?' 'What really happened in Roswell?' And, 'Where are Biggie and Tupac?'" — Obama, April 30, 2011, at the 2011 White House Correspondents' Association Dinner, mocking Donald Trump.
14. Huntsman: "First of all, let me just say I think Ambassador Huntsman has done an outstanding job as ambassador for the United States to China. ... And I'm sure that him having worked so well with me will be a great asset in any Republican primary." — Obama, Jan. 19, 2011, when asked about Jon Huntsman's possible presidential bid at a news conference with China's President Hu as Huntsman was seated in the front row.
15. Moats: "You know, they said, 'we needed to triple the border patrol.' Well, now they're going to say we need to quadruple the border patrol, or they'll want a higher fence. Maybe they'll need a moat. Maybe they'll want alligators in the moat." — Obama, May 20, 2011, speaking about the stance of Republicans on border enforcement.
16. Rutherford B. Hayes: "One of my predecessors, President Rutherford B. Hayes, reportedly said about the telephone: 'It's a great invention but who would ever want to use one?' That's why he's not on Mt. Rushmore." — Obama, March 15, 2012, in Largo, Maryland, knocking the 19th century Republican president, who by the way, was a fan of the telephone and the first president to have one in the White House.
17. Jobs bill: "We're going to break up my jobs bill — maybe they couldn't understand the whole thing all at once." — October 17, 2011, during an address in Asheville, North Carolina, referencing how Congress would vote be voting on "bite-sized" parts of his jobs bill.
18. Land of Lincoln: "And my message to all the candidates is, 'Welcome to the land of Lincoln,' because I'm thinking maybe some Lincoln will rub off on them while they are here." — Obama, March 16, 2012, speaking at a fundraiser in Chicago about how Abraham Lincoln, the country's first Republican president, pushed for large, federally funded projects.
19. Commander-in-chief: "What's said on the campaign trail, those folks don't have a lot of responsibilities. They're not commander-in-chief. When I see the casualness with which some of these folks talk about war, I'm reminded of

the costs involved in war.” — Obama, March 6, 2012, hitting his Republican opponents on their rhetoric concerning war with Iran during a Super Tuesday press conference.

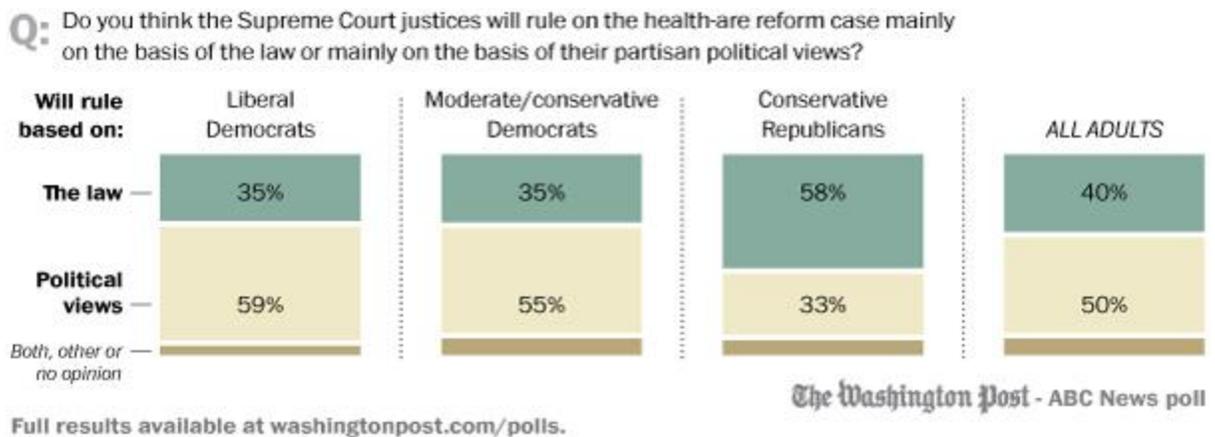
20. Trojan horse: “It’s a Trojan horse. Disguised as [a] deficit-reduction plan, it’s really an attempt to impose a radical vision on our country. It’s nothing but thinly veiled Social Darwinism.” — Obama, April 3, 2012, speaking to news executives about the House Republicans’ budget at the annual meeting of The Associated Press.

[20120411-01](#) 06:42 MarthaH “Poll: More Americans Expect Supreme Court’s Health-Care Decision to be Political”

“Poll: More Americans Expect Supreme Court’s Health-Care Decision to be Political” by Robert Barnes and Scott Clement, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 11, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/poll-half-of-americans-expect-supreme-courts-health-care-decision-to-be-political/2012/04/10/gIQAOoqW9S_story.html)

More Americans think Supreme Court justices will be acting mainly on their partisan political views than on a neutral reading of the law when they decide the constitutionality of President Obama’s health-care law, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.



Half of the public expects the justices to rule mainly based on their “partisan political views,” while fewer, 40 percent, expect their decisions to be rooted primarily “on the basis of the law.” The rest say both equally or do not have an opinion.

The court held a historic three days of oral arguments on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act last month, and its ruling probably will come just before the court adjourns at the end of June. The poll shows little enthusiasm for the Obama administration’s position that the law, passed by the Democratic Congress in 2010, should be upheld in full.

Only a quarter of Americans choose that as the desired outcome. Thirty-eight percent would like the entire law thrown out; 29 percent would like the court to strike the requirement that individuals obtain health insurance and to keep the rest of the law.

Only 39 percent of Americans support the health-care overhaul in general, the lowest percentage since the Post-ABC poll began asking the question.

The public’s perception of the court is closely tied to partisan and ideological leanings. Almost twice as many conservative Republicans think the court will decide on the basis of the law rather than politics, 58 to 33 percent. Liberal Democrats are more skeptical, saying by an equally wide margin that the court will put politics first.

Just over half of political independents think the court will base its ruling on partisan predispositions. This includes similar numbers of independents who support and oppose the health law.

Only about half of Democrats want the entire law upheld. Nearly two-thirds of Republicans want all of it thrown out.

The court's ideological and partisan divide is pronounced. For the first time in generations, the court's five conservatives were nominated by Republican presidents, while the four-member liberal bloc was nominated by Democratic presidents.

The poll was conducted April 5 to 8 among a random national sample of 1,103 adults. Results from the full survey have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

(Polling director Jon Cohen and polling manager Peyton M. Craighill contributed to this report.)

20120411-06	16:44	Art	Re: "Poll: More Americans Expect Supreme Court's Health-Care Decision to be Political" (reply to MarthaH, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

I'm always a little suspect of these polls of what - 0001 % but we will see. I keep trying to look at the bill from different angles and see nothing essentially wrong with it.

20120411-02	12:44	SteveB	"Low-Wage Jobs to Blame for Slow Economic Recovery"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Wages need to be raised, but get ready for inflation...

"Low-Wage Jobs to Blame for Slow Economic Recovery" by Eileen Appelbaum, NationofChange

Apr. 10, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/low-wage-jobs-blame-slow-economic-recovery-1334121574>)

Slower-than-expected employment growth in March 2012 has brought the halting pace of economic recovery into sharp focus again. Nearly three years since the recession officially ended in June of 2009, 12.7 million people are still out of work and unable to find a job—a figure that rises to 22.8 million if workers who have given up looking but still want to work and those employed part-time because of the poor economy are included. Demand for goods and services has been slow to recover—consumer spending has been hampered by a loss of housing wealth, continued high unemployment, and economic insecurity while government spending has been hamstrung by political infighting in Washington. The job growth that has occurred has been largely concentrated in very low wage occupations. Economic theory—and common sense—tells us that high unemployment will persist until demand picks up. Businesses are not going to increase the pace at which they hire workers until the pace of spending increases.

Despite the obvious employment gap that results from the shortfall in spending, some observers contend that it is a mismatch between the skills of unemployed workers and the skills employers require that is responsible for the continuing high unemployment. Many of the ills of the labor market have been attributed to a supposed hollowing out of the job distribution—to "job polarization." Indeed, the claim that middle-skill/middle-income jobs in the United States are disappearing while jobs at the top and bottom of the occupational ladder are growing has been put forward as the explanation for four decades of wage stagnation for men. Today, the claim that employers have good jobs but can't find workers with the right skills to fill them has gained currency in the popular press. Yet such an imbalance between supply and demand would cause wages to rise in those occupations, and no such increase in pay can be observed.

Now a new study attributes the jobless recoveries following recent recessions to such job polarization. The study's authors argue that jobs in the middle of the skill and income distribution disappear during recessions and fail to come back during recoveries. How real is job polarization?

The job polarization thesis is widely attributed to work by David Autor and his colleagues. But as Autor makes very clear, it is only the decade of the 1990s that can be characterized by a hollowing out of middle-skill jobs. In that

decade, according to Autor, employment growth was most rapid in high-skill jobs, was modestly positive in low-skill jobs, and was modestly negative in middle-skill jobs. From 1999 to 2007, in contrast, Autor finds that employment growth was concentrated in the bottom third of the skill distribution, a pattern that has persisted through the recovery from the 2007-2009 recession and that is expected to persist to 2020.

Looking at the nature of job growth as economic recovery took hold, the National Employment Law Project found that lower-wage occupations—retail sales persons, office clerks, food prep workers, and stock clerks topped this list—grew by 3.2 percent from the first quarter of 2010 through the first quarter of 2011, and mid-wage occupations grew by 1.2 percent, while higher-wage occupations declined by 1.2 percent. Occupational projections to 2020 tell a similar story. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that five of the top six occupations with the most job growth from 2010 to 2020 will be low-wage jobs that require little or no post-high school education—retail sales persons, home health aides, home care aides, office clerks general, and food prep and serving workers. Personal care aides and home health aides are also the two fastest growing occupations according to these projections.

Thus the job polarization of the 1990s has been replaced in the last dozen years by job growth that is dominated by occupations in the bottom tier of the skill and wage distributions. This trend is likely to continue in the absence of policies that increase demand more broadly in the economy and that improve wages and working conditions for the millions of workers—mainly women—in the occupations that are growing. Low wages in the expanding occupations limit gains in consumer spending and hamper more robust job growth.

20120411-03	12:54	SteveB	OWS: "MAYDAY, MAYDAY!!!"
-------------	-------	--------	--------------------------

Sounds like dangerous rhetoric to me! What do the rest of you think of this? Am I getting conservative?

"MAYDAY, MAYDAY!!!" by "Occupy Wall Street", NationofChange [??? –SteveB]

Apr. 11, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/mayday-mayday-1334157032>)

To the activist, the rebel, the revolutionary, the dreamer. To all who believe in a better world. To those who have found their voice, and those voices that have been met with the sniper's bullet. To those whose voices have been taken from them. To the peaceful who have been met with brutality and violence, the loving who have been met with hatred. Those who beg for understanding, but are met with ridicule. The free thinkers, the questioners, the dissenters, those who have woken up, and now rattle the chains that have held us down. To the freedom fighters all around the globe.

Raise your fists, break your chains. Shake the world under your feet, and make a noise so loud, that the 1% will cower in their marble halls. For the time of The People has come. Those who consider themselves our masters will find themselves standing in the path of a force the likes of which the world has never seen. For the world relied on our compliance. Our silence, our sheepish ways of living how we are told, for our acceptance of the oppressor's so called power. But this power was an illusion. Yes the power did not lie in the bank accounts, the pockets of CEOs, the chambers of Ivory towers under lock and key. No. the power has been with The People. The people who survive day to day. The children who cry at night from the pains of hunger, the students who dreams were stolen from them, or sold at prices so high, there is no hope of escape. Those who face violence and weaponry, and defend themselves with nothing but an idea. But it is this idea you see, that makes them strong. An idea cannot be beaten. An idea cannot be gassed, or shot. For it lives in our very souls, and no matter what stands against us, this idea cannot be destroyed.

So my fellow people, rise up without fear. Take back what is rightfully yours. This world belongs to you. You are powerful. You are a force so strong that Mother Nature herself cowers in your presence. This world will bend to your demands, and begin anew. Our battle cries will be heard in every street, echo off every building, and shatter the very foundations of all those who enslave us. For we are many. We are strong. We are awake. We are above your fear mongering, you who seek to silence us. You cannot threaten us with lies of alarm and panic. Your words are mist that dissipates as we march. Though the night may be long, and the oppressive darkness may seem so deep, that the dawn seems an impossible distant dream, we shall march. We will take to the streets, and march on

until we reach a dawn that mankind has never been witness to. This dawn will produce a light so strong that the fear hatred and doubt in our hearts will vanish like the early morning dew upon a blade of grass. Our hearts will instead be a raging inferno that cannot be extinguished. Fear us you 1%, for we are coming, and we are already here. We are many, and We are one. We are here, and everywhere. We are united and cannot be divided. You are no longer our masters, and we no longer bend to your will.

My fellow freedom fighters. Do not despair. No laws can choke out the fire that is already raging around this world. They will ridicule you, they will fight against you. Your peaceful actions will be met with such force, it may seem as if there truly is no chance. But I am telling you now. This fear is the sound of the world changing. It is the sound of the wings of change ushering in a new era. The People's era. Do not despair youth of this world. This new world belongs to you. We will carry this world into the light of truth and equality. Our time has come. Your time has come. Stand with me my brothers and sisters, it is time to celebrate. No longer feel your pain and sufferings. For the world is changing. Yes, the old world is slipping away, and in its stead a new world has arisen. The world as it truly should be. Be strong, my comrades, and we shall see the dawn of the People.

Solidarity to the freedom fighters across this world.

Join us on May 1st to take the streets: <http://www.maydaynyc.org>, <http://occupytogether.org>.

20120411-04	13:21	SteveG	"Explosive: Monsanto 'Knowingly Poisoned Workers' Causing Devastating Birth Defects"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

"Explosive: Monsanto 'Knowingly Poisoned Workers' Causing Devastating Birth Defects" by Anthony Gucciardi, NationofChange

Apr. 11, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/explosive-monsanto-knowingly-poisoned-workers-causing-devastating-birth-defects-1334156412>)

In a developing news piece just unleashed by a courthouse news wire, Monsanto is being brought to court by dozens of Argentinean tobacco farmers who say that the biotech giant **knowingly poisoned them with herbicides and pesticides and subsequently caused "devastating birth defects" in their children**. The farmers are now suing not only Monsanto on behalf of their children, but many big tobacco giants as well. The birth defects that the farmers say occurred as a result are many, and include cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, psychomotor retardation, missing fingers, and blindness.

The farmers come from small family-owned farms in Misiones Province and sell their tobacco to many United States distributors. The family farmers say that major tobacco companies like the Philip Morris company asked them to use Monsanto's herbicides and pesticides, assuring them that the products were safe. Through asserting that the toxic chemicals were safe, the farmers state in their claim that the tobacco companies "wrongfully caused the parental and infant plaintiffs to be exposed to those chemicals and substances which they both knew, or should have known, would cause the infant offspring of the parental plaintiffs to be born with devastating birth defects."

The majority of the farmers in the area used Monsanto's Roundup, an herbicide with the active ingredient glyphosate that has shown to be killing human kidney cells. What's more, the farmers say that the tobacco companies pushed Monsanto's Roundup on the farmers despite a lack of protective equipment. In other words, these farmers — many in dire economic conditions — were being directly exposed to Roundup in large concentrations without any protective gear (or even experience or skills in handling the substance). Still, the farmers say the tobacco giants required the struggling farmers to 'purchase excessive quantities of Roundup and other pesticides'.

Most shocking, the farmers were ordered to discard leftover herbicides and pesticides in locations in which they *leached directly into the water supply*. With Monsanto's Roundup already known to be contaminating the groundwater, this comes as a serious threat to pure water supplies.

The farmers end their landmark case with an explanation as to why the tobacco companies allowed Monsanto's herbicides and pesticides to be unloaded on the small family farms in such vast quantities and purchased in excessive amounts. In their claim, the farmers state that the tobacco companies were "motivated by a desire for unwarranted economic gain and profit," with zero regard for the farmers and their infant children — many of which are now suffering from severe birth defects from Monsanto's products.

[20120411-05](#)

14:26

SteveB

Re: "Explosive: Monsanto 'Knowingly Poisoned Workers' Causing Devastating Birth Defects" (reply to SteveG, above)

This photo is from the article, above.

Can anyone explain to me why, if Republicans care so much about fetuses, why don't they seem to want to do anything to protect them from harmful chemicals?

Instead, whatever the huge corporations want to do, there are the Republicans aiding and abetting them. One almost never hears even expressions of concern from Republican politicians. Nothing can ever be scientifically proven to them. Nothing! Fetuses be damned! World be damned!



[20120411-08](#)

19:32

Art

"Herman Cain Video Shows Man Pecked to Death by Chickens"

"Herman Cain Video Shows Man Pecked to Death by Chickens" by Luke Johnson, Huffington Post

Apr. 11, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/11/herman-cain-video-chickens_n_1419050.html?ref=email_share)

Former GOP presidential candidate Herman Cain has released yet another bizarre video. In his latest video, entitled "Chicken," the "average American taxpayer" who is "feeding big government" is pecked to death as he feeds chickens.

The clip is reminiscent of a famous scene in Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds" when children are pecked by crows as they try to run for shelter. However, Hitchcock's scene used much more sophisticated special effects.

Past videos have included a bunny being shot and a goldfish dying in open air. The *modus operandi* of these videos is to use graphic metaphors of death and animals, narrated by a young girl to advance a conservative viewpoint.

20120411-09

19:36

Art

"Allen West: I've 'Heard' 80 House Democrats Are Communist Party Members"

Here we go again! Please pass the ketchup, Sen. McCarthy...

"Allen West: I've 'Heard' 80 House Democrats Are Communist Party Members" by Jennifer Bendery, Huffington Post

Apr. 11, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/11/allen-west-democrats-communist-party_n_1417279.html?ref=email_share)

(WASHINGTON) As many as 80 House Democrats are communists, according to Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.).

West warned constituents at a Tuesday town hall event that he's "heard" that dozens of his Democratic colleagues in the House are members of the Communist Party, the *Palm Beach Post* reported. There are currently 190 House Democrats.

West spokeswoman Angela Melvin later defended West's comments -- and clarified to whom West was referring.

"The Congressman was referring to the 76 members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. The Communist Party has publicly referred to the Progressive Caucus as its allies. The Progressive Caucus speaks for itself. These individuals certainly aren't proponents of free markets or individual economic freedom," Melvin said in a statement to The Huffington Post.

West's campaign also sent over the transcript of the actual exchange that took place during the town hall to show that West was asked directly about the role of communists in the House.

Moderator: What percentage of the American legislature do you think are card-carrying Marxists or International Socialist?

West: It's a good question. I believe there's about 78 to 81 members of the Democrat Party who are members of the Communist Party. It's called the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

Some members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus confirmed that they are not, in fact, members of the Communist Party.

[What a damned shame they would have to do that, or even think they had to. This dude is skum! --SteveB]

"I can confirm that Congresswoman Baldwin is not a communist," said Jerilyn Goodman, spokeswoman for Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.), a vice chair of the caucus.

"Chellie is a Democrat, a farmer and a Lutheran but no, she is not a Communist," said Willy Ritch, spokesman for Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine), also a vice chair of the caucus.

During the same event, which took place at Jensen Beach, the freshman Republican said President Barack Obama wouldn't have a public debate with him over their policy differences because he was "scared." The president was in Florida on Tuesday giving remarks about the economy and holding campaign events.

"I really wish that, standing here before you, was Allen West and President Obama," West said, according to the *Palm Beach Post*. "We could have a simple discussion. But that ain't ever gonna happen."

When an audience member asked why, West said in "a mocking voice" that it was because Obama "was too scared."

WATCH West's comments in the video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6J6z7g5Ojg&feature=player_embedded.

UPDATE: 5:30 p.m. -- Congressional Progressive Caucus Co-Chairs Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) later criticized West's "outrageous" claims:

Calling fellow Members of Congress 'communists' is reminiscent of the days when Joe McCarthy divided Americans with name-calling and modern-day witch hunts that don't advance policies to benefit people's lives," Grijalva and Ellison said in a joint statement. "We hope the people of Florida's 22nd Congressional District will note that he repeatedly polarizes the American people instead of focusing on their interests.

CORRECTION: A previous version of this post stated that West made the remarks at Florida Atlantic University. He made the statement at Jensen Beach.

20120411-07 18:59 GaryF "Somali Pirates Refuse to Board Cruise Ships"

"Somali Pirates Refuse to Board Cruise Ships" by Andy Borowitz, Borowitz Report

Nov. 11, 2010, (<http://www.borowitzreport.com/2010/11/11/somali-pirates-refuse-to-board-carnival-cruise-ships/>)

(Cite 'Unsafe Working Conditions'. Fire, Capsizing Top Pirates' Concerns, Spokesman Says)

MOGADISHU In yet another public relations setback for the beleaguered cruise industry, Somali pirates today said they would no longer board cruise ships, citing "unsafe working conditions."

"If the cruise ship industry thinks that it's going to be business as usual between them and the Somali pirates, they need to have their heads examined," said Somali pirate spokesman Sugule. "We Somali pirates may be bold, but we're not crazy."

The pirate said that the recent fire that crippled the cruise ship Azamara Quest "has sent a shiver through the pirate community."

"We Somali pirates face enough risks without dealing with boats bursting into flames," he said. "And don't get me started on capsizing. If you want to call us rats deserting a sinking ship, so be it."

When asked if the Somali pirates might attempt to board cruise ships in the future, he responded, "I am telling me hearties that if they were thinking of pillaging a cruise ship of its booty over Easter Break, they should make alternative plans."

Carol Foyler, a spokesperson for cruise industry, said that the cruise ship companies "would be working overtime to win back the pirates' trust."

In the meantime, Ms. Foyler said, the industry would be unveiling a new slogan in the weeks to come: "Come for the fun, stay for the raging inferno."

20120411-10 23:59 SteveB Photo: Somali Pirates! Arrrrgh!

From SteveB (Apr. 11, 2012, 12:59 pm)—Somali Pirates! Arrrrgh!

<http://www.saveourseafarers.com/somali-pirates-extend-their-modus-operandi.html>

<http://www.transportgooru.com/2009/06/for-5790-you-can-go-on-pirate-hunting-luxury-cruises-along-the-somali-coast/>

<http://somalipirate.livejournal.com/>

<http://topics.time.com/somalia/articles/5/>



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #116 — APR. 13, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

The Most Dangerous Lies

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 13, 2012)

Publicly traded corporations are not “private”. Get over it! It’s time for something other than greed to be served—the public good!

“The 1%’s Most Dangerous Lies” by William Lazonick, Ken Jacobson, and Lynn Parramore, Alternet

Apr. 6, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/04/06/the_1s_most_dangerous_lies/)

(Pernicious myths about the role of corporations are ruining the economy. Here’s how to fight back.)

(This originally appeared on AlterNet. It’s the final essay in a five-part series analyzing the foundations, history and purpose of the corporation to answer this vital question: How can the public take control of the business corporation and make it work for the real economy?)

The wealth of the American nation depends on the productive power of our major business corporations. In 2008 there were 981 companies in the United States with 10,000 or more employees. Although they were less than two percent of all U.S. firms, they employed 27 percent of the labor force and accounted for 31 percent of all payrolls. Literally millions of smaller businesses depend, directly or indirectly, on the productivity of these big businesses and the disposable incomes of their employees.

When the executives who control big-business investment decisions place a high priority on innovation and job creation, then we all have a chance for a prosperous tomorrow. Unfortunately, over the past few decades, the top executives of our major corporations have turned the productive power of the people into massive and concentrated financial wealth for themselves. Indeed the very emergence of “the 1 percent” is largely the result of this usurpation of corporate power. And executives’ use of this power to benefit themselves often undermines investment in innovation and job creation.

These corporations do not belong to them. They belong to us. We need to confront some powerful myths of corporate governance as part of a movement to make corporations work for the 99 percent. To start, we have to recognize these corporations for what they are not.

- They are not “private enterprise.”
- They should not be run to “maximize shareholder value.”
- The mega-millions in remuneration paid to top corporate executives are not determined by the “market forces” of supply and demand.

Let's take a closer look at each of these myths.

1. Public corporations are not *private* enterprise.

Here's something you'll rarely hear stated by today's politicians and pundits: Publicly listed and traded corporations are not private enterprise. As documented by the pre-eminent business historian Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., in a book aptly called *The Visible Hand*, about 100 years ago the managerial revolution in American business placed salaried managers in charge of running the nation's largest and most productive business corporations.

This was a peaceful revolution in which a generation of owner-entrepreneurs who had founded these companies some decades earlier used initial public offerings on the New York Stock Exchange to sell their ownership stakes to the public, leaving decision-making power in the hands of salaried managers. In effect, these corporate employees, and the boards of directors whom they selected, became trustees of the immense productive power that these corporations had accumulated.

Even when founders of companies that evolve into major public corporations become their CEOs, they generally occupy the top positions as corporate employees, not owners. For example, when the late Steve Jobs returned to Apple Computer in 1997, 11 years after being denied the CEO position of the company he had founded, his ascent to the top position was as a manager, not an owner. When a company founder like Larry Page of Google gives up private ownership by publicly selling shares, he may become CEO of the new corporation, but he is occupying this position as a hired hand, not as a private entrepreneur.

In other words, private owners make choices to transform a private enterprise into a public company that then needs to be regulated as such. There are other choices that could have been made. When the retiring owner of a private company wants to pass on control over a prosperous company to his or her employees, an alternative to the public corporation is to establish an Employee Stock Ownership Plan, or ESOP. There are many successful companies in the U.S. that are not public corporations precisely because they are under the collective ownership of their employees.

It is also possible for some investors to agglomerate sufficient shares to take a public company private (Mitt Romney made his millions doing just that), but that only emphasizes the point: public corporations are not private enterprise. We regulate public corporations far more stringently than private businesses precisely because they are publicly held. And as U.S. citizens, how we regulate public corporations (or even private businesses, for that matter) is up to us.

2. Corporations should be run to benefit everyone who contributes to their success – not just shareholders.

It's a myth that corporations have a legal duty to maximize profits to shareholders at the expense of everyone else. Historically, the executives and directors of U.S. public corporations understood that they had a responsibility to other constituencies – customers, employees, suppliers, creditors, the communities in which they operate, and the nation.

Today, however, the dominant ideology is that a corporation should "maximize shareholder value." At the most basic level, the rationale for this ideology is that shareholders own the company's assets, and therefore have exclusive claim on its profits. A more sophisticated argument is that among all stakeholders in the business corporation only shareholders bear the risk of getting a positive return from the firm, while all other participants receive guaranteed returns for their productive contributions. If society wants risk-bearing, so the argument goes, firms need to return value to shareholders.

This argument sounds logical – until you question its fundamental assumption. Innovation, defined as the process that generates goods or services that are higher quality and/or lower cost than those previously available, is an inherently uncertain process. Anyone who invests their labor or their capital in the innovation process is taking a risk that the investment may not generate a higher quality, lower cost product. Once you understand the collective and cumulative character of the innovation process, you can easily see that the

assumption that shareholders are the only participants in the business enterprise who make investments in productive resources without a guaranteed return is just plain false. In an innovative economy, workers and taxpayers habitually make these risky investments.

How do workers make these risky investments? As is generally recognized by employers who declare that "our most important assets are our human assets", the key to successful innovation is the extra time and effort, above and beyond the strict requirements of the job, that employees expend interacting with others to confront and solve problems in transforming technologies and accessing markets. Anyone who has spent time in a workplace knows the difference between workers who just punch the clock to collect their pay from day to day and workers who use their paid employment as a platform for the expenditure of creative and collective effort as part of a process of building their careers.

As members of the firm, these forward-looking workers bear the risk that their extra expenditures of time and effort will not yield the gains to innovative enterprise from which they can be rewarded. If, however, the innovation process does generate profits, workers, as risk-bearers, have a claim to a share in the forms of promotions, higher earnings and benefits. Instead, shareholder-value ideology is often used as a rationale for laying off workers whose hard and creative work has contributed to the company's success. That's grossly unfair.

Taxpayers also invest in the innovation process without a guaranteed return. Through government agencies, taxpayers fund infrastructural investments that, given their cost and the uncertainty of returns, business enterprises would not have made on their own. It is impossible to explain U.S. leadership in information technology and biotechnology without recognizing the role of government in making investments to develop new knowledge and facilitate its diffusion. As one example, the current annual budget of the National Institutes of Health is about \$31 billion, twice in real terms its level in the early 1990s. Without this government expenditure on research, year in and year out, we would not have a medicinal drug industry. Yet shareholder-value ideology is often used to justify low taxes that deny taxpayers a return on these investments.

So shareholder-value ideology provides a flawed rationale for excluding workers and taxpayers from sharing in the gains of innovative enterprise. To turn this ideology on its head, what risk-bearing role do public shareholders play in the innovation process? Do they confront uncertainty by strategically allocating resources to innovative investments? No. As portfolio investors, they diversify their financial holdings across the outstanding shares of existing firms to minimize risk.

They do so, moreover, with limited liability, which means that they are under no legal obligation to make further investments of "good" money to support previous investments that have gone bad. Even for these previous investments, the existence of a highly liquid stock market enables public shareholders to cut their losses instantaneously by selling their shares – what has long been called the "Wall Street walk".

3. Executive compensation is a rigged game, not the result of the laws of supply and demand.

You often hear that stratospheric executive pay is the result of some inexorable law of supply and demand. If we don't give top executives their multimillion dollar compensation, they won't be willing to come to work and do their jobs. They are supposedly the bearers of "scarce talent" that demands a high price in the market place. Even Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor in the Clinton administration and a critic of U.S. income inequality, has justified the explosion in executive pay, arguing that intense competition makes it much more difficult than it used to be to find the talent who can manage a large corporation (*Supercapitalism*, 2008, pp 105-114).

That is not what determines executive pay. Here is how it works: Top executives select other top executives to sit on "their" boards of directors. These directors hire compensation consultants to recommend an executive pay package, which consists of salary, bonus, incentive pay, retirement benefits, and all manner of other perks. The consultants look at what top executives at other major corporations are getting, and say that, well, this executive should get more or less the same. Since the directors are mostly these very same

“other executives”, they have no interest in objecting – and if any of them were to do so, they would find that they are no longer being invited to sit on corporate boards.

Meanwhile, given the preponderance of stock-based compensation (especially stock options) in executive pay, whenever there is speculative boom in the stock market, top executives of the companies with most rapidly rising stock prices make out like bandits. The higher compensation levels then create a “new normal” for executive pay that, via the compensation consultants and compliant directors, ratchets up the pay of all the top dogs. And, when the stock market is less speculative, these corporate executives do massive stock buybacks to push stock prices up.

What we have here is not “market forces” at work but an exclusive club that promotes the interests of the 0.1 percent. All too often executives allocate corporate resources to benefit themselves rather than to invest in innovation and job creation. It is time that the 99 percent see through the ideology, break up the club, and get the U.S. economy back on track.

Corporate power for the people!

Business corporations exist as part of the collective and cumulative development of our economy. The investments in innovation and job creation that these corporations make or decline to make are key to our future prosperity. Public shareholders, the supposed owners of these corporations, are in general only willing to hold shares in a company because of the ease with which they can terminate this relation by selling their shares on the stock market. Yet, almost unanimously, corporate executives proclaim that they run their companies for the sake of shareholders. In fact, their personal coffers pumped up with stock-based compensation, our business “leaders” have increasingly run the corporations for themselves.

The real corporate investors are taxpayers and workers. Through government agencies at federal, state, and local levels, taxpayers supply business corporations with educated labor and physical infrastructure. Through their interaction in business organizations, workers expend the time and effort that can generate innovative products. In the name of shareholder value, however, taxpayers and workers have been losing out. It’s time to confront the myths of “private enterprise”, “shareholder value”, and “market-determined executive compensation” with arguments about how the innovation process actually works with sustainable prosperity as the result.

What will it take to build a movement that can make the business corporation work for the 99 percent ?

We have to elect politicians who will take on corporate power rather than shill for corporate power-brokers. We have to support labor leaders who recognize that gaining a voice in corporate governance is the only way to ensure that corporations will invest in workers and create good jobs. We need teachers at all levels of the education system who understand what business corporations are and what they are not. We need the responsible media to escape from the grip of corporate control. And we have to put in place business executives who represent the interests of civil society rather than those of an elite egotistical club.

20120412-06	19:02	SteveBA	Hilary Rosen vs. Anne R0mney (Stay-at-Home Moms)
-------------	-------	---------	--

Dear SteveB,

Looks like your friends on the DNC have shown their true colors today with Hilary roses remarks about stay at home moms. With you misnomer of a newsletter you would distance yourself from here remarks. By the way Rosen visited the white house 35 times to see the great one. General petraeus only 9 times

[I’ll ignore the unexpected and unwarranted personal attack, my old friend. I see no reason for any distancing. I understand the sensitivity of stay-at-home moms, Mrs. R0mney has never “worked” a day in her life (government’s definition), so she does not understand the lives of working moms, just as her husband doesn’t understand anything but stinking, filthy rich. These simply facts are the essence of what this minor flap is all about. It should be perfectly acceptable to state them, or even to Tweet them, no matter how they become slanted. –SteveB]

20120412-01 09:35 Pam

Re: SOUNDS LIKE DANGEROUS RHETORIC TO ME! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #115)

"Raise your fists, break your chains. Shake the world under your feet, and make a noise so loud, that the 1% will cower in their marble halls. For the time of The People has come. Those who consider themselves our masters will find themselves standing in the path of a force the likes of which the world has never seen. For the world relied on our compliance. Our silence, our sheepish ways of living how we are told, for our acceptance of the oppressor's so called power. But this power was an illusion. Yes the power did not lie in the bank accounts, the pockets of CEOs, the chambers of Ivory towers under lock and key. No. the power has been with The People. The people who survive day to day. The children who cry at night from the pains of hunger, the students who dreams were stolen from them, or sold at prices so high, there is no hope of escape. Those who face violence and weaponry, and defend themselves with nothing but an idea. But it is this idea you see, that makes them strong. An idea cannot be beaten. An idea cannot be gassed, or shot. For it lives in our very souls, and no matter what stands against us, this idea cannot be destroyed."

No, Steve, you're not turning conservative. When I read this, my blood ran cold. This is the kind of rhetoric and squishy thinking that drives conservatives nuts, and it makes me squirm too. All the hand-wringing, bombast, and ideology are creepy in the extreme. "The People"--code word. "our masters"--code word. "a force the likes of which the world has never seen."--Piffle. An idea that "lives in our souls?"--please. This sort of thing really turns me off, big time. It's an appeal to emotion, which is the foundation of propaganda. This would have gone down well at the Nuremburg (sp?) rallies. We could have our very own "Triumph of the Will."

[Thank you, Pam. I feel more "normal" already. Hopefully, these inflammatory, violent words will not set the dominant OWS tone. --SteveB]

20120412-02 11:54 Dale

Video: Viral Ethics

You should find this site very interesting: <http://www.viralethics.com/>.

20120412-04 15:13 SteveB

Ah...the Benefits of Being Mitt R0mney ("How Did Mitt Make So Much Money and Pay So Little in Taxes?")

"How Did Mitt Make So Much Money and Pay So Little in Taxes?" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Apr. 12, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-did-mitt-make-so-much-money-and-pay-so-little-taxes-1334245518>)

Now that Mitt Romney is the presumed Republican candidate, it's fair to ask how he made so much money (\$21 million in 2010 alone) and paid such a low rate of taxes (only 13.9 percent).

Not only fair to ask, but instructive to know. Because the magic of private equity reveals a lot about how and why our economic system has become so distorted and lopsided – why all the gains are going to the very top while the rest of us aren't going anywhere.

The magic of private equity isn't really magic at all. It's a magic trick – and it's played on you and me.

Jake Kornbluth and I have made this 2 minute video that explains it all in eight simple steps. (Thanks to MoveOn.org for staking us.)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rodifJlis2c&feature=player_embedded

By the way, the “other people’s money” that private equity fund managers (as well as other so-called “hedge” fund managers) play with often comes from pension funds that contain the savings of millions of average Americans.

The pension fund managers who dole out our savings to private equity and hedge-fund guys also take a hefty slice in bonuses. And like the others, they bear no risk if their bets later turn bad. They get their bonuses regardless.

Nor are any of them — private-equity, hedge-fund, or pension-fund managers — personally liable for doing adequate due diligence. They can bet our money on the basis of no more information than what they had for breakfast.

But if these funds lose, you lose. That’s what happened in 2008 and 2009. Some of the losses are also shifted to the government’s Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation – which means taxpayers lose.

It’s a giant con game, and it continues to this day.

Here’s what has to be done to stop it:

1. End the “carried interest” loophole that allows private-equity managers like Mitt Romney to treat their income as capital gains, taxed at 15 percent, even though they don’t risk a dime of their own income. Their earnings should be treated as ordinary income.
2. Hold the managers of private-equity funds, hedge funds, and pension funds to a “due diligence” standard. So if the funds lose money and these managers didn’t exercise due diligence, the Pension Guaranty Corporation can claw back their bonuses.
3. Raise the capital-gains rate to match the tax rate on ordinary income – especially for short-term investments. Give a tax preference only to “patient capital” – that is, for investments held for, say, five years or more.
4. Resurrect Glass-Steagall.

Mitt and others like him won’t like any of these reforms. They’d eliminate the humongous profits they’ve enjoyed at the expense of the rest of us.

But these reforms are necessary if we’re to take back our economy.

20120412-05 17:17 SteveB Fw: Avaaz Petition: Stop Jail Time for Birth Control in Honduras

from Avaaz:

Honduras is just days away from approving an extremist law that would put teenagers in prison for using the morning-after pill, even if they've just been raped. But we can stop this law and ensure women have the chance to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

Some Congress members agree that this law -- which would also jail doctors or anyone who sells the pill -- is excessive, but they are bowing to the powerful religious lobby that wrongly claims the morning-after pill constitutes an abortion. Only the head of the Congress, who wants to run for the Presidency and cares about his reputation abroad, can stop this. If we pressure him now we can shelve this reactionary law.

The vote could happen any day -- let’s show Honduras that the world won't stand by as it jails women for preventing pregnancy even after sexual violence. Sign the urgent petition calling on the President of the Honduran Congress to stand up for women’s rights. Avaaz will work with local women's groups to personally deliver our outcry.

A few countries, including Honduras, have banned the emergency contraceptive pill, which delays ovulation and prevents pregnancy -- like ordinary birth control pills. But if this new bill passes, Honduras will be the only state in the world to punish the use or sale of emergency contraception with a jail term. Anyone -- teenagers, rape victims, doctors -- convicted of selling or using the morning-after pill could end up behind bars, in flagrant contravention of World Health Organisation guidelines.

Latin America already has too many tough laws which restrict women's reproductive rights. The Honduras Congress first passed this draconian measure in April 2009, but just a month later then-President José Manuel Zelaya bowed to pressure from campaigners and vetoed it. Then Zelaya was removed in a coup, and the new regime has taken a sledgehammer to the country's judicial processes and forced the bill back to a vote.

Time is short, but we can stop this awful proposal in its tracks. Congress has the final vote on the matter and the government doesn't want to risk its already fragile global reputation. Let's tell the President of the Congress not to make Honduras the region's most repressive country against women. Sign this urgent petition now:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/no_prison_for_contraception_global/?v/

Emergency contraception is vital for women everywhere, but especially where sexual violence against women is rampant, unplanned pregnancy rates are high and access to regular birth control is limited. Let's stand with the women of Honduras and help them stop this bill.

With hope and determination, Alex, Laura, Dalia, Alice, Emma, Ricken, Maria Paz, David and the whole Avaaz team

More Information:

Honduras Supreme Court upholds absolute ban on emergency contraception (ReproRights):

<http://reproductiverights.org/en/press-room/honduras-supreme-court-upholds-absolute-ban-on-emergency-contraception-opens-door-to-crim>.

Honduras, most sweeping ban on emergency contraception anywhere (RH Reality Check):

<http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/article/2012/02/14/honduran-supreme-court-upholds-complete-ban-on-emergency-contraception-0>.

Women's rights under attack with Honduran coup (LatinoPolitics):

<http://latinopoliticsblog.com/2009/11/16/women%E2%80%99s-rights-reproductive-freedoms-under-attack-with-honduran-coup/>.

The legal status of emergency contraception in Latin America (Hevia M.):

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22088410>.

The prohibition of emergency contraception in Honduras is inadmissible (WLW):

http://www.womenslinkworldwide.org/wlw/new.php?modo=detalle_prensa&dc=163&lang=en.

Emergency Contraception in the Americas (Pan American Health Organization):

www.paho.org/english/ad/ge/emergencycontraception.PDF.



http://www.daybydaycartoon.com/2012/04/12/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+daybydaycartoon%2FkUnt+%28Day+by+Day+Cartoon+by+Chris+Muir%29#006489

[Sorry, Tom, I must be getting dense, but this is the second cartoon you've sent me that I simply don't understand. Thanks for sending it anyway. I'll keep publishing and trying. -SteveB]

20120412-03	13:26	SteveB	From the Right: "Fighting the Last War"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

This woman can be incredibly irritating, but she must have taken some kind of "mellow" pill before she wrote this view from nearer the Middle.

Always good to have a "mole" in the enemy's camp.

"Fighting the Last War" by Ann Coulter, Human Events

Apr. 11, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=50786>)

In a fast-changing world, a common mistake is to keep fighting the last war.

For example, why would Republicans support sending more troops to Afghanistan, when that war was long over, or helping topple Moammar Gadhafi, who had become an ally in the war on terrorism? Some Republicans seem to support all military deployments just out of habit.

For years after the 9/11 terrorist attack on America, Democrats hysterically bemoaned any military action, especially in Iraq. They claimed to have many precious objections, but the truth was, they thought we deserved the attack -- or at best, both sides were at fault.

So when it came to Obama's pointlessly sending more troops to Afghanistan or foolishly intervening in Libya, some Republicans' first instinct was to demand muscular American military action, forgetting that we are the party that cares about American national security and does not fling troops around the globe just to look tough, as the Democrats do.

Republicans who supported sending more troops to Afghanistan and taking out Gadhafi were fighting the last war.

Similarly, sometimes it seems as if Republicans' only move on the economy is to cut taxes. With the highest corporate tax rate in the world, there's much to be said for cutting taxes. But, unlike when Reagan ran for president, it's going to take a lot more than tax cuts to rescue this country from its \$16 trillion debt.

When Reagan took office, the top marginal tax rate in this country was a staggering 70 percent. Lowering that to 28 percent was an enormous shot in the arm to the economy.

Cutting the top tax rate today from 35 percent to 30 percent -- or even 20 percent -- cannot possibly have the same dramatic effect. Republicans, as the only responsible party, are going to have to do something that's never been tried before in Washington: Cut government spending.

To keep prattling about cutting taxes, rather than cutting our behemoth, useless government is fighting the last war.

[Amen! But substitute "military" for "government". -SteveB]

Finally, some Republicans have been fighting the last war in our primaries.

For at least the last half-century -- probably since Abraham Lincoln ran -- there has always been liberal Republican pain in the ass in the GOP primary race. (You can tell who the liberal is by whom *The New York Times* calls a "pragmatic" or "moderate" Republican.)

In 1968, there were two liberals -- Richard Nixon and Nelson Rockefeller -- and one conservative, Ronald Reagan, who nearly won the nomination.

In 1976, it was Reagan again, vs. Gerald Ford ("moderate"). In 1980, it was Reagan a third time, vs. pro-choice, "voodoo economics" George H.W. Bush.

In 1992, it was Pat Buchanan, the conservative, against "Read My Lips" betrayer Bush. In 1996, it was, again, Buchanan against moderate Bob Dole ("tax collector for the welfare state" in the immortal words of Newt Gingrich).

[LOL! "Betrayer" Bush. I love it. -SteveB]

In 2000, we had conservative George W. Bush against liberal John McCain. In 2008, it was liberal McCain vs. Mitt Romney, the conservative.

You will note that liberal Republicans have always stayed liberal Republicans and conservative Republicans have always stayed conservative Republicans. Only their match-ups change.

Until this year.

For the first time, the last cycle's conservative has been rebranded a "liberal" by right-wingers eager to resume their battle against liberal Republicans. This year's actual liberal Republican, much admired by the Non-Fox Media, was Jon Huntsman. But he dropped out after the New Hampshire primary.

Mitt Romney isn't a liberal. He isn't even a moderate. And he certainly isn't liked by the *Times*.

Liberals so loathe Romney that in 2008, their most Christian-phobic columnist, Frank Rich, was forced to write admiringly about pro-life Christian conservative Mike Huckabee. He may have been a Christian, but at least he wasn't Mitt Romney!

Conservatives know perfectly well Romney isn't a "moderate" -- he was our conservative hero just four years ago!

Indeed, when Romney withdrew from the 2008 primary at CPAC that year, gallantly throwing his support to the front-runner, McCain, a college-age Christian standing next to a friend of mine expressed the general sentiment of the 10,000 assembled right-wingers by saying, "This f-ing blows."

But the need to revert to comfortable old roles has forced some right-wingers to designate our 2008 hero as the Rockefeller Republican this time around.

It has nothing to do with the facts. Conservatives who attack Romney as the "establishment Republican" are behaving like Democrats, giving us epithets in lieu of facts.

Perhaps it is because they were asleep at the wheel four years ago when Republicans actually did run a liberal for president that these conservatives feel the need to create an imaginary liberal Republican to oppose ferociously this time.

John McCain was worshipped by the liberal media, was the author of the unconstitutional campaign finance law and a global warming bill, adamantly supported amnesty for illegal aliens, opposed the Bush tax cuts as "tax cuts for the rich," wanted to shut down Guantanamo, called waterboarding "torture" and viciously attacked Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as "agents of intolerance" (and then immediately faxed that speech to *The New York Times*).

And he was from a conservative state! Where were you people four years ago when we were running him?

By contrast, when he was governor, every single budget Romney submitted to the 85 percent Democratic legislature in Massachusetts included tax cuts. He became a pro-lifer when it mattered -- while he was governor -- and vetoed a stem cell research bill. He slashed government spending in one of the most liberal states of the union. He is the rare elected Republican who is tough on illegal immigration. He has forcefully denounced Obama's dangerous foreign policy.

[A Republican calling President Obama's foreign policy "dangerous"? Ridiculous, Ann. --SteveB]

But the facts are irrelevant to people busy fighting the last war. It's not about Romney at all, but their own posing. Romney is the Emmanuel Goldstein of GOP primary voters looking for a moderate to hate because they fell down on the job last time.

Liberal Republicans always lose. Because he is not a liberal, Romney stands a good chance of beating Obama this fall. But if the fantasist posers keep turning this presidential race into their personal "Dungeons and Dragons" battle against "moderates," Romney's victory will go into the "Liberal Wins" column, when it is anything but.

(Ann Coulter is Legal Affairs Correspondent for Human Events and author of *High Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Slander*, *Treason*, *How to Talk to a Liberal (If You Must)*, *Godless*, *If Democrats Had Any Brains, They'd Be Republicans*, *Guilty: Liberal "Victims" and their Assault on America*, and *Demonic: How The Liberal Mob Is Endangering America*.)

20120412-08	23:59	SteveB	Photos: Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia
-------------	-------	--------	---------------------------------

<http://beautifulplacestovisit.com/deserts/salar-de-uyuni-bolivia/>

An otherworldly desert of salt. Uyuni, Bolivia (Ezequiel Cabrera)





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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #117 — APR. 16, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

How to Fix Income Inequality

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 16, 2012)

Don't you think it's about time the government did something for the rest of us? Gee, sure hope this idea spreads.

"Fix Income Inequality with \$10 Million Loans for Everyone!" by Sheila Bair, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 13, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fix-income-inequality-with-10-million-loans-for-everyone/2012/04/13/gIQATUQAFT_story.html)

Are you concerned about growing income inequality in America? Are you resentful of all that wealth concentrated in the 1 percent? I've got the perfect solution, a modest proposal that involves just a small adjustment in the Federal Reserve's easy monetary policy. Best of all, it will mean that none of us have to work for a living anymore.

For several years now, the Fed has been making money available to the financial sector at near-zero interest rates. Big banks and hedge funds, among others, have taken this cheap money and invested it in securities with high yields. This type of profit-making, called the "carry trade," has been enormously profitable for them.

So why not let everyone participate?

Under my plan, each American household could borrow \$10 million from the Fed at zero interest. The more conservative among us can take that money and buy 10-year Treasury bonds. At the current 2 percent annual interest rate, we can pocket a nice \$200,000 a year to live on. The more adventuresome can buy 10-year Greek debt at 21 percent, for an annual income of \$2.1 million. Or if Greece is a little too risky for you, go with Portugal, at about 12 percent, or \$1.2 million dollars a year. (No sense in getting greedy.)

Think of what we can do with all that money. We can pay off our underwater mortgages and replenish our retirement accounts without spending one day schlepping into the office. With a few quick keystrokes, we'll be golden for the next 10 years.

Of course, we will have to persuade Congress to pass a law authorizing all this Fed lending, but that shouldn't be hard. Congress is really good at spending money, so long as lawmakers don't have to come up with a way to pay for it. Just look at the way the Democrats agreed to extend the Bush tax cuts if the Republicans agreed to cut Social Security taxes and extend unemployment benefits. Who says bipartisanship is dead?

And while that deal blew bigger holes in the deficit, my proposal won't cost taxpayers anything because the Fed is just going to print the money. All we need is about \$1,200 trillion, or \$10 million for 120 million households. We will all cross our hearts and promise to pay the money back in full after 10 years so the Fed won't lose any dough. It can hold our Portuguese debt as collateral just to make sure.

Because we will be making money in basically the same way as hedge fund managers, we should have to pay only 15 percent in taxes, just like they do. And since we will be earning money through investments, not work, we won't have to pay Social Security taxes or Medicare premiums. That means no more money will go into these programs, but so what? No one will need them anymore, with all the cash we'll be raking in thanks to our cheap loans from the Fed.

Come to think of it, by getting rid of work, we can eliminate a lot of government programs. For instance, who needs unemployment benefits and job retraining when everyone has joined the investor class? And forget the trade deficit. Heck, we want those foreign workers to keep providing us with goods and services.

We can stop worrying about education, too. Who needs to understand the value of pi or the history of civilization when all you have to do to make a living is order up a few trades? Let the kids stay home with us. They can play video games while we pop bonbons and watch the soaps and talk shows. The liberals will love this plan because it reduces income inequality; the conservatives will love it because it promotes family time.

I'm really excited! This is the best American financial innovation since liar loans and pick-a-payment mortgages. I can't wait to get my super PAC started to help candidates who support this important cause. I think I will call my proposal the "Get Rid of Employment and Education Directive."

Some may worry about inflation and long-term stability under my proposal. I say they lack faith in our country. So what if it cost 50 billion marks to mail a letter when the German central bank tried printing money to pay idle workers in 1923?

That couldn't happen here. This is America. Why should hedge funds and big financial institutions get all the goodies?

Look out 1 percent, here we come.

(Sheila Bair is a former chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and a regular contributor to *Fortune Magazine*.)

20120413-01	09:07	Tom	Movie Recommendation — <i>The Raid: Redemption</i>
-------------	-------	-----	--

If you don't like this movie, you don't have a pulse. I screened this at midnight, (13 April 2012) Post SXSW, opening night for Austin Texas! (R) Rated-Very Violent. Non Stop Action, some of the best down & dirty knife and fist fighting you have EVER seen! (Silat Fighting) "Serbuan Maut" (Indonesian Language, with English Subtitles)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkJLMOFpuCo>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1899353/>

http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_raid_redemption/

The Raid: Redemption: Best "Martial Arts," Action, SWAT, & Action Drama, in 39 Years! Enjoy this Great Action Film!

http://trailers.apple.com/movies/sony/theraidredemption/raidredemption-clip1_h1080p.mov

Deep in the heart of Jakarta's slums lies an impenetrable safe house for the world's most dangerous killers and gangsters. Until now, the rundown apartment block has been considered untouchable to even the bravest of police. Cloaked under the cover of pre-dawn darkness and silence, an elite SWAT team is tasked with raiding the safe house in order to take down the notorious drug lord that runs it. But when a chance encounter with a spotter blows their cover and news of their assault reaches the drug lord, the building's lights are cut and all the exits blocked. Stranded on the 6th floor with no way out, the unit must fight their way through the city's worst to survive their mission. Director Gareth Evans (Merantau) and rising martial arts star Iko Uwais reunite in this adrenaline-fueled action film. (101 min.)

20120413-02

11:31

SteveB

On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes ("Santorum Donor Foster Friess Hopes Obama's 'Teleprompters Are Bulletproof'")

REPUBLICAN GAFFES ARE ALWAYS BIGGER THAN THOSE OF THE DEMOCRATS.

COMPARE HILARY ROSEN TO THIS JERK! OMFG!

Or maybe this was the secretly coded command to do the unthinkable? Or, at least, wishful thinking?

On the other hand, Hilary Rosen was actually expressing concern for poor, working mothers, though she did take a swipe at a public figure who is fair game. To try to twist this incident into more than that is pure nonsense and history soon to be written will demonstrate that amply. But as the White House said, the Romney campaign is adrift in a sinking boat, throwing lifelines at anything that looks like it might float. Did Hilary Rosen say anything that would offend women voters? I don't see how.

To call for the assassination of the president is another matter entirely.

But I'll tell you what, the a*s-hole certainly blurted out my worst fear.

"Santorum Donor Foster Friess Hopes Obama's 'Teleprompters Are Bulletproof'" by Amy Bingham, ABC News

Apr. 13, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/04/santorum-donor-foster-friess-hopes-obamas-teleprompters-are-bulletproof/>)

Foster Friess, the multi-millionaire who bankrolled a large portion of Rick Santorum's failed presidential bid, walked back another ill-advised statement this week after he said he hopes President Obama's "teleprompters are bulletproof."

"There's a lot of things that haven't been hammered at because Rick and Mitt have been kind of going at each other," Friess told Fox Business News' Lou Dobbs on Wednesday. "Now that they've kind of trained their barrels on President Obama I'm afraid his, I hope his teleprompters are bulletproof."

"I mean that figuratively," Friess added after a short moment of total silence.

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, Friess seemed to realize his mistake.

"I'm sorry. I probably shouldn't have said that," the wealthy Santorum donor said, chuckling with what appeared to be embarrassment.

"No, you should not have said it," Dobbs immediately responded before clarifying his guest's comments. "We understand it's a metaphor."

Friess, who poured close to \$1.7 million into the pro-Santorum Super PAC, found himself in the hot seat of the contraception debate in February when he suggested women put aspirin between their knees instead of using expensive contraception.

"Back in my days, they used Bayer aspirin for contraceptives," Friess said to a visibly surprised Andrea Mitchell on MSNBC. "The gals put it between their knees, and it wasn't that costly."



Have a question for Romney?
Ask him here.

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20120412134701AANI2k>

With Santorum now out of the GOP race, Friess said he will shift his support to Mitt Romney and back him financially when needed. While Friess was front-and-center in the Santorum campaign, often standing behind the candidate in his telltale cowboy hat at campaign events, he may be less visible as a Romney supporter.

Friess, a retired mutual fund manager with a net worth estimated at about \$500 million, told ABC on Wednesday that with Santorum out of the race, he is now hoping to "fade back into obscurity."

[20120413-07](#) 12:57 Art Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes

Much todo about nothing. Republicans are just desperate to find an issue.

[20120413-09](#) 13:51 Pam Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes

It was a silly thing to say, but it hardly qualifies as a scandal. I don't know how politicians stand it, having their every word inscribed for eternity and held up for constant scrutiny. I'm glad no one goes around quoting me all day long. Rosen (is that her name?) should offer a quick apology, then everyone should let the matter drop. Don't you just love the way Fox News goes all ballistic over this sort of thing!?

[20120413-11](#) 17:55 SteveBA Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes

Isn't it amazing how the liberals react when one of their own insults the stay at hoe moms. First it's no big deal and let's move on or it's you should have heard what this guy said. The fact is the feminist movement here doesn't recognize anyone who not gay or supports killing the unborn.

[20120413-12](#) 18:58 Art Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveBA)

Do you really see this as some kind of insult? The context, as I understand it, was Rosen was questioning Romney's position on many recent Republican statements and proposed legislation affecting women and his position that he got his advice on issues affecting women from his wife. I am sure Mrs. Romney is a fine person and woman but I do not think her background and experience allows her to be as perhaps experienced on these issues as other women with a more varied background. I for one can hardly imagine the world they live in, but I do know I wouldn't put one of my dogs in a crate on top the car.

I suppose this is typical of election season but this is really a tempest in a teapot. Also please note the President had no part in this.

[20120413-13](#) 20:16 SteveBA Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to Art)

She is or maybe was a political strategist for the DNC. She also visited the white house 35 times, according to the visitor logs. That's once a month? IMHO it represents the disdain of the feminist movement for those who do not

toe the line to their ideology. My original point is you all on this board want to give a free pass to any of your own kind who make outrageous remarks.

[20120413-14](#) 20:32 SteveG Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveBA)

"She is or maybe was a political strategist" – this is not very specific or definitive. "maybe" indicates an uncertainty. "original point is you all on this board" – I had no idea there was a board. You receive the same as the rest of us and therefore wouldn't you be on the same board? Please define "your own kind". IMHO your responses are full of fallacies.

[20120413-15](#) 21:01 SteveG Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveBA)

To clarify another point – my interpretation after re-reading your email: By your statement of "your own kind" indicates a thought that all that receive the emails are democrats/progressives/liberals. I used to consider myself a liberal, but no longer do. I consider myself a moderate with leanings to the left. After all, we need to be closer to the middle in order for this country to move forward. Please move to the middle.

[20120414-08](#) 09:11 Art Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; Republican (reply to SteveG & SteveBA)

Shoot, I'm still a registered Republican.

[20120414-10](#) 10:00 Pam Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; Republican (reply to Art)

Are you sure that's wise?

[20120414-28](#) 19:25 Art Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; Republican (reply to Pam)

Well, their primaries are currently a lot more fun.

[20120413-16](#) 21:08 SteveB Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (View from the Right: "The Post-Hilary Rosen White House Clown Show")

"The Post-Hilary Rosen White House Clown Show" by John Hayward, Human Events

Apr. 12, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=50812>)

(At least we all got a few laughs out of it.)

As the smoking wreckage of the Democrats' dumb "War on Women" narrative tumbles from the sky, we can at least enjoy some of the goofier attempts by the terrified White House to distance itself from close advisor and frequent visitor Hilary Rosen, who just became one of America's most toxic political consultants.

Hapless White House spokesman Jay Carney was reduced to stammering that he personally knows three women named Hilary Rosen, so maybe the one who nuked the Democrat Party into orbit by sneering at Ann Romney's stay-at-home motherhood isn't the one who visited the White House 35 times.

No, seriously. He really said that. The Blaze captures the comedy with a transcript:

"I haven't seen the records. I don't know that Hilary Rosen— I know three personally, women named Hilary Rosen," Carney said. "So I'm not sure that those represent the person we're talking about necessarily."

When pressed on her involvement, he added: "I don't know how many times she's been here. ... I don't know how to assess her overall relationship to people here in the White House. I have not seen her here very frequently."

Michelle Malkin spent an afternoon entertaining herself by walking Carney up and down the stage like a duck in a shooting gallery, publishing Rosen's entries from the White House visitor logs – and noting that most of these entries used her middle initial. Meetings with a *lot* of key Obama players, and the President himself, were abundantly documented. Let's just say that airbrushing Rosen out of the White House is going to be harder than digitally removing Jar Jar Binks from *The Phantom Menace*.

Rosen is also a key figure in the heavily stage-managed Sandra Fluke controversy. Her high-powered law firm, SKD Knickerbocker, gave Fluke – a 30-year-old professional leftist activist who conned much of the media into treating her as an innocent co-ed, while she pulled ridiculous figures about the cost of birth control out of thin air – pro bono representation. Rosen's partner at the firm is... White House communications director Anita Dunn.

John Nolte at Breitbart.com noted that President Obama and his team are trying to push Rosen under the bus this afternoon, but Obama personally set up the attack on Ann Romney last Friday, at the White House Forum on Women and the Economy:

And once Michelle and I had our girls, she gave it her all to balance raising a family and pursuing a career-- and something that could be very difficult on her, because I was gone a lot.

Once I was in the state legislature, I was teaching, I was practicing law, I'd be traveling," he said. "And we didn't have the luxury for her not to work.

It didn't take long for CNS News to discover that Barack Obama was pulling down \$162,000 per year at the time he claims Michelle staying home would be an "unaffordable luxury." And the President will not be happy if people begin once again paying attention to the job Michelle Obama ended up with, a \$316,000 "community affairs" position that vanished the moment she left.

After spending a day angrily doubling down on her rhetoric, Rosen must have finally checked her four thousand frantic messages from the White House, because she suddenly apologized for the attack on Ann Romney. She tried to justify her actions in the usual leftist totalitarian terms, claiming that when she attacked Mitt Romney's wife, she was actually "discussing his poor record on the plight of women's financial struggles." Politics over all!

In a similar vein, Rosen sought to armor herself against criticism by brandishing her extremely correct politics: "As a partner in a firm full of women who work outside the home as well as stay-at-home mothers, all with plenty of children, gender equality is not a talking point for me. It is an issue I live with every day." To top it off, she didn't really apologize for what she said to Ann Romney. She only apologized for the offense Mrs. Romney and millions of other Americans felt, due to her "poorly chosen words."

It's often useful to respond to Democrat attempts to protect themselves with weaponized amnesia by recalling exactly what they said in the first place. "What you have is Mitt Romney running around the country saying, 'Well, you know what my *wife* tells me is that women really care about economic issues,'" she spat on CNN. "and when I listen to my wife, that's what I'm hearing. Guess what? His wife has actually never worked a day in her life. She's never really dealt with the kinds of economic issues that a majority of the women in this country are facing, in terms of how do we feed our kids, how do we send them to school, and why do we worry about their future."

You've got to love that snarky little "Guess what?" especially since she's now claiming her true and noble meaning was misunderstood because she chose a few words poorly. I'll grant her this much: her attack on Ann Romney was at least as much about the myopic class-warfare obsessions of the Left as it was about feminist contempt for stay-at-home-moms. She was insulting the Romneys for their out-of-touch silver-spoon lifestyle. Incidentally, at the time Ann Romney began raising her children, she and Mitt were living as impoverished college students, but it

should come as no surprise that Rosen doesn't know what she's talking about. Class warfare is an alloy of ignorance, hatred, and the lust for power.

In her catastrophic Wednesday night appearance on CNN, she actually tried claiming that the Obama campaign never used "war on women" rhetoric at all, prompting Jonah Goldberg of *National Review* to haul dozens of Democrat fundraising emails shrieking about the "War on Women" from his spam folder.

Rosen's career as a spin doctor may be over, but it's no great loss. She wasn't very good at it to begin with. Nobody on Team Obama really is. They just assume their voters are easily spun, thanks to short memories and even shorter attention spans.

[20120413-17](#) 22:11 SteveB Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes

Great point, SteveG. I don't see how the Right has the right to redefine everyone's position on the scale to suit their agenda.

I firmly believe I am a redefined moderate myself, very conservative on many issues, but redefined by the Right as a socialist because I believe in progressive taxation, global warming, and free choice. I consider these positions to be strictly centrist. The Republicans have radicalized themselves incredibly quickly.

More importantly...what is the big deal over Hilary Rosen? Please define. Her point was expressing concern for working women. What exactly is the political problem with that? If she picked slightly unfortunate wording to express the legitimate idea that Anne Romney is a rich, elitist snob like her husband, who doesn't have a clue what life for us lesser classes is like, so what?

This is no radical idea. The other Republican candidates have been saying it for months.

Rosen even apologized, but stuck to her guns, good for her, she did nothing wrong. Rush is supposed to get free ride for a left-handed apology, why not Hilary?

But the *Titanic* is sinking and people will do anything to keep from drowning in the cold water of voter rejection.

[20120414-05](#) 08:32 Pam Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveB)

Well said. (nfp)

[20120414-03](#) 08:28 Pam Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes

IMHO folks on the far right have cornered the market on making "outrageous remarks." We could argue about this all day, but it's the real issues we should be concerned with: employment, health care, education, etc.

[20120414-06](#) 08:57 SteveB Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to Pam)

I agree. Interesting, though, how readily Republicans jump to the "aid" of "women" when it only involves lip service.

[20120414-07](#) 09:10 Beth Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes

Her remarks were not articulated well. But they were not outrageous at all. Santorum pointed out how out of touch both the Romney's are with the middle class. But in truth none of these people know about waking up in the middle of the night wondering where the money will come from to pay the bills. And none them have fractured marriages

over money and stress and lack of a job. But at least the Democrats try. The Republicans don't give a damn about women and the middle class and that's the bottom line.

[20120414-11](#) 10:05 Pam Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to Beth)

So true, Beth. In all honesty I can't imagine what it would be like to live in a Cabrini-Green or a Newark slum, and I wouldn't pretend to. The plain truth is, we know best those things we've lived through: childbirth, war, parachute jumping, chronic pain, poverty. We may be sympathetic, but we can't KNOW. When Romney quipped that he had gotten "a pink slip," I wanted to laugh. IMHO I am more inclined to listen to and/or follow someone who knows whereof he/she speaks. Experience isn't the only teacher, but it may be the best one.

[20120414-14](#) 12:14 SteveBA Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; President Obama's Experience (reply to Pam)

Following Pam's logic Obama is way under qualified to lead us any thing except fund raising.

[20120414-16](#) 13:09 SteveB Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes; President Obama's Experience (reply to SteveBA)

See...here's the lack of experience thing left over from 2008.

Ummmmm...he's been POTUS for more than three years now, almost four by election time. He even got Osama, remember? And I think what he did with Libya was grand and it worked. He didn't screw it up the way Bush did Iraq and Afghanistan, did he? He kept the economy from going over the edge, and even managed to pass one monumental health care bill.

But...that's not enough experience. For John McCain, it was enough experience just sitting in a prison while true heroes fought the war. Yep, he was qualified to be President. But for a black man, being President for four years doesn't give him enough experience to be President.

It just doesn't hold water, does it, SteveBA?

[20120414-19](#) 14:01 Clark Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, President Obama's Experience, R0mney(reply to SteveB)

from SteveB:

See...here's the lack of experience thing left over from 2008.

Don't forget, he also saved the auto industry, against Romney's "sage" advice.

Anyway, it's more than your life experience alone that qualifies you to be a leader or to relate to the citizenry (although Obama has actually had a lot of life experience). It helps to have empathy, something a wealthy FDR had and a wealthy JFK had. I don't see the same empathy in Romney. (I'll refrain from making comments about his wife.) Romney may be a fairly talented technocrat, having apparently saved the SLC Olympics and all that, but based on many things he's said and policy proscriptions he's put forth, I don't think he cares much about people as people. I'm not even talking about ideology and right-wing vs. left-wing stuff here (I doubt if he even has much of an ideology). I just don't see the empathy, while I do think that Obama has it, though he's by no means a firebrand about it. Obama, like Clinton, is mostly a pragmatic politician who tries to get done what he can to move the country ahead, and compromises if he can on the rest. Romney, I believe, just wants to be president for its own sake. And I think that was the subtext behind Hilary Rosen's remarks, which were a lot more extensive and

substantive than her one ill-advised line about Ann Romney never working a day in her life. However you wish to interpret or read something into that, Rosen never said anything explicit about stay at home moms. It's a manufactured controversy, and unfortunately we'll see many more of those between now and November, thanks to the shallowness of both the media and the political class. It's sickening.

20120415-15	16:19	Ben	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, President Obama's Experience, R0mney(reply to SteveB)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

That's a nice summary.

20120414-23	15:41	SteveG	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Well stated, Mr. Norton.

20120414-25	16:21	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

An excellent analysis, Clark! I read somebody the other day, maybe it was Hilary, who said, "Romney wants to be president because he can." What the person didn't say was, "That's the only reason." If he has a vision other than the dogma of Paul Ryan, etc., I haven't seen it. I'm not sure he has even that, which is why I spell his name with a "zero" (R0mney).

20120414-27	16:48	Pam	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Well said, Clark.

20120414-29	19:33	Art	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Very well said. Thanks.

20120414-20	14:16	Dennis	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Clark)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

from Clark:

Romney may be a fairly talented technocrat..... I don't think he cares much about people as people.

But Clark, don't forget that corporations are now people. Romney does care about the ones he can buy cheap, restructure, and make a bundle on fees in the process so his wife can stay at home to work.

20120414-21	14:45	Clark	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes, Romney (reply to Dennis)
-----------------------------	-------	-------	--

Romney may be a fairly talented technocrat..... I don't think he cares much about people as people.

20120414-30	20:01	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes ("Mitt Romney in 1994: 'Now Mom and Dad Both Have to Work Whether They Want to or Not'")
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Yes, R0mney seems to have a double standard when it comes to himself and the rest of us. Ya, it's "a different world" that he lives in. Now, get crackin', you lackies!

"Mitt Romney in 1994: 'Now Mom and Dad Both Have to Work Whether They Want to or Not'" (with video) by The Huffington Post

Apr. 14, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/14/mitt-romney-hilary-rosen_n_1425910.html?ref=elections-2012)

As a senate candidate in 1994, Mitt Romney claimed life has changed since the 1960s and "now Mom and Dad both have to work whether they want to or not."

"This is a different world than it was in the 1960s when I was growing up, when you used to have Mom at home and Dad at work," Romney said, as shown in a video posted by BuzzFeed's Andrew Kaczynski. "Now Mom and Dad both have to work whether they want to or not, and usually one of them has two jobs."

20120414-31	20:16	Beth	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes (reply to SteveB)
-----------------------------	-------	------	--

Priceless!

20120414-17	13:52	Dennis	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes ("Maher on 'Rosengate': 'I Think What She Meant Was That Romney's Never Gotten Her A*s Out of the House to Work'")
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Good discussion on this Rosengate "kerfuffle" (good description for it) on Bill Maher's show. Personally I don't think the squishy liberals, like Obama, should have apologized for what was essentially a correct, if incomplete, statement by Rosen. They should have doubled down, which is what the bad-a*s Repugs do, and what Maher does on his show.

"Maher on 'Rosengate': 'I Think What She Meant Was That Romney's Never Gotten Her A** Out of the House to Work'" by Lauren Kelley, AlterNet

Apr. 14, 2012,
(http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/880921/maher_on_rosengate%3A_%22i_think_what_she_meant_w_as_that_romney%27s_never_gotten_her_a**_out_of_the_house_to_work%22/#paragraph3)

On last night's episode of "Real Time," Bill Maher took on Hilary Rosengate -- the ongoing saga over Rosen's comment that Ann Romney had "never worked a day in her life," Romney's subsequent baiting of stay at home moms, and the ensuing national discourse over what constitutes "work" for a mother. Everything about the kerfuffle is unfortunate.

Maher starts the conversation off by talking about candidate Romney's massive women voter problem -- his favorability rating among women is a scant 30%, compared to 47% for John McCain. "Why don't girls like Mitt Romney?" asks Maher, semi-sarcastically. The answer, of course, is that Romney supports rolling back women's and reproductive rights. For help understanding women's issues, he's turned to his wife (because HOW ELSE is a man to understand these things). Maher's panelists -- former Canadian PM Kim Campbell, Reagan-era budget director David Stockman, and conservative journalist Matthew Continetti -- discuss Romney's backwards views for a while before they get around to Rosengate. Quoth Maher, "No one's denying that being a mother is a tough job...but there is a big difference between being a mother in that ough job, and getting your ass out the door at 7am when it's cold, having to deal with a boss, being unhappy at a workplace where even if you're unhappy you can't show it for 8 hours." Indeed, but even more important here is the class issue: Ann Romney doesn't understand "work," as defined by lower income of American women, because she is not impacted the same way by the costs of healthcare, childcare, unpaid time spent on maternity leave, and food, to name just a few things.

If nothing else, watch the video segment for Campbell's clearheaded points about the very real war on women -- the one Mitt Romney supports:

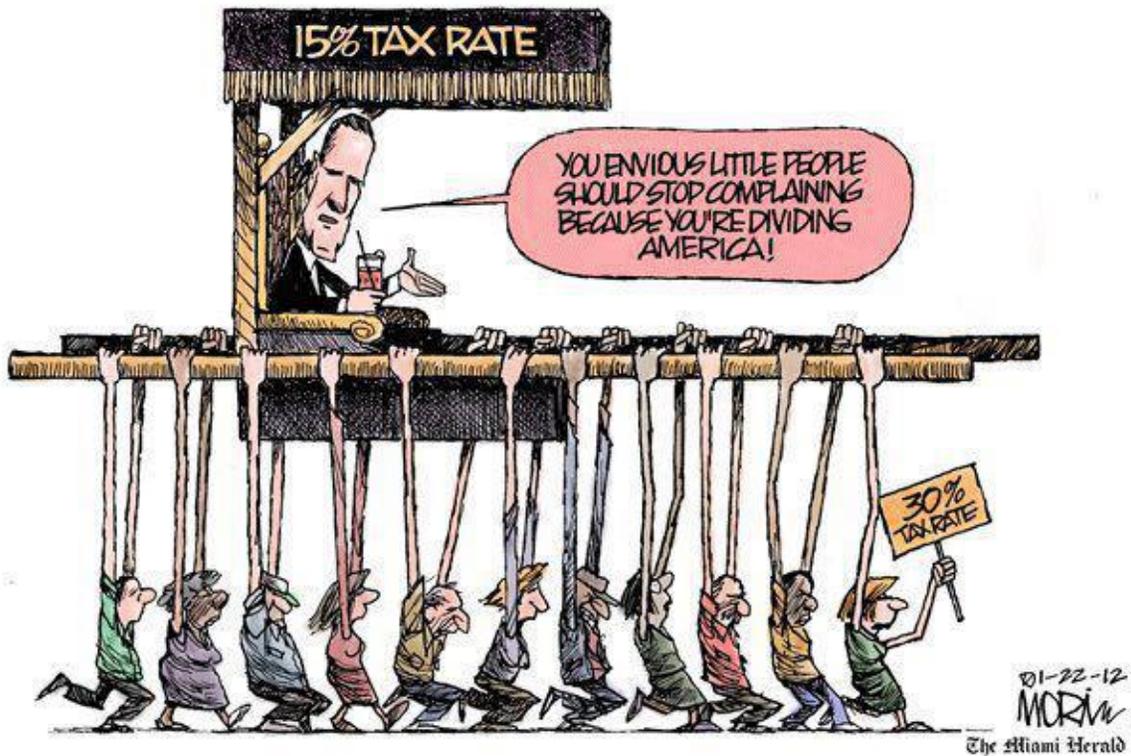
<http://www.mediaite.com/tv/bill-maher-on-rosen-gate-just-the-latest-in-stupid-non-consequential-meaningless-controversies/>.

20120414-18	14:00	SteveB	Re: On the Comparative Sizes of Gaffes / Maher on 'Rosengate' (reply to Dennis)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Yes!

20120414-32	20:21	Dennis	"Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Here's more on Mittens and the state of the Republican Party. Definitely not humorous.



"Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse" by Steve King, Truthout

Apr. 14, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/news/item/8327-mitt-romney-the-salesman-trapped-in-the-gop-madhouse>)

Mitt Romney is not a flip-flopper. He's a salesman. Romney has been running for president since 2007. He has been running as a pragmatic conservative in a party no longer interested in pragmatism or even conservatism. He is now running as a moderate in an extremist party. The party of his father is no longer a party at all; it's an insane asylum.

In 2008, Romney spent millions of his own dollars and ran as a conservative to John McCain's moderate. This image ran in stark and mind-twisting contrast to the former governor from Massachusetts. In his failed Senate run against Teddy Kennedy and his successful gubernatorial run, he ran as only a Republican can in Massachusetts; as a liberal. He described himself as a progressive Republican. He said he didn't support Reagan/Bush, he voted for Tsongas. He backed a woman's right to choose and some gay rights. He did what he had to do to get elected as a Mormon Republican in the bluest of states.

It was because of this salesman approach that the right-wing culture warrior who called himself Mitt Romney didn't make it past February in the Republican nominating contest. Indeed, he was loathed even by his opponents. At the 2008 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), Romney "suspended" his bid for that year's nomination, effectively handing the nomination over to the hapless McCain. Since that election and the crumbling of the economy, Romney's perceived cachet as the next-in-line on the Republican bench and his business experience as a corporate raider have left him well positioned to be the nominee. Since 2008, Romney has done everything a second-place Republican should. He has refined his message, made strategic endorsements during the midterm elections and spread plenty of money around through his political action committee (PAC). He supported the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) bailout of Wall Street while criticizing President Obama's rescue of Detroit. He has attacked the artificial bogeyman of government overspending while saying he would increase military spending. He lined up establishment endorsement after establishment endorsement. He did everything right. And he did it all without a major scandal.

The Romney scandal is not some nefarious, private dalliance or corrupt dealing. His scandal is himself. His critics on the right and on the left often point out that his only consistency is inconsistency. This is inaccurate. He has simply meant to please and engage any audience he happens to find himself in front of at any given time. He strives to do what he did for Bain Capital: increase his stature by increasing the worth of his shareholders, whoever they happen to be. Romney expects the same cold calculation and transactional politics to be reciprocated by his would-be supporters. The problem does not arise from the fact that his inconsistencies lend themselves more to dishonesty. They do, but political parties often forgive this in exchange for electability and the furtherance of an agenda. The problem arises from the fact that the people whose favor he now pursues might just be out of their minds.

Fearmongering in Fantasyland

In the past few years, the party that Mitt Romney hopes to preside over has moved so far to the right that Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater would have trouble securing the nomination. The party has slowly but surely wandered into a fantasyland where the nation's first liberal, intellectual African-American president has morphed into a tyrannical, possible antichrist, foreign-born, Sharia-law-abiding Muslim socialist prosecuting a war on religion while at the same time being controlled by a capitalist Jewish cabal of One World Government-pushing elites. This is an alternate reality they have constructed for themselves, one in which President Obama is orchestrating a government takeover of everything imaginable, yet at the same time, is too amateur to control or head the government. Instead of Obama's ascendance merely heralding the changing face of American progressivism, multiculturalism and a less monochromatic face at the top of US government, it seems that American conservatives' already loose grip on reality was entirely detached with his very election. Unless they can stop him and restore their version of America, the United States faces a nightmarish hellscape of death panels and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) concentration camps.

Since being elected back into a controlling majority in the House of Representatives in 2010, the party now loosely controlled by Speaker John Boehner has set out not to pass bills aimed at kickstarting job growth and the lagging economy, the most important issue of our time. They have, instead, classified pizza as a vegetable, attempted to defund Planned Parenthood and NPR, tried to redefine forceful rape, voted that global warming simply doesn't exist and affirmed that "In God We Trust" is the nation's motto. They also nearly plunged the world into another catastrophic economic maelstrom by refusing to raise the debt ceiling until the last possible moment, a partisan charade that accomplished nothing except for the first downgrading of the nation's credit rating. The downward drift of the party was described by Sen. Arlen Specter (D-Pennsylvania) in his farewell address as, "a form of sophisticated cannibalism."

And that same rhetorical degradation was on brilliant and perfect display when Rep. Louis Gohmert (R-Texas) warned the world, on the House floor no less, of the eminent threat of "terror babies" - children brought into the country and raised as sleeper agents for al-Qaeda, ready to sabotage and attack the United States from within. Rep. Joe Walsh (R-Illinois) wondered aloud on the floor how many alligators it would take to secure the border. Minnesota Congresswoman and Republican presidential candidate Michele Bachmann attempted to repeal lightbulb-efficiency regulation. Rep. Peter King (R-New York) held hearings on the national security risks posed by religious extremists, but focused exclusively on Muslims, at the same time ignoring the violent acts committed by his own party and the simultaneous prosecution of the Hutaree militia.

Not to Be Outdone by Their National Counterparts...

Though the depth of the House Republicans' buffoonery seems to have no end, it has been surpassed by the almost mass hysteria displayed by their counterparts in the states. Florida's Pinellas County commissioners voted in October 2011 to ban fluoride from the public drinking water, calling it "a social sort of program." Later that year, Florida Republican Rep. Ritch Workman filed a bill to repeal the state's ban of "dwarf-tossing" in what he said was an effort to create jobs. In 2011, Florida tea party activists also fought restrictions aimed at protecting the local manatee population, claiming it was a UN plot. These efforts were dwarfed by Florida's Gov. Rick Scott, with his own fraudulent past, who pushed to require welfare recipients to pay for their own drug tests. He also felt moved to ban bestiality and baggy jeans.

Arizona and Ohio both passed bans on the cloning of animal-human hybrids. In Ohio, a fetus was scheduled to "testify" in support of a heartbeat bill that would have banned abortion as early as 18 days from conception. In the spring of 2011, birther bills sprang up in a half dozen states requiring presidential candidates to submit their long-form birth certificates in order to get on the ballot, but only Arizona was reported to have possibly required a "circumcision certificate." South Dakota moved to legalize the killing of abortion providers by expanding the definition of "justifiable homicide" to prevent the perceived harm to the unborn.

In the Iowa legislature, a bill was proposed that would allow residents to carry weapons in public without permission from a sheriff and without training or background checks. The bill was labeled by the state's Republican pro tem as "the crazy, give-a-handgun-to-a-schizophrenic bill." Utah named their official state gun - the Browning model M1911 automatic pistol - months after the shooting of former Arizona Democratic Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. In Louisiana, Sheriff Larry Deen of Bossier Parish began equipping and training civilians with machine guns, shotguns and hand-to-hand combat in a militia-esque program called "Operation Exodus" aimed at protecting the local citizenry in the event of a terrorist attack. Sheriff Deen said he had been considering the plan since the September 11 attacks - he just didn't put it into effect until the election of Barack Obama. Also in Louisiana, governor and onetime exorcist Bobby Jindal signed into a law a bill allowing citizens to carry guns into churches. New Hampshire Republicans overturned a ban that prohibited guns from being brought into the State House. They later allowed House members to bring guns into the actual House chambers.

The Maine Republican Party platform was taken over and warped by local tea party activists into creating an amazing and publicly deranged document that opposed the Fairness Doctrine, the "Read the Bill" Act - as if legislators were not reading their own bills - and sought to investigate and eliminate Acorn-like groups. The document put into writing other gems, such as, "reject any effort to give foreign citizens the right to vote in the US in any situation or capacity," and "repeal and prohibit any participation in efforts to create a one world government."

The state where the Republican tea party has been most able to live out its conservative utopia has been Kansas. Since his election in 2010, Gov. Sam Brownback, a once and future Republican presidential candidate, has pushed such strict anti-abortion measures that the state has all but stopped the practice. He cut funding to social services, in the process doubling the state's percentage of residents in poverty and leading to the state's new nickname, "Brownbackistan."

But Oklahoma has been far and away the state that best exemplifies the fracturing nature of the Republican Party's grip on reality. Oklahoma banned the (imagined) imminent threat of Sharia law through a referendum. The motion won by 70 percent. The law was later struck down in federal court. The Oklahoma legislature attempted to pass a birther bill, leading one aide to a Democratic floor leader to conclude, "This is Oklahoma. We embarrass ourselves all the time." Earlier this year, Oklahoma state legislators attempted to ban the sale of any food which contained aborted human fetuses. The bill was introduced as a protest of stem cell research.

Then, not to be outdone, Virginia lawmakers attempted to pass a law requiring any woman pursuing an abortion to receive the aggressively invasive, and medically unnecessary, transvaginal probe. Also, Wyoming almost passed a "Doomsday Bill" that would have designated an office of planning for continuity of government operations - just in case the world came to an end. The bill was defeated, but not before the state inquired about obtaining an aircraft carrier.

These were not the rantings of the occasional insane candidate standing for public office while carrying around a baseball bat. It's not as though they were proclaiming that urban bike paths are UN plots, or dressing as Nazis on weekends, or even warning of mice with fully functioning human brains; these were the deliberate acts by people in power who saw their moves as quite normal and rational.

Election Fever Turns Up the Dial on Delusion

It's hard to pick a nominee for your political party when you're planning for the end of the world, just as it's especially hard to make coherent long-term decisions when you're slipping into madness and think the president may be the Antichrist. This mental death spiral has been no more evident than in the 2012 Republican presidential nominating contest. This explains why Donald Trump jumped ahead of Romney in the polls in the spring of 2011. Trump's farcical, profoundly ignorant and not-so-subtly racist quest for President Obama's character assassination via birth certificate ended like many of his business ventures: in abject failure and embarrassment. Yet - not unlike the Republican Party - he was too deep into his delusion and ego to admit it. At the height of the political circus that Trump had caused by publicly shrieking to anyone who would listen about Obama's alleged lack of a birth certificate, Trump achieved something that is rarely done. He built a platform, as fragile as it was, that was strong enough to topple Romney and show that the GOP base was seeking something more visceral and nasty in a candidate. It also forced the president to send his personal lawyer to Hawaii to request the release of his long-form birth certificate to settle the matter. Trump's numbers collapsed, and he was ridiculed in person by the president at the White House Correspondents Association Dinner. The next day, the president oversaw a mission that resulted in Osama bin Laden being fatally shot in the face and buried at sea, so ending the speculation that he was a secret Muslim sleeper agent "terror baby" possibly sent to destroy America.

But something had been unearthed and awakened in the Republican electorate that has not since gone away. Like a virus, it has moved from candidate to candidate, never settling on Romney. He was not a strong enough host. His approval ratings with the base remained stagnant in the mid-20s. The base support instead moved to Bachmann. Like an electrical charge burning its way through a fuse, it stayed with Bachmann until Rick Perry entered the race, leaving her candidacy permanently crippled and never to recover. She dropped out after placing sixth in the Iowa caucuses.

Rick Perry was perhaps the perfect host for the insanity virus in that he had been a long-serving conservative Southern governor who advocated secession shortly after Obama's election. He harnessed the base and breezed past Romney in the polls. Everything was going fine until he started to mangle the English language at debates, culminating in an epic brain freeze when he could not name three government programs that he would cut.

The base's support then jumped again, perhaps romanced by the hilarious and captivating oratory of one Herman Cain, a former pizza mogul with no experience in elected office. Cain was crushed under the weight of media scrutiny regarding his marital infidelities and his inability to properly defend his vague and contradictory '9-9-9' plan. He dropped out in December quoting, *Pokémon: The Movie 2000*.

The next jump landed at the feet of bombastic narcissist and former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich. As Gingrich started to enjoy the new wave of support, Romney's Super PAC, Restore Our Future, carpet-bombed Iowa with negative ads. This has been Romney's signature move: overwhelm and devastate his opponents with negative ads aimed not at bolstering his support, but at making the other candidate seem so unelectable that he is the obvious choice. Gingrich finished in Iowa a humiliating fourth. Romney achieved his goal of splitting the wingnut vote and almost winning Iowa, but, in so doing, he also cleared the road for the greatest threat to his campaign, the culture warrior Santorum. Romney lost to Santorum in Iowa by 20 votes.

With favor now focused on Santorum, Gingrich was left nearly electorally lifeless in Iowa, but this also triggered in him the same anger and fighting spirit that he had not shown since the 90s, and he has since transformed himself into a moonbase-advocating, hubris-fueled kamikaze pilot aimed directly at Romney. Romney won New Hampshire easily, but Gingrich pulled out a win in South Carolina, due, in large part, to his ruthless and combative debate performances and blatant race-baiting. Romney stopped his downward spiral by once again fire-bombing Gingrich's hate machine in Florida. Santorum kept it up and won a clean sweep in Colorado, Missouri and Minnesota, further

cementing his challenge to Romney and his dominance over Gingrich - setting the stage for Michigan and the Super Tuesday contests.

Can Romney Romance an Unloving Base?

Michigan now gives us a blueprint for the rest of the 2012 election. Romney will win by the numbers, but he will not win the people's hearts. It will be a split decision where he will win not with the affection of the people, but thanks to the two (or more) negative ads he runs for every one ad run on his opponent. Before his win, Romney was forced to deploy Donald Trump and Kid Rock to campaign on his behalf. During his Michigan victory speech, Romney proclaimed, "We didn't win by a lot, but we won by enough, and that's what counts." His subsequent victories on Super Tuesday, while giving him the delegate lead he needs to reach the nomination, underscored his rocky relationship with the base. Shortly thereafter, Gingrich faded back into political irrelevance. Ron Paul never developed the needed traction to win a single contest. Only Santorum continued on his zombie-like death march even after Romney was the clear nominee. After weeks of debate on the subject of birth control, of all things, a Planned Parenthood was firebombed in Wisconsin a day before that state's primary contest. Romney then won Wisconsin and Maryland. Finally with Romney's "Death Star" hovering over Pennsylvania, with an avalanche of negative ads ready to rain down upon him, thereby ensuring a humiliating, career-ending defeat in his home state, Rick Santorum bowed out of the race, handing the nomination over to Romney. On the same day, in Tennessee, home of the famous Scopes Monkey Trial, a bill was passed into law protecting teachers who allowed Creationism to be included in discussions on evolution.

Since the beginning, Romney has been viewed by his own side as the political equivalent of the pop star Lana Del Rey - a child of privilege with little talent but oodles of opportunity bought and paid for by a more accomplished father. Romney now finds himself peddling a bitter pill in an insane asylum to people he used to know. But those people, or Romney, may be so far gone that they can't recognize each other anymore.

He said he didn't support Ohio Gov. John Kasich's union-busting bill, then reversed himself to curry favor in the state. He said he didn't support Senators Roy Blunt (R-Missouri) and Marco Rubio's (R-Florida) radical contraception ban, then hours later said "of course" he supported it. He started his campaign claiming that he thought climate change was caused by humans; several months later, he said he had doubts. He's not only wrong on the issues here, he's wrong on the politics, as SB2 was crushingly defeated in Ohio, the Blunt bill died in the Senate (not before alienating female voters) - and he campaigned through what will be recorded as one of the warmest winters on record.

Romney and the base have been locked in an awkward and dangerous dance on the edge of a cliff. He has twisted himself into rhetorical knots, done and said everything he needs to do and say in order to try to get the right-wing affection to turn his way - and every time, he has been coldly rebuffed. This is all before he will have to change again, leading up to the general election, to woo back the moderates who have left him droves. He has sacrificed his integrity and electability in order to romance a people who do not love him back, trudging toward the general election, always looking over his shoulder to see if they're following or perhaps looking back at him as they walk away. He pushes himself forward with a forced smile and the weary eyes of a salesman who knows he's not quite able to close the deal.

But he has the money, ego and entitlement machine with the power to clench the nomination, if not the base's heart. Their hatred for Obama may be enough to get them to vote for Romney, but it won't be enough to sustain him, and they will eventually end up hating each other. He can never convince the crazies he's one of them, because deep down (or not so deep down), he's not. He is not a psychopath, though many corporate CEOs with his background are.

He's an empty void. Romney comes off as a freak who knows he's a freak but is desperately and unconvincingly trying to hide it. His problem is, it's voters with some of the strangest beliefs whose support he now needs to in order to feed the power-suction machine that doubles as his heart. His act as a conservative is artificial - as were his many acts of liberalism.

Based on his many strange outbursts when he was challenged on the trail, it can be inferred that Romney is a man used to unchallenged power. He is a church leader and corporate establishment chieftain accountable only to his

heavenly father and the memory of an earthly one who was almost president. He's a 1 percent Predator Drone and a corporate establishment zombie and a social cripple. If he understands people, he just doesn't see any value in them. Their views, values, agendas and positions hold no allure or interest to him, only insofar as they serve the mechanical humming inside of him that humans call ambition. If he is able to unseat President Obama, his problems with the base will continue to hobble his presidency and political legacy. If the Supreme Court merely strikes down the individual mandate and doesn't gut all of the Affordable Care Act, Romney would have to repeal President Obama's greatest domestic accomplishment, a law modeled on his own greatest accomplishment as Massachusetts governor. Like his smearing of Gingrich, his greatest political victory in the Republican base's eyes would just so happen to destroy a lot of people's lives and prospects. His only vindication with the people holding down the camp of delusion would lie in handing the people of this country back over to the savage whims of the health insurance companies.

But it still wouldn't be enough. He could privatize Social Security and drastically cut Medicare into virtual nonexistence, but it wouldn't satisfy their hunger. And he would still have to raise the debt ceiling. All of his right-wing pandering would eventually lead to a progressive backlash that the tacit support of the base would be too weak to overcome, leading to a one-term, failed Romney presidency.

Romney's failure to rouse the love and devotion of the GOP base is, has been and will be his eventual undoing: a tragic political love story where the salesman's quest for the insane's approval came at the expense of his very political objective and what remained of his soul.

20120414-33	20:34	Beth	Re: "Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse" (reply to Dennis)
-----------------------------	-------	------	---

Great! Thanks!

20120415-01	10:19	Clark	Re: "Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse" (reply to Dennis)
-----------------------------	-------	-------	---

This is a devastating indictment, should be read by all.

20120415-07	12:34	Art	Re: "Mitt Romney: The Salesman Trapped in the GOP Madhouse" (reply to Dennis)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Great read!!

20120415-02	10:37	Clark	"Mitt Romney: Mothers Should Be Required to Work Outside Home or Lose Benefits"
-----------------------------	-------	-------	---

Do not miss, either, this video clip of Romney saying in January of this year that stay at home mothers -- with kids as young as two -- should be forced to work outside the home in order to qualify for public assistance, just as Massachusetts made them do when he was governor. That it was worth the extra money for the state to provide daycare so that these mothers "could know the dignity of work" (I may be paraphrasing slightly). In other words -- contrary to what he told the NRA on Friday that "stay at home moms are working moms" and contrary to the great rightwing noise machine of the past few days -- Mitt actually believes (or at least bragged about in January) that stay at home moms aren't working at all. Or at least *poor* stay at home moms aren't working. His wife Ann, with all her household help and extra houses and Cadillacs and no worries about money, certainly was a working mom (and I'm not saying she wasn't, by the way).

Let's not forget that the entire premise of welfare reform in 1996 was to get people on welfare onto the "working" roles. Of the 14 ways they could qualify for this, not one was being a stay at home Mom (or Dad). One way to qualify for "work" was to take care of other people's kids -- but not your own. I haven't heard too many of the

crying-in-their-beers defenders of Ann Romney denouncing welfare reform. (And yes, Clinton signed it, so this is not a strictly partisan issue.)

If this clip from Romney doesn't anger you, doesn't convince you the guy is a total phony and hypocrite, a panderer and devoid of any true conviction, then it's hopeless. -- Clark

"Mitt Romney: Mothers Should Be Required to Work Outside Home or Lose Benefits" by Ryan Grim, Huffington Post

Apr. 15, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/15/mitt-romney-mothers-welfare-moms_n_1426113.html)

(WASHINGTON) Poor women who stay at home to raise their children should be given federal assistance for child care so that they can enter the job market and "have the dignity of work," Mitt Romney said in January, undercutting the sense of extreme umbrage he showed when Democratic strategist Hilary Rosen quipped last week that Ann Romney had not "worked a day in her life."

The remark, made to a Manchester, N.H., audience, was unearthed by MSNBC's "Up w/Chris Hayes," and aired during the 8 a.m. hour of his show Sunday.

Ann Romney and her husband's campaign fired back hard at Rosen following her remark. "I made a choice to stay home and raise five boys. Believe me, it was hard work," Romney said on Twitter.

On Sunday, Romney spokeswoman Amanda Henneberg told The Huffington Post in an email, "Moving welfare recipients into work was one of the basic principles of the bipartisan welfare reform legislation that President Clinton signed into law. The sad fact is that under President Obama the poverty rate among women rose to 14.5 percent in 2011, the highest rate in 17 years. The Obama administration's economic policies have been devastating to women and families."

Mitt Romney, however, judging by his January remark, views stay-at-home moms who are supported by federal assistance much differently than those backed by hundreds of millions in private equity income. Poor women, he said, shouldn't be given a choice, but instead should be required to work outside the home to receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits. "[E]ven if you have a child 2 years of age, you need to go to work," Romney said of moms on TANF.

Recalling his effort as governor to increase the amount of time women on welfare in Massachusetts were required to work, Romney noted that some had considered his proposal "heartless," but he argued that the women would be better off having "the dignity of work" -- a suggestion Ann Romney would likely take issue with.

"I wanted to increase the work requirement," said Romney. "I said, for instance, that even if you have a child 2 years of age, you need to go to work. And people said, 'Well that's heartless.' And I said, 'No, no, I'm willing to spend more giving day care to allow those parents to go back to work. It'll cost the state more providing that daycare, but I want the individuals to have the dignity of work.'"

Regardless of its level of dignity, for Ann Romney, her work raising her children would not have fulfilled her work requirement had she been on TANF benefits. As HuffPost reported Thursday:

As far as Uncle Sam is concerned, if you're poor, deciding to stay at home and rear your children is not an option. Thanks to welfare reform, recipients of federal benefits must prove to a caseworker that they have performed, over the course of a week, a certain number of hours of "work activity." That number changes from state to state, and each state has discretion as to how narrowly work is defined, but federal law lists 12 broad categories that are covered.

Raising children is not among them.

According to a 2006 Congressional Research Service report, the dozen activities that fulfill the work requirement are:

1. Unsubsidized employment.
2. Subsidized private sector employment.
3. Subsidized public sector employment.
4. Work experience.
5. On-the-job training.
6. Job search and job readiness assistance.
7. Community services programs.
8. Vocational educational training.
9. Job skills training directly related to employment.
10. Education directly related to employment (for those without a high school degree or equivalent).
11. Satisfactory attendance at a secondary school.
12. Provision of child care to a participant of a community service program.

The only child-care related activity on the list is the last one, which would allow someone to care for someone else's child if that person were off volunteering. But it does not apply to married couples in some states. Connecticut, for instance, specifically prevents counting as "work" an instance in which one parent watches a child while the other parent volunteers.

The federal government does at least implicitly acknowledge the value of child care, though not for married couples. According to a 2012 Urban Institute study, a single mother is required to work 30 hours a week, but the requirement drops to 20 hours if she has a child under 6. A married woman, such as Romney, would not be entitled to such a reduction in the requirement. If a married couple receives federally funded child care, the work requirement increases by 20 hours, from 35 hours to 55 hours between the two of them, another implicit acknowledgment of the value of stay-at-home work.

Romney's January view echoes a remark he made in 1994 during his failed Senate campaign. "This is a different world than it was in the 1960s when I was growing up, when you used to have Mom at home and Dad at work," Romney said, as shown in a video posted by BuzzFeed's Andrew Kaczynski. "Now Mom and Dad both have to work whether they want to or not, and usually one of them has two jobs."

(This article has been updated to reflect comment from the Romney campaign.)

20120415-04	11:50	Pam	Re: Mitt Romney, Republican Primaries, President Obama, 2012 Election (reply to Clark)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I was mightily entertained by the Republican primaries. They were infuriating, but in an amusing, amazing sort of way. Now that it's down to Romney and Obama, things have gotten very serious, and I am no longer amused. Obama must hit home again and again all he's accomplished to counter Romney's charges that his tenure as Pres. has been a "failure." I imagine there will be at least one debate, perhaps more, between Obama and Romney. I hope Obama comes armed with a barrage of Romney quotes that expose his inconsistencies. I know Obama is a strict father (I've seen hints here and there), but a loving one who defers to his wife when it comes to the kids. I'm only guessing, but I imagine Romney is a domestic tyrant who expects to bounce quarters off his kids' beds. Just guessing, but that's my impression. And the wife says, "Yes, Dear," to every immortal utterance. Again, just a guess. I bet we could take the measure of each man by the way he parents. (I hate using "parent" as a verb, but it's in the zeitgeist.)

20120415-10	13:08	Art	Re: Mitt Romney, Republican Primaries, President Obama, 2012 Election (reply to Pam)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Well, I could certainly support the "Yes Dear" part.

20120415-09	13:01	Art	Re: Mitt Romney, Republican Primaries, President Obama, 2012 Election (reply to Clark)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Goodness! Flip-flop. flip-flop, flip-flop. Does this guy stand for anything?

We do tend to get lost in trivia during elections, and accusations fly as to who is the meanest but I thought this quote from a Tweet by the Catholic League, whoever they are, on the issue was about as low as you can get:

"Lesbian Dem Hilary Rosen tells Ann Romney she never worked a day in her life. Unlike Rosen, who had to adopt kids, Ann raised 5 of her own."

So now Catholics are saying people who adopt are second class parents???

20120413-03	11:05	SteveB	Hypertext Index in Today's Newsletter(#116)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Hello Everyone,

Sorry to bother you again today, but I thought you might be interested in a little experiment I'm trying.

Today's FotM Newsletter was rather small and I had a little extra time, so I added a hypertext INDEX to today's online Newsletter (#116).

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2012-newsletters/20120413-0116.pdf>

It works much like the index in the FotM Archive.

Jump to the index by clicking on the date and my name (which is the top link in the index). Then you can jump back and forth between the index and headers because all the headers are now active hyperlinks.

I'll try to do this from now on, now that I have a system concocted. Even the copy you receive in your email will be indexed. Later, I'll try to get the back issues and compilations updated.

If you read the PDF file with Acrobat Reader, links can seem to work a little weird. They only jump you to the page with the header (link), not to the precise spot you intend to go to. You can already be on a page, try to jump to a header, and seem to go nowhere. This is because the header (destination link) is on the same page, but not on your screen. Browsers seem to handle these links better.

Any questions? Have a great weekend, y'all!

20120413-06	12:56	Art	Re: Hypertext Index in Today's Newsletter(#116)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Neat!!

20120413-04	11:51	J. Biden	They Don't Really Care
-----------------------------	-------	----------	------------------------

Dear SteveB:

This is what's happening now that Mitt Romney has essentially wrapped up the nomination:

- Even the holdouts are starting to line up behind him.
- And the special interests are lining up their cash.

The only thing that matters to them is trashing and ultimately beating Barack. They don't really care how much money they have to spend to do it.

We're different. More than 1.8 million people have chipped in to own a piece of our campaign. If you've been waiting around, it's time to join them.

Can you donate \$3 or more today?

<https://donate.barackobama.com/Starts-With-You>

Thanks, Joe

20120413-05	11:51	B. Obama	Now We Know
-----------------------------	-------	----------	-------------

Dear SteveB:

We now know who our opponent is.

But what we're really fighting against is what our opponent has pledged to do if elected.

He would shower billionaires with more huge tax breaks, oppose setting a timeline to bring our troops home from Afghanistan, starve investments in clean energy research, and make it harder for students to afford to go to college. He'd outlaw a woman's right to choose and completely cut funding for Planned Parenthood.

We can't afford an endless war in Afghanistan, a return to policies that hurt the middle class, and a social agenda from the 1950s.

The stakes and the differences are profound. The outcome of this election will determine the course of this country for decades to come.

I need you by my side.

Make a donation of \$3 or more today:

<https://donate.barackobama.com/Ready>

Thank you, Barack

20120413-08	13:21	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Request for Donation
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---------------------------------

from MoveOn:

The whole ballgame. The whole kit and kaboodle. **Game over for progressives.**

That's what December 31 could be. On that date, 1.1 trillion dollars in tax breaks for the rich will expire and force a major re-jiggering of our tax code.¹

Unless we all mobilize, the wealthiest 1% will get yet another round of tax breaks, which will basically bankrupt our country and likely lead to HUGE cuts to schools, Social Security, health care, clean energy, or environmental protection.

But if we fight hard enough, the expiring tax breaks can be our leverage to finally win fair taxes on the very rich—enough to fund better schools, Head Start, clean water, and everything else we care about.

This end-of-the-year fight is one we have to win. But right now progressives are barely even talking about it.

We need to get on the ball, and make fair taxes an issue every day between now and November. We need to make sure the election is a referendum on taxing the 1%—and that it goes our direction.

Now is the time to launch this campaign. The Senate will vote Monday on the "Buffet Rule" to make millionaires and billionaires pay fair taxes, Tuesday is Tax Day, and Mitt Romney, who wants even lower taxes for himself and other millionaires, just clinched the Republican nomination.²

MoveOn's creative team is putting together a very funny, memorable ad campaign highlighting the insanity of a tax system that makes secretaries pay higher taxes than their billionaire bosses. **And if we raise \$200,000 today, we can get it on air by Tax Day. Can you help?**

Yes, I can contribute \$5 to make sure millionaires pay their fair share:

https://pol.moveon.org/donate/tax_fairly.html?bg_id=hpc5&id=39271-20195165-jDkV_gx&t=2.

If progressives play our cards right, we have a real chance to make sure not just that the Bush tax cuts for the rich expire, but that we close all the other loopholes that allow giant corporations and millionaires like Mitt to pay lower taxes than the rest of us. That's because all the expiring tax cuts, plus automatic defense cuts required by the debt ceiling deal, give us a lot of leverage. So it's a huge opportunity.

But it's also a moment of enormous peril. Republicans are pushing to extend all the tax breaks for the rich and even add new ones, using their normal hostage tactics.³ They did the same thing two years ago, and even with Democrats in charge of Congress, they won.

And on top of that, the debt ceiling deal triggers massive new cuts to vital programs, right at that same time. If those automatic new cuts kick in, and the rich get new tax breaks, good-bye American Dream. Every program the middle class and the poor depend on, from student loans to Medicare, will see the axe. **There. Will. Be. No. Money. Left.**

That's why we need a major campaign to expose how the system is tilted to benefit the 1%, and to get the 99% fired up and fighting back.

This is the moment to launch this fight! The media and the public will be focused on taxes over the next week. If we can raise \$200,000 to launch this campaign, we'll make it MoveOn's top priority, and starting raising a ruckus for fair taxes. **Can you help?**

If we're going to get the 1% to pay their fair share again, we have to expose the system they've created to benefit themselves. **It starts now.**

Thanks for all you do. –Justin, Milan, Wes, Elena, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"Decision Time: The Fiscal Effects of Extending the 2001 and 2003 Tax Cuts," Pew Charitable Trusts, June 24, 2010:

http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274321&id=&id=39271-20195165-jDkV_gx&t=5.

²"Buffett Rule Set To Fail In Senate Vote Despite Obama's Campaign," Policymic, April 11, 2012:

http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274318&id=39271-20195165-jDkV_gx&t=6.

"Wealthy would cash in under Romney tax plan," CNN Money, March 1, 2012:

http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274314&id=39271-20195165-jDkV_gx&t=7.

³"Buffett Rule Set To Fail In Senate Vote Despite Obama's Campaign," Policymic, April 11, 2012:

http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274318&id=39271-20195165-jDkV_gx&t=8.

"GOP weighs tax vote push," Politico, March 29, 2012:

http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274322&id=39271-20195165-jDkV_gx&t=9.

"Statement of Robert Greenstein, President, on Chairman Ryan's Budget Plan," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 21, 2012:

<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3712>.

Want to support our work? We're entirely funded by our 7 million members—no corporate contributions, no big checks from CEOs. And our tiny staff ensures that small contributions go a long way.

20120413-10	17:18	SteveB	"The UN Embraces the Economics of Happiness"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

"The UN Embraces the Economics of Happiness" by Laura Musikanski, NationofChange

Apr. 13, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/un-embraces-economics-happiness-1334331113>)

Imagine you open the paper tomorrow, and the headlines are not about the "sluggish economy," but our nation's quality of life. You turn to the business section, and find not just information about a certain company's profitability, but also about its impact on community health and employee well-being.

Imagine, in short, a world where the metric that guides our decisions is not money, but happiness.

That is the future that 650 political, academic, and civic leaders from around the world came together to promote on April 2, 2012. Encouraged by the government of Bhutan, the United Nations held a High Level Meeting for Wellbeing and Happiness: Defining a New Economic Paradigm. The meeting marks the launch of a global movement to shift our focus away from measuring and promoting economic growth as a goal in its own right, and toward the goal of measuring—and increasing—human happiness and quality of life.

Not just for dreamers

Some may say these 650 world leaders are dreamers, but they are the sort that can make dreams come true. The meeting began with an address by Prime Minister Jigmi Thinley of Bhutan, where the government tracks the nation's "Gross National Happiness":

The time has come for global action to build a new world economic system that is no longer based on the illusion that limitless growth is possible on our precious and finite planet or that endless material gain promotes well-being. Instead, it will be a system that promotes harmony and respect for nature and for each other; that respects our ancient wisdom traditions and protects our most vulnerable people as our own family, and that gives us time to live and enjoy our lives and to appreciate rather than destroy our world. It will be an economic system, in short, that is fully sustainable and that is rooted in true, abiding well-being and happiness.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon cited Aristotle and Buddha in calling for the replacement of our current economic system with one based on happiness, well-being, and compassion. "Social, economic, and environmental well-being are indivisible" he said.

President Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica followed with a keynote speech that provided an explanation of why her country is one of the worlds most eco-friendly and happy nations, despite its relative poverty. Decades ago, Costa Rica eliminated its army, prioritizing spending on a strong education program, support for social security, and the protection of national parks that spur tourism.

From Finland to France, Israel to India, speakers of parliament, ministers of the environment, and other high-level officials followed with brief speeches about the need for a new economic paradigm to replace the current economy.

The afternoon featured Vandana Shiva, Martin Seligman, John Helliwell, Lord Richard Layard, Jeffrey Sachs and other luminaries.

Helliwell, Layard and Sachs introduced the World Happiness Report, a study they prepared for the conference. The report found that money and economic growth have a relatively weak correlation to happiness; happiness is much more strongly associated with things like community engagement, having lots of friends, doing work you love, and feeling a sense of trust in others. Altruism, too, is essential; a world that makes equity, care, and compassion more possible will be a happier world. As the authors write:

The realities of poverty, anxiety, environmental degradation, and unhappiness in the midst of great plenty should not be regarded as mere curiosities. They require our urgent attention, and especially so at this juncture in human history. ...if we act wisely, we can protect the Earth while raising quality of life broadly around the world. We can do this by adopting lifestyles and technologies that improve happiness (or life satisfaction) while reducing human damage to the environment.

Over the next two days, more than 200 people stayed to participate in working groups to discuss turning global happiness metrics into a reality. They presented their recommendations on the third day. These included plans for an inclusive movement, forging communication material for all audiences, collaborative development of the metrics for happiness, the formation of a UN happiness commission, and the inclusion of happiness and well-being as a UN Millennium Development Goal.

The meeting ended with a presentation by Susan Andrews, who is developing a metric for measuring well-being in Brazil. Brazilian youth, she explained, had been trained to conduct happiness surveys and taught to practice altruism and compassion. Neighbors had at first rejected the youth, but later embraced their efforts to measure the happiness of their community. The project culminated in the creation of community-based activities that are changing neighborhoods for the better.

Noticeably absent from the meeting were high-level officials from the United States. But that does not mean that nothing is happening here.

The Department of Housing and Human Services has convened a panel of experts in psychology and economics to figure out ways to reliably measure subjective well-being—a move toward government tracking and analysis of happiness statistics.

But some cities are beating HHS to the punch, using a survey developed by The Happiness Initiative, a U.S.-based nonprofit, which offers a subjective metric for happiness that can be used at a personal or community level.

In Nevada City, California, the city council is using the happiness index to gather data about people's needs and preferences for a land development decision. In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the city government is working with a local chamber of commerce, state university, boys and girls club, library, and other organizations to gather data and convene town meetings where residents can discuss ways to promote quality of life.

In Seattle, Wash., more than 2,500 people have taken the survey, providing data for a city report card—including many members of the city's Oromo, Somali, Filipino, and Vietnamese communities, thanks to local immigrant organizations working to measure the well-being of their people. The results, they hope, will help the city think more strategically about promoting social justice; the community organizations are also using them to identify and ameliorate problems within immigrant populations. Vietnamese youth, for example, scored low on sense of community and trust in government, so the Vietnamese Friendship Association (VFA) helped them host a "Spring Off," bringing people together to make spring rolls—but also to reduce isolation and create a feeling of empowerment.

"The project was wonderful in the context of working with our youth council," says James Hong, Director of Youth and Community Engagement for VFA. It gave them the opportunity to get them involved at every level, which is rare. They were able to conduct the survey, reflect upon the results, decide on a project and then coordinate it all themselves. We want to continue using this model for youth council. There was so much learning and it was all very valuable."

Nationally, more than 40,000 people have taken the happiness survey and received their own personal assessments of well-being. One woman, a New Yorker, said, "I thought my life was going pretty well. After all, I make a lot of money. But after taking the survey, I saw my low scores in community and culture, and this led me to think about what really matters to me."

The global happiness movement may seem like a dream today, but it is a dream that is becoming reality.

(Laura Musikanski wrote this article for *YES! Magazine*, a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions. Laura is co-founder and director of the Happiness Initiative and the former director of Sustainable Seattle. She is a lawyer with an MBA and certificates in Environmental Management and Environmental Law and Regulations from the University of Washington.)

20120414-01	07:36	MarthaH	Re: "Allen West: I've 'Heard' 80 House Democrats Are Communist Party Members" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #115)
-----------------------------	-------	---------	--

Here's quite a dude, pandering for \$\$\$\$ and God only knows what else. Could he define Marxism or would he know it if it smacked him in the head. Throwing around words of "fear" need NOT to be in a fundraiser...YIKES:

Allen West has been thrust into the spotlight after a number of notable Republicans listed him as a possible running-mate for Mitt Romney in the general election. Of those who have called for West to be considered is Sarah Palin, Senator Lindsay Graham (R-SC), and Herman Cain. (from "Congressman Says 80 Fellow Lawmakers Are Communists")

HOW WONDERFUL....NOT. IT's another one who needs to read Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. There is a chapter or two on each one of us in the whole picture. Denial is pandering to those haven't a clue on the BIG picture.

20120414-04	08:31	Pam	Re: "Allen West: I've 'Heard' 80 House Democrats Are Communist Party Members" (reply to MarthaH, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I'm reading Zinn's *History* as we speak. It's great. I know it shows a degree of bias--all history does--but facts are facts, and his are pretty damning.

20120414-02	07:39	MarthaH	What We Want? ("Republicans: Drill More, Regulate Less")
-----------------------------	-------	---------	--

"Republicans: Drill More, Regulate Less" by Richard Wolf, *USA Today*

Apr. 14, 2012, (<http://www.freep.com/usatoday/article/671752>)

Republicans are pressing President Obama and Senate Democrats to drill more for domestic energy while freezing regulations on refineries.

The two-prong approach will be put before the GOP-controlled House Energy and Commerce Committee in the next few days as Republicans continue to criticize Obama for blocking new energy production -- particularly the Keystone pipeline.

"In many ways, this administration's policies are moving us backwards, and making gas prices even worse," committee chairman Fred Upton said today in the GOP's weekly address.

Here's Rep. Upton's full address:

Hey, I'm Fred Upton. I proudly represent Southwest Michigan in the U.S. House of Representatives, where I serve as chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Our committee oversees national energy policy, a topic on the minds of millions of Americans grappling with high gasoline prices.

Vice President Biden recently said that 'our energy policy's the best it's ever been.' But the facts say otherwise. Last year we produced 100 million barrels less on federal lands than we did the year before. The president rejected the Keystone XL pipeline, which would have decreased our dependence on oil from unstable regions of the world. And heavy-handed federal agencies are adding new layers of regulations on the energy sector, pushing prices only higher.

In many ways this administration's policies are moving us backwards, and making gas prices even worse.

For families and small businesses here in Michigan and around the country, higher energy prices have real consequences. Everything from their daily commute to the grocery bill is getting more expensive. And higher energy prices mean fewer jobs.

In a few days, our committee will consider two bills that are part of our American Energy Initiative, a bipartisan alternative to this administration's failed energy policy.

In the House, Republicans have already passed a number of common-sense bills to address rising energy prices and create the jobs that we need. So far, these bills are being blocked by the Democratic-controlled Senate, but we're not going to stop until they start listening to the American people.

I recently toured a Michigan oil refinery where I heard firsthand how layers of red tape are making it harder and more expensive to refine and sell fuel here in America.

The first of our committee's measures pushes the pause button on costly new regs affecting refineries until we study them all to determine how much they're driving up the price at the pump.

Cutting through the red tape is part of the equation, but we have to address supply. President Obama tapped into our emergency oil supply – known as the Strategic Petroleum Reserve – last year, and he's thinking about doing it again. But that is not a real solution to rising gas prices. If we deplete our reserves, it indeed is a real threat to our energy security.

The second bill we'll soon consider says that if the president releases oil from our emergency reserves, he must open up more federal land for energy development.

Energy could be a great American success story. We are a land of abundant resources and unparalleled human creativity. Technological breakthroughs are helping us unlock vast energy resources that were previously inaccessible – and we're doing it in an environmentally safe way.

Today we're knocking at the door of a brighter energy future; one that promises abundant, secure, and cheaper North American supplies, as long as Washington doesn't create artificial obstacles. That is what Republicans are working toward, and we invite the president to join us. If he won't lead, we will.

Affordable energy is essential to job creation and economic recovery. We need it to fuel our vehicles, power our homes, and rev up our economic engine. The American Energy Initiative captures that spirit of optimism. It's a better solution to power our future.

Thanks for listening, and have a great weekend.

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Native American Wisdom

1. Rise with the sun to pray. Pray alone. Pray often. The Great Spirit will listen, if you only speak.
2. Be tolerant of those who are lost on their path. Ignorance, conceit, anger, jealousy – and greed stem from a lost soul. Pray that they will find guidance.
3. Search for yourself, by yourself. Do not allow others to make your path for you. It is your road, and yours alone. Others may walk it with you, but no one can walk it for you.
4. Treat the guests in your home with much consideration. Serve them the best food, give them the best bed and treat them with respect and honor.
5. Do not take what is not yours whether from a person, a community, the wilderness or from a culture. It was not earned nor given. It is not yours.
6. Respect all things that are placed upon this earth – whether it be people or plant.
7. Honor other people's thoughts, wishes and words. Never interrupt another or mock or rudely mimic them. Allow each person the right to personal expression.
8. Never speak of others in a bad way. The negative energy that you put out into the universe will multiply when it returns to you.
9. All persons make mistakes. And all mistakes can be forgiven.
10. Bad thoughts cause illness of the mind, body and spirit. Practice optimism.
11. Nature is not FOR us, it is a PART of us. They are part of your worldly family.
12. Children are the seeds of our future. Plant love in their hearts and water them with wisdom and life's lessons. When they are grown, give them space to grow.
13. Avoid hurting the hearts of others. The poison of your pain will return to you.
14. Be truthful at all times. Honesty is the test of ones will within this universe.
15. Keep yourself balanced. Your Mental self, Spiritual self, Emotional self, and Physical self – all need to be strong, pure and healthy. Work out the body to strengthen the mind. Grow rich in spirit to cure emotional ails.
16. Make conscious decisions as to who you will be and how you will react. Be responsible for your own actions.
17. Respect the privacy and personal space of others. Do not touch the personal property of others – especially sacred and religious objects. This is forbidden.
18. Be true to yourself first. You cannot nurture and help others if you cannot nurture and help yourself first.
19. Respect others religious beliefs. Do not force your belief on others.
20. Share your good fortune with others. Participate in charity.

20120414-12 10:40 SteveB Fw: Attend the "Tax the 1% Tax Day protest in Sarasota"

from MoveOn:

You've heard it by now: Warren Buffett's secretary pays a HIGHER tax rate than he does.¹

It's not right—Buffett says so himself.²

Tax Day is on Tuesday, and progressives have a unique chance to amplify a simple message—"Tax the 1%"—through hundreds of coordinated protests across the nation. Taxing billionaires and companies like GE and Wells Fargo their fair share has to be a big issue in the fall election if we're going to see change—and this is the day of the year when the media is most likely to cover the story of our unfair tax system.

So MoveOn and dozens of allies have organized more than 200 bold, highly visible "Tax the 1%" protests to express our outrage that the super-rich and tax-dodging corporations are paying less in taxes than the rest of us. There's a Tax Day protest on Tuesday in Sarasota at 12:00 PM.

Can you attend?

Yes, count me in! http://moveon.org/event/events/event.html?event_id=129184&id=39335-20195165-ZhYhcJx&t=2

No, I can't make it. http://civic.moveon.org/mobile/event_no.html?id=39335-20195165-ZhYhcJx&t=3

Last year on Tax Day, progressives took to the streets to say that it's more than time for the 1% to pay their fair share. Protestors delivered giant-sized "tax bills" to tax-dodging corporations and got major media coverage: more than 200 TV stations, newspapers, and online media sources let millions of Americans know how unfair our tax system is. We can have an even bigger impact this year because the elections can shine a spotlight on issues like this.

Taxing the 1% is the quickest way to rebuild our economy so that it works for ALL of us. Sign up to stand up for the 99% this Tax Day. Let's show the 1% that the 99% won't accept this raw deal. Click here to RSVP for a Tax the 1% protest in Sarasota.

Thanks for all you do, --Garlin, Elena, Stephen, Robin, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"Buffett Pays Lower Tax Than His Secretary..It's Unfair" *Business Standard*, April 11, 2012
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274407&id=39335-20195165-ZhYhcJx&t=5>.

²"Stop Coddling the Super-Rich" *The New York Times*, August 14, 2011
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=263130&id=39335-20195165-ZhYhcJx&t=6>.

20120414-13 10:54 Pam Birth Surrogacy

I just listened to a piece on NPR about surrogacy--women carrying and giving birth to babies they're not genetically related to. The law, as per usual, is scrambling to catch up with the incredible changes in parenthood. It's harder than it used to be to determine who the "real" parent is. Having just said in an earlier post that experience counts for a very great deal, I put myself out there as experienced in parental matters. I have no experience with surrogacy, and that's my point.

I won't go over my thoughts on adoption again, but for what it's worth, here's what I think about surrogacy. When a woman gives birth, her body does amazing things. Hormones are released that affect everything from weight to

emotion and mood. Even a surrogate is going to experience those changes, so I would expect any woman who has just given birth to be flooded with oxytocin, the hormone that releases instant feelings of love and attachment. She may go ahead and hand the baby over to the expectant parents, but I believe she should have a chance to change her mind, and some accommodation should be made. There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to families; therefore, people should be free to form their families in a way that best suits them. It's not for me to say what others should do. I know how it feels to give up a baby, to have babies, to adopt a baby, which gives me, I believe, some credence on this subject. That is why I feel so strongly that individuals should be free to make their own decisions.

My ambivalence about surrogacy (I could never do it) is not a reason to prevent others from pursuing it. This relates to gay marriage as well. I wouldn't want to marry a woman, but I do enjoy my marriage to my husband. Who am I to tell anyone else what they may or may not do in their most intimate relationship? Marriage is a civil contract, as well as a religious sacrament for believers. Either one will work. Let religions decide what they will or won't accept, but allow everyone who wants to to marry. We don't force people to marry; we shouldn't prevent them either.

20120414-15	13:07	SteveB	"The Latest SEC/Goldman Sachs Sweetheart Deal is the Worst One Yet"
-------------	-------	--------	---

"The Latest SEC/Goldman Sachs Sweetheart Deal is the Worst One Yet" by Richard (RJ) Eskow, NationofChange

Apr. 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/latest-secgoldman-sachs-sweetheart-deal-worst-one-yet-1334413159>)

("The SEC has the power to shut Goldman Sachs down for what it did, and the offenses it describes are felonies. But they just gave out another slap on the wrist - no, make that a pat on the wrist - with today's announcement.")

The sweetheart deals just keep coming. Lawbreakers at one bank after another are let off the hook as their shareholders write a check. And then they go out and repeat the illegal behavior they promised not to do in the last settlement.

It shouldn't be surprising that this keeps happening over at the SEC - especially as long as Robert Khuzami continues to serve as Director of the Commission's Division of Enforcement.

But while each of these deals has been shameful, destructive, and outrageous, the \$22 million agreement with Goldman Sachs which the SEC announced today - another one in which the guilty party "neither confirms nor denies wrongdoing" - looks like the worst one yet.

The SEC has the power to shut Goldman Sachs down for what it did, and the offenses it describes are felonies. But they just gave out another slap on the wrist - no, make that a pat on the wrist - with today's announcement.

The Worst Thing

It's not just the fact that the SEC continues to ignore the public's outrage by letting bankers off scott-free. And it's not just that this kind of irresponsible behavior ensures that the law breaking will continue. Its not just that crooked bank executives are allowed to "neither admit nor deny wrongdoing."

It's not even the fact that this time around the SEC has worded its announcement in a clumsy attempt to obscure the criminal behavior of Goldman's employees - although that's one of this agreement's worst features.

No, what makes this deal the worst we've seen in a long while is the timing. Most of the other recent sweetheart deals dealt with crimes that led up to - and created - the 2008 financial crisis. But this time Goldman Sachs is walking away from crimes its bankers committed as recently as *last year*.

That's been the SEC's pattern under both the last President and the current one. The number of repeat offenses compiled by the *New York Times* for these SEC deals is mind-blowing.

No wonder the SEC didn't appear before reporters to announce this latest settlement, choosing instead to announce in an email. Cowardly - but then, would you want to show your face in public after signing a deal like this?

The Crime

What crimes did Goldman Sachs employees commit this time around? They pressured their top analysts to share confidential information in meetings called "huddles," exchanging "high conviction" rating changes the analysts planned to make but hadn't announced yet. These changes were then shared with what the SEC called "a select group of Goldman's top clients" under a program called the "Asymmetric Service Initiative," or "ASI."

Goldman Sachs had "means, motive, and opportunity":

Means. From the SEC: "Between January 2007 and August 2009, there were hundreds of instances when a ratings change occurred within five business days after the stock was discussed at a huddle, referenced in a huddle script ..."

They leaned on their guys to get it done. The SEC's report says that "Analysts' contributions to huddles and ASI, such as increased commissions generated from ASI clients, were discussed in analysts' written performance reviews and in other documents used in connection with analyst evaluations."

Anybody who's worked on Wall Street knows what that means: Come up with information and get results with it - or else.

Motive. From the SEC again: "The huddle and ASI program was part of a concerted effort ... to improve or maintain the broker votes of Goldman's highest priority clients, including ASI clients, and accordingly, generate greater trading commissions."

Opportunity. How useful could it be to know in advance what Goldman Sachs analysts think? Consider this headline from Bloomberg News: "Staples Falls after Goldman Sachs downgrades stock." Then read the first sentence of the article: "Staples Inc., the world's largest office-supply retailer, fell the most in more than two months after Goldman Sachs Group Inc. downgraded the shares to 'sell' from 'neutral.'"

Then look up some similar articles about stock prices for Whole Foods. Or Patriot Coal. Or Intel. Or Meritage Homes. Or Colruyt.

Patriot Coal stocks fell by six percent the day after Goldman's announcement, and Staples fell by nearly as much that morning. An "asymmetrical" client could execute a quick \$1,000,000 trade and walk away with sixty grand before lunchtime. That kind of information is very lucrative ...

The Punishment

... and very illegal. It's a violation of Section 15(b) of the Securities and Exchange Act and is punishable as a felony. It's so illegal, in fact, that Goldman Sachs could be closed down entirely, either temporarily or permanently, "in the public interest."

That sounds right. But everybody on Wall Street knows that's not going to happen.

And as long as there's no real downside - no prosecutions, no big fines coming out of a banker's personal pockets - there's no reason to stop.

The Perp

But then, that's Goldman's way of doing business - sleazy, preferential, and highly illegal. These charges resemble "spinning," the practice of letting preferred clients buy into an IPO at inside-the-deal prices so they could immediately sell them off - usually at a big profit.

(It was that corrupt practice that eventually ended Meg Whitman's membership on Goldman's board and led to a lawsuit from shareholders of eBay. That's the company whose CEO chair made Whitman a desirable client at the time. The suit was settled for \$3 million.)

The Cover-Up

In the SEC's words, the "huddle" and "ASi" processes "created a serious and substantial risk that analysts would share material, nonpublic information...Goldman did not establish, maintain, and enforce adequate policies and procedures to prevent such misuse."

But those are weasel words. If you read the SEC brief in detail, it's clear that Goldman didn't just "create a serious and substantial risk" that insider information would be illegally shared. The SEC's records make it pretty clear that information was illegally shared.

And they tried to cover it up. Ideas from the huddles were tracked on spreadsheets called "Records of Ideas," but they were later withheld from Goldman's own surveillance analysts. The SEC report then notes that "Even when alerts regarding trading ahead of research changes were triggered by Goldman's surveillance system, all but one were closed with no further action after only a limited review."

And even when the surveillance system showed evidence of insider trading, despite the cover-ups - activity like a big buy or sell right before a major announcement - Goldman did nothing to follow up. Senior Goldman officials knew what was going on and did nothing, as you can tell from sentences in the SEC's report like this one: "During 2007, members of Goldman's Compliance Division drafted a proposed insert concerning huddles for the ... Global Policies and Procedures Manual, but no such policy was ever implemented."

The "Enforcer"

And yet the strongest words we heard from Director of Investigations Khuzami was that "Higher-risk trading and business strategies require higher-order controls."

He added (in writing, of course; he didn't face reporters) that "despite being on notice from the SEC about the importance of such controls, Goldman failed to implement policies and procedures that adequately controlled the risk that research analysts could preview upcoming ratings changes with select traders and clients."

In other words, they promised not to commit this crime anymore so we let them off with a warning. Now they've done it again - and we're letting them off with a warning.

But don't worry. "Respondent (Goldman) has agreed that "it shall cease and desist from committing or causing any violations and any future violations of Section 15(g) of the Exchange Act."

Well, alrighty then!

Asymmetrical Warfare

You know who got screwed in this deal? Pension funds and other groups of "ordinary" investors who have placed their assets with Goldman Sachs, but weren't considered part of that "select group of top clients" that were given access to this "asymmetrical" information - even though in many cases they were investing far more through Goldman than most individual clients.

That was probably prudent on Goldman's part, since institutional investors might have blown the whistle on their illegal activity.

The net effect of Goldman's "asymmetrical" illegality is to further enrich the already-wealthy while playing the rest of us for suckers. Our money - whether it's our pension, our IRA, or any other institutional funds the most fortunate among us are clinging to - loses value in this game, while others profit from insider trading.

The Evidence

Fortunately there are some promising leads. Those "Record of Ideas" spreadsheets look like a goldmine. It shouldn't be difficult for diligent criminal investigators to tie these spreadsheets to subsequent Goldman-managed trades. And those internal surveillance reports - the ones that were ignored by Goldman's senior management - could be extremely useful in identifying potentially criminal acts by individual Goldman Sachs employees.

A thorough review of the email traffic among Goldman's executives, starting at the very top, should tell investigators who in senior management might also be a candidate for prosecution. While they're doing that they can contrast the public and private communications conducted by Goldman's CEO and CFO while they were affirming under Sarbanes-Oxley that they've personally reviewed the company's procedures for identifying and preventing fraud.

But we haven't heard word one from the Justice Department about any pending criminal investigation. But then they're not answering our media inquiries down there nowadays, so citizens will have to ask them - or the White House - themselves: Where are the indictments?

20120414-22	15:34	Jim	Fw: Political Flow Chart
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--------------------------

The picture did not come through to me but sender describes it as a triangular bird perch with one bird on the top rung, two on the one below then three, four, five. Etc and more bird poop on each rung as you go down.

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

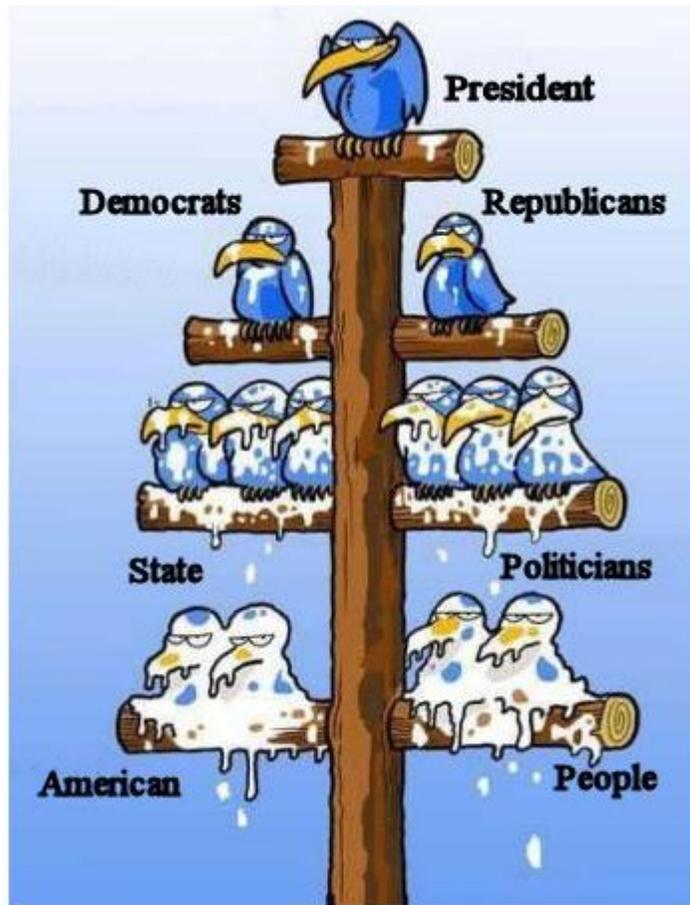
Politics FLOW chart...

Right or left, it doesn't matter. It is really only up or down in politics.

When top level people look down, they see only sh*t-heads.

When the bottom level people look up, they see only a*s-holes.

You will never see another Flow Chart that describes politics so clearly.



<http://www.sodahead.com/united-states/does-this-political-flow-chart-look-right-to-you/question-2001831/>

[Yep! –SteveB]

20120414-24 16:09 Dennis "100 Things You Can Say to Irritate a Republican"



"100 Things You Can Say to Irritate a Republican, by Stephen D. Foster Jr., Addicting Info

Apr. 14, 2012, (<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/04/14/100-things-you-can-say-to-irritate-a-republican/>)

Conservatives are so easy to anger these days. Even the most insignificant statement can set off their tempers. If you want to enrage a conservative, I suggest saying the following:

1. A Socialist wrote the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Jesus healed the sick and helped the poor, for free.
3. Joseph McCarthy was an un-American, witch hunting sissy.
4. Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee were traitors.
5. The South lost the Civil War, get over it.
6. The Founding Fathers were liberals.
7. Fascism is a right-wing trait.
8. Sarah Palin is an idiot.
9. The Earth is round.
10. Reagan raised taxes eleven times as President.
11. Reagan legalized abortion as Governor of California.
12. Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency.
13. Ronald Reagan supported gun control.
14. Global warming is real.
15. Republicans hate illegal immigrants, unless they need their lawns mowed or their houses cleaned.
16. The military is a government-run institution, so why do Republicans approve the defense budget?
17. The Cold War is over and the Soviet Union no longer exists.
18. Paying taxes is patriotic.
19. Republicans: Peddling the same failed economic policies since 1880.
20. The Republican Party began as a liberal party.
21. The Presidents' full name is Barack Hussein Obama and he was born in the United States of America.
22. George W. Bush held hands with the King of Saudi Arabia.
23. President Obama saved the American auto industry, while Republicans wanted to destroy it.
24. Hate is not a Christian virtue.
25. Jesus was a liberal.
26. Republicans spend MORE money than Democrats.
27. Tea parties are for little girls.
28. Public schools educate all children; private schools are for indoctrinating children.
29. The Constitution is the law, NOT the Bible.
30. Sharia law doesn't exist in America.
31. The President is NOT a Muslim.
32. Corporations are NOT people. People are people.
33. Fox News isn't real news, it's just a racist, sexist, hateful, right-wing propaganda machine.
34. The Federal Reserve was a Republican idea.
35. Women are equal citizens who deserve equal rights.
36. Women control their own bodies.
37. Abortion is a relevant medical procedure, just ask Rick Santorum.
38. Please use spell-check.
39. It's "pundit", not "pundint".
40. Social Security is solvent through 2038.
41. Health care is a right, not a product.
42. Roe v. Wade was a bipartisan ruling made by a conservative leaning Supreme Court.
43. G.O.P also stands for Gross Old Perverts.
44. The donkey shouldn't be the Democratic mascot because Republicans are the real jackasses.
45. Barack Obama ordered the killing of Osama Bin Laden. It took him two and half years to do what Bush couldn't do in eight.
46. Waterboarding IS torture.
47. 9/11 happened on George W. Bush's watch, therefore he did NOT keep America safe.
48. Republicans invaded Iraq for oil, so Iraq should be allowed to invade Texas to get it back.
49. Separation of church and state is in the Constitution, it's called the First Amendment.
50. Muslims are protected by the Constitution, just as much as Christians.
51. Barack Obama is the first African-American President, get over it.
52. The Oval Office is NOT a "whites only" office.
53. America is a nation of immigrants, therefore we are all anchor babies.
54. The white race isn't disappearing, it's evolving.
55. God is a particle.
56. Evolution is real.

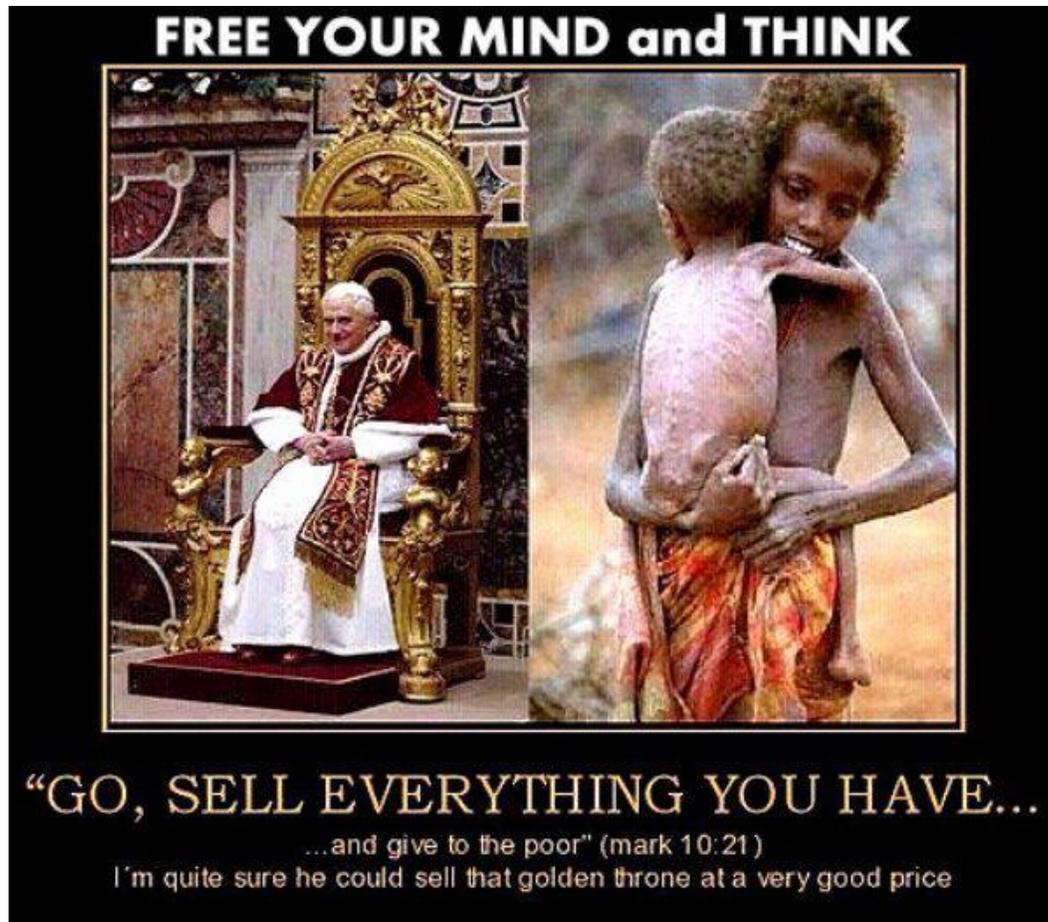
57. The Earth is 4.54 billion years old, not 6,000.
58. The Founding Fathers did not free the slaves.
59. The Revolution was NOT fought over slavery.
60. Paul Revere warned the Americans, NOT the British.
61. Federal law trumps state law.
62. The Civil War was about slavery, NOT state's rights.
63. Corporations care more about profits than they do about people.
64. Getting out of a recession requires government spending.
65. Glenn Beck is a nut-job.
66. Republicans: Paranoid since 1932.
67. Republicans don't want to pay for your birth control, but they want you to pay for their Viagra.
68. Republicans actually NEED Viagra.
69. Fox News is owned by an Australian and has a Saudi prince as an investor.
70. Republicans complain about immigrants taking American jobs, then freely give American jobs to foreigners overseas.
71. Republicans hate communism, so why do they refer to themselves as red states?
72. Labor unions built this country.
73. Republicans hold America hostage as a political strategy; the temper tantrum throwing kind of political strategy.
74. Jesus was a Jew, not a Christian.
75. When Republicans see black, they attack.
76. Inside every Republican is a Klansman or a Nazi waiting to bloom.
77. Republicans only care about children BEFORE they are born.
78. Republicans are hypocrites, they're just too stupid to know it.
79. The Christian-Right boycotts movies that have violence, and then promotes guns and insurrection.
80. I think therefore I am NOT a Republican.
81. Republicans that oppose gay marriage are most likely in the closet themselves.
82. Churches should stay out of politics, or be taxed.
83. People are too poor to vote Republican.
84. Democrats think for themselves, Republicans form think tanks to do it for them.
85. Republicans hate education because they couldn't hack it in school.
86. Greed is one of the seven deadly sins and Republicans wallow in it.
87. A little socialism on the Left is better than a little fascism on the Right.
88. The current corporate tax rate is the lowest in 60 years, so stop whining about it being too high.
89. Republicans: Anti-Gay Marriage, Pro-Lesbian sex.
90. Republicans: Terrorizing the American people since 1981.
91. Republicans have their own terrorists, just look up Timothy McVeigh.
92. Republicans love outsourcing, just ask the Chinese Communists.
93. The Republican answer to the oil spill was to apologize to BP, a foreign oil company.
94. Democrats will be working hard to bring jobs to Americans, while the Republicans tea bag each other in the middle of the aisles.
95. Voter disenfranchisement is immoral and un-American, that's why Republicans do it.
96. Republicans would let your house burn down unless you pay them to put it out.
97. Democrats want to take care of the sick. Republicans take their credit cards and then deny them medical attention.
98. Republicans say teachers are union thugs, then proceed to rape and mug the entire middle class on behalf of corporations.
99. Republicans think rape isn't a crime, but miscarriages are.
100. Republicans are idiots and arguing with them is a waste of time!

Bottom line? If you want to anger a conservative, tell them the truth.

I love these. It seems like, in these pages, we have found many more and probably will continue to, but some of them are not this funny.

Yet somehow the Right seems insensitive even to paradox.

[20120414-34](#) 20:42 SteveG Interesting Thoughts [More to come. -SteveB]



[20120414-35](#) 20:48 Beth Re: Interesting Thoughts (reply to SteveG)

Lots to think about!

[20120415-03](#) 11:37 Pam Re: Interesting Thoughts (reply to SteveG)

These are terrific quotes.

[20120415-05](#) 12:06 Dale "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe"

"Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" by John Hechinger, Bloomberg

Mar. 26, 2012, (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-26/obama-relies-on-debt-collectors-profiting-from-student-loan-woe.html>)

The debt collector on the other end of the phone gave Oswaldo Campos an ultimatum:

Pay \$219 a month toward his more than \$20,000 in defaulted student loans, or Pioneer Credit Recovery, a contractor with the U.S. Education Department, would confiscate his pay. Campos, disabled from liver disease, makes about \$20,000 a year.

A debt collector for the U.S. Education Department insisted that Oswaldo Campos pay \$219 a month on his more than \$20,000 in student loans -- even though he was entitled to pay less under federal student-loan rules.

Campos holds a letter from the U.S. Department of Education confirming that he is considered disabled. He contracted liver disease from a blood transfusion.

"We're not playing here," Campos recalled the collector telling him in December. "You're dealing with the federal government. You have no other options."

Campos agreed to have the money deducted each month from his bank account, even though federal student-loan rules would let him pay less and become eligible for a plan -- approved by Congress and touted by President Barack Obama -- requiring him to lay out about \$50 a month. To satisfy Pioneer, Campos borrowed from friends, cut meat from his diet and stopped buying gas to drive his 82-year-old mother to doctor's visits for her Parkinson's Disease.

With \$67 billion of student loans in default, the Education Department is turning to an army of private debt-collection companies to put the squeeze on borrowers. Working on commissions that totaled about \$1 billion last year, these government contractors face growing complaints that they are violating federal laws by insisting on stiff payments, even when borrowers' incomes make them eligible for leniency.

'Boiler Room'

Education Department contracts -- featuring commissions of as much as 20 percent of recoveries -- encourage collectors to insist on high payments. Former debt collectors said they worked in a "boiler-room" environment, where they could earn bonuses of thousands of dollars a month, restaurant gift cards and even trips to foreign resorts if they collected enough from borrowers.

In failing health, after contracting hepatitis from a blood transfusion, Campos pleaded with Pioneer, owned by SLM Corp. (SLM), the nation's largest student-loan company better known as Sallie Mae. He left a \$40,000-a-year job at the Massachusetts health department when he got too sick to work and waited for a liver transplant. The 52-year-old former busboy, a naturalized U.S. citizen from El Salvador, earned bachelor's and master's degrees in the 1990s from Cambridge College in Massachusetts.

"I know I owe this money and I want to pay it back -- I just can't," Campos said, his eyes filled with tears, during an interview at the Boston social-services agency where he works six hours a week leading court-ordered classes for drunk drivers.

181,000 Complaints

Debt collectors are the subject of more complaints to the Federal Trade Commission than any other industry -- almost 181,000 last year. Within the past 17 months, three companies working for the Education Department -- including one that is majority owned by JPMorgan Chase & Co. (JPM)'s private-equity arm -- settled federal or state allegations of abusive debt collections. The companies didn't acknowledge wrongdoing, and Chase declined to comment. The Education Department said the government investigations didn't involve the companies' work for the agency.

The U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, created in 2010 in the wake of the credit crisis, has proposed supervising the largest debt collectors to ensure they are complying with laws such as the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act. About 5 million federal education-loan borrowers are in default, generally meaning they have failed to make payments for 270 days or more.

"With student-loan defaults rising, we want to make sure borrowers clearly understand their loan-repayment options and debt collectors are following the law," Rohit Chopra, the agency's student-loan ombudsman, said in an e-mail.

'Reasonable and Affordable'

Federal-aid law requires collectors to offer "reasonable and affordable" payments, so debtors can "rehabilitate" their loans, repairing their credit and making good on what they owe taxpayers.

The law mandates no minimum payment for a borrower to enter a rehabilitation program, and collection companies may take borrowers' finances into account. The fair debt act forbids collectors from making "any false, deceptive or misleading representation."

Insisting that cash-strapped borrowers make minimum payments and then failing to disclose lower-cost options violates both federal-aid and fair debt-collection laws, according to Deanne Loonin, an attorney with the Boston-based National Consumer Law Center.

Debt collectors said they follow federal laws and use all available tools to recover money for taxpayers. The companies are helping to make sure that future college students have access to financial aid, said Mark Schiffman, spokesman for ACA International, a Minneapolis-based industry trade association.

\$1 Billion Commissions

Debt-collection companies helped the Education Department recover \$11.3 billion in defaulted loans during the year ended Sept. 30. The agency projects it will collect 85 cents on every dollar that defaults, factoring in collection costs and the time-value of money.

The debt collectors made out well, too. Based on a review of government contracts and Education Department data, the private companies -- working directly for the government and through state agencies -- received commissions of about \$1 billion in the year through September.

Sallie Mae and the Education Department declined to answer questions about Campos's comments. The company cited privacy rules and the terms of its government contracts. Newark, Delaware-based Sallie Mae said it works with borrowers in financial difficulty and offers lower payments when appropriate.

"We have helped thousands of student-loan customers in default get back on track to fulfill their obligations, giving consumers the opportunity to improve their credit and providing cost savings for the American taxpayer," Patricia Nash Christel, a Sallie Mae spokeswoman, said in an e-mail.

New Rules?

The Education Department this week will hold meetings with industry, government and consumer representatives to consider requiring that debt collectors automatically offer payments based on income to defaulted borrowers who qualify. If approved, the rules could take effect in July 2013.

"We want to make sure we are striking the right balance between helping borrowers who have hit hard times and honoring our responsibility to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars," Justin Hamilton, an Education Department spokesman, said in a phone interview.

To protect customers, the department randomly monitors tape recordings of student-loan debt-collection calls, Hamilton said. The department is also considering changing the commission structure in its debt-collection contracts, he said.

The agency encourages students to file reports if they feel mistreated, Hamilton said. In the year ended in September, the department received 1,406 complaints against the debt collectors it hires, up 41 percent from the year before.

Collectors' Power

Under U.S. law, student loans can rarely be discharged, even in bankruptcy, making them more difficult to shake than credit cards or past-due mortgages. The government can also confiscate tax refunds and Social Security payments, as well as paychecks.

"Student-loan debt collectors have power that would make a mobster envious," Harvard Law Professor Elizabeth Warren, who helped establish the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and is now running for a U.S. Senate seat from Massachusetts, said in 2005.

Under Education Department contracts, collection companies "rehabilitate" a defaulted loan by getting a borrower to make nine payments in 10 months. If they succeed, they reap a jackpot: a commission equal to as much as 16 percent of the entire loan amount, or \$3,200 on a \$20,000 loan.

Incentive Pressure

These companies receive that fee only if borrowers make a minimum payment of 0.75 percent to 1.25 percent of the loan each month, depending on its size. For example, a \$20,000 loan would require payments of about \$200 a month. If the payment falls below that figure, the collector receives an administrative fee of \$150.

That differential provides an incentive for collectors to insist on the minimum payment and fail to reveal when borrowers are eligible for a more affordable schedule, according to Loonin, the attorney at the National Consumer Law Center, which is representing borrowers in the Washington talks with the Education Department.

Customers benefit from successfully rehabilitating a loan, because they repair their credit, and the government removes thousands of dollars in fees and collection costs, the Education Department and Sallie Mae said. Taxpayers, rather than borrowers, pay the rehabilitation commission, according to the agency. Students who immediately sign up for income-based plans, through a program called consolidation, don't get those benefits, Sallie Mae and the Education Department said.

Automatic Dialers

Debt collectors are under pressure to extract as much money as they can up front, or lose their jobs, said J.C. Cournan, who worked for Pioneer Credit Recovery from 2004 through 2007.

Collectors, then paid about minimum wage, could earn thousands of dollars a month in bonuses, based on the money that borrowers repaid, said Cournan, who took the upstate New York job out of high school. Pioneer set monthly goals for wage garnishments and loan rehabilitations, he said.

Using automatic dialers to track down borrowers, Cournan would figure out where they worked, then contact their employers. He would tell borrowers that he was going to seize part of their wages if they didn't make the payments. Using a company loan calculator, Cournan would insist on the minimum payment, he said.

"When you're making 8 bucks an hour, it's all about the bonuses. You're starving," said Cournan, 26, now an auto mechanic.

Gift Cards, TVs

Pioneer maintained a "boiler room" environment, with high turnover among those who didn't perform, said Joshua Kehoe, a former collector. Kehoe worked in Batavia, New York, from July 2006 through October 2008 after managing a pizza stand at a theme park.

Pioneer rewarded collectors with \$100 restaurant gift cards, a \$500 mahogany jewelry box, televisions and a trip to the Dominican Republic, according to Kehoe, who said he earned \$9.60 an hour before the incentives.

It would be "a cold day in Hades" before collectors would tell borrowers about options with lower payments, according to Kehoe, who said "rehab cash was king." The company pushed collectors to sign borrowers up for the rehabilitation plans, which often required payments equal to 1.25 percent of their loan amount monthly, he said.

Heavy Heart

"It was hard on my mind -- it was hard on my heart," said Kehoe, 25, who now works as a welder in Akron, New York. "There was the guy with one leg or the single mom with five children."

Under pressure to meet collection goals, Kehoe falsified documents for verifying the employment of borrowers who were subject to wage garnishment, he said. Pioneer discovered the violation and dismissed him, Kehoe said.

Sallie Mae declined to discuss the former employees' comments. The company uses a mix of hourly pay "substantially above minimum wage" and performance-based incentives, said Sallie Mae's Christel.

Like other debt collectors, "we design a compensation system that pays for good performance," Christel said. "We take compliance seriously and design our policies and practices to meet all applicable fair debt collections laws and federal government service contract requirements."

The Internal Revenue Service in 2009 stopped using private debt collectors, saying its own employees were more cost effective and flexible for taxpayers facing economic hardship.

'IRS Was Better'

The IRS let Campos, the Boston student-loan debtor, set up a payment plan he could afford when he fell behind on his taxes, he said.

"The IRS was better," Campos said. "They bent over backwards to help you."

The Education Department will "definitely want to take a look" at IRS collections to see "what their experience has been," Hamilton, the Education Department spokesman, said.

Twenty-three collection companies work directly for the Education Department. Most of the same outfits have contracts with state guarantee agencies that also chase student-loan borrowers on the government's behalf.

In the past 17 months, three companies have run afoul of federal and state investigators, though the Education Department said their inquiries didn't involve their government student-loan business.

Wrong Numbers

During this period, Minneapolis-based Allied Interstate Inc. and Atlanta-based West Asset Management Inc. paid \$1.75 million and \$2.8 million, respectively, to settle lawsuits alleging abusive debt collection filed by the Federal Trade Commission. The companies admitted no wrongdoing. In February, to resolve an investigation by 19 state attorneys general, NCO Group, majority-owned by JPMorgan Chase, agreed to pay \$575,000 and provide up to \$50,000 per state for consumers who can show wrongful collections. The companies admitted no wrongdoing.

Allied has taken steps to correct mistakes -- primarily repeated phone calls to wrong numbers -- and complaints have fallen, Robert Burke, vice president for marketing of iQor Inc., the company's parent, said in an e-mail.

West disagreed with the FTC's findings, Deputy General Counsel Greg Hogenmiller said in an e-mail. Consumers haven't made claims to NCO since the attorneys general settlement, and no wrongdoing was found, Ronald Rittenmeyer, chief executive officer of Horsham, Pennsylvania-based NCO, said in an e-mail.

Defaults Surge

The collection business is booming as defaults more than doubled since 2003, along with outstanding federal student loans, which totaled \$848 billion as of Sept. 30, surpassing credit-card debt.

The U.S. loan program was born in 1965 as a "Great Society" initiative for lower-income students under President Lyndon Johnson. Today, with tuition soaring, two-thirds of college seniors graduate with loans, which average \$25,000, according to the Institute for College Access & Success, an Oakland, California, nonprofit education and advocacy group.

Obama -- supported by Congress -- has pledged to give borrowers a break and make college more affordable.

In 2009, Congress expanded a program that lets lower-income students tie payments to their incomes. It's a sliding scale, based on their debt, salaries and family obligations. Married borrowers with two children, \$30,000 in income and \$30,000 in student loans wouldn't have to make any payments, according to a government loan calculator. If circumstances don't improve, the loans can be canceled after 25 years.

In October, Obama proposed making payments even lower and forgiving loans after two decades for some borrowers, as soon as this year.

Disabled Mom

Kimberly Noland could have used that kind of help.

Noland, 44, lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas, with her husband, a laid-off factory worker now employed at a Wal-Mart store, and their seven-year-old daughter.

Noland injured her leg while working in a day-care center. She started collecting \$828 a month in Social Security disability payments in 2010.

Shortly after she qualified, Collection Technology Inc., an Education Department debt collector, called about Noland's roughly \$30,000 in defaulted student loans from attending the University of Arkansas.

A collector told her she had to pay \$325 a month, almost as much as her rent, Noland said in a phone interview. She couldn't afford it on her family's \$20,000 annual income, she said.

"I have a child," Noland remembered telling the collector. "I can't give you every bit of money in my house."

'Final Number'

"This is our final number," the collector replied, saying her boss wanted even more, according to Noland. The phone conversation lasted more than an hour, she said. She was given three days to decide, or Collection Technology would seize part of her disability check "forever," and she would never have another chance to rehabilitate her loan, Noland said.

She bought a prepaid debit card at Wal-Mart, authorizing Collection Technology to make the \$325 monthly withdrawals. She visited churches to collect free bread and canned goods.

"I didn't know why it had to be such a high dollar amount," Noland said. "They have the power, I guess. You do what you have to do to make them happy."

Chris Van Dellen, CEO of Collection Technology in Monterey Park, California, referred questions about Noland's comments to the Education Department, which declined to discuss her case.

In October, Noland and her husband filed for bankruptcy. Last year, she qualified for the Education Department's income-based plan. Her monthly student-loan payment: zero.

[And how is it that President Obama is personally responsible for the Student Loan Bubble? Why is he headlined and not the do-nothing Republican House? Oh, ya, it's Bloomberg! But still, lots of good information! –SteveB]

20120415-11	13:34	Art	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Dale)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Interesting article but think there are more sides to this story. I had a student loan when I went to college, Think it was called the National Defense Student Loan Program???? I think I had a year or two grace period after graduation and then I paid it back over the next 10 years. It wasn't fun but that was the deal. I was amazed to learn about the time I finally paid the loan off how many people had blown off the payback and as a result had virtually bankrupt the program. What was even more amazing is that most of these people were not like those illustrated in the article, they were army officers, policemen, government workers etc., just like me. In other words in my opinion, if I could pay it off, no fun that it was, so could they. They didn't just because they could get away with it. Personally, if I were the Government, I'd have fired them all.

Today according to the article, apparently the Government has contracted out the debt collection to private commercial concerns. We all know a commercial corporation has one mission and one mission only, to make money. So not too surprisingly, the private firms are doing what they do best, make money for themselves by collecting and who cares about the sad stories. The weakest and sick ones are the easiest to hunt down in any event, so they'll go after them first.

I don't know what the answer is but, as usual, it probably lies somewhere in the middle. I suspect for every one of these sad stories there are a bunch of people just like last time, who simply think they can get away without paying, even though they could. I have no sympathy for them. For special cases such as those mentioned there should be a government office of appeal that could remove the profit motive and look at the overall situation. Oddly enough my last job pretty much had me in one of those type positions and in the overall I think that worked pretty well. Just a thought.

20120415-12	14:00	Dennis	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Dale)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

I also borrowed from the National Defense Student Loan Program in the 60s and owed about \$3000 upon graduation. There was a one-year grace period and then 3% interest kicked in. I had the loan repaid within 5 years as I recall.

My stepson is now in a 4-year architecture program paying out-of-state tuition (2 as an undergrad and 2 as a grad student) at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana after 4 years at Eastern Michigan when he lived at home, worked part-time, and borrowed nothing. AT UICU he has had to borrow \$30,000 per year. The first year he had a government subsidized loan at 8% and private bank loan at 14. Since the 14% loan was a rip-off my wife and I loaned him the money to pay this off. But even with borrowing part of his annual cost for the final 3 years at 8% and the rest from us, he will end up owing over \$120,000 when he graduates (my son only owed \$80K when he completed his PharmD degree). He'll then have to hope to get a really high-paid job as an architect in the U.S., but more likely will take a lesser paid job in China where jobs are plentiful, especially for a bilingual speaker. I don't think this is atypical of the situation faced by many students in the U.S. now. I imagine there will be plenty of defaults on college loans in the future if drastic reforms are not made since job prospects for many graduates (except PharmDs) are not so good.

20120415-16	17:16	Pam	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Dale)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

A horrible, horrible problem. Right up there with the housing bubble.

"The Paradox of Taxing the Rich" e21 Staff Editorial

Apr. 2, 2012 (<http://economics21.org/commentary/paradox-taxing-rich>)

The share of income taxes paid by the top 1% of income earners has hovered at around 40% for the past several years. This is the highest share in the history of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax statistics and due largely to the progressivity of the tax system rather than income concentration. Since 2004, the pre-tax income share of the top 1% has been around 20%. This means that the share of income taxes paid by the top 1% is about twice as large as their share of income. Even when including all federal taxes, including payroll taxes that are paid back to contributors in the form of Social Security and Medicare benefits, the tax share of the top 1% is still about 50% greater than its income share.

Despite the fact that the top 1% is contributing a disproportionate share of tax revenues (however defined) relative to income, the Occupy Wall Street movement believes that increasing tax rates on the "rich" should be a top domestic policy priority. So, why the disconnect?

First, as e21 explained previously, it partly reflects a mistaken understanding about the "income share" of the top 1%. The share of income captured by the top 1% is somewhat meaningless because "the 1%" is a different collection of 1.2 million (or so) households each year. Treasury data makes clear that a household in the 1% today has less than a coin flip's chance of being in the top 1% ten years from now. The income growth of the top 1% is a statistical illusion because different households (summing to well over 1% of the population) share in those income gains.

Perhaps more significantly, the clamor for higher taxes on the "rich" reflects a paradox of tax policy: the lower the rate, the more income gets reported. The income statistics that analysts use to assess inequality depend critically on the way taxpayers choose to organize their businesses and the types of assets they hold in their portfolios. Income reported on tax returns can tell us very little about wealth or income disparities because it is partly a function of tax policy. When rates on a certain form of income are punitively high, the value of tax-planning services increases. Tax planning is the use of legal and accounting advice to structure businesses or investments in such a way as to minimize total tax liability. The effect of tax planning is to reduce the amount of income that gets reported in high tax brackets or income categories.

Income disparities today are attributable, in part, to lower tax rates, which have reduced the marginal benefit of tax planning. If Congress responds to the large increase in the incomes reported by the rich by increasing tax rates, tax planning services will increase in value, causing measured income inequality to decline because of the reduction in the amount of income that gets reported in higher tax brackets. For this reason, those who seek to dramatically increase taxes on the rich are setting themselves up for a Pyrrhic victory, as the rich respond to the tax increase by relying more on deductions and reducing the share of their income that's received in a taxable (and high rate) form. As Martin Feldstein's research uncovered, the 1993 Clinton tax increases reduced the amount of taxable income reported by high-income taxpayers by 7.8%. The reduction was tied to an increase in "deductible consumption," such as spending more on housing by taking out a larger mortgage or accepting more nontaxable fringe benefits like a more generous health insurance policy at work. The tax increase also caused more investments to be shifted into low-or-no-tax form, like municipal debt.

Average Income, Top 1%:

	<u>1979</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>Annualized Growth Rate</u>
Wages	\$224,710.49	\$644,718.74	3.8%
Business Income	\$64,714.18	\$328,416.97	6.0%
Dividends	\$47,583.96	\$99,178.36	2.7%
Interest Income	\$30,491.80	\$88,607.26	3.9%
Rents	\$13,171.24	\$26,813.48	2.6%
Capital Gains	\$56,605.88	\$229,119.83	5.1%
TOTAL	\$432,277.55	\$1,416,884.65	4.3%

(Source: Piketty, Thomas and Saez, Emmanuel (2007). "Income and Wage Inequality in the United States 1913-2002"; in Atkinson, A. B. and Piketty, T. (editors) *Top Incomes over the Twentieth Century. A Contrast Between Continental European and English-Speaking Countries*, Oxford University Press, chapter 5.)

To understand the distinction between forms of income and their impact on measured income disparity, consider the composition of the top 1%'s income in 1979 compared to 2007 (the peak of the most recent business cycle). In percentage terms, the category that witnessed the largest increase was business income, which grew at a compounded annual rate of 6%. Did the top 1% become more entrepreneurial during this period? Probably not. The growth was more likely a function of changes in tax policy that made "flow-through" business income more tax-advantaged.

When forming a business, entrepreneurs can choose to incorporate as a "C" corporation or form a partnership, limited liability corporation (LLC), or S-corporation. A "C" corporation pays taxes at the corporate income tax rate, while the income of the other business entities "flows through" to the owners where it is taxed at the individual rate, whether the income is actually distributed to owners or not (i.e. retained earnings are taxed at the individual level). In 1979, the top individual rate was 70%, while the top corporate tax rate was 46%. The differential in tax rates led business owners to prefer to organize their businesses as "C" corporations, in which case the net income earned by the business would not show up on the owners' individual tax returns. In 1980, C corporations accounted for more than 85% of total business receipts and nearly 80% of total business net income.

The elimination of the tax differential (both top rates are now 35%) made it far more attractive to organize as a flow-through business. Between 1979 and 2007, the share of business income reported by "flow-through" businesses like partnerships and LLCs more than doubled. By 2004, flow-through businesses accounted for over 50% of all business income and this share continued to grow. Nearly all of the increase has come in the top tax brackets, which Treasury estimates to account for over 70% of flow-through business income and more than 80% of the taxes on flow-through business income. In 2007, the Treasury Department estimated that 75% of the taxpayers in the top tax bracket reported business income and 84% of the tax benefits from a top rate of 35% instead of 39.6% that went to flow-through business owners.

Consider the impact of this tax change on income disparity: income inequality has risen because business income once reported at the corporate level is now being reported at the individual level. Consider a hypothetical business worth \$25 million with \$10 million in net income. In 1980, this \$10 million would have been more likely to be reported as the income of a C corporation, which would make the personal income of the owner seem lower than if that income flowed through directly to the owner's tax return, as occurs with LLCs and S corporations. But in both situations, the economic reality is the same: the taxpayer is the owner of a \$25 million business that generates \$10 million in net income.

Had the tax system continued to favor keeping retained earnings inside of C corporations, the reported income of the top 1% in 2007 would have been more than 10% lower, not because of any change in economic reality, but simply because less business income would have been reported at the individual level. (This assumes that reported business income would have grown at the same rate of wages. Although the capital gains on the C corporation stock might be realized and increase capital gains income, such transactions could be avoided by using the stock as collateral for secured loans to finance consumption expenditures.) By incentivizing business income to be reported

in "C" corporate form, a large tax increase on the top 1% would also increase the use of internal cash for business investment, which would increase the deferral of personal taxes from dividend and interest income. This means that income that could otherwise have been reallocated by owners for more productive investment gets trapped inside of the corporation because of tax impacts. The net result would be less reported income disparity, less tax revenue from the top 1%, but no material change in the underlying economic circumstance.

The same result could be observed from the reporting of capital gains income. Capital gains are only taxed when realized. The higher the tax rate, the more powerful the incentive to avoid realizations. A "Buffet rule" or similar device to increase the capital gains tax rate on the top 1% would lead to economically damaging "lock-in effect," where capital is not allocated to its most efficient use because of the tax disincentive to liquidate an existing investment. (A related issue is the elaborate tax-planning schemes where some investors use derivatives to replicate a sale without triggering tax liability.)

Capital gains loom so large in the taxable income of the top 1% that changes to the tax rates on this source of income can swing average income of the top 1% wildly from year-to-year. When the capital gains tax preference was eliminated in 1986 for tax years beginning in 1987, the average income of the top 1% increased by 35% in 1986 and declined by 24% in 1987 as the new tax went into effect. Similarly, when capital gains taxes were reduced to 15% in 2003, the average income of the top 1% increased by 18% the year after the new capital gains tax took effect. There was no change in the wealth of these taxpayers in these circumstances; the only difference is whether that wealth was liquidated and triggered a tax payment. Thus, increasing taxes could meaningfully reduce realizations, capital gains income, and reported income inequality, but lead to reduced revenues without doing anything to change the underlying economic reality.

Finally, consider the impact of the dividend tax reduction in 2003, which the Obama Administration proposed to undo in this year's budget. Bush's proposal earlier in the decade to eliminate the tax on dividends was actively opposed by municipalities because it meant the tax-exempt municipal debt market would face competition from stocks. Even when Congress only agreed to cut the rate down to 15%, there was a dramatic increase in the share of income (on average) of the top 1% reported as dividends from 4.2% in 2002 to more than 8.5% in 2007. This was not likely the result of these taxpayers actually receiving more net income, but simply the product of a shift in the portfolio from municipal debt to dividend-paying stocks. Increasing taxes on dividends now would almost surely cause portfolios to revert back to tax-exempt municipal bonds, which would reduce the average income of the top 1% by nearly 5%, but, again, do nothing to change economic reality.

Low rates on high income earners generate more reported income equality, which, paradoxically, serves as a rationale for higher rates. Proposals to increase tax rates on the income of the top 1% would inevitably lead to a sizeable reduction in income reported in those categories where the tax rate is raised. In response to a tax increase, reported income would be shifted to new categories, investment portfolios would shift to tax-favored assets, and consumption towards tax-deductible items like housing, health care, and renewable energy. This may reduce reported income inequality, but could actually lead to less revenue (depending on the tax rate), and would almost certainly do little to change substantive wealth disparities across households.

20120415-08	12:43	SteveB	"Hey Etch-A-Sketch-Conservatives, Time to Resurrect Some Honesty"
-------------	-------	--------	---

"Hey Etch-A-Sketch-Conservatives, Time to Resurrect Some Honesty" by Leo Gerard, NationofChange

Apr. 15, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/hey-etch-sketch-conservatives-time-resurrect-some-honesty-1334499451>)

(A perfect example of this political philosophy is the work of James E. O'Keefe III, a right wing, unsupervised, unaccountable, self-appointed and self-styled "investigative journalist" who has violated federal law, lied about his identity and deceitfully cut and pasted video to destroy what he perceives as liberal institutions.)

A spring awash with Etch A Sketch conservatives, camera-wielding GOP con men and a bogus deficit reduction budget from House Republicans shows that for the right, wrong is justified when it achieves the desired results.

A perfect example of this political philosophy is the work of James E. O’Keefe III, a right wing, unsupervised, unaccountable, self-appointed and self-styled “investigative journalist” who has violated federal law, lied about his identity and deceitfully cut and pasted video to destroy what he perceives as liberal institutions.

Oddly for the party that claims conservative Christians as key constituents, O’Keefe’s misbehavior is celebrated by GOP talking heads — the likes of Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity. That encourages copycats. The New York Times last week told the tale of one. John M. Howting, a bungling video scam man, sees himself as an O’Keefe apostle.

Honorable journalists abide by an ethics code forbidding lying to secure a story. For them, the end does not justify the means. By contrast, for O’Keefe and today’s Etch A Sketch conservatives, the end they want vindicates any scheme to secure it. Deliberate lying, cynical deceit, cut-and-paste deception – all of that is rationalized by conservatives to get their way. It’s a lovely escape clause they’ve written for themselves from that annoying Judeo-Christian thou-shalt-not-lie commandment.

O’Keefe wanna-be John M. Howting tried clumsily to trod in his disgraced mentor’s footsteps, lying about his name, who he represented and his intentions in a failed effort to discredit a couple of what he perceived to be liberal New York community groups.

O’Keefe had better luck. This right wing rebel without a conscience lied about his name, who he represented and his intentions in successful efforts to manipulate some targets into saying stupid stuff, which he surreptitiously recorded. His deceptive and distorted films destroyed ACORN and damaged other groups he considered progressive. Despite O’Keefe’s liberal use of the Commandment escape clause, he became conservatives’ golden boy.

Among right-wing talk show hosts who urged their conservative Christian listeners to praise the con was Bill O’Reilly who said O’Keefe should be awarded a Congressional Medal. Not so worshiping were federal prosecutors who charged O’Keefe with misrepresenting himself in an attempted phone hacking at the office of U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La. O’Keefe pleaded guilty. And not so revering was the California state attorney general who determined that O’Keefe’s sliced-and-diced video misrepresented the actions of ACORN workers.

Conforming to the conservatives’ philosophy of wrong-is-right-if-the-right-benefits is GOP Presidential candidate Mitt Romney. Like a Judas, he betrayed his own health insurance program.

Romney contended that requiring everyone to get health insurance – known as the individual mandate -- was good when he was governor of Massachusetts and signed Romney care, which includes it. As Congress considered health care reform, Romney repeatedly said Romney care should be the model for the nation. But later when conservatives blasted the individual mandate in Obama care, Romney sold out his Massachusetts plan, saying an individual mandate was not good for the nation.

Similarly, in 1994 during Romney’s failed campaign for U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy’s seat, Romney and his wife attended a Planned Parenthood fundraiser and she donated \$150 to the group. But now, in pursuit of the vote of the anti-abortion Christian right, Romney no longer likes Planned Parenthood so much, promising:

"Planned Parenthood, we're going to get rid of that."

Are those switches adorable little flip-flops or calculated lying? The comments of a chief Romney aide, Eric Fehrnstrom, show they are calculated. A reporter asked Fehrnstrom how Romney would appeal to crucial middle-of-the-road voters in the fall after taking such hard right positions in the spring to win the primary. Fehrnstrom compared the campaign to an Etch A Sketch:

"You can kind of shake it up and restart all over again."

So, basically, tell the conservative Christian primary voters one thing. Then tell the mainstream general election voters something else. This is the campaign of the GOP front-runner, the party’s likely standard-bearer. This is who most Republicans voted for.

It makes sense really. Apparently Republicans don't expect the truth. Look at the Ryan budget. He calls it the Path to Prosperity. The nation went down this road of tax cuts for the rich and program cuts for the middle class before, under Bush II, and it was a one-way road to increased income inequality. Voodoo trickledown economics is a path to prosperity only for the already prosperous.

Congressman Paul Ryan contends his budget is a deficit-buster, that it would shrink the deficit to 1.2 percent of the gross domestic product by 2022 – which is exactly the same place where the country would be if it did nothing, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. In addition, the cumulative 10-year deficits under Ryan's plan would be \$200 billion higher than just doing nothing. No busting going on there.

The GOP wants conservative Christian votes so badly it's willing to break those set-in-stone rules conservative Christians revere. Frankly, it's surprising this behavior doesn't make conservative Christians cross. Republicans might consider resurrecting respect for the 9th Commandment if they want to avoid a Christian right inquisition into their Etch A Sketch positions.

20120415-13	14:01	DaveY	Stop
-----------------------------	-------	-------	------

Please take me off your email list. Now that I am retired, I don't have the time.

20120415-14	15:58	Norm	Slow Down
-----------------------------	-------	------	-----------

Hey guys! Slow down with the emails. I can't keep up.

20120415-17	19:19	SteveB	Fw: NationofChange Donation Request — Free Book
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

from NationofChange:

Seinfeld mocked it. Letterman ranked it in his top ten list. And more than fifteen years later, its infamy continues. Everyone knows the McDonald's coffee case. It has been routinely cited as an example of how citizens have taken advantage of America's legal system, but is that a fair rendition of the facts? Hot Coffee reveals what really happened to Stella Liebeck, the Albuquerque woman who spilled coffee on herself and sued McDonald's, while exploring how and why the case garnered so much media attention, who funded the effort and to what end. After seeing this film, you will decide who really profited from spilling hot coffee.

Click here to support independent journalism and get your copy of Hot Coffee with your monthly tax-deductible donation to NationofChange of \$5 or more!

<https://secure.nationofchange.org/hot-coffee/?ref=email>

20120415-18	22:13	Tom	"Marine's Career Threatened by Controversial Rules of Engagement"
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

This is how we are fighting this "Limited War." Get these Political Commanders OUT of the Armed Services, STOP making Political "RoE," The "Rules of Engagement" have to be OVERHAULED! (I feel for my brothers in Arms!)

Disgusting! We're telling our servicemen to lay their life on the line, then punishing them for trying to do their jobs.

"Marine's Career Threatened by Controversial Rules of Engagement" by Sara A. Carter, *Washington Examiner*

Jan. 24, 2012, (<http://washingtonexaminer.com/news/world/2012/01/marines-career-threatened-controversial-rules-engagement/167369>)

Joshua Waddell, a first lieutenant in the U.S. Marines, appeared on his way to a stellar career as an American military officer. The son of a retired Navy SEAL commander, Waddell was awarded a Bronze Star during his first tour of duty in Afghanistan and had returned for a second.

Then he made a decision in combat that military experts say has severely jeopardized his future in the corps.

But some military experts say the black mark on Waddell's record was undeserved, that he and other young American officers are being put in a difficult, if not impossible, situation by unreasonable rules of engagement foisted upon the military by politically sensitive commanders in the Pentagon.

The facts in Waddell's case are spelled out in Marine Corps documents. But how those facts should be interpreted is a matter of heated dispute.

On Nov. 1, Waddell, a 25-year-old executive officer with 3rd Battallion, 7th Marine Corps Regiment, was monitoring a surveillance camera in Sangin, Afghanistan, when he spotted a man who had been identified as a bomb maker working with area insurgents. Two days earlier, a sergeant from India Company had lost both legs and a hand when a bomb detonated in their area of operation. The man spotted on the camera was believed to be responsible.

After receiving permission from his battalion commanders, Waddell ordered Marine snipers to open fire on the man, and he was hit. A group of Afghans rushed to the man, put him on a tractor and attempted to flee. Waddell ordered the snipers to hit the engine block of the tractor, disabling it so the man believed to be a bomb maker would not escape. The tractor was hit but no civilians were injured.

Then, about three weeks later, the civilians who helped remove the wounded man from the area were found to be teenagers.

As a result, Waddell was demoted from executive officer, and the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Seth Folsom, determined he had violated rules of engagement that governed when Marines could fire, and at whom. Folsom said Wadell "is not recommended for promotion" and "in violation of [combat rules] during an engagement." The report stated that "noncombatant local nationals" were in the area of direct fire and that "the engagement resulted in a damaged local national vehicle."

A Marine brigadier general who reviewed the case was sympathetic to Waddell, whom he described as a "superb and heroic combat leader. But the general said the decision on whether Waddell should be promoted was "the commander's prerogative," noting that the battalion commander on the scene had lost "confidence in [Waddell's] abilities."

Marine Maj. Shawn Haney, spokesman for Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs, said Waddell's fitness report will go before a review board at the time of any promotion "and everything is under scrutiny, so Waddell will have a chance to defend himself against the accusations." Still, Haney conceded, Waddell's fitness reports play a "significant role in future promotions."

The upshot is that Waddell's career has been effectively blunted, his chance for promotion blocked.

Waddell is just one of hundreds of cases of troops who have suffered under stringent rules of engagement, said Jeff Addicott, a former senior legal adviser to U.S. Army Special Forces.

"We have hamstrung our military with unrealistic ROEs that do more harm to our soldiers than the enemy, and now a Marine's career is on the line because he disabled a tractor," Addicott said. "In many ways our military is frozen in fear of violating absurd self-imposed rules on the battlefield, How can you tell if it's a teenager or a man, a farmer or an enemy when you're fighting an insurgency?"

A Marine stationed in Afghanistan who does not know Waddell, but who has operated under the same rules, said, "The rules of engagement are meant to placate [President Hamid] Karzai's government at our expense. They say

it's about winning the hearts and minds, but it's not working. We're not putting fear into the enemy, only our troops."

Waddell's father, Mark Waddell, who served more than 25 years in the military and retired as a commander of a Navy SEAL team, said his son and other Americans fighting in Afghanistan are being victimized by these rules.

"I feel what's happened to my son is a complete betrayal, and he isn't the only one," said Waddell, of Fort Worth, Texas. "Josh is a hero. We expect them to go out and make instantaneous combat decisions, then we Monday-morning quarterback their decisions. It's an outrage."

20120415-19	23:58	SteveG	"U.S. to Make Profit from Bailouts, Treasury Says"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Save jobs and make some money at the same time and some people say it was the wrong thing to do. Amazing

Chrysler repaid the US government 6 billion dollars 6 years early with 19+% interest – not a bad return on investment.

"U.S. to Make Profit from Bailouts, Treasury Says" by BBC

Apr. 15, 2012, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-17720012>)

(Treasury secretary Timothy Geithner believes that the US taxpayer will make a profit.)

The US will make a profit from bailing out the nation's banks and carmakers at the height of the financial crisis, the Treasury Department has said.

The bank bailouts may result in a return of \$2bn (£1.3bn), the Treasury said in its latest projections for the government's response to the crisis.

And the recovering auto industry has added 230,000 jobs as a result.

The recession was the worst since the Great Depression and \$19.2tn of wealth was wiped out, it said.

"Although the economy is getting stronger, we have a long way to go to fully repair the damage the crisis has left behind," the Treasury said.

"We are still living with the broader economic cost of the crisis, which can be seen in high unemployment."

The vast majority of the projected returns - more than \$179bn - come from the Federal Reserve's huge investments and loans to banks.

The Fed and the Treasury together invested \$182bn just to save insurance giant AIG.

In terms of the bank bailouts, the much-maligned Troubled Asset Relief Program (Tarp) that provided money to more than 700 banks has already realised a \$19bn profit.

The bailout of carmakers General Motors and Chrysler - which was also part of Tarp, cost \$22bn, the Treasury said.

"But the cost of a disorderly liquidation to families and businesses across the country that rely on the auto industry would have been far higher," it added.

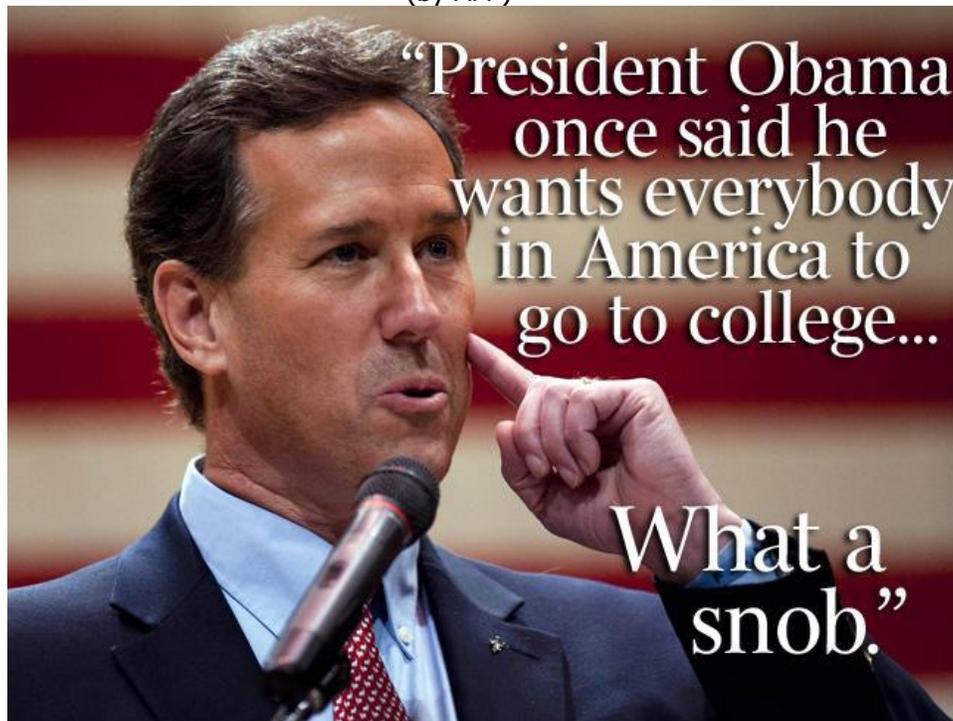
The US Treasury still owns more than 30% of GM's ordinary shares.

In the end, the Treasury expects to make \$22bn from Tarp's bank bailouts and \$2bn on Tarp's loans to restart the credit markets, offsetting the auto bailouts.

20120415-20 23:59 SteveB Photo: Gaffe: "What a Snob!"

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/us-election/gallery-fn95xh4y-1226290632082?page=2>

(by AFP)



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #118 — APR. 17, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

The Rich Are 'Different'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 17, 2012)

I don't know why I like this topic so well, but I find I've become dedicated to trying to squeeze a little more juice out of the rich. From what I understand, even a lot of the greedy rich are starting to get behind the notion. Things just ain't as fair as they used to be and that's not conservative! What do you think?

"The Rich Are Different from You and Me -- They Pay Lower Taxes" by Bill Moyers and Michael Winship, Huffington Post

Apr. 16, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-moyers/the-rich-are-different-fr_b_1428812.html)

Benjamin Franklin, who used his many talents to become a wealthy man, famously said that the only things certain in life are death and taxes. But if you're a corporate CEO in America today, even they can be put on the backburner -- death held at bay by the best medical care money can buy and the latest in surgical and life extension techniques, taxes conveniently shunted aside courtesy of loopholes, overseas investment and governments that conveniently look the other way.

In a story headlined, "For Big Companies, Life Is Good," the *Wall Street Journal* reports that big American companies have emerged from the deepest recession since World War II more profitable than ever: flush with cash, less burdened by debt, and with a greater share of the country's income. But, the paper notes, "Many of the 1.1 million jobs the big companies added since 2007 were outside the U.S. So, too, was much of the \$1.2 trillion added to corporate treasuries."

To add to this embarrassment of riches, the consumer group Citizens for Tax Justice reports that more than two dozen major corporations -- including GE, Boeing, Mattel and Verizon -- paid no federal taxes between 2008 and 2011. They got a corporate tax break that was broadly supported by Republicans and Democrats alike. Corporate taxes today are at a 40-year-low -- even as the executive suites at big corporations have become throne rooms where the crown jewels wind up in the personal vault of the CEO.

Then look at this report in the *New York Times*: Last year, among the 100 best-paid CEOs, the median income was more than \$14 million, compared with the average annual American salary of \$45,230. Combined, this happy hundred executives pulled down more than two billion dollars.

What's more, according to the *Times* "... these CEOs might seem like pikers. Top hedge fund managers collectively earned \$14.4 billion last year." No wonder some of them are fighting to kill a provision in the recent Dodd-Frank

reform law that would require disclosing the ratio of CEO pay to the median pay of their employees. One never wishes to upset the help, you know. It can lead to unrest.

That's Wall Street -- the metaphorical bestiary of the financial universe. But there's nothing metaphorical about the earnings of hedge fund tigers, private equity lions, and the top dogs at those big banks that were bailed out by tax dollars after they helped chase our economy off a cliff.

So what do these big moneyed nabobs have to complain about? Why are they whining about reform? And why are they funneling cash to super PACs aimed at bringing down Barack Obama, who many of them supported four years ago?

Because, writes Alec MacGillis in *The New Republic* -- the president wants to raise their taxes. That's right -- while ordinary Americans are taxed at a top rate of 35 percent on their income, Congress allows hedge fund and private equity tycoons to pay only pay 15 percent of their compensation. The president wants them to pay more; still at a rate below what you might pay, and for that he's being accused of - hold onto your combat helmets -- "class warfare." One Wall Street Midas, once an Obama fan, now his foe, told MacGillis that by making the rich a primary target, Obama is "[expletive deleted] on people who are successful."

And can you believe this? Two years ago, when President Obama first tried to close that gaping loophole in our tax code, Stephen Schwarzman, who runs the Blackstone Group, the world's largest private equity fund, compared the president's action to Hitler's invasion of Poland.

That's the same Stephen Schwarzman whose agents in 2006 launched a predatory raid on a travel company in Colorado. His fund bought it, laid off 841 employees, and recouped its entire investment in just seven months -- one of the quickest returns on capital ever for such a deal.

To celebrate his 60th birthday Mr. Schwarzman rented the Park Avenue Armory here in New York at a cost of \$3 million, including a gospel choir led by Patti LaBelle that serenaded him with "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Does he ever -- his net worth is estimated at nearly \$5 billion. Last year alone Schwarzman took home over \$213 million in pay and dividends, a third more than 2010. Now he's fundraising for Mitt Romney, who, like him, made his bundle on leveraged buyouts that left many American workers up the creek.

To add insult to injury, average taxpayers even help subsidize the private jet travel of the rich. On the *Times*' DealBook blog, mergers and acquisitions expert Steven Davidoff writes, "If an outside security consultant determines that executives need a private jet and other services for their safety, the Internal Revenue Service cuts corporate chieftains a break. In such cases, the chief executive will pay a reduced tax bill or sometimes no tax at all."

Are the CEOs really in danger? No, says Davidoff, "It's a common corporate tax trick."

Talk about your friendly skies. No wonder the people with money and influence don't feel connected to the rest of the population. **It's as if they live in a foreign country at the top of the world, like their own private Switzerland, at heights so rarefied they can't imagine life down below.**

20120416-01	08:30	SteveB	"In Denial About Debt Crisis"
-------------	-------	--------	-------------------------------

"In Denial About Debt Crisis" by Joe Scarborough, Politico

Apr. 16, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/joe-scarborough/2012/04/in-denial-about-debt-crisis-120730.html>)

With George Soros warning of a growing European crisis, the economic clouds that have been forming over Washington for years are growing darker by the day. While Soros fears that Europe's austerity measures will lead to a financial meltdown in the EU, at least European governments are trying something, anything, to stem the debt crisis.

Stateside, today's events in Congress show just how ill-equipped our government is to face the coming debt crisis.

President Obama pushed for a Senate vote today on the Buffett Rule as a way to get rich Americans to pay more taxes. Of course, the president always knew the rule was more gimmick than economic panacea. He also knew it would never pass out of the least productive Senate in 20 years.

Not to be outdone, House Republicans will push tomorrow for a vote on a tax cut for businesses with less than 500 employees. Like the Buffett Rule, the Eric Cantor-backed tax cut has no chance of passing both chambers and ending up on the president's desk.

The Washington Post summed up the parties' political gimmickry this afternoon:

In a gridlocked Congress, passage was never the point. Instead, both parties aim to force their opponents into the politically uncomfortable position of killing proposals they are convinced are broadly popular.

To drive home the point that legislating is now little more than campaigning by different means, New York Sen. Chuck Schumer used the occasion of today's vote to suggest the provision's name should be changed to "The Romney Rule" because the presumptive GOP nominee is so rich.

With all the game playing that is going on inside the Beltway, it is fair for voters to ask whether any adults are left working in a town that is always concerned with winning the next election rather than the new century.

20120416-02	09:35	SandyI	"Tennessee Senate Approves Bill to Warn Students That Hand-Holding Is a 'Gateway Sexual Activity'"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

My nomination for the most wasteful time spent by a state legislature...

And are state funds provided to monitor the behavior of these state senators, since they choose to spend their time monitoring and legislating others?

YIPES, we are really on the road to amuck!!!

"A life is not important except in the impact it has on others' lives." —on the tombstone of Jackie Robinson

["Tennessee Senate Approves Bill to Warn Students That Hand-Holding Is a 'Gateway Sexual Activity'" by Scott Keyes, ThinkProgress](#)

Apr. 15, 2012, (<http://www.care2.com/causes/tennessee-senate-approves-bill-to-warn-students-that-hand-holding-is-a-gateway-sexual-activity.html>)

Like any state legislature dealing with 8 percent unemployment and thousands of its residents facing disenfranchisement, the Tennessee Senate is targeting the menace of underage hand-holding.

Last week, the Senate passed SB 3310, a bill to update the state's abstinence-based sex education curriculum to define holding hands and kissing as "gateway sexual activities." Just one senator voted against the legislation; 28 voted in favor.

Since the bill specifically bans teachers from "demonstrating gateway sexual activity", educators would be prohibited from even demonstrating what hand-holding is. Breaking these laws could result in a lawsuit, as Hunter from Daily Kos notes:

If your teacher teaches you anything about sex that isn't specifically on the approved curriculum, like demonstrating "holding hands" for the class instead of quietly tsking about the dangers it poses, they can be sued.

Still, this anti-hand-holding push may only be the second-worst bill passed in Tennessee this month. Nearly a century after the Volunteer State played host to the Scopes Monkey Trial, the legislature has now enacted a new law allowing educators to teach creationism alongside evolution.

20120416-03 09:48 SteveB Fw: Shut It Down!

from Nation of Change:

Worldwide, May 1st is traditionally a 'Workers' day – a day of Labor Solidarity, and a public holiday. It's a day to celebrate and march in support of im/migrant rights. In protest against the corruption of the worldwide marketplace, which has led to illegal foreclosures, mass unemployment, low wages, high taxes and a penalization of all those who do not own the '99%' of the world's resources, and in solidarity with the im/migrant movements of May 1st, we along with Occupations across the country decided to declare May 1st, 2012 a People's General Strike.

Instead of calling upon unionized Labor to make a specific demand (illegal under Taft-Hartley), we are calling upon the people of the world to take this day away from school and the workplace, so that their absence makes their displeasure with this corrupt system be known.

In addition to this General Strike, we are joining activists at Occupy Los Angeles in a massive demonstration. We are organizing around a "4 Winds" People's Power Car and Bike Caravan through the urban sprawl of Los Angeles that will culminate in Direct Action in and around the Financial District of downtown LA. People from all sectors of the city will have a chance to plug in to the routes from any corner of the city, helping to shut down the flow of capital while addressing the 99%'s major grievances.

If you can afford to help, we are now raising funds for critical elements of the Los Angeles action. Your tax-deductible donation will help us obtain transportation to and from the event, flyers and other print materials, food and critical supplies for the protesters, and the multimedia technology necessary to broadcast our message to the world.

Join us in Solidarity on May 1st and if you can afford it, support our action now.

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

Thank you for all that you do.

Respectfully Yours, Donna Luca, Board President

20120416-04 09:57 Dale "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"

"Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" by Bloomberg News

Apr. 13, 2012, (<http://www.investmentnews.com/article/20120413/FREE/120419962#>)

(The highest-earning U.S. households have ways to escape President Barack Obama's Buffett rule with tax-planning techniques that would limit their liability and undermine the proposal's purpose.)

Those affected taxpayers -- the fewer than 0.5 percent of Americans with annual incomes exceeding \$1 million and tax rates of less than 30 percent -- could take advantage of tax-free investments such as municipal bonds to escape the Buffett rule's bite. They also could time asset sales for maximum tax benefits, engage in transactions that don't result in taxable income and make charitable contributions that yield deductions.

"Largely, the Buffett rule is going to be manageable," said David Miller, a partner at Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP in New York. "That is, with tax planning, people will be able to avoid it."

The proposal would deny high-income taxpayers many deductions and other breaks they use to drive down their average tax rate without closing out the tactics employed by the wealthiest, most sophisticated taxpayers.

The Buffett rule, named for billionaire investor Warren Buffett, would require that taxpayers with at least \$2 million in adjusted gross income pay a minimum rate of 30 percent and would impose the increase on a sliding scale for those with income between \$1 million and \$2 million.

Buffett Rule Calculator

Obama has been campaigning for the proposal in advance of an April 16 procedural vote in the U.S. Senate. He had television interviews yesterday in four states with one Republican senator. Also, the White House website posted a Buffett rule calculator with which taxpayers can compare their tax rate to millionaires' rates.

Republicans are expected to block the Buffett rule bill, which requires 60 votes to advance in the Senate. Democrats will continue to campaign on the issue of tax fairness.

Preferential tax treatment for capital gains and dividends is among the reasons why some high-income households have relatively low effective tax rates, and one result of the Buffett rule would be to raise effective tax rates on capital income. Of the top 1 percent of households, 10 percent have effective tax rates of 8.7 percent or less, including income, payroll and corporate taxes, according to the 2012 Economic Report of the President.

Generating Revenue

The Buffett rule measure, sponsored by Democratic Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, would generate \$47 billion for the government over the next decade, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation, whose estimates incorporate projected behavioral responses by taxpayers. That estimate assumes that income tax cuts expire as scheduled at the end of 2012; if those cuts are extended, the bill would generate about \$162 billion, according to Whitehouse's office.

Under current law, capital gains and dividends are taxed at a top rate of 15 percent, compared with 35 percent for wages, some business profits and other ordinary income. A 3.8 percent tax on the unearned income of the highest earners takes effect in 2013.

The U.S. taxes capital gains only when assets are sold, letting taxpayers realize gains when they choose, and they sometimes make those decisions based on tax rates. This feature of the tax code has caused spikes in capital gains realizations -- most notably after the 1986 overhaul of the tax code before an increase in the capital gains rate took effect.

'Delay Selling'

"The tax on capital gains is only collected when you sell your asset," said Jon Bakija, an economics professor at Williams College in Massachusetts. "So one way to respond to that would be delay selling your assets."

One of the clearest examples of this phenomenon is Buffett, whose estimated \$44.8 billion fortune as of yesterday places him third on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index of the world's richest people. The value of Buffett's stock in Berkshire Hathaway Inc. (BRK/A) appreciates with gains in the company's stock price. He doesn't pay taxes on the higher value of his assets unless he sells them.

Taxpayers can avoid the capital gains tax entirely by donating assets with low cost basis to charity. Another way to escape the tax is to keep such assets until one dies, when they would be passed onto heirs with a cost basis of their value at death. For the very wealthiest, the estate tax would capture some of those gains.

Investment in Capital

The higher taxes on capital gains and dividends would reduce the after-tax return on investment in capital, causing some taxpayers to make shifts in their portfolios. In some cases, income being taxed at the individual level has already been taxed at the corporate level at rates of up to 35 percent, so the combined rate could exceed 50 percent.

"The evidence suggests that individuals, and particularly high-income individuals, are responsive to tax rates," said Adam Looney, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. He said those effects are more modest than some analysts suggest.

By raising tax rates on capital income, the Buffett rule would reduce investment, said Douglas Holtz-Eakin, former director of the Congressional Budget Office and a White House economist during the George W. Bush administration.

"You affect all their investment decisions," he said. "Less overall, but also reallocated to make sure it doesn't show up in a year when you're liable to be over a million bucks, so you start getting into games."

Timing Changes

Beyond timing changes, taxpayers can rearrange their portfolios to earn income in forms that don't show up as part of adjusted gross income. For example, interest on municipal bonds and employer-provided health insurance are both tax free, and would become more attractive.

Taxpayers who want to avoid selling appreciated assets and still enjoy their economic benefits can take out margin loans against the value, Miller said.

Dividend taxes are tougher to avoid if the dividends flow from companies that the taxpayer doesn't control. Still, the higher dividend tax rates on large shareholders might prompt some companies to reduce payouts.

Also, the Buffett rule proposal allows deductions for charitable contributions, so taxpayers could accelerate future donations, especially if they think Congress might repeal the Buffett rule or otherwise lower taxes in the future.

Miller said taxpayers anticipating capital gains could move to a low-tax state. Because the Buffett rule would effectively deny the benefits of the state and local tax deduction, it would create a greater-than-usual incentive to move to a state such as Florida with no income tax.

"I promise you, the one thing this is is a full employment law for tax lawyers," Holtz-Eakin said. "They will love it."

20120416-05	10:41	Clark	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"
-----------------------------	-------	-------	--

Chris Matthews is a bit of a blowhard, but he did come up with a very interesting observation recently:

Republicans seem to think the way to get the poor and struggling to work more is to take things/money/benefits away from them (food stamps, unemployment, etc). That supposedly gets them off their couches (per Chris Christie).

Meanwhile, they think the way to get the rich to work/invest more/harder is to give them more money/benefits (tax cuts, especially). Otherwise, apparently, they aren't willing to make more money by putting it to work in their companies or businesses.

Can anyone dispute this observation, or at least explain the psychology behind it?

20120416-08	11:09	Pam	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

To those who have, much will be given; to those who have not, much will be taken away. T'was ever thus.

[20120416-09](#) 11:39 Art Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"

Well, I've read this three times and still can't find any real substance. I have a very good, albeit expensive, CPA who I will pass this along to as guidance. My guess is she will kindly tell me this article is all pretty much smoke and mirrors.

The tax increase will work. It won't solve the deficit problem by itself, but it is a step in the right direction. Just my humble opinion.

[20120416-10](#) 11:49 SteveB Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"

Why was so much American industry and wealth created during the '50s, '60s, and '70's, when tax rates were astronomical by Republican standards? Plus they had to contend with those pesky unions! Why were the rich not disincentived (disincentized?) then to just sit there like John Galt, I suppose, doing nothing?

It's all B.S. Higher taxes encourage re-investment and low taxes on corporations and the rich do not. The last 60 years or so have proven it.

[20120416-11](#) 11:51 Jim Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule"

These deductions are the same things that have been available to them (and most taxpayers) right along. But it is a question if the wealthy or anyone else would choose to give an increased charitable deduction just to save the tax on it.

For example if the tax is 30% they could give \$10,000 to a charity and they would reduce their tax by \$3000 but they are still out the \$7,000 even if they had had enough withholding that the \$3,000 came back to them as a refund. As greedy as most of them seem to be, they would probably just pay the tax and not give any money away.

Most people do not give because of the deduction, but because they support the cause. And in that case, the deductibility might allow us to be more generous.

[20120416-06](#) 10:59 SteveB REAL LIFE, NOT REPUBLICAN LIFE

Video (live): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Orv_F2HV4gk&feature=related

"Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman

You got a fast car
I want a ticket to anywhere
Maybe we make a deal
Maybe together we can get somewhere

Anyplace is better
Starting from zero got nothing to lose
Maybe we'll make something
But me myself I got nothing to prove

You got a fast car
And I got a plan to get us out of here

I been working at the convenience store
Managed to save just a little bit of money

We won't have to drive too far
Just across the border and into the city
You and I can both get jobs
And finally see what it means to be living

You see my old man's got a problem
He live with the bottle that's the way it is
He says his body's too old for working
I say his body's too young to look like his

My mama went off and left him
She wanted more from life than he could give
I said somebody's got to take care of him
So I quit school and that's what I did

You got a fast car
But is it fast enough so we can fly away?
We gotta make a decision
We leave tonight or live and die this way

See I remember we were driving, driving in your car
The speed so fast I felt like I was drunk
City lights lay out before us
And your arm felt nice wrapped 'round my shoulder

And I had a feeling that I belonged
I had a feeling I could be someone, be someone, be someone

You got a fast car
We go cruising entertain ourselves
You still ain't got a job
And I work in the market as a checkout girl

I know things will get better
You'll find work and I'll get promoted
We'll move out of the shelter
Buy a bigger house and live in the suburbs

See I remember we were driving, driving in your car
The speed so fast I felt like I was drunk
City lights lay out before us
And your arm felt nice wrapped 'round my shoulder

And I had a feeling that I belonged
I had a feeling I could be someone, be someone, be someone

You got a fast car
And I got a job that pays all our bills
You stay out drinking late at the bar
See more of your friends than you do of your kids

I'd always hoped for better
Thought maybe together you and me'd find it

I got no plans I ain't going nowhere
So take your fast car and keep on driving

See I remember when we were driving, driving in your car
The speed so fast I felt like I was drunk
City lights lay out before us
And your arm felt nice wrapped 'round my shoulder

And I had a feeling that I belonged
I had a feeling I could be someone, be someone, be someone

You got a fast car
But is it fast enough so you can fly away?
You gotta make a decision
Leave tonight or live and die this way

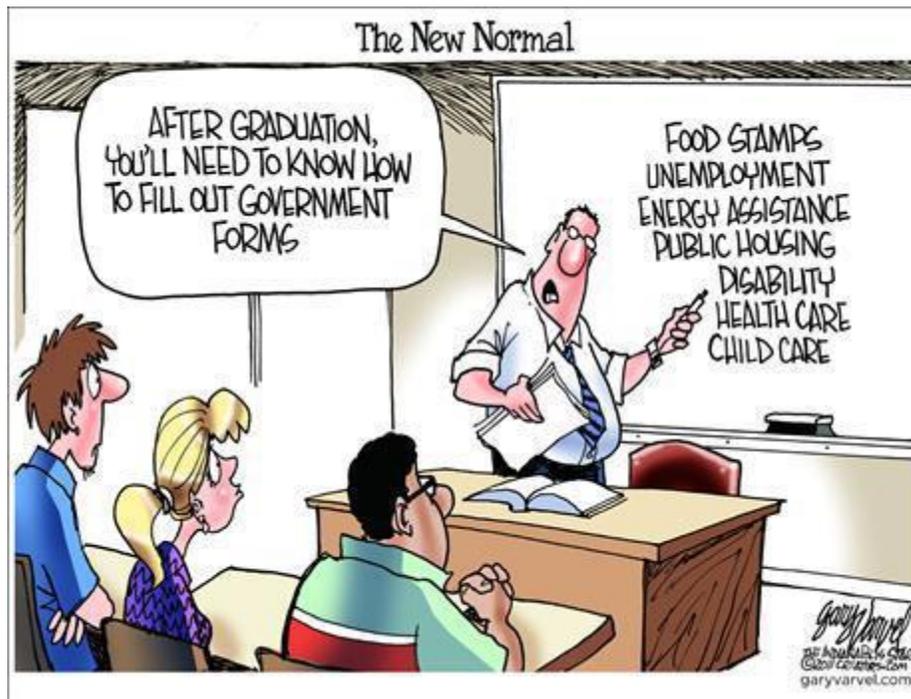
20120416-07	11:04	Pam	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Dennis & Dale)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

My daughter is in a similar situation. She needed a Master's degree to advance in her profession and had to borrow the money. That, plus her undergrad loans puts quite a burden, to say the least, on her and her husband. I've given her all I can afford to; I wish I could do more. Getting an education is WAY more expensive today than when most of us went to school. If I'm not mistaken, the tuition at DePauw when I went there in the 'sixties was somewhere around \$2000 a year. Now, I'd guess it's more like \$30,000. Kids today are graduating with a load of debt that simply never would have accrued forty years ago, and they've more or less been forced into it by pressure to get an education if they want to be "middle class." A college education is a must. A Master's is almost a requirement, and forget a career in academia if you don't have a PhD and a substantial list of publications. We are crushing the younger generation, and I wish they'd all go on strike until things change. It won't happen, but that's what it's going to take. I don't believe that most young people WANT to default, but they need to eat and pay rent or the mortgage. They shouldn't have to work as slaves until they're fifty, when it's too late to save for an adequate retirement. It is complicated, but I wouldn't assume that deadbeat young people are the biggest problem.

20120416-14	16:28	Art	Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Pam)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Wow, that is an astronomical increase. Wonder what accounts for that magnitude of a rise? Last I heard university professors weren't exactly in the top paying professions in the US.

20120416-12	13:59	Dennis	Cartoon: Re: "Obama Relies On Debt Collectors Profiting from Student Loan Woe" (reply to Pam)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---



20120416-13

15:16

SteveB

"Why a Fair Economy Is Not Incompatible with Growth But Essential to It"

Like I've been saying...higher taxes = greater reinvestment, growth, and prosperity—for all!

"Why a Fair Economy Is Not Incompatible with Growth But Essential to It" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Apr. 16, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-fair-economy-not-incompatible-growth-essential-it-1334583226>)

One of the most pernicious falsehoods you'll hear during the next seven months of political campaigning is there's a necessary tradeoff between fairness and economic growth. By this view, if we raise taxes on the wealthy the economy can't grow as fast.

Wrong. Taxes were far higher on top incomes in the three decades after World War II than they've been since. And the distribution of income was far more equal. Yet the American economy grew faster in those years than it's grown since tax rates on the top were slashed in 1981.

This wasn't a post-war aberration. Bill Clinton raised taxes on the wealthy in the 1990s, and the economy produced faster job growth and higher wages than it did after George W. Bush slashed taxes on the rich in his first term.

If you need more evidence, consider modern Germany, where taxes on the wealthy are much higher than they are here and the distribution of income is far more equal. But Germany's average annual growth has been faster than that in the United States.

You see, higher taxes on the wealthy can finance more investments in infrastructure, education, and health care – which are vital to a productive workforce and to the economic prospects of the middle class.

Higher taxes on the wealthy also allow for lower taxes on the middle – potentially restoring enough middle-class purchasing power to keep the economy growing. As we've seen in recent years, when disposable income is concentrated at the top, the middle class doesn't have enough money to boost the economy.

Finally, concentrated wealth can lead to speculative bubbles as the rich in the same limited class of assets – whether gold, dotcoms, or real estate. And when these bubbles pop the entire economy suffers.

What we should have learned over the last half century is that growth doesn't trickle down from the top. It percolates upward from working people who are adequately educated, healthy, sufficiently rewarded, and who feel they have a fair chance to make it in America.

Fairness isn't incompatible with growth. It's necessary for it.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ago5SAGV3E>



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #119 — APR. 18, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

Come On, Big Guy!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 18, 2012)

Maybe it's about time America did something about energy? Ooops! It's an election year. Republicans are dedicated to one thing only—the overthrow of the present government. President Obama doesn't seem to be leading very well on the subject. All the big money, especially big oil, is arrayed against any possible solution. Right now, the situation looks pretty hopeless. Perhaps...next year...with a Democratic Congress...

"Obama Launches Attack on Oil Speculators" by Jennifer Epstein, Politico

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0412/75244.html>)

President Barack Obama called Tuesday for greater federal oversight of oil markets, his latest effort to head off market manipulation as gas prices stay high ahead of the peak summer months.

"We can't afford a situation where some speculators can reap millions while millions of American families get the short end of the stick. That's not the way the market should work," Obama said in a Rose Garden speech, laying out a \$52 million proposal largely aimed at beefing up the Commodities Future Trading Commission's oversight and enforcement of the oil and gas markets.

As prices at the pump have risen since the start of the year and the Republican presidential candidates have attacked Obama on the issue, the White House pushed an "all of the above" strategy, which includes more drilling, the development of alternative fuels and ending tax credits for the oil and gas industry.

Another piece of cutting prices, the president said Tuesday, is to root out market manipulation.

The administration needs to "work extra hard to protect consumers from factors that should not affect the price of a barrel of oil," he said. "That includes doing everything we can to ensure that an irresponsible few aren't able to hurt consumers by illegally manipulating or rigging the energy markets for their own gain."

Obama wants Congress to approve new funding for at least a six-fold increase of "cops on the beat" to stop market manipulation and illegal speculation, a tenfold increase in civil and criminal penalties for manipulation and new funding to update the CFTC's technology to monitor markets. Obama is also taking executive action to share the commission's data with the Council of Economic Advisers.

The White House declined to predict how the moves would affect gasoline prices. "I'm not going to speculate about this provision or any other provision and the specific effects it would have on the price at the pump," Brian Deese of National Economic Council said.

The president has blamed oil speculators for rising prices before, and created a task force a year ago to deal with the issue. But the task force has met only a handful of times and has not issued a public report, McClatchy reported last month.

Obama spent much of February and March telling Americans that there is "no silver bullet" to cut gas prices while nonetheless stressing he was doing all he could to cut prices. With the price of a gallon of gas at \$3.90, according to AAA, down a bit from its recent peak, gas prices remain an issue where Obama is vulnerable.

Aware of that vulnerability, Republicans were skeptical of Obama's proposal Tuesday.

GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney didn't think much of the plan, saying that going after speculators won't lower prices at the pump. He also attacked the White House for trying to make greens happy.

"While American families struggle to pay gas prices that have doubled on his watch, the President's only solutions are to target oil and gas producers for higher taxes and now to dramatically increase federal regulation," Romney said in a statement. "And they will not distract the American people from the president's consistent record of sacrificing America's energy future to appease the environmental extremists in the Democratic Party."

Oil and natural gas magnate T. Boone Pickens also took issue with Obama for invoking Enron, the infamous Houston-based energy company that went bankrupt in 2001.

"We can't afford a situation where speculators artificially manipulate markets by buying up oil, creating the perception of a shortage, and driving prices higher — only to flip the oil for a quick profit," Obama said.

"And for anyone who thinks this cannot happen, just think back to how Enron traders manipulated the price of electricity to reap huge profits at everybody else's expense."

Pickens thought the Enron comparison was out of bounds. "To waste time comparing today's #energy commodity mkts to Enron is insulting. #Enron was a bunch of crooks," Pickens tweeted. He later added: "Be careful, the next card will be SPR release. That's the ultimate market manipulation."

"The Case of President Obama's Missing Oil Tax" by Carrie Budoff Brown, Politico

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0412/75224.html>)

Candidate Barack Obama pushed it hard in 2008: a tax on Big Oil company profits that would flow back to families in \$1,000 rebate checks.

President Barack Obama acts as if the idea never existed.

With gas prices at record highs during the campaign, Obama backed the so-called windfall profits tax as the top item of his energy agenda, arguing it was needed once oil tops \$80 per barrel. He ran TV ads in 18 states touting the idea and slammed GOP rival John McCain for taking oil company contributions "instead of taxing their windfall profits to help drivers."

But four years later, as oil sits well above the \$80 marker for the second year in a row and Republicans hammer Obama on energy policy, the idea is about as popular in the West Wing as \$4-per-gallon gas.

Obama dropped the plan soon after winning office, when the economic crisis depressed oil demand worldwide, and he hasn't talked about it since then. His aides also declined to address it on the record.

The arc of the tax from campaign cornerstone to administration dustbin illustrates the speed at which election-year promises can evaporate once the realities of governing set in. And it highlights Obama's difficulty matching his get-tough rhetoric on oil companies with results, particularly as the Senate lost its moderate core, Republican allies on the issue turned into opponents and longtime Democratic sponsors retired.

"This is a campaign pledge that disappeared in 2008 and never made it back into the mix," said Ben Schreiber, a climate and energy tax analyst with Friends of the Earth. "The truth of the matter is the president hasn't used his megaphone to promote it."

Within a week of Election Day, Obama's transition team dropped the tax from its website, according to the American Small Business League, which tracked the changes. An unnamed transition official quoted in news reports at the time said the reason was that the price of oil per barrel had dipped to about \$40. The abrupt shift infuriated progressives, who felt he'd abandoned the tax entirely and dubbed it Obama's first broken campaign promise.

Instead, Obama focused on eliminating tax incentives for oil and gas companies, which the administration included in each of its four budgets.

"Ending unwarranted subsidies for Big Oil, which represent billions in taxpayer dollars each year that could be used more effectively, is clearly more achievable, and so it makes sense for us to put our focus there," an administration aide said.

A second administration aide said the White House decided that it had a better chance at persuading Congress to repeal the tax subsidies than enact the tax on oil and gas company profits.

"Right now, the biggest oil companies are raking in record profits — profits that go up every time folks pull up into a gas station," Obama said last month. "But on top of these record profits, oil companies are also getting billions a year — billions a year in taxpayer subsidies. ... Think about that. It's like hitting the American people twice. You're already paying a premium at the pump right now. And on top of that, Congress, up until this point, has thought it was a good idea to send billions of dollars more in tax dollars to the oil industry."

On Tuesday, Obama spoke once again about the need for an "all-of-the-above strategy" as he pushed Congress to give oil market regulators more muscle to head off manipulation by speculators. The rest of the strategy includes more drilling, the development of alternative fuels and ending the oil industry tax credits — but not the windfall tax.

The Rose Garden event was latest in a string of efforts by the White House to show it isn't powerless, even though Obama has struggled to win over voters on his response to high gas prices. A Washington Post/ABC News Poll released last week found 62 percent of adults disapprove of his handling of the issue.

Elgie Holstein, a senior campaign adviser on energy policy in 2008 and co-director of Obama's energy transition team, said he could not recall any discussions during the transition on dropping one proposal in favor of another.

But he said the main reasons for doing so were likely the gyrating oil prices that would have made it difficult to structure the tax, an economic crisis that shifted priorities and a recognition that targeting the oil subsidies made more sense from a policy standpoint.

"In the big picture this is really all about how things in the course of a campaign season can change dramatically, so by the time a new president is inaugurated, the scale of the problems he or she has to confront changes dramatically and so do the solutions," said Holstein, now senior director of strategic planning for the Environmental Defense Fund.

But critics, and even some allies, of the president say the White House made more of a cold political calculation in abandoning the windfall profits tax.

The tax made it too easy for Republicans to tag Obama as a liberal in the mold of former President Jimmy Carter, who enacted a windfall profits tax that Congress repealed eight years later, after it failed to produce a windfall for the government.

"Maybe they took some classes and realized it didn't work," said Peter Van Doren, a scholar at the libertarian Cato Institute who has studied the issue.

Hiking taxes on oil company profits won support from 55 percent of adults nationwide in an ABC News/Planet Green/Stanford University poll in July 2008. But repealing the tax incentives for oil companies has earned higher marks from the public in various polls over the past year.

Seventy-seven percent of Americans said redirecting the oil tax incentives to fund investments in alternative fuels would either help a lot or somewhat help in addressing high gas prices, according to a March survey conducted by Hart Research for the liberal Center for American Progress. Sixty-three percent said the same about taxing oil company profits.

And then there is the congressional math. The House is now controlled by Republicans. In the Senate, of the 12 Republicans who supported procedural votes on bills to tax oil profits at some point over the past seven years, only four are still in office.

Among the remaining group, the support has dissolved. Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) said in the "current economic climate," she favors ending the tax subsidies rather than taxing oil company profits. A spokeswoman for Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) said he only supported opening debate on the energy bill, not the tax itself. A spokesman for Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) could not say where she stood on the issue. A spokeswoman for Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) could not be reached for comment.

The Democratic sponsors — Sen. Hillary Clinton of New York, Sen. Byron Dorgan of North Dakota and Sen. Chris Dodd of Connecticut — are gone, too.

The increasingly polarized Senate isn't interested in repealing the tax subsidies, either. A bill to do so failed to advance last month on a 51-47 vote, short of the 60 votes needed to open debate.

If that bill can't advance, then taxing the windfall profits stands no chance — which is why nobody is really expecting Obama to return to the proposal, even though the price of oil has been above that \$80-per-barrel level that Obama identified in 2008 for five months. As of Monday, it was \$102.

"No one is talking about it right now," said Dan Weiss, director of climate strategy at the Center for American Progress.

That could change later in the month when the big five oil companies report their first-quarter profits, which could once again break records, Weiss said.

But even supporters of the proposal concede that prospects are dim. Not that they are happy about it.

"Barack Obama told the people of America that he would pass a windfall profits tax," said Lloyd Chapman, president of the American Small Business League, which first drew attention to Obama's shift away from the tax after his election. "Not doing so is one thing but to never explain why ... is a staggering lack of integrity. Obama needs to do what he said he would do."

20120417-01	11:28	Bill	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Clark, Apr. 16, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	------	--

With respect to your second point as to Republican thinking (Meanwhile ...), Daniel Bernoulli may be one of the more powerful thinkers, despite his eighteenth century outlook. Here's a translation of his thought in a paper he wrote on risk- and wealth-related topics in St. Petersburg:

[The] utility resulting from any small increase in wealth will be inversely proportional to the quantity of goods previously possessed.

What might be abstracted from this is that further acquisition of wealth by the very wealthy may sometimes be mindless and not necessarily beneficial to the rest of society. I'm not going to put this on any banner that I carry into battle, but we do see many of the very, very wealthy apparently behaving in a manner that confirms this. I'm only a tinhorn economist, so I'm unable to address the real core of your point as to whether accumulation of wealth/capital has broader benefit to society.

[20120417-03](#) 12:16 Pam Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Bill)

A couple of months ago Romney said he wanted "welfare mothers" to have to work, even if they have a 2-yr. old at home. It would, he said, teach them the "dignity of work." I guess his own wife didn't need that. This morning on NPR I heard the Minister of Women and Children in Bangladesh talk about what their government (not NGOs, the govt.) does for pregnant women and new mothers. It's a WHOLE lot more than we do here. Six months paid leave, prenatal care and encouragement to breastfeed, immunizations, etc. Americans (Republicans) don't want to help people; they want to punish them, as if they (Newt, Herman) have never made bad choices. Every civilized country--and some of the not-so-civilized--do more for families than we ever think of doing. It makes me sick, quite frankly.

I don't know if these benefits still obtain, but when I lived in Canada, I gave birth to Saskia for a total cost of \$40.00, and that was because I opted for a private room. We also got \$60/mo. for each child. Everyone got this, citizen or not, rich or poor. Canadians actually care about people--at least in my experience.

[20120417-05](#) 12:56 SteveG Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Pam)

Life expectancy, infant mortality rate, educational scores, happiness, medical service, student educational debt – how do we rate compared to other nations? But we do rate number 1 in defense spending. Kind of shows where our national priorities are doesn't it?

[20120417-02](#) 12:02 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Action: Send a Fax to Rep. Paul Ryan

from Daily Kos:

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) is perfectly willing to follow the dictates of the Catholic bishops on limiting women's access to reproductive health care. Funny how he ignores his church when it advises caring for the poor, ending war—and supporting President Obama's proposed federal budget instead of Ryan's own "starve the poor, help the wealthy" plan.

Perhaps the architect of the make-poor-people-pay plan hasn't read the recent guidance from the Conference of Catholic Bishops that "a just framework for future budgets cannot rely on disproportionate cuts in essential services to poor persons; it requires shared sacrifice by all, including raising adequate revenues, eliminating unnecessary military and other spending, and addressing the long-term costs of health insurance and retirement programs fairly."

Let's remind Paul Ryan of his church's advice.

Call out Paul Ryan by faxing him a copy of the statement from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops denouncing his budget proposal.

Thousands of faxes will let Ryan and his fellow conservatives know that you can't hide behind church teachings when it's in line with conservative thinking and ignore it when it's not. Voters are keeping track of the hypocrisy.

Please, click here to send a fax to Paul Ryan: http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=114.

Keep fighting, Kaili Joy Gray, Daily Kos

20120417-04 12:32 SteveB From the Right: "Common Sense: What Goes Around"

"Common Sense: What Goes Around" by Oliver North, *Human Events*

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=50863>)

(No one speaks of an "Arab Spring" anymore.)

Nine years ago this week, our Fox News team accompanied U.S. Marines as they swept into Baghdad and then north up the Tigris River to seize Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

It took less than three weeks to drive the tyrant from power in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and it appeared then that the force of American arms could ensure a new era of tranquility in a part of the world where brutality and anti-American despots had ruled for too long. But it was not so.

The Dec. 13, 2003, capture of the deposed dictator, dragged filthy and bedraggled from a "spider hole" within sight of his palace in Tikrit, failed to quell a rising insurgency. During the following spring and through the autumn of 2004, the U.S. Marines and soldiers we lived with in Anbar province were in daily gun battles with well-armed Sunni insurgents waging jihad against the "invaders."

To the east and in Baghdad, Shiite militias launched a campaign of terror against their Sunni countrymen and coalition troops. At home, critics of the war and the Bush administration prognosticated that the fights for Fallujah and Ramadi were prelude to all-out civil war. But that didn't happen, either.

In the spring of 2005, we were embedded with the Marines when they launched Operation Matador in Qaim, where the Euphrates River enters Iraq from Syria. Their mission: stanch the flow of weapons, munitions and suicidal Islamist militants flooding into Anbar province from Syria.

Interdicting the Damascus-supported ratlines turned out to be a very good idea. Five months later, we documented the first free national legislative election in Iraqi history -- and a better than 70 percent turnout.

U.S. military operations along Iraq's border with Syria didn't end the insurgency, but they made the subsequent "awakening" in Anbar -- and then the rest of the country -- possible.

By the time we were covering the "surge" five years ago, the bloody operation in Qaim was all but forgotten by those who once predicted catastrophe in Iraq. The reporters who didn't make it to Qaim in 2005 ought to go there now. This desert town on the banks of the Euphrates is once again the scene of a flood from Syria. But now it's a torrent of refugees fleeing the sanguinary carnage wrought by Bashar Assad.

None of us -- including the U.S. Marines we accompanied to Baghdad and beyond nine years ago this week -- expected the outcome we now see in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the attack on 9/11, the end of the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan was predictable. So, too, was the demise of Saddam Hussein once the battle in Iraq was joined. But no one in government or elsewhere spoke or wrote about these military operations precipitating a nearly spontaneous cascade of collapsing authoritarian regimes throughout the region. Yet that's what has happened.

When unarmed civilians protesting oppressive government policies, rampant unemployment and escalating food prices drove Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from power in Tunisia on Jan. 14 of last year, devotees of Barack Obama attributed the event to our president's Nobel Prize-winning oratorical skills. They called it the "transition in Tunis"

and described it all as the beginning of an "Arab Spring." It was repeated yet again in February as crowds in Cairo forced Egyptian strongman Hosni Mubarak from power.

The term was still in vogue in October, when Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi fell to an armed rebellion -- and NATO airstrikes. Now it's happening in Syria -- but this time, the crowds are armed -- and no one speaks of an "Arab Spring" anymore.

This week's "cease-fire," brokered by former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, hasn't stopped Syrian refugees from trekking through the Syrian Desert and across the border into Qaim. Deterred by harsh conditions, lack of fuel and inadequate food and water and banned by the Iraqi government of Nouri al-Maliki from going any farther, they have become unwelcome squatters in the border town that once served as a refuge for terrorists.

The brutal irony in all this is that many of those who once passed through Qaim to threaten the government in Baghdad are now among the armed rebels menacing the regime in Damascus. For six years, Bashar Assad was deaf to U.S. pleas to cut the terror ratlines from Syria into Iraq. Instead, he did the opposite -- facilitating the movement of thousands of Islamist fighters into Anbar province to kill and maim. Now those same Islamists have turned on him, and he is learning one of the harsh realities of war: What goes around comes around.

20120417-06	14:12	SteveB	"Thoughts on Tax Day 2012"
-------------	-------	--------	----------------------------

"Thoughts on Tax Day 2012" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/thoughts-tax-day-2012-1334677092>)

As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., wrote in 1904, "taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society."

But the wealthiest Americans, who haven't raked in as much of America's income and wealth since the 1920s, are today paying a lower tax rate than they have in over thirty years. Even though America faces a mammoth federal budget deficit. Even though public services at all levels of government continue to be slashed. Even though the median wage is still dropping, adjusted for inflation. Even though the typical American is paying more of his or her earnings in taxes -- including payroll taxes, sales taxes, and property taxes -- than ever before.

I'm not a class warrior. I'm a class worrier. And my worries go to why all this has happened.

I worry about the political power that comes with great wealth -- such as the power of the wealthy to reduce their taxes, cut the public services most other Americans depend on, while at the same time garnering special subsidies and tax breaks for their businesses -- big oil, big pharma, big agriculture, military contractors, big insurance, Wall Street.

I worry about the well-financed big lies that the very rich are the nation's "job creators," that the benefits from tax cuts on the rich "trickle down" to everyone else, that American corporations will create more jobs if only their taxes are lowered and if regulations protecting health, safety, and the environment were jettisoned.

I worry about the increasing dominance of Wall Street over our economy and democracy, and the near political impossibilities of closing the "carried interest" loophole that allows private-equity and hedge-fund managers to treat their income as capital gains subject to only 15% tax; of resurrecting the Glass-Steagall Act separating investment from commercial banking, and of breaking up the big banks to protect against another financial crash and bailout of the Street.

You and I have every right to be class worriers -- and to be outraged at what has occurred. But we must get beyond worry and outrage, and do everything in our power to take back our economy and reclaim our democracy.

It was another justice of the Supreme Court, Louis Brandeis, who wrote in 1897, **"We may have a democracy or we may have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both."**

20120417-07 14:14 SteveG Fw: Emily's List Action: Tell the GOP Women Deserve Equal Pay

If you sign the petition, it will flip to a contribution site – the idea of women making 77% of a man's pay is ridiculous.

from Emily's List:

Today is Equal Pay Day. The sad fact is, in 2012, American women still earn an average of only 77 cents for every dollar men make. This terrible wage gap has dire consequences for not only women, but for their families as well.

But Republicans think that 77 cents is more than enough for women. Just a few weeks ago, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker repealed an equal pay law, yet again turning the clocks back. When Mitt Romney campaigned in Wisconsin, he repeatedly called Scott Walker a "hero" and a "man of courage." And just last week, Republican Pete Hoekstra, running for Senate in Michigan against EMILY's List champion Debbie Stabenow, called the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act "a nuisance."

Let's get real: there's nothing courageous about attacking the economic security of women and their families. Rolling back equal pay laws is just another battle in the Republican War on Women. And we're simply not going to stand for it.

Click here to tell the GOP: we support equal pay for equal work for all American women:
http://emilyslist.org/action/20120417_equal_pay/.

How do we fight back against the Republican War on Women? We must go all out to take back the House and keep our Senate firewall of pro-choice Democratic women. Just like Senator Barbara Mikulski said, "Women make this country run -- we are business leaders, entrepreneurs, politicians, mothers and more." And we must stand together against this extremism and make sure women get fair and equal treatment.

It's up to us to ensure that 2012 is an historic year for American women. We must unite our voices against the backwards policies of Republicans like Scott Walker and Mitt Romney.

Click now to tell Republicans that women deserve more than 77 cents. Stand up for equal pay for women across this country.

The GOP would love it if we remained silent in the face of this draconian agenda. But I know that supporters like you will help protect our values of equality and fairness. Join me today in sending a clear message: we have had enough.

Thanks for everything you do.

All the best, Amy K. Dacey, Executive Director

20120417-12 18:20 Art Re: Emily's List Action: Tell the GOP Women Deserve Equal Pay

Done.

20120417-08 15:21 SteveG "'Broadcasters Are 'Against Transparency,' Says FCC Chairman"

Spread the word.

Broadcasters are hiding the real truth.

We have a right to know who is paying for the political advertisements.

"Broadcasters Are 'Against Transparency,' Says FCC Chairman" by Justin Elliott, ProPublica

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.propublica.org/article/broadcasters-are-against-transparency-says-fcc-chair>)

Television stations, which have been fighting a government proposal to make political ad data more accessible, came in for some harsh criticism yesterday at their annual trade show in Las Vegas. In a keynote speech Monday afternoon at the National Association of Broadcasters convention, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski unleashed on the industry.

"[S]ome in the broadcast industry have elected to position themselves against technology, against transparency and against journalism," said Genachowski, who favors the proposed rule, which would create an FCC website for political ad data.

The data is already public but kept only on paper at TV stations. (That's why ProPublica has launched Free the Files. We're inviting volunteers to visit the stations and help collect the data so anybody can see it. The data can provide information not available through traditional campaign finance filings.)

As we've previously reported, the National Association of Broadcasters, led by former Sen. Gordon Smith, has been lobbying the FCC to water down the proposed rule requiring stations to post the data. The commission will vote on it April 27.

Genachowski criticized television stations for opposing the transparency measure despite the "proud history of broadcast journalism."

Genachowski also answered broadcasters' objections point by point. Here's the key portion of his speech:

The arguments, made in the public record, shouldn't go unanswered.

First, cost. The argument is that meeting existing disclosure obligations online instead of on paper would be a heavy financial burden and indeed a "jobs destroyer." But the facts demonstrate the unsurprising conclusion that the cost of online disclosure is nominal and that, indeed, once the transition from paper to digital is complete, it will save money — save money for broadcasters and for other stakeholders: including political candidates, journalists and the public at large.

It's also noteworthy that any disclosure costs tied to putting the political file online relate directly to political advertising revenue received by broadcasters, which is estimated to be in the \$3 billion range this year, up by large amounts over past years.

Another argument that's been made: This isn't an FCC issue. That argument is refuted by the plain language of the law. Congress explicitly requires broadcasters to "maintain, and make available for public inspection, a complete record of a request to purchase broadcast time that is made by or on behalf of a legally qualified candidate, etc."

Congress placed this requirement in the Communications Act, and explicitly charged the FCC with the obligation to carry out these provisions. It gave both the FEC and the FCC roles, understanding the unique role broadcasters play and that some of the information Congress requires broadcasters to make public is never provided to the FEC, and what is provided is sent weeks or months later. The FCC's role here is clear, essential and very longstanding.

Another objection is that the disclosed information is "proprietary," particularly the rates broadcasters charge for political advertising. But, one, Congress explicitly requires broadcasters to disclose this information, and, two, broadcasters already do.

In other words, the argument against moving the public file online is that required broadcaster disclosures shouldn't be too public. But in a world where everything is going digital, why have a special exemption for broadcasters' political disclosure obligation?

20120417-09 17:11 SteveG Fw: The Other 98% Petition: Help Close the GE Tax Hole

from The Other 98%:

What do you call it when a major US corporation lobbies and receives its own, special tax law that is just for them, and then pays negative tax rates for years on end, netting billions of dollars in pure profit?

We call it the GE Tax Hole.

GE has paid a cumulative tax rate of negative 18% over the last 5 years - WTF?

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. Join our Tax Day letter to Congress: let's close the GE Tax Hole NOW!

<http://other98.com/close-the-ge-tax-hole-now/>

How does GE pull off this massive scam? By having their army of tax lobbyists craft, write and pass a tax law just for them: it's called Active Financing, but a better name is Active Tax-Dodging. Active Financing is an uber-complex scheme, designed to use loopholes in foreign leasing law to prevent GE's US profits from ever being taxed.

How much of a scam is the GE Tax Hole? Even GE's own tax lawyers joke publicly about how much of a scam it is: their top Tax attorney, John Samuels, publicly joked at a conference that they created "a heads-I-win, tails-I-break even situation."

GE ain't just hoping the American people don't notice - they are literally and openly laughing at us.

Let's make this a Tax Day that GE doesn't ever forget - join our joint letter to Congress NOW.

GE and other major corporations aren't just playing a short-term money game - they're shifting the burden of funding the common good onto us and our kids. In the mid-50s, according to Citizens For Tax Justice, corporate tax receipts accounted for roughly a third of all federal revenue - today, it accounts for a teeny-tiny 6.6%.

This corporate looting has to stop.

It's time to end the corporate tax holiday. It's time to close the GE Tax Hole. Join us.

Thank you for all you do to make this movement real.

Sincerely, Andrew Boyd, The Other 98%

20120417-10 17:34 SteveG Fw: MoveOn Petition: Support the Student Loan Forgiveness Act

from MoveOn:

Since 1999, average student loan debt has increased by a shameful 511%. In 2010, total outstanding student loan debt exceeded total outstanding credit card debt in America for the first time ever. In 2012, total outstanding student loan debt is expected to exceed \$1 trillion.

In response to this crisis, U.S. Representative Hansen Clarke of Michigan has just introduced H.R. 4170, the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012, which would extend a helping hand to those struggling under massive amounts of student loan debt.

That's why I created a petition to Rep. John Kline, Chairman of the House Education and the Workplace Committee; the United States House of Representatives and Senate; and President Barack Obama on SignOn.org, which says:

Total outstanding student loan debt in America is expected to exceed \$1 TRILLION this year. Millions of hardworking, taxpaying, educated Americans are being crushed under the weight of their educational debts, while the economy continues to sputter. Support a REAL economic stimulus and jobs plan. Support the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012 (H.R. 4170).

Will you sign the petition? Click here to add your name, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=272847&id=39566-18997482-pkHYGbx&t=2>

Thanks! –Robert Applebaum

20120417-11	17:42	SteveG	"Ted Nugent's Obama Comments Buzz Around Romney"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Gotta love Ted Nugent and the NRA!

"Ted Nugent's Obama Comments Buzz Around Romney" by Catalina Camia, USA Today

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/onpolitics/post/2012/04/ted-nugent-obama-threat-mitt-romney-/1?loc=interstitialskip#.T43jK9krmvI>)

Rocker Ted Nugent's controversial remarks about President Obama this weekend have put a spotlight on his support of Mitt Romney, as the likely GOP presidential nominee ratchets up his White House campaign.

Nugent slammed the Obama administration and singled out four members of the Supreme Court as not supporting the Constitution during his remarks at the National Rifle Association's annual conference in St. Louis. Nugent, best known for his hit "Cat Scratch Fever", is an NRA board member.

"If you want more of those kinds of evil anti-American people in the Supreme Court, then don't get involved and let Obama take office again," Nugent said Saturday. "Because I'll tell you this right now: If Barack Obama becomes the president in November again, I will either be dead or in jail by this time next year."

Nugent's comments sparked an outcry from Obama's allies. Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz said in an e-mail to supporters that Nugent's remarks were "clearly beyond the pale" and called on Romney to denounce them.

Andrea Saul, a spokeswoman for the Romney campaign, said in a statement, "Divisive language is offensive no matter what side of the political aisle it comes from. Mitt Romney believes everyone needs to be civil."

Asked about Nugent's comments, White House spokesman Jay Carney did not directly respond to its specifics. "We can't as a general rule police the statements of every supporter," Carney said, adding Obama is focused on issues such as the economy.

The U.S. Secret Service is looking into the matter. "We are aware of the situation, and we're conducting an appropriate follow-up," said Brian Leary, a Secret Service spokesman.

20120417-13	21:03	SteveBA	"Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now"
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---

I thought I'd send this article, after you spent a lot of time congratulating Obama for saving GM.

"Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" by Ed Morrissey, HotAir.com

Apr. 15, 2012, (<http://hotair.com/archives/2012/04/16/great-news-too-big-to-fail-banks-even-bigger-now/>)

More than two years ago, Barack Obama railed against "too big to fail" banks and pledged to prevent the "further consolidation" of the banking system. Did Obama succeed? According to Bloomberg, the five banks that held assets equal to 43% of the US economy in 2007 before the financial crisis and the bank bailout now control assets that equal 56% of the US economy:

Two years after President Barack Obama vowed to eliminate the danger of financial institutions becoming "too big to fail," the nation's largest banks are bigger than they were before the credit crisis.

Five banks – JPMorgan Chase & Co. (JPM), Bank of America Corp., Citigroup Inc., Wells Fargo & Co., and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. — held \$8.5 trillion in assets at the end of 2011, equal to 56 percent of the U.S. economy, according to the Federal Reserve.

Five years earlier, before the financial crisis, the largest banks' assets amounted to 43 percent of U.S. output. The Big Five today are about twice as large as they were a decade ago relative to the economy, sparking concern that trouble at a major bank would rock the financial system and force the government to step in as it did during the 2008 crunch.

"Market participants believe that nothing has changed, that too-big-to-fail is fully intact," said Gary Stern, former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

That specter is eroding faith in Obama's pledge that taxpayer-funded bailouts are a thing of the past. It is also exposing him to criticism from Federal Reserve officials, Republicans and Occupy Wall Street supporters, who see the concentration of bank power as a threat to economic stability.

Obama made these pledges in early 2010 in support of the Dodd-Frank bill. That passed in the summer of 2010 with some bipartisan support. After more than 18 months in effect, the only impact this has had on "too big to fail" (TBTF) is to raise capital requirements and an "unwinding" plan in case of financial failure. Those plans have already been called "unrealistic" by former TARP Inspector General Neil Barofsky, who scoffed at the notion that an institution with more than \$2 trillion in assets can be rationally "unwound," and insists that the Obama administration has made "almost no progress" on ending TBTF.

They're not talking about it much anymore, either. While JP Morgan's assets increased 15% since the time Obama signed Dodd-Frank, a search on the White House website for "too big to fail" + "banks" nets only 200 hits, most from two years ago. In contrast, a search for "contraception" gets 295 hits, which seems to indicate that the Obama administration considers contraception almost 50% more important than TBTF.

Okay, that may have been a little too snarky for your taste. How about comparing it to another major part of the Obama economic message? A search for "Buffett Rule" at the White House website results in 20,800 hits, 104 times the number for TBTF banks. That only makes sense if one thinks that the danger of 400 families complying with current tax code and a potential revenue of no more than \$5 billion a year in taxes (under static analysis) is 104 times more important than the consolidation of the banking industry and the continuance of the need for taxpayers to backstop huge banks to keep the American financial system from collapsing.

This is what passes for priorities in Obamanomics and in governance in the Hope and Change era.

20120417-14	21:18	SteveBA	Fw: After Three Years of Obama...Here's Your Change!
-------------	-------	---------	--

More good news about your buddy Obama.

[Source of original email unknown]

After three years of Obama.... Here's your change!

(<http://juniperinthedesert.blogspot.com/2012/03/all-change-you-want-and-more-courtesy.html>)

	January 2009	TODAY	% chg	Source
Avg. Retail price/gallon gas in U.S.	\$1.83	\$3.44	84%	1
Crude oil, European Brent (barrel)	\$43..48	\$99..02	127.7%	2
Crude oil, West TX Inter. (barrel)	\$38..74	\$91..38	135.9%	2
Corn, No.2 yellow, Central IL	\$3.56	\$6.33	78.1%	2
Soybeans, No. 1 yellow, IL	\$9.66	\$13..75	42.3%	2
Sugar, cane, raw, world, lb. Fob	\$13..37	\$35..39	164.7%	2
Unemployment rate, non-farm, overall	7.6%	9.4%	23.7%	3
Unemployment rate, blacks	12.6%	15.8%	25.4%	3
Number of unemployed	11,616,000	14,485,000	24.7%	3
Number of fed. Employees	2,779,000	2,840,000	2.2%	3
Real median household income	\$50,112	\$49,777	-0.7%	4
Number of food stamp recipients	31,983,716	43,200,878	35.1%	5
Number of unemployment benefit recipients	7,526,598	9,193,838	22.2%	6
Number of long-term unemployed	2,600,000	6,400,000	146.2%	3
Poverty rate, individuals	13.2%	14.3%	8.3%	4
People in poverty in U.S.	39,800,000	43,600,000	9.5%	4
U.S. Rank in Economic Freedom World Rankings	5	9	n/a	10
Present Situation Index	29.9	23.5	-21.4%	11
Failed banks	140	164	17.1%	12
U.S. Dollar versus Japanese yen exchange rate	89.76	82.03	-8.6%	2
U.S. Money supply, M1, in billions	1,575.1	1,865.7	18.4%	13
U.S. Money supply, M2, in billions	8,310.9	8,852.3	6.5%	13
National debt, in trillions	\$10..627	\$14..052	32.2%	14

Sources: (1) U.S. Energy Information Administration; (2) Wall Street Journal; (3) Bureau of Labor Statistics; (4) Census Bureau; (5) USDA; (6) U.S. Dept. Of Labor; (7) FHFA; (8) Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller; (9) RealtyTrac; (10) Heritage Foundation and WSJ; (11) The Conference Board; (12) FDIC; (13) Federal Reserve; (14) U.S. Treasury.

Just take this last item: In the last two years we have accumulated national debt at a rate more than 27 times as fast as during the rest of our entire nation's history.

Over 27 times as fast. Metaphorically speaking, if you are driving in the right lane doing 65 MPH and a car rockets past you in the left lane. 27 times faster, it would be doing 7,555 MPH!

So, tell me again, what is it about Obama that makes him so brilliant and impressive? Can't think of anything? Don't worry. He's done all this in 29 months -- so you'll have about 11 months to come up with an answer. Every statement in this email is factual and directly attributable to Barack Hussein Obama. Every bumble is a matter of record and completely verifiable.

EVERYONE SHOULD READ THIS... I WONDER HOW MANY WILL FORWARD THIS?



"It is well that the people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system, for if they did, I believe there would be a REVOLUTION before tomorrow morning."

- Henry Ford

FREE YOUR MIND and THINK

[http://journals.worldnomads.com/kurenai/story/26114/Japan/The-kouyou-\(red-leaves\)-of-Kyoto](http://journals.worldnomads.com/kurenai/story/26114/Japan/The-kouyou-(red-leaves)-of-Kyoto)

Toji Temple, Kyoto, Japan



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #120 — APR. 19, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

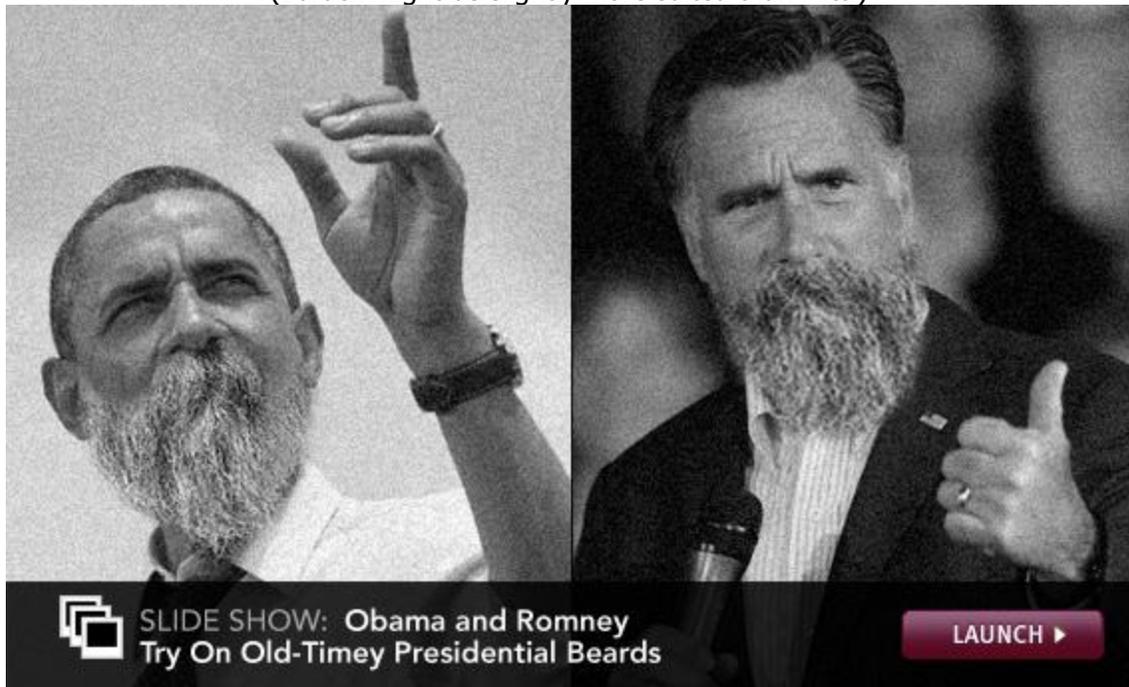
Maybe America Just Needs More Hair?

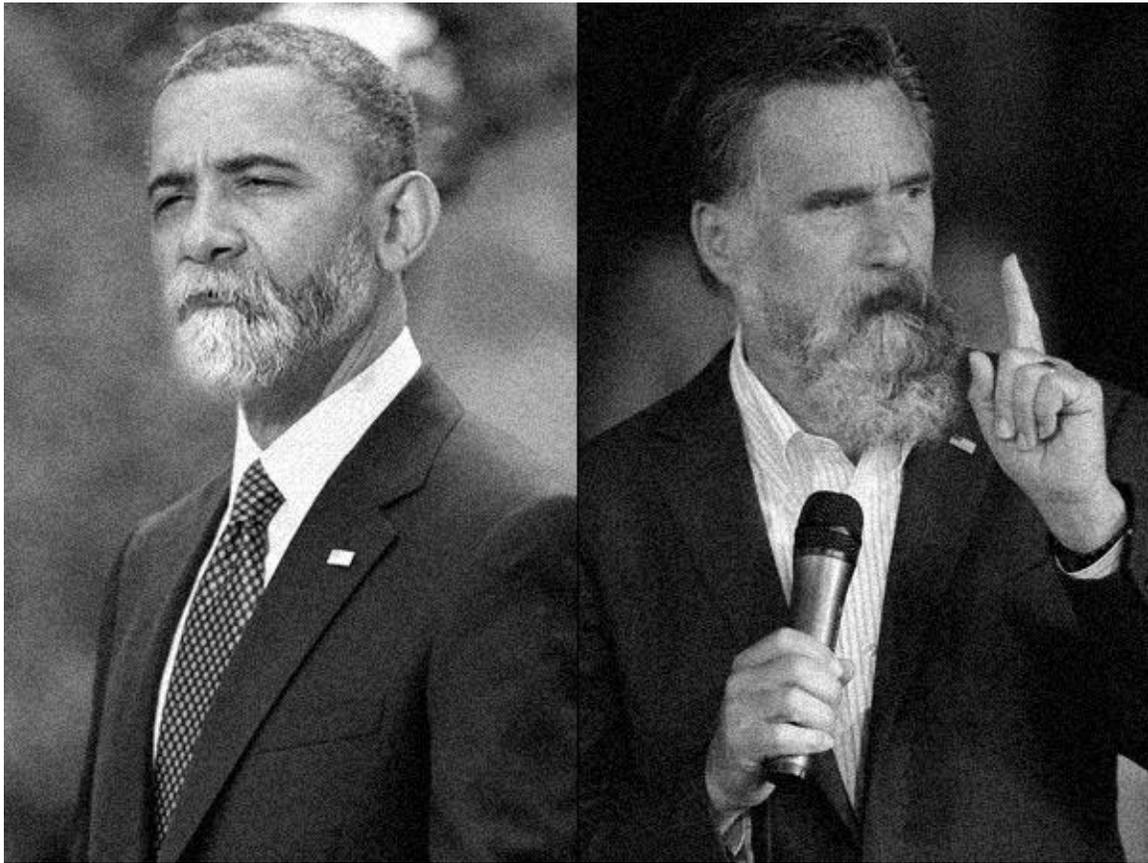
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 19, 2012)

In those madcap, boisterous, highly successful days of yore, Presidents wore facial hair. Just think of Lincoln and our other Indiana hero, Benjamin Harrison (not the fort). Perhaps we'd be more respected in foreign circles if our leaders looked more distinguished? Or just a little bit more like Wavy Gravy? In our wildest dreams, the President would pick-up an electric guitar and give a speech something like this:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_EFdod4YDo.

(Barack might be slightly more suited than Mitt!)





Benjamin Harrison, 23rd president of the United States, 1889-1893.
(http://www.slate.com/slideshows/news_and_politics/presidential-beards.html)

"Lincoln Had One. So Did Uncle Sam." by Justin Peters, Slate

Apr. 18, 2012,

(http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2012/04/beards_in_politics_there_hasn_t_been_a_bearde_d_major_party_presidential_nominee_in_almost_100_years_why_single.html)

(Why don't politicians today grow beards?)

Though the gentlemen who vied for the Republican presidential nomination disagreed on many things, from tax policy to contraception to the feasibility of establishing a colony on the moon, there's one critical issue on which they were firmly in accord: facial hair. This was true of the eventual nominees in the last election, and the one before that, and in every other presidential contest going back to 1916. One hundred years ago, two of the four men running for president were proudly hirsute, as were two of the four vice-presidential candidates. Today, the sitting president can't grow whiskers and his challengers wouldn't dare try. When did the beard lose its political prestige?

In his delightful 1930 monograph *Concerning Beards*, Edwin Valentine Mitchell notes that "the fortunes of the beard have always fluctuated through the ages. It flourishes for a time in full splendor, then diminishes in size, and finally disappears altogether, only to burst forth once more in all its former glory." In much of the premodern era, a healthy beard connoted influence and high status; Mitchell says that "one ancient king actually made a terrible scene because the reigning head of another state sent a beardless youth upon a political errand to his court." The opposite is true, too: Men pressed into servitude were often shorn of their beards as a sign of subjugation.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, facial hair had gone out of style in America, explains Victoria Sherrow in her *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History*. And, indeed, the first 15 U.S. presidents were beardless, though John Quincy Adams did sport a rather nice pair of muttonchops. A sign of the times: In 1830, a man named Joseph Palmer was jailed for a year in Fitchburg, Mass., after fending off four men who attempted to forcibly rid him of his widely loathed beard. (Palmer's gravesite is marked with a monument that reads "Persecuted for Wearing the Beard.")

In the mid-1800s, whiskers made a comeback in American political life—or, as Reginald Reynolds put it in his odd 1950 volume, *Beards*, "a beard was becoming almost as necessary as a Bible to a rising demagogue." Abraham Lincoln began his presidency as a baby-faced rube from rural Illinois, governing a country on the brink of collapse. After growing a beard at the behest of a schoolgirl, he vanquished the South and passed into legend.

Every subsequent president up to William Howard Taft wore some sort of facial hair, except for Andrew Johnson, who was impeached, and William McKinley, who was assassinated. If you wanted the Republican Party's nomination, a beard was as necessary then as a Reagan fetish is now.

That changed in the early 1900s, likely due to the advent of the Gillette safety razor, which debuted in 1903 and eased the performance of what had long been a hated and bloody chore. Soon thereafter, the military banned beards, as they interfered with the seal on gas masks. By 1930, Edwin Valentine Mitchell would write that, "In this regimented age the simple possession of a beard is enough to mark as curious any young man who has the courage to grow one."

In politics, that's been the case ever since. No sitting president has worn facial hair since Taft. Charles Evans Hughes was the last bearded major-party presidential nominee; he lost to Woodrow Wilson in 1916. Today, it's received wisdom that candidates should be clean-shaven. "Except for a brief window from Sept. 11 to 2003-2004, most of the last 15 years in politics have been about change, and a wizened graybeard doesn't really convey change," says Jeff Jacobs, creative director and founder of NextGen Persuasion, a campaign consultancy firm. "In 500 campaigns I've almost never had a conversation with a candidate about whether or not to have facial hair," explains Democratic media consultant John Rowley. "It's almost like conventional wisdom about facial hair has already hit candidates before they even run."

The beard's absence from modern American politics can be partially blamed on the two scourges of the 20th century: Communists and hippies. For many years, wearing a full beard marked you as the sort of fellow who had Das Kapital stashed somewhere on his person. In the 1960s, the more-or-less concurrent rise of Fidel Castro in Cuba and student radicals at home reinforced the stereotype of beard-wearers as America-hating no-goodniks. The stigma persists to this day: No candidate wants to risk alienating elderly voters with a gratuitous resemblance to Wavy Gravy.

A few politicians have managed to win elective office in spite of their hairy visages. Moderate, beard-having Ohio Republican Steve LaTourette has been a House stalwart since 1995. Who liked Rep. David Obey's beard? The voters of Wisconsin's seventh district did: They elected its wearer to 21 consecutive terms before Obey retired in 2011. Sen. Tom Coburn sometimes wears a beard, and its occasional appearance is eagerly awaited by Hill types. Coburn's beard even has its own tribute Twitter account, which boots up whenever the senator's whiskers begin to sprout. (Sample tweet: "i've asked tom to spend a few minutes combing me before tonight's #SOTU, i must maintain my supple virility.")

But mostly, a list of contemporary bearded politicians is a roster of the inept and inessential. There's former New Jersey governor Jon Corzine, who's currently embroiled in a massive financial scandal. Florida Rep. Alcee Hastings was impeached and removed from office while serving as a federal judge in the 1980s. Ex-New York governor David Paterson's three-year tenure did much to improve the fortunes of Saturday Night Live. Cantankerous Alaska congressman Don Young, known as "Mr. Pork," has seemingly been ostracized from the beard community. ("Young is kind of a disgrace to beards around the world," wrote one member of a beard-centric message board). The oddly bearded jurist Robert Bork is the only person in the last 40 years to have his Supreme Court nomination rejected by the Senate. Ben Bernanke is the first beard-wearer to chair the Federal Reserve; he is currently one of the most-loathed men in America.

Sometimes, a beard makes it seem like a politician is either emerging from or embarking on a three-day Smirnoff bender. "A lot of times people associate beards with what happens after you lose a campaign and you let yourself go," says Jacobs. Indeed, one need only picture a dazed, broken Al Gore circa 2001, puffy and bearded like a white-collar woodsman gone to seed, to understand why politicians identify facial hair with failure and shame. There are other negative connotations, too. "One misperception is that somebody who has a beard is lazy and can't be bothered to shave, sort of on par with somebody who's too lazy to brush his teeth," says Phil Olsen, the founder and self-appointed captain of Beard Team USA, who would know. "Some people perceive beards as disrespectful."

When I asked John Rowley if he could think of a circumstance when he might actually advise a candidate to grow facial hair, he paused for a few seconds. "Maybe when people have a lot of scars on their face from an accident," he finally answered.

Barring a surge in the number of disfigured men running for office, voters shouldn't expect the political beard to re-emerge anytime soon. Because the real reason most candidates don't have beards is because most men don't have beards, and there's nothing to be gained by deviating from the mainstream. "Candidates get criticized mercilessly on what their appearance is, so they go to great lengths to get a political uniform down that isn't too distracting," says Rowley. Which makes sense: The last thing a candidate wants is for his crazy beard to distract from his sober, rational message about living on the moon.

And yet, though beards might not be all that common, they're actually well received among the general population. "I do a lot of work with visual communications, facial expressions, how people read faces," says Jeff Jacobs. "Facial hair poses no distraction or causes no aversions whatsoever." Academic research bears this out: In a 1990 paper for the journal *Social Behavior and Personality*, J. Ann Reed and Elizabeth M. Blunk reported "consistently more positive perceptions of social/physical attractiveness, personality, competency, and composure for men with facial hair." More recently, researchers Barnaby J. Dixson and Paul L. Vasey rejected the notion that "facial hair decreases a male's perceived social status because it is associated with traits such as vagrancy." In fact, participants in their study "rated bearded men as having higher social status than clean-shaven men."

Are there any politicians whose campaigns might have been helped if they had worn beards? "You put John Kerry in the room with a well-groomed beard, and it makes it a lot harder for that flip-flopper charge to stick," says Jacobs. "He seems like a guy who changes his positions because they evolve, and because he thinks about things." Former

New Mexico governor Bill Richardson ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008, only to drop out after getting no traction in Iowa and New Hampshire. Soon thereafter, he grew a beard; if he had had one during the primaries, voters might not have been scared off by his hideous double chin. And despite his name, Jon Huntsman struck this year's Republican primary voters as the sort of person who might faint in terror if invited pheasant-shooting. A beard might have lent his campaign a solidity that it so desperately lacked.

Beards won't take hold in politics, it seems, until a bearded candidate wins a high-profile election. Politicians are unabashed copycats and generally won't try a new campaign strategy until it's been proven to work. Howard Dean's successful use of online organizing in the 2004 presidential primaries paved the way for every digital campaign tactic in use today. Bill Clinton's smooth jazz stylings in 1992 led directly to the "Saxophone Congress" of 1994.

Though the prospective 2016 presidential candidates are, thus far, a beardless lot, there's still plenty of time to establish an exploratory committee for someone like Beard Team USA captain Phil Olsen, who is perhaps the best hope for the future of American political beards. "We love America, and we're growing beards for America," Olsen says of himself and his teammates. Someone's got to.

20120418-01	09:57	Pam	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 17, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Interesting article, and I understand why you sent it, but I don't buy its whole premise. I agree that the banks should be split back into commercial and investment, which would protect "ordinary" account holders. I think the other statistics about the number of hits on the web about this or that are pretty irrelevant. Whatever the hot topic of the day, it's going to get a lot of hits. And it's not a question of either/or. Either Obama cares about the economy and not contraception, or he cares more about contraception than jobs: this is a false dichotomy. We need to decentralize banks (IMHO) AND save GM (whose failure would have ruined our economy, whether you approve of GM or not) AND create jobs (even if this means some of them are govt. jobs; the private sector obviously isn't doing enough) AND get the hell out of Afghanistan AND negotiate with Iran and North Korea AND help small business owners AND make sure everyone has affordable health insurance (the CHEAPEST way would be universal coverage/ single payer). Am I leaving anything out? These are huge problems. NO ONE could have solved them all in three years. I think Obama has done a pretty good job. He's a pragmatist, and he weighs benefits against costs. He realizes that compromise is not defeat. He's not perfect, but he's learned a lot, and he has a steady hand. He doesn't go shooting off his mouth about making the moon a state or invading the Middle East. Who knows what Romney would do? I don't believe he's crazy (unlike others I could name), but he's a bit too trigger happy for my taste--and he has no military experience. I think Hillary has done a far better job than the Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Cheney triumvirate. Obama stands firm vis a vis Iran and North Korea, but he doesn't threaten Armageddon. Romney sounds like he wants to turn us into Sparta. I think Obama is more like Pericles, admittedly without the military chops. It's a Big Picture, and Obama is acutely aware of that. I'm not sure Romney "gets it."

20120418-08	15:05	SteveG	Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to Pam)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Banks do need a lot of work, but they also have good lobbyists that don't want anything done except repeal what rules do exist. If Obama was not president it would mean that McCain would be president. In all probability we would have troops in Libya, troops or at least air strikes in Syria – neither of which would be funded.

We can argue all day long about any president or any issue, but until lobbying is under control, until corporations/people cannot buy elections through PAC's we sit where we do. Look at today's Friends of the Middle and the quote of Henry Ford – the banking systems has been screwed up for scores of years and will continue for scores of years as government/banks/lobbyists seem to like the status quo.

[20120418-12](#) 18:41 SteveBA Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveG)

You confidently forget Dodd frank bill that he signed was supposed to solve this problem. Your argument that it would have worse with is flawed.

[20120418-15](#) 21:34 SteveBA Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to Pam)

The I point is that Obama is not accomplishing anything positive, in the areas that he promised hope and change. His view is that big government will solve all of our problems. Think of the irony when he blasted the banks and others for having a convention in vegas and 3years later the first lady and family is visiting Vegas on our dime and his GSA is spending millions of our dollars partying in Vegas. The guy is a pure politician and uses any topic for his purpose. He spends more time on contraception than big banks. His Dodd frank bill has created this problem.

[20120418-17](#) 23:30 SteveG Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA)

You cannot take 50 years of decreasing banking regulations to be corrected with one bill after an economic downturn such as we had. I do not believe I argued anything would have been worse, but I argued that it would have been different. Every argument is flawed depending on the perspective taken. Obama has not been the best and Reagan was not the best, just saying. All degrees of interpretations are based on one's frame of reference.

[20120418-18](#) 23:58 SteveB Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA)

I'm happy you're taking part in the discussion. But what is the problem you have with Dodd-Frank? What problem, exactly, has it created?

I don't see how President Obama has spent any time on contraception, except maybe in his own bedroom. You must be thinking about the news cycles, not the executive branch. And any time spent has been forced by Republican actions the majority of us find reprehensible.

Otherwise, most Democrats, including Mr. Obama, I'm sure, take contraception as a given and don't need to waste any time thinking about it. That's just what Rick Santorum and the Republicans do.

Ya...Republicans never party on the taxpayers' dime. Nobody ever said Democrats aren't guilty of some of the same excesses of power as Republicans, just fewer of them.

We kill at every step, not only in wars, riots, and executions. We kill when we close our eyes to poverty, suffering, and shame... In the same way all disrespect for life, all hardheartedness, all indifference, all contempt is, in the eyes of the believer, nothing else than killing. It is possible to kill not only what is in the present, but also what is in the future. With just a little skepticism we can kill a good deal of the future in a young person. Life is waiting everywhere. The future is flowering everywhere. We see only a small part of it and step on much of it with our feet. We kill with every step.

~ Hermann Hesse, Nobel Laureate



from Consumers Union:

No tax refund this year? Well, we dug around and found health insurance companies could owe consumers big refunds this summer, thanks to the new healthcare law!

One Aetna company is estimated to owe \$46 million to customers nationwide. That's real money back in your pockets.

Savings are adding up in states too. A WellPoint insurer in Missouri may pay out \$29 million to individual and small-business policyholders. And Florida small-businesses using Blue Cross Blue Shield are expecting \$45 million in refunds – a boost to struggling entrepreneurs.

But lobbyists are still trying to undermine this law. Next week House members will take up a bill that will scale back rate cuts and refunds. And your state Insurance Commissioner who helps enforce the law is under pressure to back off as well.

Let the law work! Tell your leaders to support insurance rate cuts and refunds.

Getting a handle on insurance costs is critical for our nation. Insurers now can't spend more than 20 percent of your premium on their administrative costs, CEO salaries and excessive profits. Spend more, and they must lower rates or refund the difference.

Our early analysis found this incentive is working. Countless insurance companies are spending more of your dollars on needed medical care and less on their overhead. And we're discovering more expected refunds and savings each day.

Unfortunately, these savings are under attack right now! Take action now:

<https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=2651&JServSessionIdr004=r9mcci21i5.app244a>

Insurance companies hate the idea of giving your money back. Make sure they're held to it by having your friends and family join you in taking action. Refunds are due this summer. It's your money, fight for it!

Sincerely, DeAnn Friedholm, YourHealthSecurity.org

20120418-04	13:07	SteveB	"The Importance of Being Sassy"
-------------	-------	--------	---------------------------------

"The Importance of Being Sassy" by Sven Eberlein, *Yes! Magazine*/NationofChange

Apr. 18, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/importance-being-sassy-1334755018>)

Since long before Abbie Hoffman dropped dollar bills over the New York Stock Exchange—unleashing hilarity as Wall Street traders scurried to gather up cash—humor has been a potent political weapon. It can expose the absurdities and inequities of consumer society. It doesn't need big bucks to be effective or contagious—Occupy has shown that creativity and imagination can be powerful enough to build a national movement. And the Internet and social networking can allow a well-orchestrated prank to reach millions in minutes. Want to use your wit to confront corporate power? Here are creative and inspiring examples.

Truth in Advertising

Corporations may try to influence our perceptions through advertising, but who's to say activists can't give their messages a little editing? San Francisco's Billboard Liberation Front has been "improving" ads for clients ranging from Wachovia Bank to McDonald's for more than 30 years. One recent campaign helped telecommunications giant AT&T refine its message from an obtuse "AT&T works in more places, like Chilondoscow" (Chicago, London, Moscow, get it?) to the more discerning "AT&T works in more places, like NSA Headquarters."

"Not only were we helping NSA cut through the cumbersome red tape of the FISA system, we were also helping our customers by handing over their emails and phone records to the government," read a statement to press from James Croppy, designated by the Billboard Liberation Front as the "AT&T vice president of homeland security."

Other activists have fought back by getting their own ad space. Canadian artist Franke James launched a crowd-funded ad campaign on bus shelters throughout Ottawa, using her visual essays to call out the Harper administration's coddling of dirty oil industries. "It's a great way to change the conversation from consuming stuff to making positive social change happen," says James.

Mobbing the Lobby

The mall, the bank lobby, the retail store—the spaces where ordinary people interact with corporations—are ideal locations for political theater that raises awareness.

Reverend Billy and his "Church of Stop Shopping" are a band of activists on a mission to draw attention to the problems of consumerism. Two years ago, they decided to hold their Easter Sunday service at JPMorgan Chase's Astor Place branch in Manhattan.

"This is a call to bring the earth back to the bank that has financed 80 percent of the mountaintop removal strip-mining in Appalachia," announced Reverend Billy.

Armed with soil sent by activists from West Virginia's Coal River Valley, they built a little mountain sculpture in front of the ATMs, singing, "There's a mountain in my lobby!"

Two months later, Chase announced that it would subject all mountaintop removal financing to more extensive review and revealed that it was no longer serving coal company Massey Energy. The Reverend doesn't claim credit, but he believes the church's 18-branch campaign may have been "the mosquito in [Chase's] tent."

Similarly, in August 2010, a progressive group called the Backbone Campaign used the floor of a Target retail store to stage a flash mob—and draw attention to the Citizens United Supreme Court ruling that lets corporations give unlimited campaign contributions. (Target gave \$150,000 to the anti-gay, anti-worker candidate for governor of Minnesota.) On a quiet day inside a Seattle Target branch, a group of ordinary-looking people standing beside shopping carts broke into song and dance as a brass band played the 1980s hit "People are People"—with new words and the catchy chorus line, "Target ain't people, so why should it be / allowed to play around with our democracy?"

The 5-minute, GLEE-style dance party got some of the other shoppers visibly animated and shaking their booties. The YouTube video of the event, created by Agit-Pop Communications, went viral, with over 1.5 million hits.

Running for Office as a "Corporate Person"

The absurdity of the legal precedent that says corporations are people is hard to ignore. Eric Hensal decided to mock corporate personhood by testing out whether a corporation could run for office. The Murray Hill Inc. for Congress campaign began with a proposal written on a napkin at a Tastee Diner. "I'm driving to meet someone for breakfast one morning, the Citizens United decision comes on, and I'm like, the hell with it, I'm running my corporation for Congress," says Hensal, owner of the small, Silver Spring, Md., public relations company. "Murray Hill Inc. for Congress puts a boring subject like campaign finance on a human scale," says Hensal. "People laugh, but they appreciate the underlying truth behind it."

Impersonating a Corporation

Enbridge, an oil company with a long record of spills, planning a pipeline more than 700 miles long through pristine British Columbia wilderness—what could possibly go wrong? Enter the Yes Men's "MyHairCares" campaign, a flurry of fake press releases under the Enbridge name asking more than 1,000 salons across Canada to collect hair to mop up the oil giant's future spills.

For years, Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, a.k.a. The Yes Men, have been drawing attention to corporate abuses by pretending to be corporate spokesmen. The Yes Lab for Creative Activism's new "project wizard" allows anyone to cook up the next prank. "Nothing we do is rocket science," says Bichlbaum. "After coming up with a funny project idea, it's just a matter of applying elbow grease and connecting with the right people."

Mic Check

"Mic check?" someone shouts. "MIC CHECK!" the crowd echoes, almost in unison. After the New York police banned the use of electronic amplification in Zuccotti Park, necessity compelled the first Occupiers to prove that the power of a crowd was enough to amplify the messages of the 99 percent. The simple human microphone has come to signify the Occupy movement's resilience and adaptability. Now, this cheeky "technology" has become a tool for disrupting business as usual with righteous rants. A crowd begins an almost unstoppable call and repeat. They overpower a luncheon at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce or interrupt Black Friday sales at Walmart to announce to shoppers that "Walmart could fire its employees for the mere mention of forming a workers' union."

Disorder in the Court

What can match the legal power of corporations? At a courthouse in Brooklyn, a simple song was enough to drown out the proceedings. In October 2011, members of Organizing for Occupation (O4O), a group of New York City residents formed to respond to the housing crisis, disrupted a foreclosure auction with a song written specially for the arbiter of (in)justice. "Mrs. Auctioneer," they sang, sadly and beautifully, "all the people here are asking you to hold all the sales right now. We're hoping to survive, but we don't know how." While the singers got escorted out of the courtroom in plastic handcuffs after half an hour, their heroic anthem apparently reached the hearts of potential

buyers, and according to reports in Village Voice, only one of the three buildings set to be auctioned that day was sold.

(Sven Eberlein wrote this article for *9 Strategies to End Corporate Rule*, the Spring 2012 issue of *YES! Magazine*. Sven is a freelance writer living in San Francisco, with roots in Germany.)

[20120418-05](#)

13:53

SteveG

Fw: Working America Action: Tell DeMarco: Get Moving to Help Underwater Homeowners!

From WorkingAmerica.org:

One man has been single-handedly blocking urgently needed relief for millions of homeowners caught in the upheaval of the mortgage crisis.

Federal Housing Finance Agency Acting Director Edward DeMarco is an obscure federal bureaucrat most Americans have never heard of. Despite being unknown, he has been the main roadblock to writing off principal for homes that are "underwater." The decision to help underwater homeowners is his to make, and he needs to do it.

With help from supporters like you, we're launching a bold effort to rally Americans to stand up to DeMarco with one clear and urgent message: Get Moving!

We're fanning out across America, going door to door to spread the message and gather petition signatures. And as one of our key supporters, I'm asking you to get the ball rolling by being one of the first to add your name to our petition.

Tell DeMarco: Get moving on relief for underwater homeowners!

http://action.workingamerica.org/c/575/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=4211

Until now, DeMarco has barely considered doing what housing experts and even Congress and President Obama recommend—writing off principal balances for distressed homeowners who owe the bank more than their homes are worth.

Last Tuesday DeMarco signaled he may consider some write-downs. If he means it, this is a step in the right direction. He needs to know homeowners are paying attention. That's why we've set a goal of 4,000 signatures by April 25—the day we'll hand-deliver your petitions directly to Federal Housing Finance Agency headquarters.

With one out of every five mortgages in the nation currently underwater like this, tens of millions of working families need help NOW. It's high time for DeMarco to get moving.

Sign the petition before our 4/25 deadline, and we'll hand-deliver your message.

Ed DeMarco needs to understand one thing: If he's willing to help, he needs to hurry up and get the job done. Together, you and I are going to drive that message home in a big way.

Thanks for speaking out, Christian Norton, Communications Director, Working America

[20120418-06](#)

14:38

SteveG

"Marchers Protest Big Banks, Big Salaries in Downtown Yakima"

["Marchers Protest Big Banks, Big Salaries in Downtown Yakima" by Mike Faulk, *Yakima Herald-Republic*](#)

Apr. 18, 2012, (<http://www.yakima-herald.com/stories/2012/04/18/marchers-protest-big-banks-big-salaries-in-downtown-yakima>)

(YAKIMA, Wash.) On Tuesday afternoon when plenty of people were hurrying to file their taxes, Occupy Yakima marched to point out the disparities they see in who pays their fair share to the government.

The group pulled together about 20 protesters to march from Millennium Plaza to the Chase Bank branch at the corner of North Third Street and Yakima Avenue while echoing themes of the Occupy Wall Street movement that caught on across the nation last year.

Protester Melvin Neifert, 36, said similar groups were organizing in front of banks around the country Tuesday as part of a national "Tax Day Protest." Neifert and others said big banks used government bailouts for the benefit of their executives while paying no mind to the livelihoods of their employees or customers.

"We demand the 1 percent pay their fair share," Neifert said, referring to the top 1 percent of income earners in the United States.

Protesters signed a poster-size petition calling on JPMorgan Chase, the national bank under which the local Chase branch operates, to increase compensation for its rank-and-file employees and for the federal Financial Stability Oversight Council to break up the bank's assets because they see it as too large to fairly manage.

"It's more symbolic than anything," Neifert said.

Protester Glenda Phillips, 54, said the stock market crash in 2008 wrecked the investments she'd made for retirement. Now Phillips says she doesn't know when she will be able to retire, while banks, such as Chase, become bigger and more profitable.

"All the dreams I was saving for I'm seeing slip through my fingers," Phillips said.

The local Chase manager said he wasn't authorized to speak to the media. He directed calls to a spokesman in Chicago, who referred calls to a Seattle spokeswoman, who did not return several messages.

Protest organizer Robert Beal, 58, said Occupy Yakima chose the downtown branch because it's the main street version of the large national banks that continue to accrue wealth while average Americans struggle to get by nearly five years after the recession began. Beal said the likelihood of another crash hasn't been reduced, it's greater than ever.

"The incentives to speculate and manipulate markets are still there," Beal said. "They have not changed."

[Way to go, Yakima! –SteveB]

20120418-10	15:42	Pam	Re: "Marchers Protest Big Banks, Big Salaries in Downtown Yakima" (reply to SteveG)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Right on!

20120418-07	14:42	SteveB	From the Right: "Another Day, Another Administration Witch Hunt"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

I'm not sure it can really be done, but I've been pushing for years to end speculation in the oil and commodity markets. All that has to happen is this: If you buy a futures contract, you have to take delivery or face a stiff penalty when you sell. It's that simple, but it must be done in all major markets, which the Chinese are starting to bypass, thus eliminating, for them, the cost of speculation. My plan would have no negative effects on businesses who buy oil and prices would come down. The demand from speculators is artificial and artificially raises prices. This is why the conservatives love them.

"Another Day, Another Administration Witch Hunt" by David Harsanyi, *Human Events*

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=50917>)

So many imaginary villains and so little time.

This week, President Barack Obama is taking the fight to "oil speculators" and "market manipulation" (nee "free enterprise"), demanding that traders put up more money for transactions and government ratchet up enforcement and monitoring. "None of these will bring gas prices down overnight," Obama helpfully explained in his news conference. "But they will prevent market manipulation and help protect consumers."

No, they won't. They'd probably hurt consumers, and they would doubtlessly raise the cost of doing business. So for a few hundred words, let's treat populist agitation as if it were earnest policy.

Let's start by being thankful for oil speculation -- no matter what the motivation of those involved might be. To begin with, speculation allows companies with exposure to fluctuating commodity prices to hedge against rising costs by locking in. Sometimes the bet pays off; other times it doesn't. But risk and profit are not yet crimes.

Oil speculation also offers consumers and investors information about the future that can help them make informed long-term decisions. Speculators trade commodities based on the information available in the marketplace. They reflect reality; they don't create it.

But sometimes, unfortunate as it is, prices will rise. "Gouging," the close scaremongering cousin of "speculation," helps persuade consumers not to use what they don't need. It incentivizes to modify behavior -- our driving habits or the size of our cars. We conserve more when prices are higher, so we avoid shortages, and producers intensify their production. (Funny how Democrats get this concept when writing energy policy designed to artificially spike fossil fuel prices.)

The president surely understands, as well. He knows that a fungible commodity's price is driven by demand and geopolitical events beyond the control of speculators or, for the most part, Washington. There are billions of people in China, India and elsewhere who are new consumers of oil -- and they are better off for it. We are better off for it.

Or put it this way: Natural gas prices are trading so cheaply that it's no longer profitable to drill for most companies. According to *Businessweek*, there are only 624 operating drills in the United States, the fewest since April 2002. So I guess natural gas speculators forgot to manipulate the world market this month. Or do oil manipulators only work part time? Confusing.

[But these are drills, not pumping rigs! Sounds like a hell of a lot to me! BrentR? --SteveB]

Where, after all, is the president's evidence that oil speculation is driving up oil prices? The White House "Fact Sheet" on the matter offers plenty of solutions to a problem it hasn't even proved exists. Why are we going to spend another \$52 million -- and who-knows-what in political witch hunt trials -- on a theory that plays on assumptions and flourishes in the progressive blogosphere?

Obviously, much of this is driven by political realities and accusations by Republicans that the president isn't doing enough to curb rising oil prices. George W. Bush also talked about manipulation nonsense, and I'm sure it's gone on forever.

So it's also worth noting that Washington, regrettably enough, already has the power to enact the counterproductive regulations the president is asking for. Nothing needs to be passed. It was only last year when Obama formed a special task force designed to find manipulation in the oil market and to ferret out incidents of gas gouging.

It is rare when Washington gives a topic what it deserves. But the Oil and Gas Price Fraud Working Group has given the American people exactly what the topic deserves: zip.

from MoveOn:

The 99% Spring has arrived! Over the past week, hundreds of organizations ran more than 1,000 nonviolent direct action trainings nationwide for more than 45,000 people—all aimed at building a huge wave of progressive action this spring to confront the 1%.

MoveOn members joined allies from labor unions, community organizations, the Occupy movement, environmental groups, and more. We prepared ourselves to take action in the spirit of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. because we all agree that our system is fundamentally broken and we need to create great change.

The trainings last week were inspiring, but don't worry—if you missed them you can still join in right from your computer at home, work, or school! Check out the new online version of the training—and then we'll connect you to actions happening in your area.

Click here to get started training online: <http://training.the99spring.com/training/99spring/>

Thanks for all you do.

–Lenore, Carrie, Robin, Wes, and the rest of the team

from People for the American Way (PFAW):

More evidence that PFAW supporters' activism is working: the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has announced that it is disbanding its "Public Safety and Elections Task Force," the working group responsible for advancing model legislation like the controversial Voter ID and "Shoot First" gun laws that have proliferated around the country. Of course the move is a transparent attempt to stem the hemorrhaging of support ALEC's facing, thanks in large part to the efforts of PFAW supporters like you, but it's big symbolic victory and shows we have them on the defensive.

ALEC's trying to whitewash their role pushing extreme legislation that endangers the safety and lives of Americans - but we won't let them.

ALEC now claims they will only focus on legislation that will 'put the economy back to work,' but will they work to undo the immense harm that have already caused? And it begs the question of how they will use a so called 'jobs agenda' to justify laws -- which they presumably will still be pushing -- that undermine workers' rights, privatize public education, and make it harder to hold corporations accountable for poisoning our air and water or selling us dangerous and defective products. We will continue to work with our friends to shine a light on ALEC's agenda and hold members accountable for supporting that agenda.

Help hold ALEC accountable -- join our petition now to tell companies to withdraw their support from the influential right-wing group!

<http://site.pfaw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ditchalec&autologin=true>

Yesterday, in another major victory, Blue Cross Blue Shield became the latest company to pull out of ALEC. We are going to keep up the momentum by turning the focus of our next round of grassroots pressure on State Farm.

Despite continued contact with State Farm, the company is not yet showing signs of budging and withdrawing its support for ALEC. It's time to get local with your activism.

After you sign the petition you will be asked to call local State Farm agents and tell them you want the company to cut ties with ALEC.

Hopefully this local, bottom-up grassroots pressure will be what it takes to make State Farm join Blue Cross, McDonald's, Coca Cola, Pepsi, Mars and the other companies who have so far said "enough" to ALEC's destructive right-wing agenda.

Thank you for your activism!

-- Ben Betz, Online Strategy Manager

20120418-13	19:53	Dennis	"Mitt Romney Is Far More Frightening Than Ted Nugent"
-------------	-------	--------	---

This is a very clear discussion of getting and retaining political power:

"Mitt Romney Is Far More Frightening Than Ted Nugent" by Wendy Gittleson, Addicting Info

Apr. 18, 2012, (<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/04/18/mitt-romney-is-far-more-frightening-than-ted-nugent/>)

The current Republican party is like a coin. On one side, the head, there is Mitt Romney – cool, detached, almost robotic. On the other side, the tail, there are Rush Limbaugh, Newt Gingrich, Glenn Beck, Rick Santorum, Ann Coulter and Ted Nugent. What people often forget is that they are the same coin.

Do I believe for a moment that Ted Nugent actually wants President Obama to "suck on his machine gun?" Do I take him literally when he tells NRA members to "chop" the "heads off" Democrats? No. He's just doing his job and his job, like many on the right, is to be a professional a*shole.

I'm not being dismissive of Nugent's rhetoric either. Not only is he encouraging violence among a group of people who like to hide behind their guns, he's preaching anarchy, an idea that is extremely romantic to some. He is encouraging violence. But the real problem with Nugent isn't that he said the words he said. It is that he is invited to say the words he says. In a nutshell, Nugent is a distraction.

Mobutu Sese Seko of Gawker wrote a brilliant piece about racism on the right and the right's reaction to the killing of Trayvon Martin. In the piece, Seko quotes the former RNC Chairman, Lee Atwater, who apparently had **some sort of end-of-life "come to Jesus moment" of honesty:**

You start out in 1954 by saying, "Nigger, nigger, nigger." By 1968 you can't say "nigger"—that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states' rights and all that stuff. You're getting so abstract now [that] you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is [that] blacks get hurt worse than whites. And subconsciously maybe that is part of it. I'm not saying that. But I'm saying that if it is getting that abstract, and that coded, that we are doing away with the racial problem one way or the other. You follow me—because obviously sitting around saying, "We want to cut this," is much more abstract than even the busing thing, and a hell of a lot more abstract than "Nigger, nigger."

Conservatism, by definition, indicates a longing for days past. The two essential facts that Republicans want us to forget are that the power structure in the United States is still largely white and male and that they are personally and financially invested in seeing that it stays that way.

Right after the inauguration of President Obama, I interviewed a white supremacist, or as he liked to call himself, a white separatist. While his words were vile, I found his candor almost refreshingly honest. He was proud to call himself a racist. He was proud of what he called "an innate instinct" to protect his own race.

Most people aren't overtly racist. Most don't wear hoods. Most don't illustrate their points with the barrel of a gun. Most white people don't hate minorities, but that doesn't mean that the majority of white people believe that minorities are their equals. Most men don't hate women, but it doesn't mean that the majority of men (of all races) believe that women are their equals.

I'm pretty sure that Mitt Romney doesn't hate women or minorities, in the same way that I'm pretty sure he didn't hate Seamus the dog or the thousands of employees he has laid off during his career. He simply feels that they are less important than those who are white, male and most importantly, monied.

Ted Nugent is dangerous in that he could be putting a few lives at risk. Mitt Romney, Paul Ryan, John Boehner, Mitch McConnell and the rest of the Republican establishment are dangerous because they kill millions through legislation. In the last 10 years, 8000 people have died in Republican wars. Every year, 45,000 people die for lack of health care. Republicans loathe the idea of men marrying men or women marrying women, but they believe that women in abusive marriages should be left to their own devices.

In just one year, Republicans have introduced 916 bills which are designed to keep women pregnant and poor, a deadly combination. Women earn 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. Romney is non-committal on the issue of equal pay, but his party isn't; they are just fine with the discrepancy.

Racial policies have been more subtle, but no less damaging. Like Atwater said, they are abstract. In the United States, there are two clear sets of standards. When a white person wears a hoodie, it's to stay warm. When a black person, especially a young man, wears a hoodie, it's a sign that he's up to no good. **There are now more black men in prison than were enslaved in 1850.** Many are there for drug offenses. There is absolutely no evidence that black people do more drugs or deal more drugs than white people, but they are six times more likely to be arrested for drugs and 11 times more likely to be imprisoned. The ugly reality of law enforcement is that if a police officer wants to find a reason to arrest someone, they usually will. They are far more likely to find that reason if the "perp" is black or Latino. The ugly reality of the judicial system is that white juries are more likely to convict a black person than a white.

Economic policies are even more dangerous. Any policy that benefits the wealthy at the expense of the poor will have a greater impact on minorities and women. Raising college tuition rates while lowering available financial assistance, impacts minorities and women. Cutting safety net programs impacts minorities and women. Reducing access to birth control and abortions helps create a cycle of poverty. Cutting back on teachers and police officers impacts minority communities.

The deservedly maligned John Edwards often said that there are two Americas and he was absolutely right. There are the elite and there is everyone else. All of the power and most of the money resides in the hands of just a few. Racist, sexist and homophobic policies protect that power. Violent rhetoric inflames the passions necessary in convincing a good portion of Americans that the racist, sexist and homophobic legislation is necessary to protect their own ways of life.

Ted Nugent, Rush Limbaugh and their ilk play a vital role in Republican politics. Compared to the crazies, the Republican establishment looks sane. As long as they look sane by comparison, they'll have the support to pass any number of insane pieces of legislation.

That's why Romney, when he weakly distances himself from Nugent and Limbaugh, only addresses their tone. It is the tone that he wants us to object to. He's fine with the sentiment. As long as the elite can keep us hating each other, they get to protect their own power while legislating away ours. If there are a few casualties along the way, it won't matter. We don't matter.

20120418-14	20:27	Pam	Re: "Mitt Romney Is Far More Frightening Than Ted Nugent"
-------------	-------	-----	---

Have you ever noticed that right-wing arguments usually employ the "you're another" fallacy? My pot may be black, but what about your black kettle? And suddenly we're arguing about kettles or communism or freeloaders or

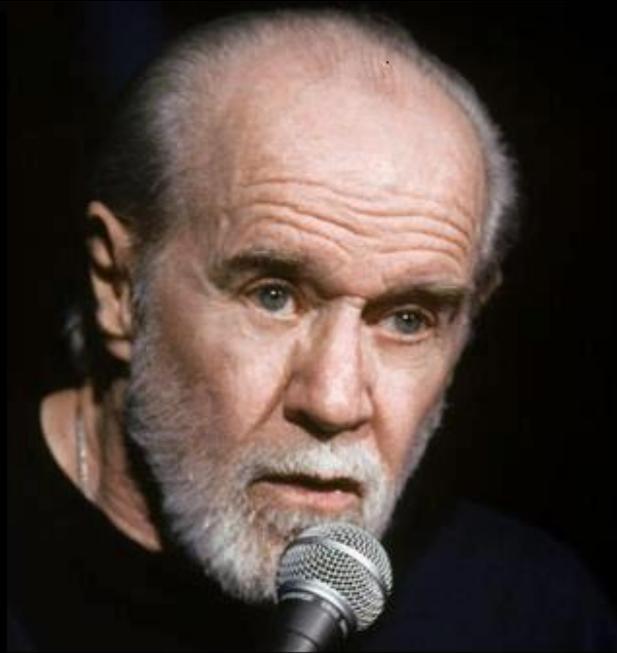
whatever. Republicans argue like pool balls. Democrats argue like clams digging into the sand. The rest of us are ostriches, wishing the whole sorry scene would just go away. A little cheery note to end the day on.

[20120418-16](#)

21:44

SteveG

Quote: George Carlin on Conservative Paradox #1,347



“Conservatives say if you don’t give the rich more money, they will lose their incentive to invest. Then they say as for the poor, they’ve lost all incentive because we’ve given them too much money.”

~~ George Carlin

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



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

Welcome to all our new members! We want to hear from YOU! To submit your opinion or comment on anything you read here, simply reply to this email. Be sure to sign with your desired user name. Your email address will always be kept strictly private. I'd love to be able to promise you that, if you forward this email to 10 people, you will become rich and your life will be changed in important ways. I can't bring myself to do that. But I can honestly tell you that, if you forward this email to 10 people, one of their lives may be changed in important ways.

Subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily HTML Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to all things important. Simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the subject line and add our email address to your contacts or safe list. To opt-out of our mailing list, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line. Your email address will always be kept strictly private.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>

©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved

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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line,

then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



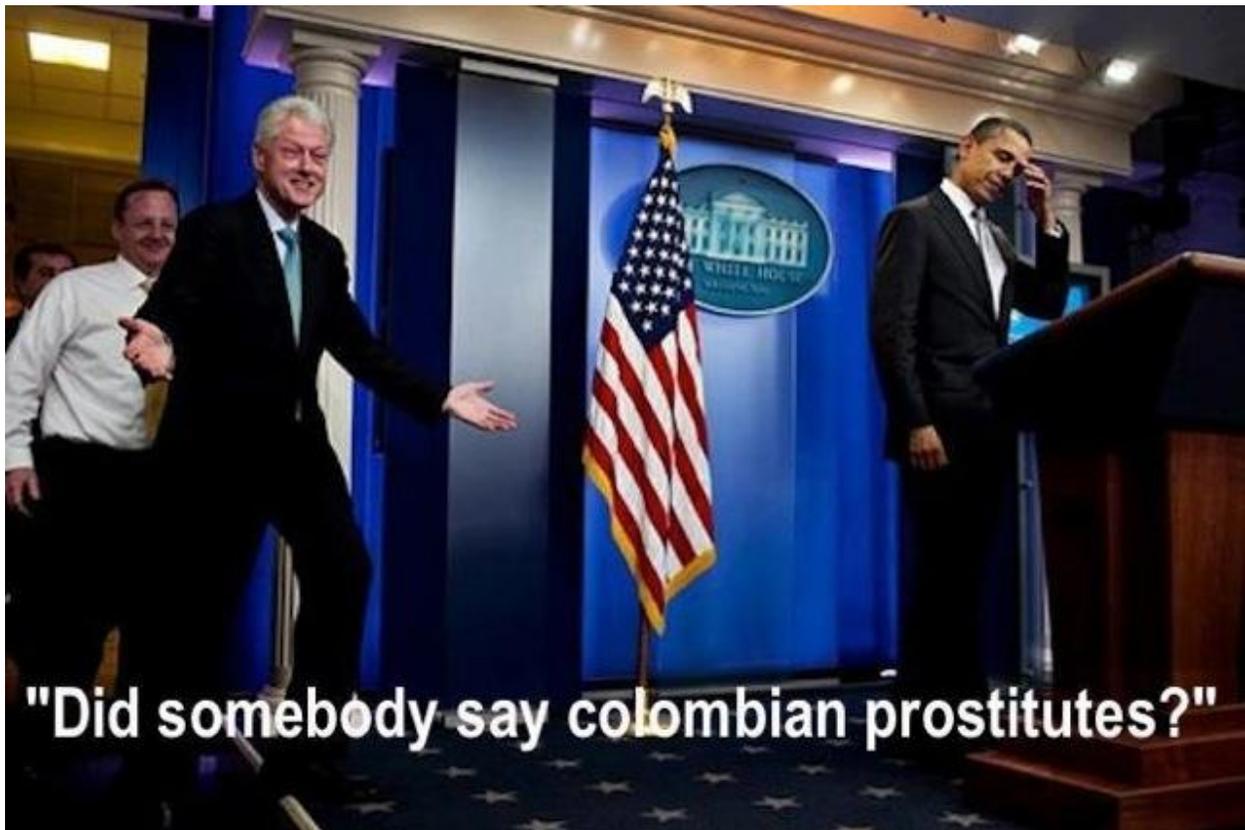
FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #121 — APR. 20, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

Colombian Prostitutes

(posted by Art Hotop / Art, Apr. 20, 2012)



Heee's Baaaack! Ya gotta love this one. Just look at the facial expressions. [This is the best one yet! I can just hear that raspy voice of his saying this! I think he's in! –SteveB]

[20120419-01](#) 09:50 Art

Re: "Mitt R0mney Is Far More Frightening Than Ted Nugent" (reply to Dennis, Apr. 18, 2012)

Good article. Thanks.

[20120419-02](#)

10:16

Pam

Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 18, 2012) Health Care

With all due respect, Steve, I take issue with some of what you say here. May I explain?

You say Obama hasn't accomplished anything positive. I'm pretty sure you hate Obamacare, so I'll focus on that. When it finally goes into effect (god willing), it will help Americans enormously by allowing young adults to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26, forbid insurance companies to disqualify people for pre-existing conditions, and cover the 40 million or so who are uninsured today and have to rely on expensive emergency-room care. Do you not like any of those things?

I assume you value fairness and efficiency. Let's consider what a universal coverage, single payer system would look like. It would be like Social Security and Medicare, funded by payroll taxes based on income. I don't know anyone but G.W. Bush and Paul Ryan who wants to get rid of those very popular programs. You don't want to force people to buy something they may not want? Fine. A single-payer system would require you to do nothing. Private insurance companies are in business to make money. Their interest is in keeping sick people out of the system, hence the requirement insurance companies have that procedures get prior approval--from whom? You got it. The insurance companies. Administrative costs for private insurance range from 30% to 40% of premiums. In order to pay for advertising, lobbyists, and marketing, and give stockholders a return on their investment, they must take in as much as they can and pay out as little as possible. A Medicare-for-all system would have overhead costs of around 3%. Everyone would pay into it, everyone would be covered. The young would pay disproportionately more, but they will be old someday, and their turn will come. The government would be able to bargain with drug companies to get the best prices, which it cannot do today.

What about end-of-life care? Upwards of 80% of a dying old person's medical spending is incurred in the last 2 or 3 months of life. I ask you, what is the point? Some Republicans are on record saying that if an uninsured young person is critically injured, he should be allowed to die. Isn't it more sensible to let a 90-yr. old, who is incontinent, incoherent, and beyond recovery go? Rationed care? We already have it. Those, like my son until recently, who are working but not making enough to pay for exorbitant insurance premiums, are rationed. People with treatable but chronic illnesses run out of coverage, and many elderly must decide on a monthly basis whether to take their medicine or eat. A universal coverage, single payer system would be fair. What we have not is not. I don't think anyone disagrees with that.

I'm sorry Obama didn't push harder for a Canadian-type plan, but he knew it would never get through Congress. What is the Republican argument against it? It's Socialism. A misapplied epithet snuffs out reasoned argument; language is used to frighten people. We call that propaganda. Hope and change? That's about as meaningful as "a city on a hill" or "the American Dream" or "family values." What is the budget for hope and change? For family values? Right, there isn't one. UCSP requires tough decisions about money, and that's real. We need to design a plan that does as much as possible for each individual. Accountants and financial experts will have to tell us what we can afford and what it would cost to have what we want. We don't need to be flinging around phrases like "death panels" and "creeping socialism" that accomplish nothing. We need to sit down, concentrate, and figure out the best course of action--and forget politics for half a minute. I know something as reasonable as this will never happen, which is why I am the eternal pessimist.

I'd like to know the specifics of what you believe would be a good plan.

[20120419-09](#)

13:43

Dennis

Re: "Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 18, 2012)

SteveBA: The I point is that Obama is not accomplishing anything positive, in the areas that he promised hope and change. His view is that big government will solve all of our problems.

Dennis: This is one of those Republican Big Lies that they hope if they keep repeating it, it will be believed. Actually Obama has worked to reduce the size of the federal government despite factors beyond his control such as Congressional mandates, inherited programs, and the effects of the recession:

<http://news.yahoo.com/obama-takes-big-government-change-204938164.html>

http://money.cnn.com/2012/01/25/news/economy/obama_government/index.htm

SteveBA: Think of the irony when he blasted the banks and others for having a convention in vegas and 3years later the first lady and family is visiting Vegas on our dime and his GSA is spending millions of our dollars partying in Vegas.

Dennis: The GSA is not part of the Obama Administration and is being investigated by four Congressional Committees. The GSA has a history of misconduct dating back decades under both Republican and Democratic administrations. It was a person appointed by Obama who uncovered the latest wrongdoing and other abuses.

SteveBA: The guy is a pure politician and uses any topic for his purpose.

Dennis: Name me some politicians who don't do this.

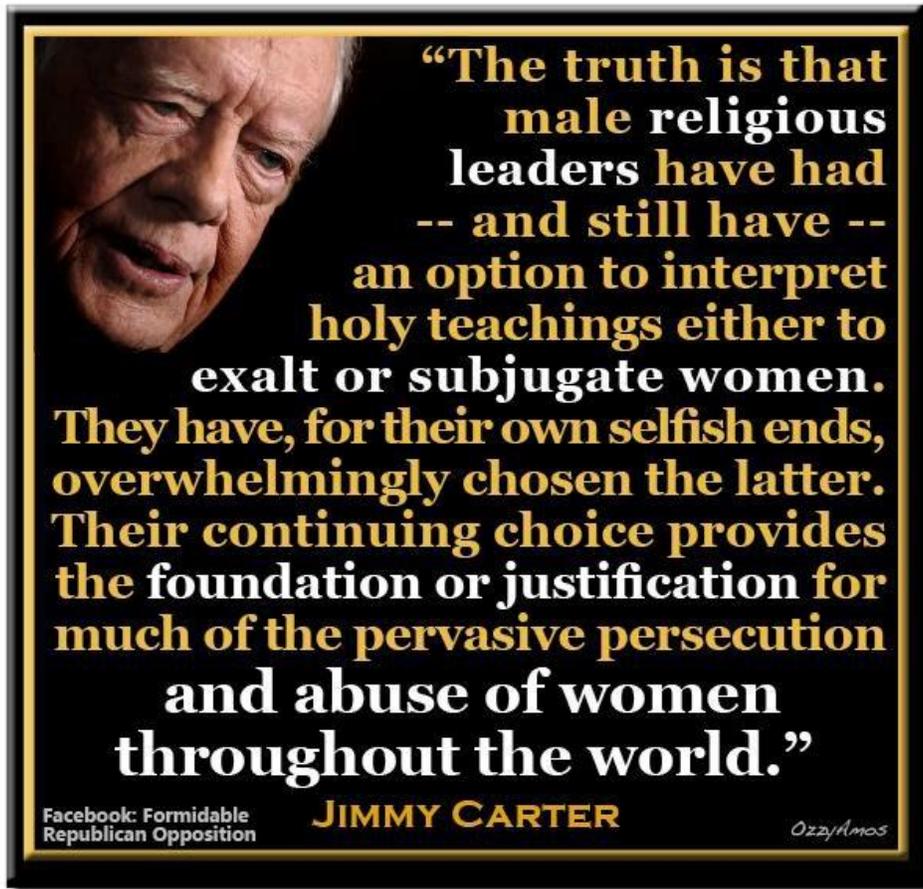
SteveBA: He spends more time on contraception than big banks.

Dennis: I'll ignore this empty rhetoric since you have no idea what he spends his time on.

SteveBA: His Dodd frank bill has created this problem.

Dennis: The Dodd-Frank bill was passed by Congress, not by Obama. It certainly did not go nearly far enough to correct the problem caused by Wall Street and will not prevent the same fiasco from happening again. But aren't Republicans being contradictory and hypocritical when they criticize too much government regulation and then claim that Obama didn't do anything to corral the Big Banks?

20120419-03	10:36	SteveG	Quote: Jimmy Carter on the Subjugation of Women
-------------	-------	--------	---



20120419-04 11:08 SteveB R0mney's Lies

Here's what R0mney said yesterday:

"He [the President] can't continue to try and deflect blame elsewhere," R0mney said. "At some point he's got to acknowledge this is his economy — that what's happened is the result of his policies — not of his predecessors, not of Congress." (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/04/18/11271422-romney-assails-president-steps-from-site-of-obamas-re-nomination?lite>)

What BS!

1. I thought Republicans feel the government can't solve the nation's problems, only private citizens and enterprise can? In that case, what could the President possibly do to improve the economy? Taxes and regulations are already nearly non-existent, and that has not brought the Republican Promised Land.
2. The President hasn't been able to do much with a Congress fighting him without compromise, despite his many concessions.
3. And, gee, we'd all like to conveniently forget the path along the precipice he inherited from Bush, but we can't and we won't.

All of this is written history. Look it up. And this a*s-hole has the nerve to lie about it!?

What does Mr. R0mney actually stand for? What a mystery! What does he think President Obama should have done, specifically, that he did not do? Notice, you never hear that. This "empty suit" is going to get eaten alive in any debate with the Professor.

It's so obvious that, with the Mittens, all the same old lies will be re-told over and over until he thinks we believe them. How sad for America.

20120419-06 12:06 Pam Re: R0mney's Lies (reply to SteveB)

You said it!!!

20120419-05 11:47 SteveG Fw: Don't Let R0mney Bork America in 2012!

from People for the American Way

Today, People For the American Way launched a major new campaign -- including a website, a web ad and an exclusive report -- exposing Mitt Romney's dangerous agenda for America's courts.

The first phase of the campaign highlights Romney's choice of Robert Bork to lead his constitutional and judicial advisory team. Yes, that Robert Bork. By allying with Bork, a jurist so extreme he was rejected by a bipartisan majority of the U.S. Senate 25 years ago, Romney has sent a clear signal that he means to drag America's courts even farther to the right, endangering many of the civil rights, liberties and economic protections won by the American people over the past five decades.

Check out the ad and download the report now at RomneyCourt.com. Then, help spread the word using social media and by asking others to check out the site.

Now more than ever, the Supreme Court should be an issue of utmost concern to all Americans. However, few are aware of the extreme agenda Mitt Romney has for the High Court -- an agenda exemplified by his close alliance with Robert Bork.

In 1987, People For the American Way led the fight to keep Judge Bork off the Supreme Court. 25 years later, we are as relieved as ever that we succeeded. When Bork was nominated, Americans across the political spectrum rejected the dangerous political agenda that he would have brought to the bench -- his disdain for modern civil rights legislation, his acceptance of poll taxes and literacy tests, his support of government bans on contraception and criminal sodomy laws, his continued privileging of corporations over individuals. Since then, he has dug his heels even deeper into a view of the law that puts corporations first and individuals far behind.

It is frightening that a quarter century after Robert Bork's jurisprudence was deemed too regressive for the Supreme Court, a leading presidential candidate has picked him to shape his legal policy.

Find out more at RomneyCourt.com now and please help spread the word: <http://romneycourt.com/>.

PFAW Senior Fellow Jamie Raskin, the author of the report, said, "The return of Robert Bork and his reactionary jurisprudence to national politics should be a three-alarm wake-up call for all Americans. In his work on the bench as a judge and off the bench as a polemicist, Bork has consistently placed corporations above the government and government above the rights of the people. The idea that Bork could be central to shaping the Supreme Court in the 21st century is shocking because he wants to turn the clock back decades in terms of the civil rights and civil liberties of the people."

The new report and ad review Bork's record from his days as solicitor general to President Richard Nixon to his turn as co-chair of the Romney campaign's committee on law, the Constitution and the judiciary. Highlights of Bork's career include:

- Consistently choosing corporate power over the rights of people. As a judge, Bork regularly took the side of business interests against government regulators trying to hold them accountable, but the side of the government when it was challenged by workers, environmentalists and consumers pressing for more corporate accountability.

- Opposing civil rights, voting rights, reproductive rights, gay rights and individual free speech. Bork disparaged the Civil Rights Act of 1964; defended the use of undemocratic poll taxes and literacy tests in state elections; believes the government should be allowed to ban birth control; disagrees with the Supreme Court ruling that overturned sodomy laws; and believes that the government should be able to jail people for advocating civil disobedience.
- Advocating censorship and blaming American culture first. Bork promotes censorship to combat what he calls the "rot and decadence" of American society, saying "I don't make any fine distinctions; I'm just advocating censorship." He writes that "the liberal view of human nature" has thrown American culture into "free fall."
- Rejecting the separation of church and state. Bork rejects the science of evolution, advocates legalizing school-sponsored prayer and has written that he wants to see the Constitution's wall of separation between church and state "crumble."

Learn more at RomneyCourt.com and please make sure to share the video on Facebook, Twitter and elsewhere.

Thank you for all you do, and for your ongoing vigilance in defense of liberty and equality -- the American Way.

Sincerely, Michael Keegan, President

20120419-07	12:08	Pam	Re: Don't Let R0mney Bork America in 2012! (reply to SteveG)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

OMG! OMG! My hair's on fire!!

20120419-08	12:47	SteveG	Fw: One.org Petition: Help 50 Million People Escape Poverty Through Agriculture
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

I went to the White House last week with 25 hibiscus plants, 25 sweet potato plants, dozens of other ONE Members and a message for President Obama: Break the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty for good, at next month's G8 summit.

1 click will automatically add your voice to our growing movement:

http://act.one.org/sign/thrive_us/?akid=3059.5789054.wUdZnU&rd=1&t=2.

Here's the best part: Just as we were rallying at the White House, members all around the world joined us in London, Paris, Berlin and beyond to do the same. And in just days, over 100,000 people have signed ONE's petition to the G8.

That's what real momentum looks like: Sam Kass - White House Assistant Chef and Senior Policy Advisor for the Healthy Food Initiative - graciously accepted my hibiscus and sweet potato plants (native to Togo, my homeland), even saying he would replant one in the White House garden. I hope that plant serves as a constant reminder to President Obama of the 50 million people we can help escape poverty through investments in country-owned agriculture plans.

The momentum is on our side. Please click here to automatically add your name to ONE's petition which reads:

Dear G8 leaders: It's time to break the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty. Please urgently agree to and implement a bold global plan to ensure 50 million people escape poverty through agriculture and 15 million children no longer endure chronic malnutrition.

Best, Yao Afantchao, ONE Member (and farmer)

20120419-10 16:09 SteveG Fw: Sum of Us Action: Monsanto Bringing Back 'Agent Orange'

Next week, the USDA will decide whether to allow Monsanto and Dow to introduce one half of the chemical mixture Agent Orange into our food supply. Widescale use of Roundup has led to a new generation of resistant weeds, and the next step in the pesticide arms race is 2,4-D -- a chemical linked to cancer, Parkinson's and reproductive problems.

Farmers that sign up to use genetically-engineered 2,4-D-resistant corn will be required to spray down their fields with both 2,4-D and Roundup, double-dosing our food, our soil and our waterways with the toxins. Some experts estimate this will increase the use of 2,4-D 50-fold, even though the EPA says the chemical is already our seventh-largest source of dioxins -- nasty, highly toxic chemicals that bioaccumulate as they move up the food chain and cause cancer, developmental damage, and birth defects.

We can stop this. The use of 2,4-D is banned entirely in parts of Canada and Europe, and right now the US Department of Agriculture is accepting public comments on 2,4-D to decide whether or not to approve the widespread industrial use of the toxin.

Add your name to our letter to the USDA urging them to deny approval for Dow's 2,4-D-resistant GMO corn (below).

This is part of a growing problem, an escalating herbicide war going on across America's heartland. From 1996 to 2008, herbicide usage increased by 383 million pounds. Nearly half of this took place between 2007 and 2008 after the introduction of another strain of herbicide-resistant plant pushed by Dow. Like Roundup before it, 2,4-D is only a temporary solution that will require more and more tons of toxins and more and more potent chemicals leaching into our food supply.

2,4-D is nasty stuff and has been linked to a number of health problems, such as tripling the rates of non-Hodgkins lymphoma in Nebraska farmworkers exposed to it and causing reproductive problems -- birth defects and high rates of miscarriage -- in both mice and men exposed to it in the lab and field.

Tell the USDA - we don't want Monsanto's toxic pesticide:

<http://sumofus.org/campaigns/24-d/?akid=374.97777.KOJzwG&rd=1&sub=fwd&t=3>.

--Kaytee, Claiborne Taren, and the rest of the team

20120419-11 16:16 Pam Re: Monsanto Bringing Back 'Agent Orange' (reply to SteveG)

You all know about BPA in plastics, but did you know that it's in the lining of cans (of food) too? I wonder if evolution will help us adapt to toxicity.

20120419-12 16:48 SteveG Re: Monsanto Bringing Back 'Agent Orange' (reply to Pam)

Didn't the EPA just rule that there wasn't enough BPA in food can linings to be a problem? Amazing we have lived this long.

20120419-15 19:45 Pam Re: Monsanto Bringing Back 'Agent Orange' (reply to SteveG)

And the cigarette companies used to claim that tobacco smoke didn't cause cancer. I hope the EPA is right, is all I can say. Meanwhile, I'm going to avoid canned food, not that I eat that much anyway.

For the Obama apologists here is some food for thought about those green jobs that never materialized. We are witnessing a transforming event in energy that will power America cheaper and cleaner than oil for the next hundred years. But this president and supporters can't get past the ideology to see it, think keystone pipeline. Instead he and you would rather send money to the Arabs and than create thousands of jobs here and give us energy independence. In the final analysis Obama is just a political from Chicago taking care of his buddies.

"Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" by Ed Morrissey, Hot Air

Apr. 16, 2012, (<http://hotair.com/archives/2012/04/16/reuters-those-green-collar-jobs-promises-have-been-a-bust-huh/>)

When Barack Obama took office, he promised an explosion of jobs in the "green" energy sector, up to five million in the next ten years. In his 2009 stimulus bill, Obama spent \$90 billion on green-tech subsidies to kick-start that process. How has that worked out? Reuters takes a long look and reports that the effort has been a bust (via Big Government):

Three years after Obama launched a push to build a job-creating "green" economy, the White House can say that more than 1 million drafty homes have been retrofitted to lower heating and cooling costs, while energy generation from renewable sources such as wind and solar has nearly doubled since 2008.

But the millions of "green jobs" Obama promised have been slow to sprout, disappointing many who had hoped that the \$90 billion earmarked for clean-energy efforts in the recession-fighting federal stimulus package would ease unemployment – still above 8 percent in March.

Supporters say the administration over-promised on the jobs front and worry that a backlash could undermine support for clean-energy policies in general.

We have documented much of what Reuters reports today in earlier spot reports, but the collection of flops is truly remarkable — all the more so because of the massive amount of government spending involved. The Obama administration has been reduced now to arguing that its \$90 billion expenditure will result in 827,000 "job years" over the course of Obama's term in office. For those who are counting, that would be 276,000 jobs lasting three years. Even in "job years," that comes to \$108,827 per job-year; in jobs, it comes to \$326,481. And the "job-years" construct carries a heavy subtext of a lack of permanence, too.

Not all of the expenditures have aimed at direct job creation, of course. Some of it went to train the unemployed to work in the expected green-sector boom. After spending \$173 million on training, the program placed a grand total of 16,092 workers (20% of the target), a cost of over ten grand per placement. That money might have been better used to give each student a year of college education instead.

This has been an expensive flop. At a point when the US already faced a huge public-debt crisis in its near future and the economy was staggering through a private-debt crisis in its present, Obama chose to dump \$90 billion of debt into a bet on the so-called green energy sector as a jobs stimulus. It's been a failure from every possible perspective without even getting to discussions of Solyndra, Ener1, Beacon Power, and other taxpayer-backed bankruptcies.

Did you have a chance to read FotM Newsletter #119 ("Come On, Big Guy!" – kinda anti-Obama) and the various replies to your previous posts?

About this article...let me ask you this...have you made any money in alternative energy? It's a confounding market. Even for the U.S. government, which I thought, according to conservative philosophy, shouldn't be creating any jobs anyway. It's not their place. Now you're a socialist? President Obama creates no jobs and he's not conservative enough for you?

May May make Indiana bloom like the dickens. (Oops...global warming moved that up to March!)

20120419-19	20:35	SteveBA	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveB)
-----------------------------	-------	---------	--

Can't make money in green energy because there is no there there. Its all about future technology that appears to far away for now. Natural gas is here and is abundant, its low price will drive the utilities away from coal and nukes to gas fired turbines. Industry will convert to CNG with or without help from the government,As they say obama needs to lead follow or get out of the way.

20120419-16	19:54	Pam	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Nothing (just about) that Obama campaigned on has come to pass--because Republicans have thwarted him at every turn. Congress is more responsible for our failure to move forward than Obama, by far. It's not about ideology. Climate change is not an ideology; it's a scientific fact. We're going to have to look at lots of sources of energy, not simply rely on oil or coal or natural gas. We're not going to stop using those, but we need to begin to develop alternative energy sources, like wind, solar, geo-thermal, etc. or within a very few decades our planet earth will be unrecognizable. We are digging our own grave. Sadly, it's our grandchildren who will see the devastation we have caused, because we will be long gone. Why do you say Obama has an "ideology" about energy? Are you saying a preference for clean energy is a belief system? If so, that's simply weird.

20120419-18	20:31	SteveBA	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to Pam)
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---

Funny how we went from global warming and the end of the world to climate change and the end of the world. We have always had climate change and in my memory I remember Time magazine worrying about the ice age. So far every claim made by the global warming camp has proved to be false or an outright lie. When you mix politics with science you end up with the Nifong syndrome, or as many of the liberals have said: forget that the facts don't support their claim, but their claim is true anyway. The point is that Obama over promises and under delivers with our tax dollars on projects near and dear to his supporters. He does not support developing hydrocarbons but still tied to green power or else. Just listen to when he goes on the campaign trail, his promise of jobs is always in the green sector. Simple jobs like welders etc on the keystone pipeline he doesn't get because its not green. like it or not we do not have viable battery technology for electric cars, wind power, or solar. keep in mind the wind doesn't always blow and the sun isn't always shining. When we do get the technology for commercially viable electric cars we will still have to use gas, coal or nuclear for power generation. think of the impact on the "grid" when everybody plugs in. if we had committed 90 Bilion to converting our municipal fleets of cars buses etc to compressed natural gas how much cleaner things would have been immediately, instead of wasting tax dollars on subsidized volts. The last point is the excuse making that gets a pass here, we went form jobs to job years. Try that approach at work sometime and see how far it goes or far it would have gone in your classroom. Me I'm all for clean air. CNG for transportation gets us there quicker than any thing else and is cheaper than gas AND gives us energy independence from those that hate us in the middle east. If you this is pie in the sky, corporate america is already heading there as UPS has contracted Clean Eney to install CNG stations on their route from Ontario,CA to Las Vegas probably to help Michelle and the GSA enjoy the city. With a reported unemployment rate of 8.2% and a real rate over 10% we need jobs now, not pie in the sky feel good project that liberals can feel good about. Final comment the DEMS have 2 years of complete control of the government and could only cobble together Obamacare, its too late to blame Bush and congress. You had your chance and blew it. My next posting will be about the pathetic showing DEM

senators who have gone 1085 days without even trying to pass a budget. But wait Harry Reid is Vegas with Michelle and the GSA.

[20120419-17](#)

20:28

SteveG

Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" & "U.S. Exported More Gasoline Than Imported Last Year" (reply to SteveBA)

If we are exporting gasoline, diesel fuel, etc. how is the pipeline going to make us energy independent? If we are exporting fuel, do we not have more than enough to meet our needs and do we create an artificially inflated domestic price on fuel?

"U.S. Exported More Gasoline Than Imported Last Year" by Michael Winter, USA TODAY

Feb. 29, 2012, (<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2012/02/us-exported-more-gasoline-than-imported-last-year/1#.T5CrONkrmvI>)

For the first time since 1949, the United States exported more gasoline, heating oil and diesel fuel last year than it imported, the Energy Department reported today.

Bloomberg writes that to offset weak U.S. demand, refiners exported 439,000 barrels a day more than were imported the year before. In 2010, daily imports averaged 269,000 barrels, according to the Petroleum Supply Monthly report.

Imports of crude oil and related products fell 11% last year, reaching a level not seen since 1995.

News of record gasoline exports comes as the pump price rose today for the 22nd straight day (\$3.78 a gallon average) and the Energy Department reported separately that gasoline inventories fell last week while crude oil inventories and imports rose.

Crude oil inventories swelled by 4.2 million barrels last week, more than four times what analysts expected and eight times the estimate of the American Petroleum Institute, 24/7 Wall St. says, adding, "To say that the increase in imports is counter-intuitive is not an overstatement."

Refineries were running at 83.6% of capacity last week, according to the Energy Information Administration's weekly report on petroleum supplies.

Separately, in a piece headlined "Oil Refiners Look To Exports Growing Profit," 24/7 Wall St. writes: "The rise in imports could be the result of the decline in refined products, but more likely is that the imported crude is being refined and the refined products are being exported."

The article explains what major oil companies and U.S. refineries -- Valero Energy, Tesoro, Marathon Petroleum and HollyFrontier -- are doing to boost their profit margins:

Crude at Gulf Coast refineries is priced at the Brent crude import price, no matter where it comes from. Refineries in the US interior are typically able to get the vast majority of their crude at or below domestic the WTI [West Texas Intermediary] crude price. Today, a barrel of Brent costs about \$121, and a barrel of WTI costs about \$106. That \$15 difference in feedstock pricing pays dividends at the refinery. ...

To boost margins at Gulf Coast refineries, Valero and the others are exporting more refined products, both gasoline and the higher-priced diesel fuel. ...

The secret to making a profit in refining these days is for refiners to source crude oil domestically and then sell the refined products to US consumers at prices based on imported oil. Valero can't do that, but Marathon, Tesoro, and HollyFrontier can. ...

Despite higher-than-expected oil inventories and less driving by Americans, the price of crude oil finished higher today.

20120419-20	20:43	SteveBA	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveG)
-----------------------------	-------	---------	--

Money goes where it is treated best. oil futures price in the potential for geo-political events, Israel and Iran come to mind. If you would listen to T Boone Pickens our energy prices would not be dictated by others. In fact we would dictate every prices and world policies. I would encourage you to read about the Bakken Shale, the Marcellus Shale, the Utuca Shale and others. We have a 100 year supply of natural gas for our transportation needs. Is that so hard to understand, we won't need oil to convert to gasoline. Shale gas and oil is transforming event.

20120419-21	20:58	SteveG	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

I refer you to these articles. No, SteveBA, it is not hard to understand. The hard part is getting a safe technology for getting the natural gas from the ground without damaging ground water: getting a retail system for getting natural gas to the customer; and to get the automobile companies to come to a consensus and develop a safe method of transportation. Not hard to understand.

<http://www.tarsandsaction.org/spread-the-word/key-facts-keystone-xl/>

<http://www.americanrivers.org/our-work/protecting-rivers/fracking/?gclid=COvs96Zwq8CFcgGRQodnBlng>

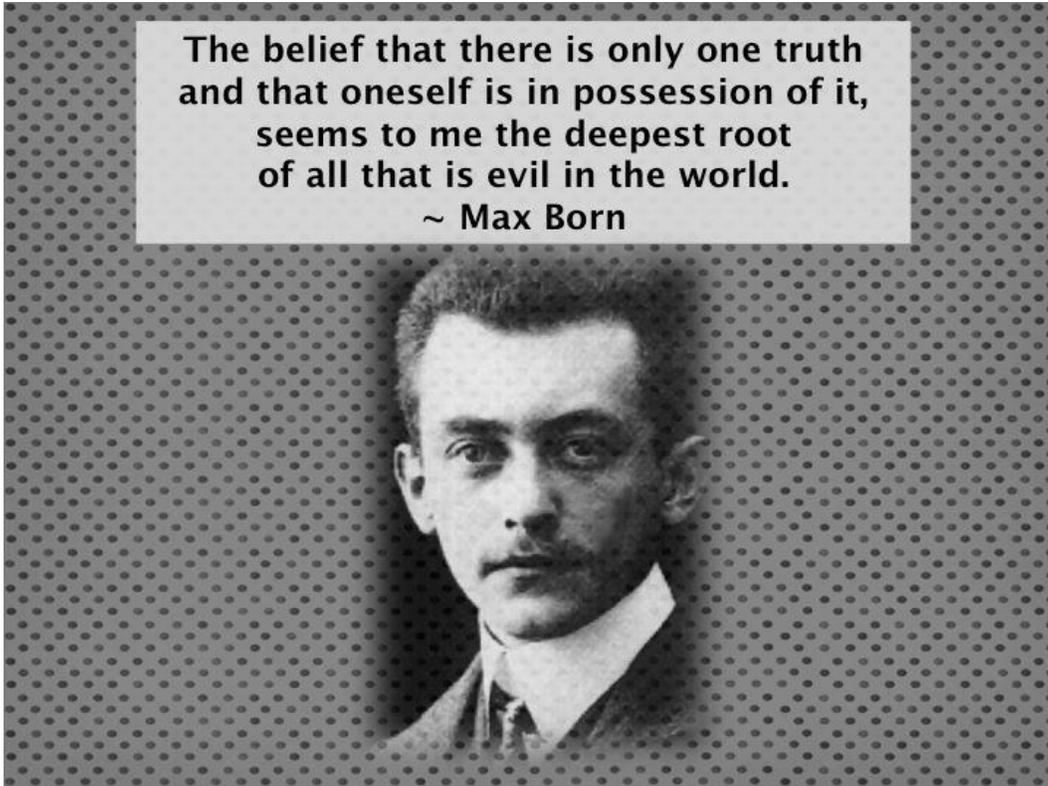
<http://dailyreckoning.com/oil-shale-reserves/>

20120419-22	22:46	SteveG	Re: "Reuters: Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Below in response to CNG energy replacing gasoline/diesel fueled vehicles as you suggested:

http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2007-05-08-natural-gas-usat_N.htm.

The belief that there is only one truth
and that oneself is in possession of it,
seems to me the deepest root
of all that is evil in the world.
~ Max Born



<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/unleashed/2009/03/siberian-tige-1.html>

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



You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #122 — APR. 23, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

Sad Conclusion (A Conversation)

(posted by Friends of the Middle, Apr. 23, 2012)

Pam (Apr. 20, 14:29):

A piece I heard on NPR the other day has been rattling around my head like a pebble in a shoe. It was about Apple and its outsourcing of much of its production to Asia, especially China. Workers, many newly arrived from the countryside, work 12-hr. shifts, six days a week, making iPads or whatever, and sleep in Spartan dormitories. Conditions that would be intolerable to an American worker are actually a step up for China's factory workers. Americans are enlightened enough to know that slavery is wrong, yet we support it everyday. What is an underpaid, Third World worker but a slave with a different name?

Despite his bad rep. these days, Marx was prescient about many of the things we see today. He asked two important questions, according to John Lanchester in the London Review of Books 5 April 2012: "what is money and where does its value come from?" Leaving out several steps in his argument, Marx says, in essence, that there "is a gap between what the labourer sells his labour for [the minimum the employer can pay and still attract workers], and the price the employer gets for the commodity [as much as the market will bear], and that difference is the money which accumulates to the employer and which Marx called surplus value." This is the "basis of capitalism: all value in capitalism is the surplus value created by labour."

My argument is that every "advanced" civilization has depended on some form of "slave" labor in order to exist. One crucial element any civilization requires is a surplus of food. Our capitalist society requires a surplus of value, i.e., money. Peasants in medieval Europe toiled in the fields so that the elite were free to do what elites do--make art, wage wars, build monuments, explore. In ancient Athens slaves worked so philosophers could walk around and think. In ancient Rome slaves worked so citizens could engage in politics. Today Chinese workers toil so that I can sit here all day at my computer, and Latin American women make T-shirts so I can buy them for a few dollars. For thousands of years this imbalance has prevailed. It is my contention that it always will. We are like birds sitting on crocodiles that feed and support us. What happens when the crocodile decides he'd rather have someone feed him? I see no way out of this dilemma, if that is what it is. Those of us fortunate enough to live in America or Europe are complicit in daily injustice and exploitation. I don't single anyone out for blame. We are all to blame. I'm going to continue buying cheap T-shirts at the GAP and grumbling when the price of gas goes up. I'm not a Christian, but the church is right about one thing: we are all sinners.

Today is my day off from taking care of my grandson, hence my prolixity.

SteveB (Apr. 20, 18:50):

Thinking about your post, Pam, and everything from everybody else the last few days of editing...

I'm tossing around a lot of ideas—triggered by y'all's comments—that do not necessarily represent a coherent philosophy such as that which I find myself applying to most things. Like all of us, after a lifetime, I believe this and that. I have learned some things I consider to be facts. Some I honestly know to be hopes. Part of what I want to talk about fits into the gray areas of this edifice I have constructed out of the pieces largely given to me. I probably will not be politically correct and I don't much care. I'm sort of thinking out loud and trying to work this out as I write it.

World Standard of Living

Let me try to guess something here, because I have never read any information on the subject. It seems to be missing from the liberal bibliography and conservatives wouldn't touch it with a ten foot pole. What is a good liberal, living in any relatively well-to-do country, supposed to think about the lives of most people in the world? You know, the estimated 2 billion people (30% of the world's population) who live on an income of less than \$3 per day. An awfully lot more live on less than \$5 per day, more than half the world's people. This is not much money, even in the poorest countries where terrible housing and worse food are relatively cheap. What am I to think, as a modern, educated, progressive person? (Admittedly, giving myself the benefit of the doubt!)

You might have a knee-jerk reaction to immediately go on line and help some of these people, and that would be a proper response, though nearly futile in the larger scheme of things. The U.S. trade deficits have recently been reduced to "merely" about \$50 billion per month. This has been going on for a long time, essentially shipping that much money to the rest of the world every month (plus government aid), and we don't seem to have made a dent in world poverty, while nearly going broke ourselves. I honestly don't think your \$3 a month is going to help much, but have at it.

So, what is our goal? To keep all these people living minimally, but without so many starving? What about dependable water? Health care? Transportation? Education? Jobs? Infrastructure? Whose problems are those? America's? We can't even control our border with Mexico or provide these essentials to nearly enough of our own citizens. Yet we believe that if someone does not save the world, there will be hell to pay, right? Maybe it's just too late and there will be hell to pay either way? The word "hopeless" comes to mind.

Is our perfectly logically liberal but unstated goal that we want the world standard of living raised to, say, that of Mississippi? Then haven't we bitten off more than we can possibly chew, my friends? What a world of grief and guilt we are in for if our objective is to Americanize the world. Yet that is the unspoken de facto goal that has become the dominant paradigm of liberal thought. I don't have a clue as to what the conservatives think of all this except maybe, "F*ck 'em!"

I know many of these people who make less than \$5 or even \$3 a day. They seem to do pretty well, actually, (though I know many others truly suffer) even in relatively modern societies such as Latin America and the Caribbean. Am I evil to say that I don't really want to live like the poor, am eternally thankful I don't have to (though what if I didn't know anything different?), am thankful to the people who do live like that, and am happy that they can?

For the world as a whole, any other alternative (than billions of poor people) would be unmitigated disaster to the vast majority of us. Isn't that apparent? Sorry. It's not the world I would have wanted to create, but we're stuck with it. Now, let's be good conservatives and try to preserve as much of it as we can, not try to change it into Mississippi.

Lately, Apple seems to have finally taught America that it is difficult to Americanize even China (and what will be the long-term fruits?).

Can you use your imagination on the rest, or do I have to spell it out for you? Let me know, I'm movin' on. The world's poor don't have cars, video games, computers, or modern appliances. But (OMFG!) what if they did? DISASTER!

U.S. Standard of Living

To me, the U.S. is an entirely different case. Here, there is hope for at least a while longer.

And, myself, I'd rather be like Canada or New Zealand—an island of prosperity in a cold sea of poverty—than be drowning in those dark waters of suffering. But that's just me.

We should be conservative and go back to what worked—high taxes, especially on accumulated capital and the rich, government regulation, unions, and a prosperous middle class. These are the things that made America great. Not greed. Sharing the fruits of our labor, creativity, and frugality. Any two out of the three can make a country prosperous—i.e. Germany or Japan. The U.S. had all three!

I will put the principle as simple as possible: Incomes shall be made more equitable or there will be outright rebellion. None of us wants that. It's a good enough reason for sharing, even if there were not countless others.

Investment money is pouring into the U.S. as I write this. It must be employed for the long-term good of the country, not simply to satisfy illogical, short-term, wreck-the-world greed, not simply for the wealthy few to make slaves of their brothers—yet again.

Karl Marx

Well, Marx was right, of course, in that labor produces surplus value that largely disappears into the pockets of the moneyed class. But I believe creativity and the accumulation of capital can also produce surplus value. These are important capitalistic principles, yet I think it is obviously time that we look beyond capitalism for solutions. Governments can accumulate capital. Workers can too. Financial institutions can be created which serve people rather than attempt to bankrupt them.

Marx, like Darwin, was right about many things, but controlling the environment can mitigate the effects.

The great failure of Marx and of all economists is that they are essentially historians and the world is always different. Marx does not provide a working blueprint for any way forward past capitalism. I guess he and a few others thought he did, but they were wrong. Excuse me.

Corporations vs. People

Corporations do one thing well. They bring together the means of production to maximize short-term profit. Asking them to do anything else is like asking a cow to lay an egg. If corporations are people, they are pretty strange, incomplete people. They can never focus on anything long-term, not even profits. Politically, within any corporation, the long-term barely exists. That's the way it must be. People, on the other hand, live in the real world, with grandchildren and such. They have to think about the future in a very large way, and so do the political projections of those people—their governments.

Business is not an end in itself. The true end is the happiness of the people. Corporations are simply a tool we employ for our benefit. We must control them, not they us. I have often compared unregulated corporations to Terminator robots. They are probably even more heartless. How many examples do you need? Read our FotM newsletter. Read a little history. We must take control back from these monsters soon or they will destroy us (if they have not already done so).

Why I'm a Conservative

When I say that I am a conservative, I am probably saying something stupid, because I always then have to immediately explain myself. The definition has shifted so far in my lifetime, but what I mean is that I think we have to be very careful about change. Even about growth, which is a kind of change, is it not?

America roared out of the adversity of WWII with a government and set of ideas, well entrenched and extensively implemented, that remained relatively constant until Ronald Reagan—high taxes, government regulation especially of key economic sectors like banking and finance, encouragement of unionization and union rights, a fierce commitment to public education at all levels, and effective international trade barriers. The middle class and, hence, nearly all of America flourished. We became the richest and most powerful nation on Earth.

This system was constructed by Democrats and Republicans of the Greatest Generation and handed to us, the Lesser Generations, with every expectation that their hard-won gains would be continued. Movies, television, and science-fiction showed us worlds of continuing upward progress. Why, we could do anything! We have almost totally forgotten that spirit.

From Reagan until now, the system that worked to produce an economic powerhouse was de-constructed. Everything was changed! Just what a true conservative does not want, yet the charge was led by conservatives! Amazing! Everything right was made wrong again: taxes were lowered ridiculously, discouraging reinvestment, deregulation held sway, axes were swung, shackles restraining greed were thrown off, banks started blowing their inevitable (to anyone who lived through or bothered to read about the Great Depression and the years leading up to it) bubbles, union busting became a national pastime, public education was gutted and told it needed to “privatize”, and “free” trade led to the destruction of millions of good jobs.

What else have we gained? Nearly constant wars and a broken health care system that omits way too many people, while providing increasingly poor and ridiculous service at a price that is bankrupting the country. Oh, and now we seem to have gained a completely dysfunctional government, because of these same conservatives who have led us down the path of drastic change.

All this is change I can live without. When are we going to wake up and realize that we know what works! It is, amazingly enough, what worked before! The tried and true! Exactly the opposite course that we have followed since the Gipper threw us off our horse all those many years ago.

And please don't think I'm talking about nostalgia here. I have no desire to return to a pre-internet, pre-sexual revolution world. I don't long for the good ole days. I don't have misconceptions of years I lived through. I was there. What I say is based only on hard economic data from a completely different implemented philosophy of government than we have now, and how the economy has performed under “conservative” principles since Reagan.

Toward a More Reasonable American Foreign Policy

Am I lying when I say the world as a whole is headed for disaster? Aren't we already there in many places? Haven't we been for a long time?

I guess it's already too late for isolationism. I may sound a little too much like Ron Paul for my own comfort, but I think whatever we can do in the direction of developing and protecting our native resources, factories, and economy, we should do as China does—think of ourselves and our long-term goals first, and make our American companies and foreign companies who wish to do business with us tow the line.

We have to stop throwing money away by giving it to foreign governments and dictators. We need more bang for our bucks. What Japan and Great Britain do, for instance, is they assess what projects would most help people and that's what they do. In Santa Cruz, Japan built a hospital and gave it to the people. In St. Lucia, the British built a tunnel through the mountain blocking the capitol from most of the rest of the country. These donor countries are loved and honored for what their governments do. Our government is hated for what it does for very much more money.

The wars must stop. We must find a way to deal with the world mainly with peace and a few well-planned covert actions. We must find a way to slow down change, or even more people will die. And if “free trade” can't accomplish peace, what is it good for?

Liberals might have to accept things like genetic modification of crops if billions more are not to die in the worst ways possible. But this area is too crucial for decisions to be made alone by companies like Monsanto, who have

only short-term profit goals. The people and their governments must be involved in all these decisions, not just corporations. Just as with Global Warming and Evolution, let's apply science and see where it leads us when the decisions are open, informed, and democratic. We need a lot more food and need to figure out how to produce it without destroying ourselves. I trust no corporation on Earth with decisions of such consequence.

In foreign relations, the main goal of our government—if we choose to avoid isolationism—should be the prosperity of American citizens and companies. There should be no aid without trade. No assistance where American companies are shut out. American intellectual property rights must be protected. Friendliness and peace should be used to promote trade. Every politician should, by law, have to take sales samples to any foreign country they might visit. I'm sick and tired of going everywhere in the world and finding superior American products shoved off the shelves by the Germans, Japanese, Koreans, and now the Chinese and Indians. If we're such good capitalists, why don't we compete? It sure ain't because of high taxes or low American productivity, that's for certain. It's time for the excuses to stop!

Pam (Apr. 22, 12:58):

I just read this over again--there's so much in it!

--"We should be conservative and go back to what worked—high taxes, especially on accumulated capital and the rich, government regulation, unions, and a prosperous middle class. These are the things that made America great. Not greed. Sharing the fruits of our labor, creativity, and frugality. Any two out of the three can make a country prosperous—i.e. Germany or Japan. The U.S. had all three!

I will put the principle as simple as possible: Incomes shall be made more equitable or there will be outright rebellion. None of us wants that. It's a good enough reason for sharing, even if there were not countless others."-- (I don't know how to put that little line beside a quote.)

--"America roared out of the adversity of WWII with a government and set of ideas, well entrenched and extensively implemented, that remained relatively constant until Ronald Reagan—high taxes, government regulation especially of key economic sectors like banking and finance, encouragement of unionization and union rights, a fierce commitment to public education at all levels, and effective international trade barriers. The middle class and, hence, nearly all of America flourished. We became the richest and most powerful nation on Earth."

This is a description of conservatism I can go along with, but I don't think many "conservatives" today would agree to higher taxes and more regulation. Alas. The post-War years that saw so much American growth are often remembered now for being conformist, dull, and socially repressive, which they were. Our goal then was to create an economic engine that would power a huge middle class, and that was a very smart thing to do, whether anyone consciously realized it at the time or not. Stability, peace, and, yes, growth depend on a huge middle class. Look at any country in the world that doesn't have one, and you'll see a disaster. The middle is where most folks need to be; we should be able to say, We are ALL middle class. The American mentality IS a middle-class mentality. I am a child of the 'sixties, and I well remember my impatience with conformity, with staying inside the lines. A whole generation of us kicked our way out of those constraints, and the nation is the better for it. But in some ways we threw the baby out with the bath. In the 'fifties housing improved, more people went to college, unemployment was low and well-paying jobs were widely available. The disparity between the rich and the middle class was far smaller than it is today, which had great social benefits. One danger of democracy, according to deToqueville, is envy. The possibility of upward mobility naturally leads to competition and envy of those above you on the greasy pole. If those you envy are only a bit better off than you, your envy will encourage you to try harder, not enrage and humiliate you. Mitt Romney is so much richer than all but a few of us that most people resent him and can't identify with him, even his own party. Obama, to take just one example, makes a whole lot more than I do, and more than most of you I imagine, but not so much more that he lives in a world I can't begin to understand. My first husband grew up in Akron, Ohio. His father was a high school graduate with no college at all. He was a businessman who started with a small movie theater and created other businesses that gave his family a very comfortable life. A basic education, limited resources, and a strong work ethic were enough to put him solidly in the middle class. My husband grew up next door to the editor of the Akron Beacon Journal, a juxtaposition I doubt you would find today.

I agree with you, Steve, that change is often best when it is relatively slow, but we need to be specific about what change we're talking about. Edmund Burke condemned the French revolution because it catapulted the nation from one way of being into a drastically different one virtually overnight, with disastrous results. The British took longer to institute reforms--many decades--and avoided revolution and mass executions. On the other hand, I agree with Martin Luther King that "justice delayed is justice denied." Edging toward greater income parity is fine; forcing people to wait for equal rights is not.

--"The great failure of Marx and of all economists is that they are essentially historians and the world is always different. Marx does not provide a working blueprint for any way forward past capitalism. I guess he and a few others thought he did, but they were wrong."--

When Marx and Engels looked at the London slums and the midland factories, they saw appalling inequality, exploitation, and an absence of social responsibility. They didn't make anything up; they described what they saw. I believe any of us would react as they did. Marx was an astute historian, and his explanation of capitalism is, I believe, sound, but he got a lot of crucial things wrong. He didn't foresee that people would be more loyal to their own country than to their social class across national boundaries. We still don't know if his prediction that capitalism will evolve into something else is right, but if it is, I don't see any signs of a paradigm shift yet. Communists of the Stalinist stripe insanely took "The Communist Manifesto" and used it as a foundation for their goal of drastic, immediate change. In that respect, they have something in common with the French Revolution. Marx was right about political evolution, IMHO, but I think he was wrong about revolution. (This is way too complicated. What about the Arab Spring? I support that revolution.) Our situation is not yet so dire that out-and-out revolution is likely, but if it worsens anything is possible. The Occupy movement might be just the first shot across the bow. What Marx saw was wealthy manufacturers with homes in London and in the country on enormous estates, where there had traditionally been common lands and a self-respecting yeomanry. Beside the lavish lifestyles of the newly rich, under their very noses in fact, were tenements whose first floors were uninhabitable because they were flooded with raw sewage; little children apprenticed to Master chimney sweeps, who climbed up hot flues because they were small enough to fit in tight spaces, who had their heads shaved and climbed naked and slept on the bags of soot they collected, giving them an appalling incidence of cancer of the scrotum. Read William Blake. The English in the 19th c. enacted a series of Reform Bills that expanded the franchise and took steps to ameliorate the worst abuses of the industrial revolution. They did this not just because they wanted to do the right thing, but because they saw the revolutions breaking out all over Europe, and they didn't want to go down that road. What we see in America today is not sweat shops and child labor (unless, of course, you count immigrants both illegal and documented) but rich corporations and their political minions lavishing millions on birthday parties, golf trips, and multiple homes beside a whole generation of young people being crushed by debt, millions without adequate health care, and a growing incidence of hunger among the poor. I saw a movie with Will Smith (can't remember the name) where he cons a rich couple into taking him into their fancy New York apartment as a kind of son. I believe he tells a buddy at one point, The rich are broke, just like you and me, but at a higher level. We're the 19th c. in Britain, but at a higher level.

Life is not fair, and there will never be liberty and justice for all. That being said, our greatest responsibility is to those closest to us. Charity really does begin at home, or should. We cannot catapult Afghanistan into the 21st c., but we can provide health coverage to all Americans. I know we can't afford the luxury of a small military, but I wish we could be more like Canada and New Zealand, "an island of prosperity in a cold sea of poverty." But like it or not, America does have a responsibility to the rest of the world. Someone has to keep the North Koreans from totally losing it. I think our biggest problems are really moral ones: hedge fund managers who cheat, insurance companies that refuse to pay for cancer treatment, politicians who abuse their power, corporations that put profits above people. Look at where the wealthy live. It sure ain't on land that's being fracked. I like Kant's categorical imperative: live as if it would be a good thing if everyone acted as you do. (Obviously not an exact quote.) There's a good article in this week's New Yorker about guns in America. The NRA, naturally, believes that the more citizens who are armed, the better. I do not. I'm not saying no one should own a gun, but I believe the world would be a better place if no one did, so I will live accordingly.

I'm sorry to have rattled on so long. Writing helps me think.

Art (Apr. 22, 13:55):

These are all really good. If I could just add a couple of points:

1. As we came out of WW II, the country was A, used to high taxes to sustain the great effort, winning the war. And B, the new President Eisenhower, had a great vision, to build the interstate highway system (which he got from observing the German Autobhan system by the way). At least part of the reason to sustain some of those taxes was to accomplish this great national goal. I think people understood this and largely supported the effort. So while I agree we need to adjust taxes upward, people need to see and believe what it will accomplish. Today, reducing the deficit may be enough.
2. I also agree that, if we continue this disparity in wealth, it will eventually create violence. Frankly, I have come to the point personally, I feel nothing in common with greedy self serving people like Romney. I wouldn't want to spend a minute talking or listening to him or them. To me, he and his kind are utterly contemptible. They are worth the loyalty to people they have exhibited, exactly none. Equally, and this is from a former soldier who proudly saluted the Flag for 30 years, I don't think the serving people like him is worth the life of one Army private, to poorly paraphrase Frederick the Great. I certainly wouldn't waste my time, much less risk my life, serving any of these self serving individuals.
3. I also think that where Marx may have had a point (remember he lived and developed his philosophy in 19th century Great Britain, which was a bastion of social privilege largely based on birth and privilege) the real answer to prosperity lies in the middle. Business should be encouraged by honest government and laws intended to support the development of business. However we must never forget that business and businessmen have but one goal, to make money, the more the better. That is the sole reason it exists. That should be encouraged to be successful but never trusted to do anything beyond that one objective. Businesses and businessmen will lie, cheat, steal, abuse employees etc. and justify it or see no wrong in it, if they can increase profits. History is full of examples and look at Apple today or Monasanto. Nothing has changed from the child labor or sweat shops of the 19th century. Again, we should not fault this, but never expect any thing more from business than this approach. That is where governments come in. Governments must serve to curb these actions to provide a level field. Fair wages, decent working conditions, reliable products you can safely eat or use, all really on government's regulating practices. Of course, business and businessmen will do everything they can to prevent government oversight because they restrict the one sole objective of business, making more profits.

So the question is, can we really trust a slash and burn businessman as President? Which side will he be on?

Pam (Apr. 22, 14:16):

I think the three of us ought to be government consultants (not lobbyists). I agree, Art, that we should expect nothing more from big business than corner-cutting and ruthlessness. "I love to fire people." Business and government are, in many ways, adversarial, which optimally achieves a rough balance of power. The problem today, as I see it, is that business and government are in bed with each other, with business on top (if you'll forgive my analogy). I think this election is probably the most crucial one in my lifetime. If Romney wins, we will circle the drain faster and faster. If Obama wins, we will circle more slowly, which will give us a breathing space to figure out what to do next. Our conversation (FotM) is really helping me figure things out.

SteveB (Apr. 22, 15:05):

I think business being "on top" is the perfect analogy, Pam, only I think it's rape and the government isn't having so much fun anymore.

Yes, business seems to have taken control of its adversary, and that's what Eisenhower warned us about, as Art has said.. It's what we should have done everything possible to prevent because, now, it's gonna be hard to get them

out, out of bed, dressed, and back out into the f*cking street where the low lifes belong. Not in bed with my government of the people and for the people.

The polls seem to be saying R0mney and Barry are neck-`n-neck. How is this possible? Where are the women, blacks, and Hispanics? Has the cheating already started? How is to nor Barry 80%, R0mney 20%. That's his natural constituency...about 20% of the voting public. I thought the primaries pretty much proved that. Now that you throw in Democrats, he's doing better? Doesn't make any sense to me.

Here's my thought for the day (which is about the most I am capable of): "R0mney is a man who will do what he is paid to do. That's his entire political philosophy and plan for the country in a nutshell." The voters be damned.

We know who's paying him. The result of R0mney would be ruin.

SteveBA (Apr. 22, 20:25):

This thread seems to be dominated by the socialist and some belief that the government can make all things well by punishing the successful and giving their wealth to the rest of us. I would challenge one and all here to identify one government enterprise that has worked. We have 2 choices of economic systems, one where the decisions are centralized and one where capital is free to go where it is related best. The soviet union is a classic example the failed enterprise of centralized planing and for some reason was admired the socialists but it failed in part because it took away the freedoms of the individual. For bother failed experiment we only need to go 90 miles south of Florida where Castro version of Marxism has caused great human suffering but garners the admiration of Sean penn. and finally there is France Spain, Italy and Greece all socialist economies nd all failing because the majority worked for the government. Last but not there is china a curious blend of political repression, centralized planing and free enterprise. There they have millionaires and the people's party.

On the other hand we have our version of capitalism, where we decide where we want to invest. And it has produced the highest standard of living in the history of mankind, the most innovations in the world and for all our problems people are still willing to cross the rio grande to get here. The dislocation that we face is that our manufacturing base has moved over seas to cheap labor and eliminated a lot of middle class jobs. IMHO this loss of jobs was caused by both big business unions and government, all characterized by bloated bureaucracy. The auto industry is the classic example where the companies built cars that nobody wanted with union labor that priced the cars out of reach the common man. In comes Honda and the rest and good by gm and Chrysler. Free markets, that is the us consumer were punishing the inefficient and perhaps the best long term solution was to let them fail. Interestingly ford is profitable and prospering but not so for the other two.

Summary capitalism serves best a society that values its freedoms. Centralized governments take away economic and individual freedoms. For all it's flaws our system works best

SteveB (Apr. 22, 21:04):

"I would challenge one and all here to identify one government enterprise that has worked."

You're joking, right, like you are about the "socialist" crap?

I can give you thousands of government enterprises that have worked. Let's start with the New Deal, American education (including your own, SteveBA), WWII, Social Security until Congress robbed it, the Postal Service until Congress robbed it, NASA, Apollo, the Space Shuttle, the internet, the railroads, the airline industry, semiconductors, the understanding of DNA, and air traffic control, the Polio vaccine...all government enterprise.

Let us all strive not to tow any party lines here, my friend, especially to the point of saying something so ridiculously radical as I quoted. I don't really think you are that incredibly far right.

But you are right in saying that we must truly be the greatest nation on Earth if the poorest people will cross the mighty Rio Grande to find if the American dream still lives...or if it has been killed by the last 40 years or so of Republican-brand conservatism.

And, hey, I'm all for more freedom. For people! That means the rich and the corporations are going to have to give up a lot of their freedom abusing powers, mainly purchased from our self-interested politicians on both sides of the aisle.

Ben (Apr. 22, 22:29):

SteveBA, you must be very busy this election season, towing party lines. Good work, if you can get it, I guess.

And... you forgot the Interstate Highway System, the Tennessee Valley Authority, whatever that campaign was that brought electricity to farms in the 1930s... it really is a heck of a list.

Jim (Apr. 22, 23:16):

Concerning Art's point about paying for WW II, people today are used to having a war or two going on without paying for them and just letting the debt pile up from all the military spending. That wartime spending was setup to be outside of the pay-as-you-go policy that the rest of the budget was supposed to use.

20120420-01	07:05	MarthaH	Democrats.org Petition: Repeal Shoot First Laws
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---

from [Democrats.org](#):

The ground is starting to shift on "shoot first" laws and your willingness to act is a big reason why. Here's what has happened since you signed our "Repeal Shoot First Laws" petition:

- Governor Rick Scott of Florida announced he'll reevaluate their controversial "Stand Your Ground" law -- that's the one that was at the center of Trayvon Martin's death and has been a key component of the NRA agenda.
- And ALEC -- the shady, Washington coalition that wrote these dangerous laws in the first place -- announced they would now end their work in issues like these "shoot first" laws.
This is exciting progress but we've still got a lot to do.

We won't stop until we do right by the communities and families who are so deeply affected by senseless gun violence. The crucial thing we need to do right now is keep growing our movement. Right now we're 250,000 strong, but if we're going to keep the pressure on, it's really important we're able to show more and more people standing up to gun violence every day. With enough people, we can create real change on this issue.

http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/50495/p/salsa/web/tellafriend/public/?tell_a_friend_KEY=8344

Please, tell your friends and family about this progress and ask them to join you and get involved today.

Or simply forward this email, and they can click here to join you: <http://licensedtokill.org/>.

It's going to take all of us coming together to keep marching forward toward sensible gun laws in this country. But seeing this progress over the last month, I'm confident we can get there if we keep working together.

Thanks for all you do, Joe Grace

[20120420-02](#) 07:53 MarthaH "President Barack Obama Stops to Sit on Bus Made Famous by Rosa Parks" (w/ Photo)

History lesson, wow!

"President Barack Obama Stops to Sit on Bus Made Famous by Rosa Parks", ClickonDetroit.com/MSNBC

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/47101747#.T5CwaKtYtj0>)

A just-released picture by the White House shows a tender moment President Barack Obama had while in Michigan on Wednesday.

Obama was in town for two fundraisers but stopped at The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn to sit inside the bus made famous by Rosa Parks.

On Dec. 1, 1955, the 42-year-old African-American Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery City bus for a white man. She was arrested and sparked a civil rights movement.

Obama said he took the time to sit in the bus to "ponder the courage and tenacity that is part of our very recent history."

"We have a lot at stake in this election ... But we have the truth on our side," he added.



Pete Souza / The White House via Getty Images

[20120420-03](#) 09:58 Art Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 19, 2012) & "Common Climate Change Myths"

SteveBA, I just have to respond to the first part of your e-mail. It continues to amaze me when obviously bright people like yourself deny the facts. The below are not theories, they are facts, period.

1. Recently a corpse discovered in the Alps was labeled the Ice Man. The body had been there covered and preserved by ice and snow for SIX THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED (6300) years. It was exposed after all that time when the ice melted away. That ice and snow is gone now.
2. The fabled Northwest Passage, searched for in previous centuries by Henry Hudson, Martin Frobisher, and John Franklin among others but always closed by ice and frozen seas, was open for the first time in human history in 2009 and ships sailed from the Atlantic to the Pacific.
3. The glaciers in Glacier National Park have disappeared.

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

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

From wikipedia:

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

I'll stop now, since I doubt we will ever agree on this. My personal belief is it has the emergency equivalent requirement of a major war. The effort is much more difficult because it will require a world wide effort and we can't even get our own country to agree. One of the worst thing that could have happened to the better understanding of global warming in this country was when Al Gore made that movie, "An Inconvenient Truth". He was right of course, but that set off the right wing who hate Gore and most anything else that is different and that politicized the issue on the right. To take corrective step, as you point out, will be very inconvenient indeed.

If the simulations are even remotely correct when we increase much beyond 2 degrees Celsius, it will set off a chain of events we can no longer control and pretty much wipe all life from earth, the 6th mass extinction in earth's history. It will happen fast and by 2100 most species including humanity will be dying out everywhere. I fear we are condemning our grandchildren to a miserable agonizing early death. If the WW II generation was the Greatest Generation, we will be known as the Most Selfish Generation. Of course the good news is there probably won't be anyone around to remember.

Finally, a neighbor who like you feels this is all a conspiracy by 97% of the world's climate scientists and the current Administration to deceive the great American people, advise me he got his information on the other side from the renown Anthony Watts. I looked Watts up. he is not a climate scientist, does not even have a undergraduate degree in anything, and his sole qualification was, he was a local weather person in Chico, California. I think I'd rather get my information from people who have some qualification to speak on the subject.

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

"Common Climate Change Myths" by National Park Service

Apr. 22, 2010, (<http://www.nature.nps.gov/climatechange/myths.cfm>)

Despite scientific evidence about the realities of climate change, we are still faced with persistent and confusing myths in the media. To allow the National Park Service to manage for climate change, we have dissected and examined these myths and found the realities of potential climate forecasts sobering. Not only will climate change impact the natural, cultural and historic resources we protect, but also how we serve the National Park Service mission and maintain a high-quality visitor experience.

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

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

Myth 1: The current warming trend is a natural process, the Earth has done this before and nature is capable of coping.

The Earth's temperature fluctuates naturally over what humans view as very long periods of time; tens of thousands to millions of years. The temperature increase attributed to a sharp rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide occurred over a few decades. So while life on this planet copes with gradual change in a dynamic environment, the current warm up, and the speed at which it happens, is unprecedented over the last 1,300 years.

Myth 2: Scientists are in disagreement.

A recent survey of climatologists reveals that 97% of those scientists think that global climate change is occurring presently and that human activity is the primary cause. The myth that scientists disagree about the existence of climate change persists because the scientific method is pitted against an apparent societal need for absolute certainty portrayed in the media.

When faced with a question, scientists first develop a "hypothesis" and then subject their hypothesis to rigorous experimentation and observation. Multiple proven hypotheses may be collected into a "theory," which summarizes several experiments and observations. Theories are lines of thinking that scientist accept as true, but scientists always make room for an exception, or for science to come along with new discoveries that can disprove previously accepted hypotheses and theories. A theory need not have 100% agreement to be valid, and theories seldom achieve unanimous approval. Scientists may disagree about certain aspects of climate change, but this is part of the scientific process, not a sign that a theory is inaccurate. As new facts come to light, science adjusts its theory. A "law" is a predicted set of observations with no significant exceptions. Theories do not "grow up" to be laws once they are proven. In fact, scientists are still refining Newton's laws of gravity.

Let's be clear. Climate change is happening all around us, and human activities are accelerating it. The evidence is overwhelming, and the theory of global warming is sound. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which conducted the survey above, consists of thousands of scientists from all over the world who specialize in difference aspects of climate science. A separate study by the National Academy of the Sciences drew the same conclusions.

As a scientific agency, the National Park Service has learned to adapt our management practices to new evidence as it becomes available. For example, we used to manage forest fires by putting them out as quickly as possible. We

now realize that fire is a natural process, and this process must remain active in fire-dependent ecosystems to promote healthy forests, and healthy forests release less carbon into the atmosphere in the long run.

We acknowledge that uncertainty remains over how fast and how much the temperature will increase. Nor are we certain about rainfall levels and the number or severity of storms. Some scientists think that the outcomes will slowly increase like turning a dial; while other scientists think it will be more like flipping a switch. Despite the uncertainty, we believe it far riskier to do nothing. We will move forward with the best science we have today. Our mission demands that we do so.

Myth 3: Global climate change is not human caused we can't possibly affect something as big as the planet.

Our history is alive with examples of human impacts on global systems, from something as large-scale as damming mighty rivers to a myriad of small actions like shooting the last passenger pigeon. We all have the ability to add and take away in small amounts to a global system. We find evidence of how humans have affected natural and cultural resources in our national parks. Petrified Forest National Park was once covered with pieces of petrified wood—not today. The park is facing the possibility that it may lose the singular thing that defines it—because some visitors have taken just one piece of petrified wood. When it comes to climate change, it is not just individual impacts but the collective impact that changes the global system.

Myth 4: If climate change were true we would be seeing the impacts already.

We ARE seeing the impacts in many places around the world. The most obvious impacts are currently visible in more northern latitudes, along the coasts, and in high-elevation habitats. The glaciers in Glacier National Park, for example, are shrinking—the park once had 150 glaciers larger than 25 acres in size, and now only 25 are left, and they are predicted to be completely gone by 2020. Plants like Joshua trees in Joshua Tree National Park or sugar maples in many eastern parks need a particular temperature zone to survive. They have already begun a shift across the landscape to reach the right growing conditions. Fire seasons in the West appear to start earlier and last longer into the fall. Park facilities and homes in Alaska are sinking due to thawing permafrost. Once gone, these fragile ecosystems and cultural resources are gone forever.

Myth 5: Cold weather disproves global warming.

While we may say "climate" when we mean "weather," and vice versa, they are two very different things. As Mark Twain put it, "Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get." Weather is what we get on a day-to-day basis, whereas climate is the average weather conditions over long periods of time. With the 2010 heavy snowstorms in the Washington DC area, some declared that climate change was over. But climate scientists tell us that with climate change we can expect more flooding, more drought, extended heat waves, and more severe storms. Furthermore, one cold winter does not by itself change the long term average (the climate) much. Both the overall climate and the extremes of weather are a concern for national parks. In 2006, huge floods damaged many of the main roads in Mount Rainier National Park in the Washington state. The park was closed to visitors for many months to repair damaged roads and make it safe for visitors to reenter the park. Those storms may not be directly attributable to climate change, but the increased frequency of such storms will certainly impacts parks.

Myth 6: Climate change is being caused by the sun?

Recent records of the sun's activity show that solar radiation reaching the Earth varies by about 0.1%. That change is too small to explain documented warming over the past 50 years, and scientists haven't found any long-term trend in solar output that would explain it. Two factors control how much energy the Earth receives from the sun. First, subtle wobbles in our planet's orbit around the sun vary the amount of solar radiation received and changes the seasonal cycles. These "Milankovitch Cycles" affect the Earth on timescales of thousands of years and their impact on climate change is well understood. Second, the sun's energy output changes following the 11-year sunspot cycle, but also may vary gradually over longer periods of time.

Myth 7: Alternative energy is too expensive and cannot solve our energy needs.

We need to compare short-term and long-term costs to settle this myth. In the short-term, today's alternative energy producers are often more expensive than traditional energy sources. However, when long-term costs such as pollution, global warming, and quality of life are factored into the economics of energy, alternative energy shines. When faced with the need to change, America produces innovative solutions that lead the world. Many of these changes were very expensive and limited at the beginning. America's national parks were another innovative idea, sometimes called "America's best idea." They were expensive and controversial 100 years ago. Now they are priceless gems that reconnect us with nature, our heritage, and the larger world around us.

Myth 8: There is plenty of time to react to climate change.

Changes in the Earth's climate, because of the increased level of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, already affect our national parks and visitors' experience in the parks. Let's say we could stop pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere today. The amount we have already released would linger for decades and continue to raise the temperature at the surface of the Earth where we already see the effects of climate change. In the Rocky Mountains, for example, pine trees have already been infested by the mountain pine bark beetle, a blight brought on by the stresses of climate. Acres of dead trees have increased the threat of more severe fire activity, changed the visitor experience and created a hazard for campers in some national parks. By the time we realize such climatic effects, it is often too late to do something about it; a planned response to climate change is much better than a hasty reaction.

Myth 9: There's nothing I can do to change this, so why should I care?

One individual CAN make a difference, a difference that is compounded when others join in. We need your help to make changes so we can fulfill the mission of the National Park Service: to conserve our natural, cultural and historic resources for the enjoyment of this and future generations. We need your help to ensure generations to come experience the tallgrass prairie, see spectacular waterfalls, mountains and hear the call of the pika among wildflowers in the alpine tundra. Please join us.

20120420-04

11:01

Pam

Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA & Art)

Let us assume that some of the positions on both sides of the political spectrum are true:

1. Big government stifles progress and interferes with individual rights; big money controls governments worldwide, and the oil industry controls big money; ergo the oil industry, by calling the shots politically, determines policy, especially energy policy. It follows logically that if you support big oil, you also support big government.
2. Obama is like every other politician, a tool of the monied interests. This explains why he has not tried harder to reign in big oil, and his administration has seen oil companies raking in unprecedented profits.
3. Obama is at heart a socialist and has a liberal agenda that includes destroying the oil industry, expanding support for "green" energy, and lowering our standard of living. He wants to do this because he's a liberal, and it's liberals who favor sustainable energy, not because he recognizes the science that proves climate change and the very real prospect of Earth becoming uninhabitable. I'm tempted to invoke Pascal's wager here. Pascal was an Enlightenment mathematician who didn't believe in God, but on his deathbed, he converted to Catholicism. His reason was, If there is no God, it doesn't matter what I do. If there is, then I'm covered. Why take the chance? Even if YOU are unconvinced that climate change is real and exacerbated by human activity, wouldn't it be prudent to be on the safe side and wean ourselves off fossil fuels? If Obama is anti-oil, what is his motive, if not to save the world?
4. Our standard of living today is worth more than the health and welfare of the Third World and more than our own children and grandchildren. Having to curtail our use of energy would be more onerous than "sharing" energy with developing nations or planning for the future (which was yesterday). Better that we have cars and planes and big-screen TVs and computers and warm homes and cool homes (all of which I

have or use, BTW), even if it means depriving most of the world's population of a standard of living even remotely like ours. We deserve it. They don't. The future will somehow take care of itself, just as it always has. (Ask the dinosaurs.)

5. It's easier to accuse Obama of having nefarious intentions than to acknowledge the danger we are in. Believing something in the face of overwhelming opposition from people you don't like anyway feels far better and safer than opening your mind to the possibility of massive tragedy. When it's you against the world, it's easy to feel self-righteous. (Ask a teenage girl whose father hates her boyfriend.) When uncertain about who or what is responsible for x,y, or z, find a scapegoat and blame him for EVERYTHING. If you still don't feel safe but can't admit to yourself the world just might be changing in ways that will destroy life as we know it, if you feel helpless in the face of something so overwhelming, then take refuge in a threat--black helicopters, earthquakes, epidemics, terrorism--that you can at least have a chance of defending yourself against. Join a militia, dig a bunker in the back yard, stockpile a year's worth of food--then sit back and relax. If that doesn't appeal to you, just embrace the inevitable as God's will. Think about it--YOU will be present at Armageddon. How thrilling.

Don't all these evasions seem crazier than confronting the problem of climate change, figuring out what we can do about it, and implementing whatever steps are necessary to save the world? We're Friends of the Middle, right? I don't think that is limited to politics. For all to survive, all must have something. The world will not endure if a few have lots, and the rest have nothing. Our standard of living must fall, and the standard of living of Congo must rise. We must meet in the middle. (Ask Marie Antoinette.) We have been lucky, and I'm very grateful for that. But our luck will not hold when temperatures rise, major cities are submerged, and millions die. I am NOT arguing for absolute equality. There is no such thing, and it wouldn't be good if there were. All I'm saying is, America, Europe, indeed the whole world, need a broad middle class. That is not class warfare; it's human survival.

Sadly, so sadly, I don't see any progress on the part of the U.S. to deal with this crisis. I very much fear that we, who have given the world so much, will be responsible for hastening its ruin. I'm sorry to say, SteveBA, that nothing you said gives me any comfort. I only wish it did.

20120420-12	14:47	Dennis	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA) & "Clean Air & Natural Gas"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Well, SteveBA, I don't know where you get the idea that Obama is opposing the development of natural gas, unless you only watch Fox News. Despite accusations by Republicans, like James Imhofe, who seem to love dirty air, Obama's new rules, as announced by the EPA, for restricting harmful emissions from natural gas wells are not his way of slowing the boom in NG production. They are, in fact, a win-win, good for the environment and profitable for industry. Even the American Petroleum Institute does not oppose them (see NY Times editorial link below). It wasn't the API that you were referring to when you mentioned his Chicago buddies, was it?

"Clean Air and Natural Gas" *New York Times* Editorial

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/20/opinion/clean-air-and-natural-gas.html? r=2&ref=opinion>)

(The Obama administration's new rules aimed at cutting harmful emissions from natural gas wells are a win for the environment, for the public and for industry. And despite what Republican politicians claim, the rules will not impose major new costs or slow what has been a remarkable boom in natural gas production.)

The rules, announced on Wednesday by the Environmental Protection Agency, are the first federal effort to address air pollution problems associated with hydraulic fracturing. They will require drillers to capture toxic and smog-forming pollutants, along with methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, before they escape into the air.

James Inhofe of Oklahoma, the top Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, immediately denounced the rules as one more administration effort to regulate gas production "out of existence." This followed Mitt Romney's absurd charge that President Obama was determined to use environmental regulations

to "slow down the development of our own resources." The new rules would do nothing of the sort; even the American Petroleum Institute said it could live with them.

Roughly 13,000 wells are "fractured" each year. The rules would require drillers to undertake so-called green completions, in which gases emerging at the wellhead are captured and stored in trailer-mounted tanks and routed back into pipelines. Colorado and Wyoming already require green completions. And several major producers are making money by recapturing gas and reselling it, which more than offsets the costs of the new equipment.

Mr. Obama has repeatedly said that he favors robust exploration for natural gas, in part because it is plentiful and cheap and in part because it produces only about half the greenhouse gas emissions that coal does. Coal produces nearly half the country's electricity. But natural gas's share, now a little over one-fifth, is rising as more supplies are found and prices drop.

There are still legitimate concerns about hydrofracturing's potential impact on water supplies — an E.P.A. study is due next year. But the rules should ease concerns about the process's effect on air pollution and global warming. Far from presenting new obstacles to drilling, the rules could win supporters for hydrofracturing.

20120420-16	18:13	SteveBA	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to Dennis)
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---

I worry about You, his hit men the EPA has gone the natural gas industry tooth and nail. He couldn't even get Reid to support tax subsidies to quicken the implementation of CNN conversion but pushed through tax breaks for anyone who buys the volt from government gm motors. Ps I have heard that the battery replacement for the volt is 40k if car doesn't catch on fire first.

20120420-18	18:27	Dennis	Re: "Those 'Green-Collar Jobs' Promises Have Been a Bust, Huh?" (reply to SteveBA)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Well, this confirms that you are getting your fallacious information from Fox News. The EPA are "hit men"? I wish. As for the Volt, it was named car of the year in Europe and is very well liked by the people who own one, even if it isn't such a great value that takes 26 years to break even on it. However, the "catch on fire" BS was disproved and only lingers on in the minds of you and the Fox News bubbleheads.

20120420-05	11:35	SteveG	Fw: Media Education Video: "Cause & Effect"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

from Miss Representation:

Every parent, woman, girl, or man who cares about women and girls needs to see this video:

<http://www.upworthy.com/what-happens-to-3-out-of-4-girls-after-leaving-through-a-fashion-mag-for-3-minut?c=nm4>.

20120420-06	12:11	Bill	Fw: AMA's Opinion of Obamacare
-----------------------------	-------	------	--------------------------------

The American Medical Association has weighed in on Obama's health care package. The Allergists were in favor of scratching it, but the Dermatologists advised not to make any rash moves. The Gastroenterologists had sort of a gut feeling about it, but the Neurologists thought the Administration had a lot of nerve.

Meanwhile, Obstetricians felt certain everyone was laboring under a misconception, while the Optometrists considered the idea shortsighted. Pathologists yelled, "Over my dead body!" while the Pediatricians said, "Oh, grow up!"

The Psychiatrists thought the whole idea was madness, while the Radiologists could see right through it. Surgeons decided to wash their hands of the whole thing and the Internists claimed it would indeed be a bitter pill to swallow.

The Plastic Surgeons opined that this proposal would "put a whole new face on the matter". The Podiatrists thought it was a step forward, but the Urologists were pi*sed off at the whole idea. Anesthesiologists thought the whole idea was a gas, and those lofty Cardiologists didn't have the heart to say no.

In the end, the Proctologists won out, leaving the entire decision up to the a*s-holes in Washington.

20120420-07	13:29	SteveG	Fw: PFAW Action: Send Scott Walker a Copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

from People for the American Way:

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has launched an all-out assault on the rights of his constituents. And to add insult to injury, he's made smug comments trivializing those same fundamental rights and protections.

Walker clearly needs to be educated about people's rights and their importance. That's why we're going to deliver a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to the governor -- on your behalf if you sign here:

<http://site.pfaw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=UDHR&autologin=true>.

You know Walker and his right-wing allies in the state legislature stripped workers' collective bargaining rights. But what you might not know is that he said about collective bargaining:

It's not a rights issue. It's an expensive entitlement.

And we told you about Walker's repeal of Wisconsin's Equal Pay Enforcement Act -- ending pay-equity protections for women, veterans, seniors and disabled workers. But did you know he said the equal pay law was nothing more than a "gravy train" for trial lawyers?

Scott Walker denies that these important rights -- rights that many people depend on -- are rights at all. But the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations following World War II, says differently.

Article 23 of the UDHR is very explicit:

- Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

It's time to set Scott Walker straight.

Send Scott Walker a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights now.

Obviously, Gov. Walker could stand to read it. We'll deliver a nice hardcover copy of the Declaration to Walker in Madison, as our gift to him on your behalf. Just sign your name to the note that will accompany it urging him to read it.

Millions of Wisconsinites depended on the important legal protections that were in place to safeguard these basic human rights. Help make Walker understand what he took away from them.

Thank you for standing up for the rights of all Americans -- in Wisconsin and nationwide -- against attacks from the Far Right.

-- Diallo Brooks, Director of Field Mobilization

from Emily's List:

Frankly, I'm disgusted that I even have to write this message. You would think that if any issue was safe from political posturing, it would be violence against women.

But no. Next week, the Senate is scheduled to vote on renewing the Violence Against Women Act, and Republicans can't stop playing politics for a single day on an issue this important. Many, many Republicans in Congress have announced their opposition to renewing the Act -- including some of those running against our women.

This vote could actually be close. It's enough to make me want to throw up my hands and scream. But that won't help the women who need the protections in this law.

What will help them? Showing them that we're standing together to protect women's health and safety.

The vote is coming soon, so we need you to act right now. Click here to tell Republicans to stop playing politics with women's lives.

Since President Clinton first signed it, the Violence Against Women Act has given law enforcement agencies the tools they need to stop domestic violence, and given women resources to protect themselves. This legislation has saved countless lives, and every time it has come up in Congress for renewal, it has passed easily and with bi-partisan support.

But now we're facing a new political reality, one where the Republican Party is run by its most extreme elements. Something that used to be a no-brainer is now just another political football for Republicans to use to impress the Tea Party radicals who are calling the shots for them.

Make no mistake: they are playing politics with women's lives.

We can win this. There are Republicans wavering, a few who know this is too important for politics and are ready to buck their party to support renewing VAWA. But they need to hear from you.

Click here right now, before the Senate votes, and tell Republicans to protect the health of women and their families:

<http://www.dsc.org/vawa?track=20120420-VAWA-EmilysList>.

I don't need to tell you that our EMILY's List champions in the Senate are leading the fight to protect women. And we're going to keep working to elect more pro-choice women to fight for us -- like Barbara Mikulski and Patty Murray and Dianne Feinstein -- so the next time VAWA comes up for renewal, there is no fight. But there's no time to waste if we want to win this fight today. Thanks for your support.

Warmly, Stephanie Schriock, President

"Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (w/ Video) by Reuters/MSNBC

Apr. 20, 2012, (<http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/04/20/11306372-catholic-nuns-group-stunned-by-vatican-scolding-for-radical-feminist-ideas?lite>)

The Catholic Church accused the nation's largest organization of American nuns of espousing "radical feminist" ideas. MSNBC's Lawrence O'Donnell discusses the charges with Sister Jeannine Gramick, who was once silenced by the Vatican, and Jeff Stone, communications director of Dignity USA.

A prominent U.S. Catholic nuns group said it was "stunned" that the Vatican reprimanded it for spending too much time on poverty and social justice concerns and not enough on abortion and gay marriage.

In a stinging report on Wednesday, the Vatican said the Leadership Conference of Women Religious had been "silent on the right to life" and had failed to make the "Biblical view of family life and human sexuality" a central plank in its agenda. It accused the group of promoting "certain radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith."

It also reprimanded American nuns for expressing positions on political issues that differed, at times, from views held by American bishops. Public disagreement with the bishops -- "who are the church's authentic teachers of faith and morals" -- is unacceptable, the report said.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a "doctrinal assessment" saying the Holy See was compelled to intervene with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to correct "serious doctrinal problems."

The nuns group, based in Silver Spring, Md., said in a statement Thursday on its website, "The presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious was stunned by the conclusions of the doctrinal assessment." It added it may give a lengthier response at a later date.

The conference says it represents 80 percent of America's 57,000 Catholic nuns. It is influential both in the United States and globally.

Academics who study the church said the Vatican's move was predictable given Pope Benedict's conservative views and efforts by Rome to quell internal dissent and curtail autonomy within its ranks.

"This is more an expression of the Church feeling under siege by trends it cannot control within the Church, much less within the broader society," University of Notre Dame historian Scott Appleby said.

That includes a steady drumbeat of calls to ordain women as priests, which the pope has reasserted was an impossibility.

The Vatican named Seattle Archbishop Peter Sartain and two other U.S. bishops to undertake the reforms of the conference's statutes, programs and its application of liturgical texts, a process it said could take up to five years.

(Msnbc.com's James Eng contributed to this report from Reuters.)

[20120420-10](#)

14:45

Pam

Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveG)

The Catholic church still lives in the Middle Ages. I simply cannot imagine how American Catholics reconcile their submission to an authoritarian hierarchy with a commitment to democracy. I have Catholic friends, but I've never had the nerve to ask them this.

[20120420-13](#)

14:47

SteveB

Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveG)

This one is absolutely sickening to me. How can all those devoted, good women continue to serve a Pope like that, who slaps them in the face as if they were dogs? Amazing.

The Catholics here almost universally love the Church but loathe its positions on, well, everything except maybe God. But that doesn't make pigs fly or women priests.

Pssst!....I hear the Vatican has been seeking Iran's help in building an atomic bomb. I don't think it's too late for a preemptive strike!

20120420-14	14:58	SteveG	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveB)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

If you were born in Saudi Arabia you are probably Muslim.

If you were born in Israel you are probably Jewish.

If you were born in India you are probably Hindu.

If you were born in China you are probably Buddhist.

If you were born in Utah you are probably Mormon.

If you were born in South America you are probably Catholic.

If you were born in the US (except for Utah) you are or were probably protestant.

Religion is based on geography and the strength of the controlling religious body.

20120420-15	16:42	Pam	Re: "Catholic Nuns Group 'Stunned' by Vatican Scolding for 'Radical Feminist' Ideas" (reply to SteveB)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

There's some kind of mafia/murder mystery swirling around the Vatican. I await developments.

20120420-11	14:46	SteveB	Video: Jon Stewart Interviews Robert Reich
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Video: "Robert Reich Extended Interview" from NationofChange

Apr. 20, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/robert-reich-extended-interview-1334932520>)

Americans can't rely only on getting good people elected, Reich argues, because nothing positive happens in Washington unless good people outside Washington are organized to help make those things happen after the election. But in order to be effectively mobilized, we need to see the big picture. Reich connects the dots for us, showing why the increasing share of income and wealth going to the top has hobbled jobs and growth for everyone else, while undermining our democracy; has caused Americans to become increasingly cynical about public life; and has turned many Americans against one another. He also explains why the proposals of the "regressive right" are dead wrong and provides a clear road map for what must be done instead. Here is a blueprint for action for everyone who cares about the future of America.

20120420-17	18:15	SteveBA	"Picture of the Day: Democrats (Not) At Work"
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---

I thought I would share with you a picture of the dems in the senate hard at work.

"Picture of the Day: Democrats (Not) At Work" posted by Ed Morrissey, Hot Air

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://hotair.com/archives/2012/04/19/picture-of-the-day-democrats-not-at-work/>)

Guy Benson says that this is a picture worth 1,086 words — one for each day since the Democrat-led Senate passed the budget resolution required by law each April 15th. This picture comes from yesterday's so-called "mark-up session" of the Senate Budget Committee, a meeting which chair Kent Conrad helpfully promoted by declaring that he wouldn't allow any votes to be taken on budgets. That turned the meeting into nothing more than a discussion forum, one that Conrad's colleagues decided to skip. The picture, taken by a Republican staffer at the meeting, shows all 11 Republicans sitting on the far side of the table — and almost no Democrats in their chairs.

The meeting was broadcast on one of the C-SPAN channels, so this isn't exactly a secret. Only three Democrats bothered to show up at all, out of a dozen assigned to it. Republicans showed up, prepared to cast votes to finally bring the ignominious streak of 1,085 days (as of yesterday) without a budget resolution to an end. Sadly, Democrats — who control the committee, the chamber, and the White House — don't have the same sense of responsibility.

Senator Jeff Sessions, like all of the other Republican members of the Senate Budget Committee, actually showed up for work. Sessions delivered a stinging rebuke to the leadership for their irresponsibility and utter lack of leadership on a core function of the Senate.

For a party that demands that voters put them in charge, they seem utterly unwilling to do the job once they have it. Voters should keep this in mind in November, up and down the ballot.



20120420-19	21:32	Jim	Fw: The Fable of the Porcupine
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--------------------------------

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com does NOT confirm this story. –SteveB]

Fable of the Porcupine

It was the coldest winter ever. Many animals died because of the cold.

The porcupines, realizing the situation, decided to group together to keep warm. This way they covered and protected themselves; but the quills of each one wounded their closest companions.

After awhile, they decided to distance themselves one from the other and they began to die, alone and frozen. So they had to make a choice: either accept the quills of their companions or disappear from the Earth.

Wisely, they decided to go back to being together. They learned to live with the little wounds caused by the close relationship with their companions in order to receive the heat that came from the others. This way they were able to survive.

The best relationship is not the one that brings together perfect people, but when each individual learns to live with the imperfections of others and can admire the other person's good qualities.

The moral of the story is: Just learn to live with the Pricks in your life!



20120421-01	10:14	SteveG	Fw: Credo Action Petition: Tell Angie's List to Drop Support of Rush Limbaugh
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/al_limbaugh/?r=6878444&id=38786-3891339-ZRuiO2x

20120421-02	10:15	SteveG	"When in Need of Political Distraction, Bash the Poor"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

"When in Need of Political Distraction, Bash the Poor" by Cynthia Tucker, The National Memo

Apr. 21, 2012, (<http://www2.nationalmemo.com/when-in-need-of-political-distraction-bash-the-poor/>)

Poor people are useful during political season.

Politicians offer up the impoverished to distract from the myriad problems for which their platforms propose no workable solutions: Is the treasury awash in red ink? Are there too many demands on a shrinking government purse? Then let's tighten up on largesse for the very poor.

Never mind that traditional welfare programs barely make a dent in federal spending. Middle-class voters are eager to hear plans that aim the budget-cutting ax away from the entitlement programs, such as Medicare, which have a large constituency among the well-heeled.

After all, voters, like political candidates, find it useful to point the finger at the less fortunate. The impoverished serve to remind the rest of us of our obvious moral superiority, of our wise choices, of our supreme good judgment in not being born poor.

That's why the current season has brought another round of the faddish insistence on mandatory drug tests for beneficiaries of welfare. Nathan Deal, Georgia's Republican governor, has become the latest political leader to get in on the mischief-making, signing a bill passed by the GOP-dominated Legislature that would require drug tests for recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

In places where conservative policymakers tend to gather — such as meetings of the American Legislative Exchange Council — proposals such as this are offered up in lieu of legislation that might actually reduce spending or boost government efficiency or improve the lives of the poor.

Mitt Romney, the likely GOP nominee for president, has endorsed the idea. In February, congressional Republicans refused to pass an extension of unemployment benefits until the legislation allowed states to require drug tests for the jobless.

You might have thought that conservative ideologues — those who insist that the U.S. Constitution guides their every brainwave and that an overweening government is the greatest threat to the survival of the republic — would hesitate to pass a law that so clearly violates principles laid out in the Bill of Rights. You'd be wrong.

Indeed, Georgia proceeded with imposing mandatory drug tests even though a federal judge has blocked a similar law in Florida.

And that's not the only lesson to be learned from the Florida experience, where GOP Gov. Rick Scott signed the drug-test requirement last year.

Though conservatives insist that the measure will save money, it didn't in the Sunshine State. It didn't reduce welfare rolls or uncover a culture of meth- or crack-addicted "welfare queens."

According to Florida state documents released last week, only 108 of the 4,086 would-be beneficiaries who were tested from July to October of last year failed. (The documents were released by the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, which obtained them as a result of a lawsuit against the drug-testing requirement. The ACLU notes that the law violates the Fourth Amendment ban against unreasonable search and seizure.)

That's 2 1/2 percent, folks — a far smaller percentage of drug users than among the general population. According to last year's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, conducted by the federal government, 10 percent of Americans reported regularly using illegal drugs.

Since taxpayers pay for the drug tests and since the requirement is likely to continue generating lawsuits, it will end up costing more in the long run. But it's pretty clear that this idea was never about saving money or helping the poor. Quite the opposite: It's another in a long list of mean-spirited proposals to inconvenience and intimidate the impoverished, as if their lives are not already difficult enough.

Back in the 1990s, when Republicans pushed a wide-ranging welfare reform plan through Congress, I was naive enough to believe that its proponents were genuinely worried about multi-generational dependency. They imposed lifetime limits on welfare, which should have calmed any concerns about "welfare queens" and a culture of seeking "hand-outs."

But it's now clear that they need to keep hammering at the poor for their alleged failings. It's useful political theater.

(Cynthia Tucker, winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, is a visiting professor at the University of Georgia. She can be reached at cynthia@cythiatucker.com.)

20120421-03 10:16 SteveB "Barney Frank Makes a Misdiagnosis on Obamacare"

"Barney Frank Makes a Misdiagnosis on Obamacare" by Jonathan Alter, Bloomberg View

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-04-19/barney-frank-makes-a-misdiagnosis-on-obamacare.html>)

Representative Barney Frank, who is not seeking re-election, gave a memorable exit interview this week to *New York* magazine suggesting that President Barack Obama "underestimated, as did Clinton, the sensitivity of people to what they see as an effort to make them share the health care with poor people."

The Democratic Party "paid a terrible price for health care," Frank said. "I would not have pushed it as hard."

Frank's take is self-serving. He argued that Obama should have proposed financial reform first, which is convenient considering that he was chairman of the House Financial Services Committee at the time and would have loved all eyes on his bill.

But the question remains: Is Frank right? We know what Republicans unanimously think. What's surprising is how many Democrats, with the benefit of hindsight and speaking sotto voce, agree with Frank. Although they support the substance of the law, they are appalled by its political fallout and wish they had a do-over. Their thinking was summarized this week in the *National Journal* by Michael Hirsh, who wrote that by embracing health care reform amid the economic crisis, Obama confused his priorities and took his eye off the ball, much as President George W. Bush did when he invaded Iraq instead of worrying more about al-Qaeda.

This analysis has new resonance because of the recent Supreme Court oral arguments over Obamacare (a term, by the way, that the Obama campaign now embraces). Democrats are wondering if it was worth it to lose the House in 2010 and perhaps the White House in 2012 over a bill that may be declared unconstitutional, anyway.

The answer is yes. To understand why, we need to be clear about the purpose of politics.

It's not to win elections -- hard as that may be to believe in the middle of a campaign. Public approval as expressed in elections is the means to change the country, not the end in itself.

Insuring 30 million Americans and ending the shameful era when an illness in the family meant selling the house or declaring personal bankruptcy? Nothing to sneeze at, whatever the cost to one's political career.

Frank is mistaken that the White House underestimated the political price. At various points, Vice President Joe Biden, senior advisor David Axelrod and Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel advised the president to focus entirely on the economy and leave comprehensive health care for another day. "I begged him not to do this," Emanuel told me when I was researching my book about Obama's first year in office.

I asked the president in late 2009 why he overruled his team. He answered: "I remember telling Nancy Pelosi that moving forward on this could end up being so costly for me politically that it would affect my chances" in 2012. But he and Pelosi agreed that if they didn't move at the outset of the Obama presidency "it was not going to get done."

Obama was right that his political capital would diminish over time. Even if the Democrats had delayed health care and held the House in 2010, their numbers would almost certainly have been reduced. Can you imagine trying to bring it up now or in a second term?

Hirsh argues that Obama should have stayed focused on the economy not for appearances' sake but because it was worse off than he and his closest advisers recognized. This wrongly assumes that he could have done substantively more to spur a rebound or keep the benefits of recovery from skewing toward the top 1 percent.

Liberal critics rightly say that Obama should have had a broader circle that included liberal economists. But their remedy -- restructuring of the banks -- turned out to be unnecessary for reviving the economy and would have cost, by some estimates, several hundred billion dollars on top of the Troubled Asset Relief Program.

It's important to remember that Obama began his presidency with economic recovery, not health care. In his first month in office, he pushed through a mammoth stimulus package that, contrary to the analysis of Drew Westen and others, was as big as Congress would allow. There was no political appetite for a second stimulus before the first had even kicked in -- the period when health care was on the table. In other words, the opportunity costs of health-care reform were zero.

As for other priorities, passing the Dodd-Frank financial reform in 2009 would have accomplished nothing except to further slow momentum for health care. In the New York magazine interview, Frank says his bill, which passed in July of 2010, ended up with almost all he wanted anyway.

The other possible legislative achievement -- pushing a cap-and-trade energy bill before health care -- was a nonstarter. Even after that bill cleared the House in mid-2009, Max Baucus, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, made clear that it would never become law.

The "eye off the ball" critics have a point, but it relates to the second year of Obama's presidency, not the first.

Just as Nixon had his "18.5-minute gap" on the Watergate tapes, so Obama had his 18-month gap, from the signing of the Affordable Care Act in March 2010 until the introduction of his jobs bill in September 2011.

If the president had pivoted more quickly from health care to a jobs agenda and signed a bill before the midterms, he would be better off politically and might even have helped the economy a bit.

But let's not pretend health-care reform was a fatal Iraq-style distraction from the main event. Instead of costing thousands of lives, it will potentially save many more with its incentives for preventive care, among other historic provisions.

The public might not appreciate it yet, but Obamacare took leadership and guts from the president whose name it bears.

[20120421-04](#)

10:19

SteveG

"Stuck in the Past? DOE's Cold War Mindset Leads to Blown Bucks on Nuclear Labs"

"Stuck in the Past? DOE's Cold War Mindset Leads to Blown Bucks on Nuclear Labs" by Mia Steinle, POGO

Apr 18, 2012, (<http://pogoblog.typepad.com/pogo/2012/04/stuck-in-the-past-does-cold-war-mindset-leads-to-billions-blown-on-nuke-labs.html>)

We've been saying for some time that the U.S. nuclear weapons complex is a relic of the Cold War. Now it seems even the Department of Defense (DoD) has had enough, according to a Pentagon memo obtained by the Project On Government Oversight, and is calling out the Department of Energy (DOE) for its refusal to downsize its nuclear weapons laboratories. POGO sent a letter to Members of Congress today—along with a copy of the leaked DoD memo—urging them to ensure that DOE does not circumvent the congressional funding process and pour even more money into its oversized lab system. We also urged DOE to follow DoD's lead by closing redundant lab space and by placing a cap on contractor compensation at the labs.

The DoD memo appears to have been written in response to a new interagency council comprised of DOE, DoD, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The council is looking for ways "to engage in interagency long-term strategic planning" for the DOE labs. Simply put, the interagency council could create new missions for the nuclear weapons labs and could allow the agencies to funnel funding into DOE nuclear projects without congressional approval.

But, at a time when President Obama is calling for a “leaner” military and the Administration is considering shrinking the nuclear stockpile to reflect the realities of the 21st century, DOE nuclear labs should be getting smaller too.

As the DoD memo notes, experts have been urging DOE to downsize its labs (including the three nuclear weapons laboratories) since the end of the Cold War. The White House’s Office of Science and Technology Policy concluded in 1995, “the DOE laboratory system is bigger and more expensive than it needs to be,” and there is “excessive duplication of capabilities among the labs.”

However, funding for the labs now exceeds Cold War levels, due in part to lobbying by the DOE lab directors. According to the DoD memo, the Administration’s plans to increase funding to \$8.6 billion per year over the next ten years is almost 70 percent higher than spending during the Cold War in constant dollars. In another leaked memo obtained by POGO, an official from the Office of the Secretary of Defense noted that the DOE labs want to take on new missions as a way to justify their oversized infrastructure.

By contrast, the DoD has undertaken five Base Realignment and Closure rounds, or BRACs, since 1988, closing 21 laboratories and eliminating excess capacity. This past November, a DOE Office of Inspector General report concluded that DOE should carry out a BRAC-like review of its labs, which could lead to consolidation or realignment—which are ultimately money-savers for the labs and for taxpayers.

And, as we point out in the letter, taxpayers are footing a hefty bill for the labs. Seven of the top fifteen officials at the three nuclear weapons labs make more than the Administration’s \$700,000 executive compensation cap. In theory, any amount above the compensation cap shouldn’t be a burden on taxpayers, as the labs are required to pay for the difference out of their own profits. However, because the labs use their government-granted award fees to pay the difference, taxpayers end up picking up the slack. For instance, in 2009, taxpayer dollars covered all of former Sandia Lab Director Tom Hunter’s \$1.7-million salary.

What’s more, the DOE is clearly resistant to transparency, keeping under wraps the justification for the labs’ award fees. Since, 2009, the department has denied the public timely access to its revealing Performance Evaluation Plans (PEPs) and Performance Evaluation Reports (PERs), which POGO called “perhaps the single most important information available to hold NNSA [National Nuclear Security Administration] accountable” in a letter to President Obama. We’ve only been able to see recent PERs due to the efforts of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, which filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the NNSA for access to the documents.

Congress needs to step in. POGO echoes the call of other experts who believe the DOE must reevaluate its oversized, outdated lab system. Instead of giving the DOE lab complex a blank check to continue to grow, it’s time to end the bloat.

20120421-05	17:07	Dennis	“The Autism Epidemic & Disappearing Bees: A Common Denominator?”
-------------	-------	--------	--

Here’s why the EPA really should do a “hit” on environmental polluters such as Monsanto:

[“The Autism Epidemic and Disappearing Bees: A Common Denominator?” by Dr Brian Moench, Truthout](#)

Apr. 21, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/news/item/8586-the-autism-epidemic-and-disappearing-bees-a-common-denominator>)

On a recent front page of *The Salt Lake Tribune*, a frightening, oversized headline read, “Highest rate in the nation, 1 in 32 Utah boys has autism.” Less well publicized, another national story ran the same day: “New pesticides linked to bee population collapse.” If you eat food and hope to do so a few years from now, this should be equally frightening. A common denominator may underlie both stories.

A recent Stanford University study, examining 192 pairs of twins, where one twin was autistic and one was not, found that genetics account for 38 percent of the risk of autism and environmental factors account for 62 percent.¹

Suggesting an environmental and genetic tag team are other studies showing mothers of autistic children and autistic children themselves have a high rate of a genetic deficiency in the production of glutathione, an antioxidant and the body's primary means of detoxifying heavy metals.² High levels of toxic metals in children are strongly correlated with the severity of autism.³ Low levels of glutathione, coupled with high production of another chemical, homocysteine, increase the chance of a mother having an autistic child to one in three, according to Dr. Jim Adams, director of Arizona State University's Autism/Asperger's Research Program. That autism is four times more common among boys than girls is likely related to a defect in the single male X chromosome contributing to antioxidant deficiency. There is no such thing as a genetic disease epidemic because genes don't change that quickly. So, the alarming rise in autism must be the result of increased environmental exposures that exploit these genetic defects.

During the critical first three months of gestation, a human embryo adds 250,000 brain cells per minute, reaching 200 billion by the fifth month. There is no chemical elixir that improves this biological miracle, but thousands of toxic substances can cross the placenta and impair that process, leaving brain cells stressed, inflamed, less well developed, fewer in number and with fewer anatomic connections with each other, all of which diminish brain function. The opportunity to make up for the resulting deficits later on is limited.

The list of autism's environmental suspects is long and comes from many different studies that show higher rates of autism with greater exposure to flame retardants, plasticizers like BPA, pesticides, endocrine disruptors in personal care products, heavy metals in air pollution, mercury and pharmaceuticals like anti-depressants.^{4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13} (Utah's highest in the nation autism rates are matched by the highest rates of anti-depressant use and the highest mercury levels in the country in the Great Salt Lake.)

Doctors have long advised women during pregnancy to avoid any unnecessary consumption of drugs or chemicals. But as participants in modern society, we are all now exposed to over 83,000 chemicals from the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe and the consumer products we use. Pregnant women and their children are experiencing 100 times more chemical exposures today than people living 50 years ago. The average newborn has over 287 different chemicals and heavy metals contaminating its blood when it takes its first breath.^{14,15} One hundred and fifty-eight of them are known to be toxic to the brain. Little wonder that rates of autism, attention deficit and behavioral disorders are all on the rise.

How does this relate to disappearing bees and your ability to put food on your table? Three new studies show that the rapid rise in the use of insecticides are likely responsible for the mass disappearance of bee populations.^{16,17,18} The world's entire food chain hangs in the balance because 90 percent of native plants require pollinators to survive.

The nervous system of insects is the intended target of these insecticides. They disrupt the bees homing behavior and their ability to return to the hive, kind of like "bee autism." But insects are different than humans, right? Human and insect nerve cells share the same basic biologic infrastructure. Chemicals that interrupt electrical impulses in insect nerves will do the same to humans.

But humans are much bigger than insects and the doses to humans are miniscule, right? During critical first trimester development, a human is no bigger than an insect, so there is every reason to believe that pesticides could wreak havoc with the developing brain of a human embryo. But human embryos aren't out in corn fields being sprayed with insecticides and herbicides, are they? A recent study showed that every human tested had the world's most popular pesticide, Roundup, detectable in their urine at concentrations between five and twenty times the level considered safe for drinking water.

The autism epidemic and the disappearance of bees are just two of many self-imposed disasters from allowing our world, including Utah, to be overwhelmed by environmental toxins. Environmental protection- including the smallest and most vulnerable among us - is human protection.

Footnotes

¹Hallmayer J, Cleveland S, Torres A, et al. "Genetic Heritability and Shared Environmental Factors Among Twin Pairs With Autism," Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2011;68(11):1095-1102. doi:10.1001/archgenpsychiatry.2011.76.

- ²James SJ, Slikker W, Melnyk S, New E, Pogribna M, Jernigan S. "Thimerosal Neurotoxicity is Associated with Glutathione Depletion: Protection with Glutathione Precursors," *NeuroToxicology* 26.(2005) 1-8.
- ³Adams J, Baral M, Geis E, et al. "The Severity of Autism Is Associated with Toxic Metal Body Burden and Red Blood Cell Glutathione Levels," *Journal of Toxicology* Volume 2009.(2009), Article ID 532640, 7 pages. doi:10.1155/2009/532640.
- ⁴Croen L, Grether J, Yoshida C, Odouli R, Hendrick V, "Antidepressant Use During Pregnancy and Childhood Autism Spectrum Disorders," *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2011;68(11):1104-1112. doi:10.1001/archgenpsychiatry.2011.73
- ⁵Volk H, Hertz-Picciotto I, Delwiche L, Lurmann F, McConnell R. "Residential Proximity to Freeways and Autism in the CHARGE study," *Environ Health Perspect*. 2010 December 13. (Epub ahead of print.) PMID: 21156395.
- ⁶Whyatt RM, Liu X, Rauh VA, Calafat AM, Just AC, Hoepner L, et al. 2011. "Maternal Prenatal Urinary Phthalate Metabolite Concentrations and Child Mental, Psychomotor and Behavioral Development at 3 Years of Age," *Environ Health Perspect* 120:290-295.
- ⁷Kern J, Geier D, Adams J, Mehta J, Grannemann B, Geier M. "Toxicity biomarkers in autism spectrum disorder: A blinded study of urinary porphyrins," *Pediatrics International*. (2011) 53, 147–153 doi: 10.1111/j.1442-200X.2010.03196.x.
- ⁸Miodovnik, A, SM Engel, C Zhu, X Ye, LV Soorya, MJ Silva, AM Calafat and MS Wolff. 2011. "Endocrine disruptors and childhood social impairment," *Neurotoxicology*.
- ⁹Roberts, EM et al. "Maternal residence near agricultural pesticide applications and autism spectrum disorders among children in the California Central Valley," *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 115(10):1482-1489.
- ¹⁰Henrik Viberg anders Fredriksson, Sonja Buratovic, Per Eriksson. "Dose-dependent behavioral disturbances after a single neonatal Bisphenol A dose," *Toxicology*, 2011; DOI: 10.1016/j.tox.2011.09.006.
- ¹¹Whyatt RM, Liu X, Rauh VA, Calafat AM, Just AC, Hoepner L, et al. 2011. "Maternal Prenatal Urinary Phthalate Metabolite Concentrations and Child Mental, Psychomotor and Behavioral Development at Age Three Years," *Environ Health Perspect*.
- ¹²Holmes AS, Blaxill MF, Haley BE; "Reduced levels of mercury in first baby haircuts of autistic children," *Int J Toxicol*. 2003 Jul-Aug;22(4):277-85.
- ¹³Allen J, Shanker G, Tan K, Aschner M. "The Consequences of Methylmercury Exposure on Interactive Functions between Astrocytes and Neurons," *Neurotoxicology* 23.(2002) 755-759.
- ¹⁴"Body Burden - The Pollution in Newborns," Environmental Working Group, 2005.
- ¹⁵Woodruff TJ, Zota AR, Schwartz JM 2011. "Environmental Chemicals in Pregnant Women in the United States: NHANES 2003-2004," *Environ Health Perspect* 119:878-885.
- ¹⁶M. Henry et al. "A common pesticide decreases foraging success and survival in honey bees," *Science*. doi: 10.1126/science.1215039.
- ¹⁷P.R. Whitehorn et al. "Neonicotinoid pesticide reduces bumble bee colony growth and queen production," *Science*. doi: 10.1126/science.1215025.
- ¹⁸C. Lu, K.M. Warchol and R.A. Callahan. "In situ replication of honey bee colony collapse disorder," *Bulletin of Insectology*, Vol. 65, June 2012.

from Daily Kos:

Steve, please sign the picture of a mutant Gulf Coast shrimp we are sending to John Boehner, along with a petition telling him to pass legislation mandating that fines paid by BP go toward the clean up and restoration of the Gulf Coast. Click here to sign the picture and the petition.

Two years after the BP oil spill, Gulf Coast fishermen are finding huge amounts of mutated seafood. The devastation this is causing to local fisheries is just one of the many ways Gulf Coast communities are struggling to recover from the spill.

To help out, last month the U.S. Senate passed legislation mandating that 80 percent of all court-ordered fines paid by BP go toward Gulf Coast clean up and restoration. The legislation, known as the RESTORE Act, passed with the support of all Democrats and a majority of Republicans.

However, the RESTORE Act has stalled in the House. While it would easily pass if a vote was held, Speaker John Boehner has not yet held one.

Push him along. Please, add your name to the picture and petition we are sending John Boehner, telling him that fines paid by BP should go toward the clean up and restoration of the Gulf Coast.

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=123

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers, Daily Kos

20120422-02	23:57	SteveB	"Jon Huntsman Criticizes Republican Party, Compares Actions to Communist China"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Republicans should listen to Jon Huntsman, perhaps the only completely sane man in the GOP leadership. But, of course, most Republicans seem to think he's crazy. LOL!

"Jon Huntsman Criticizes Republican Party, Compares Actions to Communist China" by Huffington Post

Apr. 22, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/22/jon-huntsman-gop_n_1444529.html)

Jon Huntsman leveled harsh criticism at his party on Sunday evening, BuzzFeed's Zeke Miller reported, comparing the Republican Party to communist China and questioning the strength of this year's presidential field.

During an event at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, Huntsman spoke candidly about his party's flaws, lamenting the Republican National Committee's decision to rescind an invitation to a major fundraising event after Huntsman called for a third-party candidate to enter the race.

"This is what they do in China on party matters if you talk off script," Huntsman said.

Huntsman, a former Utah governor who dropped out of the GOP primary in January, served as U.S. ambassador to China under President Barack Obama.

He also criticized the Republican candidates' foreign policy stances, particularly in regard to China.

"I don't know what world these people are living in," Huntsman said.

Although Huntsman did not mention any specific candidates, he has criticized Mitt Romney in the past for his "wrong-headed" approach. Huntsman, who endorsed Romney after dropping out of the race, said in February that the former Massachusetts governor should take a more opportunity-minded view to relations with China.

Huntsman also spoke on Sunday about his presidential candidacy, revealing that he was less than impressed by his fellow candidates when he attended his first debate in August.

"Is this the best we could do?" Huntsman said he asked himself.

He also joked that his wife forbade him to pander to the party's far-right contingency ahead of Iowa's caucuses, which likely hurt him with conservative voters in the Hawkeye State.

"She said if you pandered, if you sign any of those damn pledges, I'll leave you," Huntsman said. **"So I had to say I believe in science -- and people on stage look at you quizzically as though you're ... an oddball."**

Huntsman, however, did not actively campaign in Iowa, telling CBS News in December that "they pick corn," not presidents, in that early caucus state.

Since dropping out of the race, Huntsman has remained critical of his former opponents and has remained lukewarm in his backing of Romney.

"Gone are the days when the Republican Party used to put forward big, bold, visionary stuff,"

Huntsman said during the February interview with MSNBC that got him disinvited from the RNC fundraiser. "I think we're going to have problems politically until we get some sort of third-party movement or some alternative voice out there that can put forward new ideas."

And unlike others in his party who have endorsed Romney, Huntsman has refrained from appearing at campaign events on behalf of his party's likely nominee. According to his daughter, Abby Livingston, he won't be joining Romney on the trail anytime soon.

"My dad is not a surrogate for Romney and will not be out stumping for him in the general," she told ABC News earlier this month. "He is enjoying private life."

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

Why Didn't Jesus Tell Us to Take Care of It or Didn't They Listen?



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #123 — APR. 24, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

The War on Women Continues

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 24, 2012)

They're at it again with the ACORN strategy, but Planned Parenthood is much too important to lose. I hope women begin to understand the direct threat to their well-being and freedom and vote accordingly. Actually, I believe they will. If there's one thing I've learned in life, it's that women are smarter, as the Robert Palmer song says, "...The women today / Are smarter than the men in every way."

"Planned Parenthood Worried It's the Target of New Undercover Sting" by Laura Bassett, Huffington Post

Apr. 23, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/23/planned-parenthood-live-action_n_1446527.html?ref=mostpopular)

A string of suspicious incidents at Planned Parenthood clinics across the country has given the organization reason to believe that anti-abortion activists are targeting it in a new organized sting operation.

According to Planned Parenthood spokesperson Chloe Cooney, clinics in at least 11 states have reported two dozen or more "hoax visits" over the past several weeks, in which a woman walks into a clinic, claims to be pregnant and asks a particular pattern of provocative questions about sex-selective abortions, such as how soon she can find out the gender of the fetus, by what means and whether she can schedule an abortion if she's having a girl.

While patient privacy laws prohibit Planned Parenthood from offering specific details about the visits and where they occurred, Cooney told The Huffington Post that the incidents are so unusual and so similar to each other that they have raised concerns among the organization's executives that the visits are being recorded as part of a concerted anti-Planned Parenthood campaign.

"For years opponents of reproductive health and Planned Parenthood have engaged in secret videotaping tactics with fictitious patient scenarios and selective editing in an attempt to promote misinformation about Planned Parenthood and our services," Cooney said. "As with the prior instances, we anticipate that once again this group, likely in coordination with a broad range of anti-abortion leaders, will soon launch a propaganda campaign with the goal of discrediting Planned Parenthood, and, ultimately, restricting women's health."

The most likely group behind the campaign, Planned Parenthood suspects, is anti-abortion activist group Live Action, which has a history of paying actors to walk into Planned Parenthood clinics and act out various controversial scenarios in an attempt to catch the family planning provider's staffers doing something illegal or immoral on tape. A recent operation involved actors posing as pimps and prostitutes engaged in human trafficking

and seeking birth control, STD testing and other family planning services. HuffPost's Ryan Grim reported in February 2011 that Live Action heavily edited the videos they gathered to alter the meaning of conversations and falsely imply that Planned Parenthood is complicit in sex trafficking, but conservative lawmakers and media outlets cited the group's videos in numerous subsequent political attacks against the family planning provider.

While Planned Parenthood has no proof that Live Action is behind the current series of encounters, Cooney said the group is the most coordinated in their operations and that the recent string of incidents "follows their pattern exactly."

Kate Bryan, a spokesperson for Live Action, would not confirm whether the group was behind the newest Planned Parenthood sting. "As you can understand, Live Action does not comment on any investigations until after public release," she said.

Spotlighting the issue of sex-selective abortions is an increasingly common tactic that the anti-abortion community has been using lately to turn the "war on women" around on Planned Parenthood, to galvanize social conservatives and to push legislation that would restrict abortion access. "In 2010, more than 9 out of 10 PPFA's services going specifically to pregnant women were abortion," National Right to Life president Carol Tobias wrote in a recent opinion column. "Roughly half of those abortions are performed on unborn girls. That's the real war on women."

Lawmakers on both a state and federal level have also latched onto the issue by introducing legislation that criminalizes doctors who perform abortions based on the race or gender of the fetus, although opponents of those laws say they force doctors into the inappropriate position of investigating a woman's personal motivations for seeking an abortion.

While Planned Parenthood condemns seeking abortions on the basis of the gender of the fetus, Cooney said the provider is also "committed to providing high-quality, confidential, nonjudgmental care to all who come into our health centers." While Planned Parenthood staffers are extensively trained to answer unusual and difficult questions and to refer women to necessary counseling, none of its clinics will deny a woman an abortion based on her reasons for wanting one, except in those states that explicitly prohibit sex-selection abortion (Arizona, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Illinois).

"Decisions about whether to choose adoption, end the pregnancy or to raise a child have to be left up to a woman, her family and her faith, with the counsel of her doctor," Cooney said.

While the problem of sex selection has been widely documented in Southeast Asia, it's unclear how often such gender-motivated abortions happen in the U.S. But Planned Parenthood executives and other experts on the issue acknowledge that they sometimes do.

"The short answer is yes, it does happen here, but not to the same extent as in other countries," said Miriam Yeung, executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum.

The solution to sex selection, however, is not likely to be found in a Planned Parenthood investigation, Yeung said.

"If you've studied the issues and studied the problem of sex selection in a global context, you know that in order to tackle sex selection, you have to address the social and economic root causes of gender preference," she said. "Abortion restrictions are a non-solution, and Planned Parenthood and others who have been providing necessary women's health care for gazillions of years are not the perpetuators of the war on women."

[20120423-01](#)

07:46

MarthaH

"Is the Tea Party Still Relevant?" & "Orrin Hatch Pushed into Primary in Utah Senate Race"

"Is the Tea Party Still Relevant?" by Chris Cillizza, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 22, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/is-the-tea-party-still-relevant/2012/04/22/gIQAXP8uZT_story.html)

Is the tea party breaking up?

After playing a dominant role in a number of elections in 2010 — Christine O'Donnell, anyone? — there is growing evidence that the power (and visibility) of the movement has faded somewhat of late.

To wit:

- Former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney, the establishment candidate, secured the Republican presidential nomination after the tea party — and conservatives more generally — failed to unite around an alternative candidate.
- Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) very nearly escaped a primary challenge Saturday, almost two years that home-state colleague Bob Bennett was ousted at the state party convention thanks to tea party-fueled unrest directed at him. Hatch begins the primary race against a conservative former state senator as a favorite.
- Aside from Indiana Sen. Dick Lugar, who faces a serious primary fight from his ideological right next month, there are few signs tea party-led uprisings will threaten GOP incumbents this cycle in the same way they did in 2010. (Even Indiana is something short of a pure establishment vs. tea party race; Lugar's challenger, Richard Mourdock, currently serves as the state treasurer — not exactly the credentials of a pure outsider.)
- In a Washington Post-ABC News poll conducted this month, more than six in 10 people said they were not interested in learning more about the movement, and a majority said the more they learned, the less they liked. Both of those numbers have increased significantly over the past two years.

Conversations with a number of Republican strategists — both those of the tea party and those who count themselves as casual observers of the movement — suggest that the tea party isn't dying, it's just transforming into a new role.

"The tea party clearly is not as successful in 2012 as in 2010, but it still plays a huge role in GOP primaries," said Republican pollster Glen Bolger.

The same Post-ABC poll that showed interest in the tea party flagging also showed that roughly four in 10 people described themselves as supporters of the movement, numbers virtually unchanged over the last year.

Sal Russo, a co-founder of the Tea Party Express, insisted that "the tea party is more vibrant now than in 2010." The difference between now and two years ago, Russo argued, is that the movement is now centered less on pure protest and more on political action.

"Instead of the pleading about what to do, the tea party people now know what to do," Russo said. "Campaign headquarters are bubbling over with people, very different than 2008 and 2006 when they were nearly dead."

Of course, attributing Republican energy and intensity solely to the tea party is a bit of an oversimplification. While the tea party clearly served as an organizing force for unhappiness bubbling in conservative circles toward President Obama in the early days of his presidency, the desire to oust him from office now permeates virtually every corner of the GOP — a fact made apparent by the rapid coalescing of Republicans behind Romney in the past few weeks. (A Gallup tracking poll released last week showed Romney with the support of 90 percent of self-identified Republicans.)

Viewed broadly, it appears that the tea party may well be a victim of its own success. In 2010, it proved its powers — beating establishment-backed candidates in Senate races in Delaware, Colorado, Florida, Utah and Alaska to

name a few. The result? Candidates are far more wary of crossing the tea party this time around, moving to embrace it rather than stare it down.

"The reason for the appearance of less tea party success is that the establishment candidates have moved markedly to the right this cycle," said Jon Lerner, a Republican consultant. "As the establishment candidates have moved to the right, there is less of a gap for tea party candidates to exploit."

Hatch is a perfect example of that phenomenon. The six-term senator spent much of the past two years relentlessly courting the tea party wing of the Utah GOP and moving his voting record to the ideological right. (In 2008, Hatch was ranked as the 29th most conservative senator in *National Journal's* vote ratings. By 2011, he was up to 15th.)

Romney, too, moved to the right on fiscal issues in hopes of keeping any tea party revolt at bay. And if you needed an example of the influence the tea party's no-compromise approach to fiscal austerity has had on the GOP, look no further than an August presidential debate in which all eight candidates said they would not accept a budget deal that included \$10 in spending cuts to every \$1 in revenue increases.

"The core of the movement was a shock therapy to Washington to make the national debt and the danger of the growth of government central to the debate," said Brad Todd, a Republican strategist. "It's clear Republicans got that message and Obama never will."

The question then is what the tea party does for an encore. Having moved the GOP — and the broader debate on fiscal issues — further to the ideological right, does it re-incorporate itself into the Republican Party? Disappear entirely? Or find another cause such as fiscal austerity around which to rally?

"Orrin Hatch Pushed into Primary in Utah Senate Race" by Chris Cillizza, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 21, 2012, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/orrin-hatch-pushed-into-primary-in-utah-senate-race/2010/12/16/gIQAX5GCT blog.html>)

Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch will face off against conservative former state Sen. Dan Liljenquist in a June primary after the six-term incumbent failed to win 60 percent of the vote at the state Republican convention on Saturday.

Hatch took 57 percent on the first ballot and then 59 percent on a second ballot, one on one fight against Liljenquist. Hatch needed to win 60 percent of the vote to avoid a June 26 primary.

Hatch forces had hoped to win the nomination outright on Saturday. He came up short on that goal. But, Hatch did avoid the fate of Sen. Bob Bennett (R), who two years ago lost his bid for reelection when he finished third at the state party convention amid deep discontent directed at him from conservatives.

Bennett's defeat served as a wake-up call for Hatch who spent the intervening two years relentlessly courting Utah conservatives in hopes of avoiding his one-time colleague's fate. (Here's a good summary of how Hatch re-made himself.)

Hatch also benefited from some measure of good luck when Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R), who was considered a sure thing to take on Hatch, decided against a bid in August 2011.

Hatch will likely enter the June primary as the favorite since the electorate will be considerably larger than the 4,000 or so delegates who participated at Saturday's convention.

20120423-02	08:59	SteveB	Re: "Is the Tea Party Still Relevant?" (reply to MarthaH)
-------------	-------	--------	---

Thanks for these! I hear Lugar is getting a little backing now from people afraid of the alternatives...

20120423-03 09:35 Pam Re: Sad Conclusion (A Conversation) (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)

IMHO America is an adolescent culture, and like adolescents we tend to see things in black and white. The college freshmen I taught were far more judgmental than anyone I know who is my age. Maturity means seeing the gray areas, the ambiguities, the exceptions, the complete picture. We do not have a choice between two economic systems; that is far too simplistic. What we do have is a choice of directions. We cannot go back; we can only go forward. Adherence to ideology is ruinous; it limits choices and narrows vision. "The People" are like the masses everywhere, easily manipulated into acting against their own best interests. The push to overturn Obamacare is a prime example. Here's what opponents want to get rid of: allowing young adults to remain on their parents' insurance, no refusal of coverage because of pre-existing conditions, Medicare coverage for preventive care (mammograms, etc.). I challenge anyone to examine the proposed changes (Google is easy) and find any that are offensive. I would love to go through the list of provisions with an opponent item by item and hash this out, but life is short. Government haters act as if robots were running the show, when it's people, just like you and me.

20120423-04 09:46 MarthaH Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Pam, above)

Amen, Pam. Each person is entitled to his own opinion, but it needs to be based on fact from study and often from bitter experience. That makes us mature, and the black and white jells into gray. The middle is where true governance comes from--and we have lost that. I taught that concept to high school seniors--not sure if they are past the immature stage of "my way or the highway yet" but I learned and so can they; ONLY in compromise is governance possible. The opposite is gridlock--and what do WE have...Our great grandson was here Saturday, and I couldn't help but think what our self-centered generation probably has wrought for his lifetime. Then Sunday night I watched the polar story unfold on TV...depressing again! Yours for study and common sense.

20120423-06 10:37 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Pam, above)

I think we have to go forward to what works. The only thing we know that works is what has worked.

If anyone or any party has a platform to increase taxes on the rich, improve and expand public education and make it freer and less expensive, make peace, balance the budget when possible, regulate big business and finance to keep them from crushing us, expand the middle class, provide good jobs by making sure investment is made in America, not China (otherwise, that's where all the jobs will be), and not be afraid to dream... well... where did these ideas come from?

These are things we did in the past that worked and that we must return to in the future.

Good ideas, ideas that work, are not trendy cr*p to be thrown away just because one party made the mistake to do so. (That would be the GOP, by the way.)

The past is the future...I HOPE!

Now, as to health care, we don't have such a good history to go back to and it is one of our most pressing problems, so Pam is right to keep trying to find solutions. Maybe here, though, we still have plenty of history to draw from if we will just not be so arrogant as to think that many, many countries in the world have not solved this problem. In engineering we call this the "Not Invented Here Syndrome" or NIHS.

And Pam has the most radical solution of all--now, I know this sounds crazy, especially to right-wingers, and it sounds like an oxymoron, a paradox, and a conundrum all rolled into one enormous déjà vu, but, believe it or not!—her idea is to FOLLOW Canada!

America following Canada? You have to be kidding!

IDIOT! WAKE UP! CANADA'S COOL!! (and history has shown that a little socialism, especially when it comes to taxes and health care, can be a very good thing indeed!)

Don't believe me? Study. If you're a businessman, about all you have to do is look into what per cent of GDP different countries spend on total health care costs, and look at infant mortality rates to see if quality is suffering because of cost savings. If you look at just these sensationally representative numbers even casually, you might be amazed.

Then we could talk about what it took for these countries to get there.

Is anyone saying America isn't good enough to do it? That we aren't as good as, say, our unfortunately frozen brethren to the north? I SAY WE ARE!

[20120423-05](#) 09:47 Art Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)

from SteveBA:

Identify one government enterprise that has worked.

World War II
The Space Program
The Interstate Highway System
The TVA

I could go on but you get the idea.

[20120423-12](#) 11:37 Art Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)

I thought about forwarding an exchange I am having with another old friend that is just frustrating beyond belief but decided to spare you all. I try carefully not to dwell on any assumptions about a candidate's personality or political leanings and just stick with facts in these discussions but it seems to go right over their heads. One of the problems, at least, is that much of the tea party right has stopped questioning anything that flies over the Internet that seems to support their general belief and they simply accept anything no matter how improbable or outrageous. This is sort of the contrary to Pam's dream of having an open discussion point by point over the Health Care Act. It seems they simply won't do that because they know the logic won't hold up.

No offense, SteveBA, but I think your opening sentence in one of these e-mails sort of captures the issue.

"This thread seems to be dominated by the socialist and some belief that the government can make all things well by punishing the successful and giving their wealth to the rest of us."

There is no logic to this statement or at the very least it does not reflect in any way what I or most of the others on this e-mail think. I am not a socialist. I do not want to punish the successful. On the other hand, John Dillinger was pretty successful and at one point had a lot of money. It did not, however, make him necessarily a good guy. It is also not a black and white choice of two economic systems. Assuming everyone reading this has some sense of history, the USA went through a wrenching period about 100 years ago over the excess of businesses going wild. The giant monopolies of Standard Oil, the railroads, mining interests etc. We went through a very violent period of labor unrest, violent riots and brutal repression before we finally enacted the laws that leveled the playing field and established the grounds for the economic development of one of the greatest societies in history. Had we not resolved those issues to the general benefit of all, we would probably have gone the way of the Russian Revolution or contrarily a repressive Fascist type government.

So we are back to my and Pam's big frustration. How to have an intelligent dialogue on these issues? So far I have not solved the puzzle, but I think this polarization at both the personal level and the national level is not healthy and will not serve anyone well.

Just a thought.

[20120423-07](#) 10:59 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)

Maybe we should start a little side project...something like snopes.com...where we compile more government programs that have worked well (even in America). We have a good start already. I don't see how anyone can argue with any of the programs presented. Maybe Republicans can get away with believing there was no holocaust, but even they would have to admit that we didn't lose WWII. Jeez, or did we? Their revisionist crap is starting to make me dizzy.

I'll keep track of all I think of and any you send me.

I am tired of this kind of nonsense and we need to get it behind us.

Republicans say they love America and our Constitution and Christianity...yet they maintain that for the history of America, we have been so stupid and incompetent that we were never able to create one good, working government project. Not even the blessed Republicans, is my take. To say that is to say that Americans are a bunch of fricking idiot monkeys and I resent that!

Americans are just a little better than you seem to believe, my friend, SteveBA. We are at least at the level of bonobos.

Let me give you a controversial one—Medicaid! The people love it, despite its flaws. And weren't the great Cold War and stealth planes both government programs? Oh, we lost and the B-2 is a Democratic myth, right? Oh, (and too bad, maybe we succeeded) the A-Bomb and H-bomb and Berlin Airlift. Hey, this is kinda fun...

AND, INSTEAD OF SAYING WE CAN'T DO IT, WHY DON'T WE SAY WE CAN DO IT, LIKE OUR PARENTS' GENERATION DID? If we can't, could someone please tell me why we can't? Maybe because of the dreaded socialism? Obama? LOL!

[20120423-09](#) 11:16 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 22, 2012)

I'm I to assume, then, SteveBA, that your position is one of advocating total anarchy, total lack of government? If no government program can be good...what follows? That governments only do harm and take people's money?

This is a radical idea, indeed.

You know, I thought the fire department, police department, streets and sanitation department, water company, and schools worked pretty darned well in Greencastle while we were growing up. I bet they still work amazingly well. These are all government projects. We should be proud of these people who have succeeded so well, not denigrate them falsely with failure.

[20120423-11](#) 11:36 Clark Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveB, above)

Somalia, I guess, equals paradise.

[20120423-13](#) 11:39 Art Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Clark, above)

Good choice and as someone who has spent far, far to much time in Somalia, a perfect example. No government, no laws, some very successful strongest, and a lot of "others". Wonderful place.

20120423-08 11:06 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to MarthaH, above)

Martha, I really like your reminder that the answers to our problems usually come from middle-seeking compromise. The lack of any of this is killing us right now.

You remind me of my pride that our little group is called "Friends of the Middle". Those are two very important, big words in that name!

I intend to seek and develop both of them as much as I possibly can in the life I have been given that remains.

20120423-10 11:27 MarthaH Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveB, above)

Do you suppose gray hair and blending life experiences into gray/governance is a little lesson...Idealism is Fine and sets us on the path. Compromise is something difficult to learn. Our culture seems hellbent on My Way or Else...and Else will take us down while others succeed. I heard nothing but good stuff on Canadian healthcare from Canadians and nothing but badmouthing from American Doctors...hmmmm....accountability?????

I grew up a YR, but in advocating as the devil for kids I concluded I wasn't anything but a family clone in registration. My tighter-than-bark-on-a-tree uncle died and in shuffling through their "stuff" I came across where FDR drove him out of the "D" column. REALLY???????????????????????????????????? I could have passed out, :-)))))))))))))))))))). My pastor calls me his liberal...and I told him I was once a "R"...and he looked shocked. I'd say 'way liberal but with the knowledge that we have to meet in the middle! Or not at all for nothing at all.

Cool, crisp spring day up there. Frost this morning for the MORONS who set out tomatoes before 1 May. Heck, I am a conservative there and would hedge the other way, :-)...Nothing gray about frozen tomato plants...more profit for Wmart???? I think NOT on my watch. :-)

I do chuckle as the rants I read on the website are so like Art and I used to do, ha. We have debated since 1960...and I don't want it to stop! I read Obama's books and knew he was on MY page...and also recognized I could have had him in class...Clinton was the first "younger" president and quite a phenomena. Add 46 years now to age 18 for my first seniors...They weren't that much younger than I...:-)

Happy autumn in the southern hemisphere...

20120423-34 18:15 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to MarthaH, above)

So you and Art were both Republicans?... interesting. (And me, of course.)

Yes, your gardening philosophy sounds like my gardening or my sailing or my political philosophy, don't take more risks than you need to. Simple. Conservative. Conserve resources too. Save for a rainy day. Often, I would ask my Mom what she had to say, she'd usually say, "Save your money." How did those terms get all turned around in politics?

We're had some nice, cool days lately. We've been able to walk farther, which is very nice. We don't have to put-up with winter, really, but we never have anything equivalent to "cool, crisp spring" air. I miss it. Oh, well, next year... And to compensate, we have incredible flowering trees all year, uncountable birds, and even the frogs and butterflies are cool. To me, the trees are very cool!

Take care. Hope your garden grows bountifully.

20120423-14 11:54 SteveG Re: Sad Conclusion

SteveBA was educated in public high school, state operated university for his bachelors, and another state university for his graduate degree. He has worked at Hillard Lyon, assisting people to manage their wealth. Other work, I am unaware of. From his point of reference the educational system, even though government sponsored, worked pretty well. I MHOPE SteveBA's problem is with the rules and regulations surrounding investments and the management of wealth.

[20120423-16](#) 12:16 Pam Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveG, above)

What about that, SteveBA? You seem to think many of us are out to soak the rich and take away their hard-earned wealth. Either this is a deliberate misunderstanding, or you really don't read our comments in this newsletter. I, for one, have nothing against people being successful, earning lots of money, and enjoying all the comforts money can provide. What does trouble me--more and more the older I get--is the great disparity between the very rich and everyone else. The Marie Antoinette syndrome, if you will. Whether in France or Russia or elsewhere, revolutions most often occur when an isolated elite ignores the suffering of their fellow citizens. A great fortune can accomplish great things: Carnegie libraries, AIDS treatment in Africa, support for science and the arts. Big-ticket items, like opera companies, art museums, science laboratories, would be impossible without at least some patronage. Look at all the art museums that are named for a wealthy patron: the Whitney Museum, the Barnes Collection, the Hirschorn Museum, the Frick Museum, the Phillips Collection and on and on. These institutions are not products of the middle class OR of the government. The rich do have an important role to play in society, and I am grateful to all the benefactors who do so much to support worthy endeavors. That said, the middle class is still provides our best security, our best opportunities, and our moral center (ideally). Those of us in the MIDDLE do not want to "punish" success; we do expect those who are fortunate enough to never have to count the cost of anything to give something back. Our survival as a healthy society demands it. Common humanity demands it.--

[20120423-19](#) 12:39 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Pam, above)

Pam, you are a hopeless realist.

[20120423-23](#) 14:20 Clark Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveB, above)

And SteveB, you're one of those even rarer commodities, a centrist firebrand.

[20120423-30](#) 16:00 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to Clark, above)

:-)

[20120423-15](#) 12:14 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveG, above)

I think you are right to defend SteveBA.

But, as Art pointed out, we gave laissez-faire capitalism quite a complete opportunity to show its stuff in America and it truly did. For decades! We must try NEVER to forget those years of excess and true near-anarchy. The slaughter of innocent union members. The incredibly abusive working conditions. The destruction of the middle class. America was held back economically and in the world until we solved the problem of how to rebuild the middle class. Another lesson not to forget.

This is what SteveBA would return us to?

Just asking...

[20120423-17](#) 12:26 SteveG Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveB, above)

You got me wrong – I am not defending! Just stating an observation and offering an opinion of his thinking. I personally think laissez-faire capitalism is what has gotten us into the mess we are in. Unions have saved the workers, EPA has attempted to save the environment, SEC/etc. have tried to control investments – and yet corporations are people and they lobby in their own interests. Social enterprise corporations or approaches to business would go along way of making things better.

[20120423-18](#) 12:38 SteveB Re: Sad Conclusion (reply to SteveG, above)

Gotcha, SteveG...I guess I meant something a little more subtle, as you point out...maybe more like "attempting to understand where SteveBA's views come from"...the empathy. And I thought that was rightfully conceived and expressed by you. Language, especially at a distance, can get so clumsy sometimes...

I KNOW you're a damned COMMUNIST FREAK, my friend! :-)

You're right about social enterprise. Down here in Bolivia we nationalize, though I don't like that much, but for utilities, banking, health care, and education, it only makes sense.

The perfect time to experiment with this would have been Goldman Sachs, AIG, and Citicorp. The government should have nationalized them instead of bailing them out and made them part of the federal Reserve and really pi*sed Ron Paul off!

[20120423-20](#) 12:41 Pam How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion?

What do you all think about SteveB's comment about nationalizing Goldman Sachs et. al.? It's a thought that had occurred to me as well.

[20120423-21](#) 12:44 SteveG Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to Pam, above)

The framework within which all of live and work need to be structured to protect all people, corporations, etc. from greed/malicious behavior.

[20120423-22](#) 13:53 SteveB Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveG, above)

Yes, it's really small business—the real dynamo of our economy—that is most hurt by the monopolies, big corporations, and government control by the few. It's why you would think true conservatives/Republicans would be on our side, or at least able to compromise...

[20120423-24](#) 14:43 Pam Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveB, above)

That's why I find their position so hard to understand. I LOVE small business. I have nothing but admiration for those who are gutsy and hard-working enough to have a business. I would never have the nerve. But there's business and then there's Big Business. "Liberals" are not anti-business. What we object to--at least this liberal does--is when the rich get all the luck, all the opportunities, all the money, and so many people are left with nothing, through no fault of their own. I think the Right exaggerates the poor's apparent disincentive to work. I don't like deadbeats either. But I know that there are lots and lots of people who work hard, play by the rules, and still come up short.

[20120423-26](#) 14:56 SteveG Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveB, above)

Just switched all bank accounts from a national bank to a local credit union.

[20120423-40](#) 20:10 SteveBA Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to all, above)

Boy do things move fast on the conversations here. Thanks to Steve G for the bio, but like many here graduated ghs in 64, purdue in 68 with BS in industrial management . Started work for Westinghouse electric until 86. During that time got a MBA at ball state. Left Westinghouse to seek fame and fortune in the financial services business as a stockbroker, married Mary Adams have 3 sons. Still a broker at Hilliard Lyons in Indianapolis.

SteveB mentioned SSA as model of government enterprise. I can't speak to their efficiency in taking our money and giving it to others. But I will refer you to a study published in the federal reserve review march 2005 by the st louis fed that concludes private pension funds would have done better in providing retirement benefits than SSA. They compared performance of the s&p500, 6 month cd's and SSA tax program. Note the vanguard 500 index fund charges about 30bp (.003 percent) and there are no charges for a 6 month cd. So yes private enterprise would have done a better job in delivering the desired benefit. SteveB also mentioned the post office, last I looked both FedEx and ups are very profitable companies doing what the post office could have done, granted they may have cherry picked the services and I am sure delivering to every home is not the most efficient, but I would bet if they had to provide some sort of home service it would have been done more efficiently but it doesn't matter email has killed the post office they just don't know it.

More to come.

[20120423-25](#) 14:52 Dennis George Carlin on Conservative Paradox #1,347



[20120423-27](#) 14:58 SteveG Re: George Carlin on Conservative Paradox #1,347

George was way too smart.

[20120423-28](#) 15:34 SteveB "The Amnesia Candidate" (Mitt R0mney)

Why is all this so typical, yet the GOP will somehow still wake up tomorrow in existence?

Are you Republicans proud of all this blatant dishonesty? It makes me want to puke, myself.

"The Amnesia Candidate" by Paul Krugman, *New York Times*

Apr. 22, 2012, (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/23/opinion/krugman-the-amnesia-candidate.html?_r=2)

Just how stupid does Mitt Romney think we are? If you've been following his campaign from the beginning, that's a question you have probably asked many times.

But the question was raised with particular force last week, when Mr. Romney tried to make a closed drywall factory in Ohio a symbol of the Obama administration's economic failure. It was a symbol, all right — but not in the way he intended.

First of all, many reporters quickly noted a point that Mr. Romney somehow failed to mention: **George W. Bush, not Barack Obama, was president when the factory in question was closed.** Does the Romney campaign expect Americans to blame President Obama for his predecessor's policy failure?

Yes, it does. Mr. Romney constantly talks about job losses under Mr. Obama. **Yet all of the net job loss took place in the first few months of 2009, that is, before any of the new administration's policies had time to take effect.** So the Ohio speech was a perfect illustration of the way the Romney campaign is banking on amnesia, **on the hope that voters don't remember that Mr. Obama inherited an economy that was already in free fall.**

How does the campaign deal with people who point out the awkward reality that all of the "Obama" job losses took place before any Obama policies had taken effect? The fallback argument — which was rolled out when reporters asked about the factory closure — is that even though Mr. Obama inherited a deeply troubled economy, he should have fixed it by now. That factory is still closed, said a Romney adviser, because of the failure of Obama policies "to really get this economy going again."

Actually, that factory would probably still be closed even if the economy had done better — drywall is mainly used in new houses, and while the economy may be coming back, the Bush-era housing bubble isn't.

But Mr. Romney's poor choice of a factory for his photo-op aside, **I guess accusing Mr. Obama of not doing enough to promote recovery is a better argument than blaming him for the effects of Bush policies. However, it's not much better, since Mr. Romney is essentially advocating a return to those very same Bush policies. And he's hoping that you don't remember how badly those policies worked.**

For the Bush era didn't just end in catastrophe; it started off badly, too. Yes, Mr. Obama's jobs record has been disappointing — but it has been unambiguously better than Mr. Bush's over the comparable period of his administration.

This is especially true if you focus on private-sector jobs. Overall employment in the Obama years has been held back by mass layoffs of schoolteachers and other state and local government employees. But private-sector employment has recovered almost all the ground lost in the administration's early months. That compares favorably with the Bush era: as of March 2004, private employment was still 2.4 million below its level when Mr. Bush took office.

Oh, and where have those mass layoffs of schoolteachers been taking place? Largely in states controlled by the G.O.P.: 70 percent of public job losses have been either in Texas or in states where Republicans recently took control.

Which brings me to another aspect of the amnesia campaign: **Mr. Romney wants you to attribute all of the shortfalls in economic policy since 2009 (and some that happened in 2008) to the man in the White House, and forget both the role of Republican-controlled state governments and the fact that Mr. Obama has faced scorched-earth political opposition since his first day in office. Basically, the G.O.P. has blocked the administration's efforts to the maximum extent possible, then turned around and blamed the administration for not doing enough.**

So am I saying that Mr. Obama did everything he could, and that everything would have been fine if he hadn't faced political opposition? By no means. Even given the political constraints, the administration did less than it could

and should have in 2009, especially on housing. Furthermore, Mr. Obama was an active participant in Washington's destructive "pivot" away from jobs to a focus on deficit reduction.

And the administration has suffered repeatedly from complacency — taking a few months of good news as an excuse to rest on its laurels rather than hammering home the need for more action. It did that in 2010, it did it in 2011, and to a certain extent it has been doing the same thing this year too. So there is a valid critique one can make of the administration's handling of the economy.

But that's not the critique Mr. Romney is making. **Instead, he's basically attacking Mr. Obama for not acting as if George Bush had been given a third term.** Are the American people — and perhaps more to the point, the news media — forgetful enough for that attack to work? I guess we'll find out.

[20120423-29](#) 15:59 Pam Re: "The Amnesia Candidate" (Mitt R0mney) (reply to SteveB)

Too many Republicans are like somebody who sticks his fingers in his ears and says, La, la, la, la, la, la, as loud as he can when he hears something he doesn't like. Smart Republicans, like David Brooks, don't try to twist the facts to fit their own agenda. I think Krugman's essay is right on target. I am SO frustrated.

[20120423-31](#) 16:03 SteveG Re: "The Amnesia Candidate" (Mitt R0mney) (reply to SteveB)

It is like the Swift Boat ads – if you repeat them often enough people start taking them for the truth – after all they read them in the paper, see them on the internet, and see them on TV as well on the news.

[20120423-32](#) 17:15 Pam 'A Conservative in His Soul'

I just heard a woman on the radio say she feels Marco Rubio is a "true conservative, a conservative in his soul." I want to know what that means. SteveBA? Politics isn't a religion, the last time I checked. What do souls have to do with anything?

[20120423-35](#) 18:35 SteveG Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'

The last I heard was that God told Rick Perry to run for president, after He told Michelle Bachman to run, and before He told Rick Santorum to run.

[20120423-37](#) 19:03 Clark Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'

Obviously God had a sense of humor.

[20120423-38](#) 19:10 Dennis Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'

When I worked with mental patients, they told me God is very talkative.

[20120423-39](#) 19:35 SteveG Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'

When I worked with mental patients I too was told that God was talkative. And to Clark, hopefully God will always have a sense of humor and the jokes of the GOP candidates will continue to be jokes.

[20120423-42](#) 21:06 Clark Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'

Forgot to mention that He also told Gingrich not to run, but he ran anyway.

[20120423-43](#) 22:02 SteveG Re: 'A Conservative in His Soul'

Let me see – Newt, Rick P., Rick S., and Michelle all had trouble raising money and getting votes – but they were all the true conservative . Newt doesn't listen to anyone, he already knows it all.

[20120423-33](#) 18:12 Art Fw: Video: Swan Lake in Chinese

This really special.

Swan Lake-----Un-be-lieve-able!!!! YOU MUST WATCH THIS!!!

YOU MUST WATCH THIS. OF ALL THE DANCES I HAVE EVER SEEN, THIS ONE PERFORMANCE OUT SHINES THEM ALL. This is pretty amazing! I don't think Tchaikovsky had this choreography in mind when he wrote " Swan Lake ." How could anyone imagine the performance you are about to see. With a population of nearly 1.5 billion, the Chinese had to locate one great dancer with strength and gymnastic skills and they did. Watch this superb performance:

<http://www.nzwide.com/swanlake.htm>.

[20120423-41](#) 21:02 SteveB Re: Swan Lake in Chinese (reply to Art, above)

Come on, Art, I thought you were a big, tough, macho Army guy?

Gay ballet, get serious?

Just kidding. Thanks for the video link.

Have you seen my tutu anywhere?

[20120423-36](#) 18:37 SteveG Fw: Share a Public Service Announcement from The 99%

from The 99% (or 98%?):

Two weeks ago, we began training 100,000 people in nonviolent direct action to take back our economy.

Last week we opened up a can of 99% whoop-a*s on Tax Day.

This week we're going to jump all over 2 of America's biggest Tax Dodgers - GE and Wells Fargo - at their shareholder meetings.

Welcome to the 99% Spring. Today we're releasing a hard-hitting video call to action with our allies - and we want YOU to watch it and tell your friends.

The video is called 'A Public Service Announcement from the 99%' - and it's just that: a call for members of the 99% to stand up and fight back together. We think it's one of the best videos we've ever helped create - and we hope you'll agree.

Can you take a minute to share our video on Facebook, tweet about it on Twitter, and maybe even forward this email to your friends?

We recently joined the 99% Power coalition, a team of economic justice advocacy groups that are continuing the story from where the 99% Spring left off: directing people to actions they can take in their own communities. We'll be targeting corporate shareholder meetings and engaging in May Day mobilizations - and we want you to join us.

Watch our new video and spread the word today:

<http://www.the99power.org/a-public-service-announcement-from-the-99/>.

Thank you for all you do to [keep?] this movement real.

Sincerely, John Sellers, The Other 98% [Not sure if the math is right here. Two different organizations? –SteveB]

20120423-44	23:44	SteveM	From the Right: "A Black Man, The Progressive's Perfect Trojan Horse"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

"A Black Man, The Progressive's Perfect Trojan Horse" posted by Lloyd Marcus, loydmarcus.com

Mar. 25, 2010,(<http://www.loydmarcus.com/?p=1114>)

As millions of my fellow Americans, I am outraged, devastated and extremely angry by the democrat's unbelievable arrogance and disdain for We The People. Despite our screaming "no" from the rooftops, they forced Obamacare down our throats. Please forgive me for using the following crude saying, but it is very appropriate to describe what has happened. "Don't urinate on me and tell me it's raining." Democrats say their mission is to give all Americans health care. The democrats are lying. Signing Obamacare into law against our will and the Constitution is tyranny and step one of their hideous goal of having as many Americans as possible dependent on government, thus controlling our lives and fulfilling Obama's promise to fundamentally transform America.



I keep asking myself. How did our government move so far from the normal procedures of getting things done? Could a white president have so successfully pulled off shredding the Constitution to further his agenda? I think not.

Ironically, proving America is completely the opposite of the evil racist country they relentlessly accuse her of being, progressives used America's goodness, guilt and sense of fair play against her. In their quest to destroy America as we know it, progressives borrowed a brilliant scheme from Greek mythology. They offered America a modern day Trojan Horse, a beautifully crafted golden shiny new black man as a presidential candidate. Democrat Joe Biden lorded Obama as the first clean and articulate African American candidate. Democrat Harry Reid said Obama only uses a black dialect when he wants.

White America relished the opportunity to vote for a black man naively believing they would never suffer the pain of being called racist again. Black Americans viewed casting their vote for Obama as the ultimate Affirmative Action for America's sins of the past.

Then there were the entitlement loser voters who said, "I'm votin' for the black dude who promises to take from those rich SOB's and give to me".

Just as the deceived Trojans dragged the beautifully crafted Trojan Horse into Troy as a symbol of their victory, deceived Americans embraced the progressive's young, handsome, articulate and so called moderate black presidential candidate as a symbol of their liberation from accusation of being a racist nation. Also like the Trojan Horse, Obama was filled with the enemy hiding inside.

Sunday, March 21, 2010, a secret door opened in Obama, the shiny golden black man. A raging army of democrats charged out. Without mercy, they began their vicious bloody slaughter of every value, freedom and institution we Americans hold dear; launching the end of America as we know it.



Wielding swords of votes reeking with the putrid odor of back door deals, the democrats landed a severe death blow to America and individual rights by passing Obamacare.

The mainstream liberal media has been relentlessly badgering the Tea Party movement with accusations of racism. Because I am a black tea party patriot, I am bombarded with interviewers asking me the same veiled question. "Why are you siding with these white racists against America's first African American president?" I defend my fellow patriots who are white stating, "These patriots do not give a hoot about Obama's skin color. They simply love their country and oppose his radical agenda. Obama's race is not an issue".

Recently, I have come to believe that perhaps I am wrong about Obama's race not being an issue. In reality, Obama's presidency has everything to do with racism, but not from the Tea Party movement. Progressives and Obama have exploited his race from the rookie senator's virtually unchallenged presidential campaign to his unprecedented bullying of America into Obamacare. Obama's race trumped all normal media scrutiny of him as a presidential candidate and most recently even the Constitution of the United States. Obamacare forces all Americans to purchase health care which is clearly unconstitutional.

No white president could get away with boldly and arrogantly thwarting the will of the American people and ignoring laws. President Clinton tried universal health care. Bush tried social security reform. The American people said "no" to both president's proposals and it was the end of it. So how can Obama get away with giving the American people the finger? The answer. He is black.

The mainstream liberal media continues to portray all who oppose Obama in any way as racist. Despite a list of failed policies, overreaches into the private sector, violations of the Constitution and planned destructive legislation too numerous to mention in this article, many Americans are still fearful of criticizing our first black president. Incredible.

My fellow Americans, you must not continue to allow yourselves to be "played" and intimidated by Obama's race or the historical context of his presidency. If we are to save America, the greatest nation on the planet, Obama's progressive agenda must be stopped.

(Lloyd Marcus, (black) Unhyphenated American, singer/songwriter, entertainer, author, artist, and Tea Party patriot)

20120423-45 23:59 SteveB Photo: Slavery?

<http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/gastudiesimages/Black%20Children%20Picking%20Cotton.htm>

"Black Children Picking Cotton"



Ed Jackson

Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #124 — APR. 25, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

The Defense Budget Is Killing Us

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 19, 2012)

Ike was right!

Don't listen to the lies about "Entitlements". Here's one clue: to call them "entitlements" is a lie. Both Social Security and Medicare are insurance that you pay for, plain and simple. If Congress screwed it up, maybe they should fix it or get out of the way, but the people will not tolerate giving up much of these popular programs.

On the other hand, 50% of the federal budget is "defense" or offense, more normally, whatever the case may be. This is where cuts must be made if we are to be safe.

And (of course) I have a small suggestion. The politicians have created a situation where everything the world buys is made in China. Why don't we have the Chinese build all our tanks, planes, guns, bullets, Cruise missiles, drones, bunker busters, bazookas, Howitzers, rockets, grenades, rifles, uniforms, medals, A-bombs, H-bombs, deadly chemicals, gases, and biological agents for us? I'm sure Walmart could get them that stuff way cheaper than what they're paying now.

Though my burning, burning question would then be whether we could meet our two primary foreign-policy objectives — KEEPING ISRAEL SAFE AND CUBA UNSAFE!

"Defending Ourselves to Death" by Thomas Magstadt, NationofChange

Apr. 24, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/defending-ourselves-death-1335281978>)

(If you add the \$100 billion or more for the two wars we are still fighting, the \$80 billion for the intelligence budget, and various other defense-related expenditures, that figure is actually much higher – roughly one-half the entire federal budget for the period 2002-2008.)

The OWS movement is right to focus on Wall Street and the financial services industry as the proximate cause of our current discontents. Wall Street is at once the symbol of greed and the instrument of the big commercial banks, venture capitalists, and "wealth managers" that feed on greed, and (more to the point) are fed by it. As everyone knows, the nation's leading financial institutions engaged in extremely risky behavior with our money, plunging the country into a deep and prolonged recession, causing great pain across the length and breadth of middle-class America, while reaping fabulous rewards, some virtually tax-free, in the form of multi-million-dollar bonuses, perks, deferred compensation, stock options, and "golden parachutes".

The economic conundrum we face at present is rooted in the past, including a tax system that redistributes wealth upward from the middle class to the wealthy and, consequently, the relentless growth in both public and private debt. Private debt exacerbates the problems arising from a shrinking labor market; burgeoning public debt places severe limits on what government can do to stimulate growth and often renders efforts to do so (for example, the Obama stimulus) ineffectual largely in large part because the very banks that receive the bulk of the bailouts pull back and refuse to lend. The irony is delicious; unfortunately, the *nouveaupauvre* can't eat it.

But there's another big piece of the puzzle that deserves closer public scrutiny, namely the obese US defense budget. The Plutocrats who control Wall Street and bankroll the Wingnuts in Congress who kill all attempts at tax reform and oppose everything that has anything to do with social justice would have us believe that the big problem with the federal budget is entitlements – Social Security and Medicare. Pure rubbish. There are two much bigger problems, one on the revenue side, namely the skewed federal tax laws that let corporations and the super-rich pay way too little, and one on the spending side. The mother of all expenditure-related debt problems is the defense budget.

At least 95 percent of the national debt is war-related. The Defense Department absorbs 25-30 percent of the federal budget, depending on what's being counted and who's counting. Two-thirds (68 percent) of all federal government civil and military employees are involved in national security and war related activities. If you add the \$100 billion or more for the two wars we are still fighting, the \$80 billion for the intelligence budget, and various other defense-related expenditures, that figure is actually much higher – roughly one-half the entire federal budget for the period 2002-2008.

In terms of money circulation and markets, the multiplier effect of military spending is far less than other forms of capital investment. Nor is the arms industry structured to compete in the civilian economy.

The defunct Soviet Union developed two distinct economies with two distinct sets of quality control standards. In his best-selling book, *The Russians* (1976), Hedrick Smith, winner of a Pulitzer Prize for journalism, wrote about "the split-level nature of Soviet society" in which the military industries "operate on a different system from the rest of the economy." Today, much the same can be said of the United States.

We, too, have a split-level society based on a self-perpetuating war economy with arms manufacturers, beltway bandits, and a vast array of defense contractors that similarly "operate on a different system from the rest of the economy". The domestic economy is characterized by structural unemployment, public and private debt, deteriorating infrastructure, outsourcing, and the like. The products of the war economy have "made in America" stamped all over them. The US is the world's largest arms export, accounting for 30% of the total in the most recent five-year period, 2007-2011. (Russia is second at 24% and Germany is a distant third at 9%.)

The military-industrial economy foreshadowed in President Eisenhower's farewell address a half-century ago, however, presents a very different picture. Defense contractors are thriving, while the federal government is busy throwing good money after bad in Iraq and Afghanistan; paying for the defense of NATO countries, plus Japan, and Korea; and deploying hundreds of thousands of active-duty military personnel at hundreds of bases around the globe.* The US governments also contracts with a growing number of private security contractors to augment military operations in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Much of the money spent in the name of national security and war-waging goes to private corporations through hundreds of thousands of procurement contracts (around 400,000).

For FY2002 through FY2008, nearly half of all federal expenditures went to eight federal departments and agencies involved in national and homeland security – including the servicing of war-incurred debt. The "military-industrial complex" has corporate and defense tentacles reaching into virtually every political constituency. DOD alone maintains nearly 5,500 bases and military sites in the U.S. and around the world.

Meanwhile, our NATO allies have made deep cuts in defense spending, and most are falling short of the minimum NATO requirement of 2 percent of GDP spent on defense. Ironically, 2 percent of GDP is what the US spends on the

maintenance and upgrading of its aging infrastructure. The EU, in contrast, spends 5 percent, and China spends at least 10 percent.

The bifurcation of the US economy has its roots in World War II and the intense postwar superpower rivalry. The emerging rivalry in the New World Order is between the United States and China – and the rules have changed.

The challenge China poses is very different from the one the Soviet Union did. China is leading with its strength – economic power – and building a first-rate military on that foundation. Meanwhile, the U.S. blithely continues to throw money at the military and run up ever bigger deficits as though there is no relationship between the soaring national debt and national security.

Most experts agree that a single minded obsession with building military muscle was a major cause of the Soviet Union's collapse. Armaments plus an ill-conceived war in Afghanistan proved to be the Soviet empire's undoing. They may also prove to be our own.

* A 2007 estimate put the number at 737, but it's impossible for any outside observer to know for certain.

20120424-01	09:51	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: Help a Family Save Their Home from Wells Fargo
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

from Change.org:

Two of Kathy Sontag's daughters, Brittany and Cassie, were diagnosed with a rare immune disorder -- they both required months of grueling treatment and even bone marrow transplants. They left their home in Inola, Oklahoma for months on end while fighting to survive.

But medical bills piled up. Kathy, a single mother, missed work to care for her daughters. She says the payments on her home mortgage are becoming too much for her, and so she's been asking Wells Fargo to adjust her loan payments.

The bank hasn't budged. Now Wells Fargo wants to foreclose on Kathy's home -- in just weeks, Kathy and her daughters could be homeless.

Kathy didn't give up in her fight to save her daughters, and she's not giving up now. She started a petition on Change.org asking Wells Fargo to modify her home loan so that she and her daughters can stay in the only home they've known together.

Click here to add your name to Kathy's petition:

http://www.change.org/petitions/wells-fargo-save-the-home-of-bone-marrow-transplant-recipients?utm_source=action_alert&utm_medium=email&me=aa&utm_campaign=IpglNVkbxh&alert_id=IpglNVkbxh_GfgmAqtiYI

The home Kathy shares with Brittany, Cassie, and her third daughter is no ordinary home. When their neighbors heard about the girls' illnesses, they decided to pitch in. They transformed Kathy's home, including extensive repairs and a new ventilation system, all designed to make the girls' recovery as easy as possible.

When her daughters finally were able to return home, wearing face masks to protect their fragile immune systems, they were greeted by their friends and neighbors holding signs and cheering. "The whole community got together," said Kathy. "It was like they did their own version of Extreme Home Makeover."

Kathy's daughter Cassie told a local reporter when she returned home, "It's really amazing 'cause I knew they cared, but I didn't think they cared enough to build a new house and get us all this stuff. I'm shocked. I love it."

Now Kathy, Brittany, Cassie, and the rest of their family could lose their special home. But Kathy has seen other homeowners save their homes from foreclosure. She's hoping that if the public comes to her side -- much like her community came to her family when the girls first got sick -- she can save the only home her girls have ever known.

Click here to sign Kathy's petition to Wells Fargo to reevaluate her case and modify her mortgage so her family can keep their home.

Thanks for being a change-maker, Tim and the Change.org team

20120424-02	09:52	SteveG	Fw: JustLabelIt.org Petition: Urge USDA to Reject GMO Corn
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

from Just Label It!:

The USDA is on the brink of approving a type of corn genetically engineered to withstand 2,4-D herbicide, which some studies have shown may be linked to reproductive abnormalities, birth defects, and several forms of cancer.

Approval of Dow Chemical's genetically engineered corn would trigger an increase in 2,4-D use and our exposure to this herbicide.

Although we might not all agree on the science concerning the long-term effects of eating GMOs, we should be able to decide for ourselves whether to feed them to our families. But if the USDA approves this new corn, we won't be able to make that choice since genetically engineered foods aren't labeled.

Urge the USDA to reject the genetically engineered 2,4-D resistant corn until these concerns are addressed.

Before the USDA makes a decision, they've asked to hear from people like you and me, but they're only accepting comments from the public until Friday! We must make sure they understand our concerns about this new kind of genetically engineered corn.

The herbicide 2,4-D is a persistent chemical with a habit of spreading into the water we drink, the grass our children and pets play on, and the soil beneath our backyard gardens. Plus a growing number of farmers are concerned about the potential impact on their crops from the herbicide drifting onto their fields.

You care about the food you eat, that's why you asked the FDA to label genetically engineered ingredients. Now speak up before the USDA approves 2,4-D resistant corn with absolutely no labeling, which could unleash a new wave of chemicals in our environment.

Help flood the USDA comment box before it's too late (Deadline on Friday!):

http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/50202/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=7572

Thank you for contacting the USDA today and for bringing attention to these critical food issues.

– Alex, Nancy, Naomi, Sue, and the entire Just Label It team

20120424-03	10:22	Pam	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 23, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

SteveBA, what is it with you and your issue with "taking money and giving it to others?" That seems to really get under your skin. It's not as if Social Security were ripping people off. What's the limit? \$60,000 or so, then everything above that isn't charged, which means the rich are not touched by their deductions as much as those making less. It's not like it's a crushing burden or anything. Back in the 19th c. Otto von Bismark instituted the first social welfare programs in Europe in order to strengthen the German state. He knew that a society in which everyone has a measure of security is going to be stronger and more stable than someplace like Sudan or Somalia.

Imagine what would happen if suddenly the rich didn't have to give up anything and the middle class didn't have to pay taxes. What would our society look like then? Look back at Victorian England to get an idea.

You might say you prefer private charity or church-run institutions to help people in need, but that would almost certainly be inadequate. For example, the university where I taught for 30 years is a state school and depends on the state legislature for a substantial portion of its budget. Private donors are solicited (my best friend works for Development), but those gifts could never cover everything. Places like Stanford and Harvard that are privately supported and have huge endowments can make it without govt. money (though their students often get federal education loans), but a school like UNCG would have to close its doors if the state eliminated our funding. I could write a telephone-book-length list of similar examples. Private money cannot replace government spending.

Moreover, government spending is at least notionally controlled by the taxpayers through their representatives. Government can see where money is needed and direct it accordingly. (I know it's way more complicated than this, but I think you understand me.) UNCG is always having to deal with benefactors who want to give money for a particular thing: a bell tower, the Honors Program, whatever. That's fine, but what if it's actually the Classics Dept. that needs the funds? A university, and a nation, need to be able to move money around to where it will do the most good. If taxes didn't provide that money, everything we take for granted would come to a crashing stop. The rich people I admire--and there are many I do--share their bounty with their society in one way or another. The rich people I do not admire are those whose goal in life is to hang onto every penny, who say, I got mine; you get yours. That is a selfish attitude, not a justified one. If the Grinches and Scrooges won't make a fair contribution to their society, then they must be made to do so. That's what taxes are for. We need a combination of money sources, just as we need a combination of energy sources. Balance. The middle way. Taking account of both complexity and human nature. These are what we need to focus on. When someone like Simon Cowell spends \$4 million on a birthday party for himself, I feel not a tinge of regret at taxing the bejeebers out of him. Everyone wants a comfortable life, but there's a reason the rich are so often hated--historically and today. Every time I see Kim Jung Un's fat face I think about all the North Koreans subsisting on tree bark. We need to find a reasonable middle ground, and we must consider the interests of EVERYONE.

20120424-04	10:44	Clark	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to Pam, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-------	---

Pam, I can't top this for eloquence, but I would only add that 2005 was a convenient time for such a study (on SS vs. private pension funds), a few years before many people lost their savings in the 2008 market/financial crash. Yet they still had their Social Security. It's a safety net. Doesn't stop people who have the means from investing, but it takes the risk out for at least some funds. Otherwise, as Pam notes, it's a return to Victorian England.

20120424-05	10:45	Art	Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveBA, Apr. 23, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

All good points but I think the difference, for some of us at least, is that you cannot in the end really trust private enterprise to do anything but try to make a profit. I know some don't like to hear this but that doesn't make it any less true. It is only government regulations and requirements for at least some degree of honesty in business that keeps us from having sawdust or sewage in our hamburgers. Yes, it is true that in the end business must offer something that it's clients will buy but it also can be a very long road between cutting corners on the product and finally being rejected by the public. The larger the business the longer the road. In SteveBA's line of business, Bernie Madoff comes to mind instantly but in fact business is loaded with businessmen who cut corners, provided faulty products and generally cheated their customers and clients all in the name of making a little more money. If Social Security had been privatized, I am certain along the road somewhere some CEO, trying to enhance his salary, would have made risky investments or other selfish actions that would have not had the best interests of the investor population in mind.

Less this be misconstrued, I applaud private industry and am heavily invested in it myself. I just don't really trust any of the senior CEOs etc to do anything but try to make more money, mostly these days for themselves, but hopefully taking me along for the ride. I am OK with that as long as the people of this country have a higher power to watch over the abuses and reign them in from time to time.

[Can you imagine the panic in 2008 if the full Social Security funds, less Congressional pilfering, had been invested in the markets? Gack! Our nation could possibly have crashed and burned. –SteveB]

[20120424-12](#) 14:08 SteveB Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to Art & SteveBA)

I agree, Art. And conservatives seem to be the last to believe that mankind is intrinsically good—hence the guns, death penalty, and interference in my bedroom.

They don't think mankind is honest or good, but somehow the rich and powerful and the mighty corporations are. I guess they would have us believe that, the more money involved, the more honest people become. They don't need any damned laws or regulations! Horsie doo-doo!

True or not, SteveBA?

You just can't have it both ways. Unless...oh...I see...the rich are good and it is only the scum who are bad! I get it!

[20120424-19](#) 18:01 Art Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveB)

"What's good for General Motors is good for America"

Right?

[20120424-16](#) 15:30 SteveG Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (SteveB, above)

As I remember Ron Paul stated that companies/corporations would do the right things if all the regulations were lifted.

[20120424-17](#) 16:05 Clark Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (SteveG, above)

Sure they would!

Getting back to government programs that work and have done tremendous good over the years, despite cutbacks and political interference, how about food inspection, the CDC, OSHA and the EPA?

I'll draw the line at the TSA, however.

[20120424-06](#) 11:22 SteveG Re: A Happier Conclusion? Health Care (reply to Art, above)

All excellent points. Banks during the past few years, particularly the mortgage scams, have to be added to the Madoff lists.

Most of us went (K-12) through public schools – all in one form another government institutions. Some went to private schools for college while others went to state universities and most went to state schools for graduate school – all government ran enterprises.

Last night there was a report on CBS news about costs of appendectomies – no complications – all were in California and the costs were from \$13, 000 to \$182, 000 dollars – free enterprise at work for you in the medical field.

[20120424-07](#) 11:43 SteveG Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? & Video: "No Standardized Price for Appendix Removal"

Take a listen to the report on appendectomies and then talk to me about how great medical care in the US is. What is it that Pam says, single payer and universal coverage! Medical costs are ridiculous.

Video: "No Standardized Price for Appendix Removal" by CBS News

Apr. 23, 2012, (<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7406362n&tag=contentMain;contentBody>)

[20120424-08](#) 11:55 Clark Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveG, above); Health Care

I had one of those (appendectomies) in California 30 years ago and the cost even then was around \$10,000. I did have insurance, which gave me the decided sense that they were happier to see me than if I hadn't, and I landed a good surgeon. Otherwise I might be a statistic. It was a messy operation.

[20120424-09](#) 11:56 Art Re: How Do We Reach a Happier Conclusion? (reply to SteveG, above); Health Care

Worth a watch. This is the problem and needs fixing. Could happen to any of us. Curious for the non Americans on this list. Have the same problem?

[Non-Americans? Well, in Bolivia we have incredibly inexpensive universal health care. Prescription drugs are cheap and don't require prescriptions. Doctors and hospitals make less money, but everyone who can be is happy and healthy. Many of our doctors were trained in the U.S. or Cuba, and I can't see much difference in the expertise of those two groups. Also, students come from all over Latin America to attend medical school in Bolivia. Is only America too stupid to leave this problem unsolved? The only country with a political process too controlled by special interests—doctors, the medical-industrial complex, and insurance companies, in this case? Pathetic! – SteveB]

[20120424-10](#) 12:08 SteveB Re: A Happier Conclusion? Candidates Chosen By God (reply to Clark & SteveG, Apr. 23, 2012) & "Romney: God Wants U.S. to Lead, Not Follow"

And Romney is not without Divine assistance either. (Where are those damned Golden Plates?) God sure gives mixed signals these days.

I hope He at least told President Obama to run too or to bomb Libya or something, otherwise... Maybe God tells him to raise our taxes...haha.

Below is from the *FotM Archive*.

SteveB, Oct. 7, 2011, 6:38 am

How far behind the times can you possibly be? Just what we need, more military spending and adventures. These Republicans just don't get it—we're broke! We gotta scrape some money together and fix ourselves somehow, not fight more wars!

And, even more dangerous—HE KNOWS WHAT GOD WANTS! (Hey, maybe he could ask God what happened to those golden plates Jesus gave the Mormons that they somehow managed to "lose".)

I guess "better than the rest" [of the field] doesn't mean much, huh? Now, Mitt, let's go out there in the world and dominate! hahaha This is not what we need at this point in our nation's history, in my humble opinion.

"Romney: God Wants U.S. to Lead, Not Follow" by Bruce Smith and Steve Peoples, AP

Oct. 7, 2011, (<http://news.yahoo.com/romney-god-wants-us-lead-not-081157082.html>)

(CHARLESTON, SC) Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is calling for a century of American dominance in his first major foreign policy address, outlining plans to strengthen the U.S. military while rejecting multilateral institutions like the United Nations when necessary.

The former Massachusetts governor also condemns the isolationist policies supported by some tea party members in a speech to be delivered Friday at The Citadel, South Carolina's iconic military college.

"This is America's moment. We should embrace the challenge, not shrink from it, not crawl into an isolationist shell, not wave the white flag of surrender, nor give in to those who assert America's moment has passed. That is utter nonsense," Romney says in prepared remarks obtained by The Associated Press.

The leading GOP presidential contender offers no clear direction for the war in Afghanistan, but says he would conduct a full review of the situation in his first 100 days in office to determine "the presence necessary to secure our gains and successfully complete our mission."

"This century must be an American century. In an American century, America has the strongest economy and the strongest military in the world," Romney says. "God did not create this country to be a nation of followers. America is not destined to be one of several equally balanced global powers. America must lead the world, or someone else will."

While he served as a Mormon missionary in France more than four decades ago, Romney has limited foreign policy experience. As he says in nearly every campaign stop, he has spent the majority of his life in the business world. But Romney has been critical of President Barack Obama's foreign policy, particularly the president's aggressive timeline to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.

At a campaign stop in Mount Pleasant on Thursday, Romney previewed some of the themes for Friday's speech. He called for 100,000 new troops, increased military spending and a larger Navy.

"You would think that the president and the people in Washington would recognize the importance of the United States military and the need not to shrink our military budget but strengthen it," Romney told veterans on the hangar deck of the World War II-era aircraft carrier U.S.S. Yorktown.

The former governor acknowledged waste in defense spending and "my life in the private sector taught me to go after waste and economize, and there is an opportunity to do that." But he said he wouldn't, as European nations have done, reduce defense to bolster social programs.

Romney also released the names of 22 advisers he will consult on foreign policy issues.

The Citadel speech comes three days before his rival Jon Huntsman, the former ambassador to China, delivers a foreign policy address of his own. And it comes as Romney has jumped back into the lead in national polling following Texas Gov. Rick Perry meteoric rise and fall in recent weeks. The location of the speech, in the early voting state of South Carolina, is of course no coincidence.

Romney calls for working with the United Nations when appropriate.

"But know this," he says. "While America should work with other nations, we always reserve the right to act alone to protect our vital national interests."

[20120424-11](#) 12:55 SteveB Re: A Happier Conclusion? Candidates Chosen By God

Ah...I get it! THAT'S why they say President Obama isn't a Christian. God doesn't tell him to do all that stuff...thank God!

So the ignoramuses (ignorami?) conclude he must be a Muslim.

I do honestly believe that Mormonism is a cult and I don't think I'm prejudiced in saying that, but it is from getting to know some of the young Mormons who'd come around to try to convert us, from attending their small local church a couple of times, from spending some time in Salt Lake City, and from reading the entire incredibly boring alleged *Book of Mormon*, out of sheer, obstinate curiosity. It's as crazy as Scientology or Rev. Moon or Jim Jones, IMHO.

Not that I believe any of that matters one whit in whether to vote for R0mney or not. I'm pretty sure he doesn't believe in any damn thing. At least, in all these long months, I haven't seen one glimmer of integrity or veracity or what he stands for except the "private sector", being rich, paying little taxes, and liking to fire people.

Please give me a break. As John Huntsman said, "Is this the best we can do?"

[20120424-13](#) 14:19 Dennis Fw: Harlequin Novel, Updated: 2011 Version

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

He grasped me firmly, but gently, just above my elbow and guided me into a room, his room. Then he quietly shut the door and we were alone. He approached me soundlessly, from behind, and spoke in a low, reassuring voice close to my ear.

"Just relax."

Without warning, he reached down and I felt his strong, calloused hands start at my ankles, gently probing, and moving upward along my calves, slowly but steadily. My breath caught in my throat.

I knew I should be afraid, but somehow I didn't care. His touch was so experienced, so sure. When his hands moved up onto my thighs, I gave a slight shudder, and partly closed my eyes. My pulse was pounding. I felt his knowing fingers caress my abdomen, my ribcage. And then, as he cupped my firm, full breasts in his hands, I inhaled sharply.

Probing, searching, knowing what he wanted, he brought his hands to my shoulders, slid them down my tingling spine and into my panties. Although I knew nothing about this man, I felt oddly trusting and expectant. This is a man, I thought. A man used to taking charge. A man not used to taking 'No' for an answer. A man who would tell me what he wanted. A man who would look into my soul and say...

"Okay ma'am, you can board your flight now."

[20120424-15](#) 15:21 SteveG Re: Harlequin Novel, Updated: 2011 Version

LOL – All I get is a video.

[20120424-14](#) 14:47 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Action: Support the Woman's Option to Raise Kids (WORK) Act

from Daily Kos:

Please send an email to your member of Congress to support the Woman's Option to Raise Kids (WORK) Act, which gives low-income women with children under age four the choice to stay at home to raise their kids. Click here to send an email:

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=119.

Now that Republicans have flip-flopped on their decades-long denigration of mothers and decided that staying at home to raise children is work—or at least, it's work when Ann Romney does it—some House Democrats are telling them to put their money where their mouth is by introducing the Woman's Option to Raise Kids (WORK) Act.

The WORK Act allows raising children under the age of four to count toward the required “work activity” defined under the 1996 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program. If Republicans really valued the work mothers do, they'd support legally defining raising young children as work so that more low-income moms can make the same choice Ann Romney made.

However, with Democrats calling their bluff, many Republicans are folding. When asked about the WORK Act, Rep. Jon Mica (R-FL) said being a mother "isn't work in the normal sense." Teabagger Rep. Steve King of Iowa compared the hard work of motherhood to washing his car.

Please, send an email to your member of Congress in support of the WORK Act. It's either time to give all moms the same choice Ann Romney had, or to put an end to this sham outrage.

Keep fighting, Kaili Joy Gray, Daily Kos

20120424-18	16:13	SteveG	“Take Action Against Dow Chemical and Monsanto ‘Agent Orange’ GMO Crops” & Reply from SteveB
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

[“Take Action Against Dow Chemical and Monsanto ‘Agent Orange’ GMO Crops” by Cassandra Anderson, NationofChange](#)

Apr. 24, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/take-action-against-dow-chemical-and-monsanto-agent-orange-gmo-crops-1335283074>)

You can help to hold the USDA and Dow Chemical accountable simply by posting your comments on the official public record of Dow Chemical’s petition with the USDA to approve their 2,4-D herbicide resistant GMO crops (remember that 2,4-D herbicide is half of the recipe for Agent Orange).

The USDA is required to respond to all UNIQUE comments publicly. Therefore, it is essential that you write your own message in addition to using any of the issues listed below. It’s also important to note that comments close April 27th, so make sure to get them in today. It’s simple to do, and you can view the list of issues and links below. Simply go to the USDA website to leave your comments and take action!

Here is a list of issues concerning the new dangerous 2,4-D herbicide resistant crops and source links that we encourage you to use, along with your own message, in your comments to the USDA:

Effects on human health:

- I am demanding a full Environmental Impact Statement on these crops because they can affect human health.
- What are the cumulative effects for these crops and the increase in 2,4-D herbicide usage?
- EPA documents show that 2,4-D herbicide is the seventh largest source of dioxin in the US.
- Link: http://www.epa.gov/oppsrrd1/REDS/24d_red.pdf.

Pollution of the environment:

- EPA documents reveal that 2,4-D agricultural runoff has polluted groundwater across the US. Dioxin has a half-life of more than 100 years when leached into soil and embedded in water systems. Additionally, when contaminated fish are used as a food source, humans absorb dioxin.
- Links: http://www.epa.gov/teach/chem_summ/24D_summary.pdf.
- <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/agent-orange/history>.

Ramped up 2,4-D herbicide in crops:

- The commercialization of GMO 2,4-D herbicide resistant crops will dramatically increase the usage of 2,4-D herbicide that is linked to dioxin to be used on food crops.
- Link: <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/GMcropsIncreasedHerbicide.php>.

Dioxin in diet and food sources:

- The FDA admits that 95% of human dioxin absorption is from diet, especially animal fats. Corn and other crops are used for animal feed and dioxin levels are likely to rise in animals if they are fed 2,4-D herbicide resistant GMO crops, due to increased herbicide use.
- Link: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FoodContaminantsAdulteration/ChemicalContaminants/DioxinsPCBs/ucm292321.htm>.

Connection to cancer and birth defects:

- The EPA says that dioxin increases risk of cancer and current dioxin levels are already “uncomfortably” close to dangerous levels that can cause other health damage.
- Link: <http://www.epa.gov/pbt/pubs/dioxins.htm>.
- EPA admits that dioxin in 2,4-D causes blood, liver and kidney toxicity in addition to birth defects in lab-tested animals.
- Link: http://www.epa.gov/teach/chem_summ/24D_summary.pdf.
- The Veteran’s Administration recognizes these diseases that have resulted from Agent Orange exposure (2,4-D is half of the recipe of Agent Orange): Amyloidosis, chronic B-cell leukemias, chloracne, diabetes mellitus type 2, Hodgkin’s Disease, ischemic heart disease, multiple myeloma, Non-Hodgkins lymphoma, Parkinson’s Disease, peripheral neuropathy, liver dysfunction, prostate cancer, respiratory cancers (including lung), soft tissue sarcomas and birth defects in subsequent generations.
- Link: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/diseases.asp>
- The USDA has failed to require tests of how 2,4-D herbicide and Monsanto’s glyphosate herbicide interact synergistically in the environment and in humans, which may present a real danger.

Take action on the USDA comments website:

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!submitComment;D=APHIS-2010-0103-0001>

Please note that your comments should contain an original message by you (instead of a form letter) so that it is counted as a unique message requiring a response from the USDA. It’s also important to be aware that only your name, city and country are required information, the rest of your personal information like your home address and e-mail are voluntary.

Personal stories of individuals affected by agent orange: [see source website listed above].

reply from SteveB:

Ya know, SteveG, I was just thinking...

Isn't this one of those damned if you do / damned if you don't situations?

First of all, did you know that almost all the arable land on the entire planet is infertile for most crops? Oh, ya, we pay lip service to crop rotation, which helps, but it still takes millions of tons of fertilizer each year to make the farm land continue to grow crops, because it was "worn out" long ago. All this fertilizer ultimately damages the environment almost as much as the poisons.

This shows the dire situation we're gotten ourselves into.

Now, let's say we don't have pesticide/herbicide resistant crops. As the "background" poison levels rise, as they historically have, and we continue to use chemicals that don't break down into anything resembling harmless components, crops could start dying along with everything else, and the world, including the Tea Party, would starve. Oh, except the ones with big survivalist stashes, and there would be major armed conflict over those. Fun.

Just as, already, bees don't fly, corn would not grow.

I say, as in climate control, we go with science, but carefully monitored science, in this case. Already, much (more) of the world's population would be starving if we didn't already grow heavily genetically modified crops everywhere in the world. We just did most of the manipulation with less than modern, less efficient, less powerful methods.

As to this particular genetic modification? Governments, not corporations should decide the issue, I believe. The governments need a lot of input from scientists, companies, and the people, then time to decide. Many of us have gotten to be a small part of that process.

I say, let 'em do it, then ban the same chemicals world-wide, just to teach 'em a lesson. Unfortunately, cool sh*t like this almost never happens in the real world.

The real question is: Can we genetically engineer poison resistant humans (and dogs, cats, cows, and chickens, I hope)?

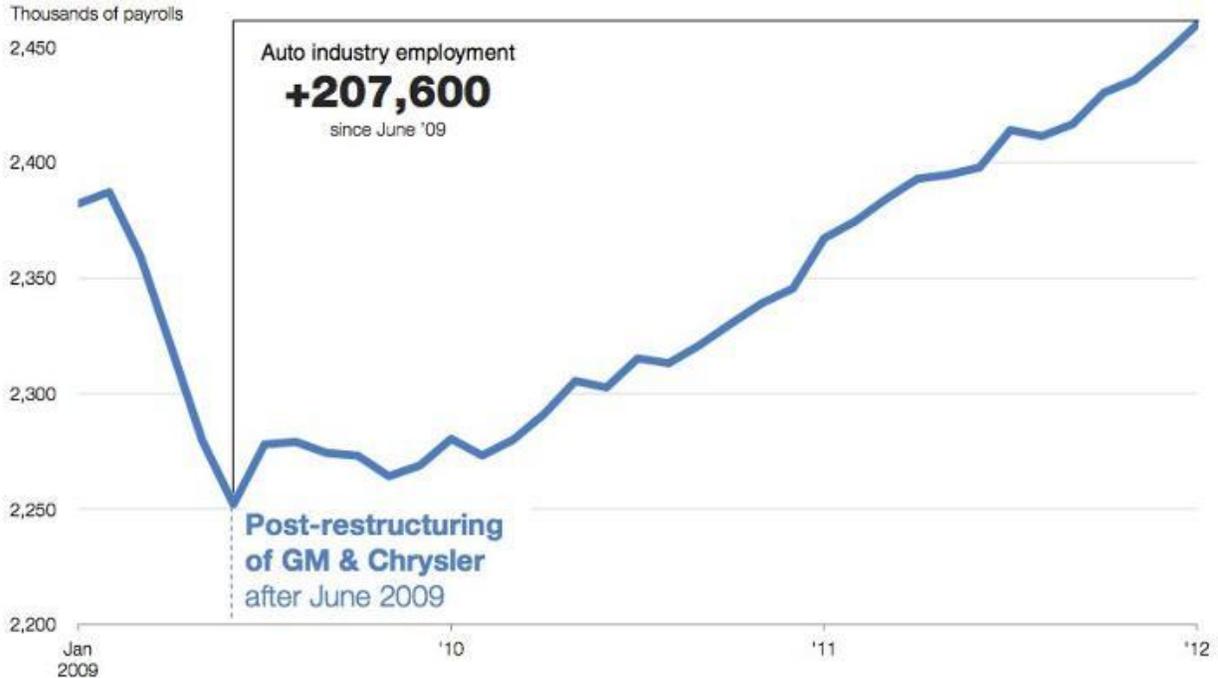
20120424-20	18:26	Dennis	"Auto Industry Employment Has Grown Since the Rescue"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Seems that Government Motors and Chrysler are doing better than America in producing jobs. Who wudda thunk it?

8 The Auto Industry

Auto industry employment has grown since the rescue.

Total private payrolls in motor vehicles and parts (manufacturing and retail trade), seasonally-adjusted



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

20120424-21 22:50 SteveM "Obama's Make-Believe Life"

You cannot get the water to clear up until you get the pigs out of the creek.

[Source of original email unknown. Attributed to the *Wall Street Journal*, but never published there, according to Snopes.com: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/makebelieve.asp>. But this is apparently a legitimate blog posting. -SteveB]

"Obama's Make-Believe Life" by Alan Caruba, Warning Signs Blog

Jan. 2, 2010, (<http://factsnotfantasy.blogspot.com/2010/01/obamas-make-believe-life.html>)

I have this theory about Barack Obama. I think he's led a kind of make-believe life in which money was provided and doors were opened because at some point early on somebody or some group took a look at this tall, good looking, half-white, half-black, young man with an exotic African/Muslim name and concluded he could be guided toward a life in politics where his facile speaking skills could even put him in the White House.

In a very real way, he has been a young man in a very big hurry. Who else do you know has written two memoirs before the age of 45? "Dreams of My Father" was published in 1995 when he was only 34 years old. The "Audacity of Hope" followed in 2006. If, indeed, he did write them himself. There are some who think that his mentor and friend, Bill Ayers, a man who calls himself a "communist with a small 'c'" was the real author.

His political skills consisted of rarely voting on anything that might be deemed controversial. He went from a legislator in the Illinois legislature to the Senator from that state because he had the good fortune of having Mayor Daley's formidable political machine at his disposal.

He was in the U.S. Senate so briefly that his bid for the presidency was either an act of astonishing self-confidence or part of some greater game plan that had been determined before he first stepped foot in the Capital. How, many must wonder, was he selected to be a 2004 keynote speaker at the Democrat convention that nominated John Kerry when virtually no one had ever even heard of him before?

He outmaneuvered Hillary Clinton in primaries. He took Iowa by storm. A charming young man, an anomaly in the state with a very small black population, he oozed "cool" in a place where agriculture was the antithesis of cool. He dazzled the locals. And he had an army of volunteers drawn to a charisma that hid any real substance.

And then he had the great good fortune of having the Republicans select one of the most inept candidates for the presidency since Bob Dole. And then John McCain did something crazy. He picked Sarah Palin, an unknown female governor from the very distant state of Alaska. It was a ticket that was reminiscent of 1984's Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro and they went down to defeat.

The mainstream political media fell in love with him. It was a schoolgirl crush with febrile commentators like Chris Mathews swooning then and now over the man. The venom directed against McCain and, in particular, Palin, was extraordinary.

Now, nearly a full year into his first term, all of those gilded years leading up to the White House have left him unprepared to be President. Left to his own instincts, he has a talent for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. It swiftly became a joke that he could not deliver even the briefest of statements without the ever-present Tele-Prompters.

Far worse, however, is his capacity to want to "wish away" some terrible realities, not the least of which is the Islamist intention to destroy America and enslave the West. Any student of history knows how swiftly Islam initially spread. It knocked on the doors of Europe, having gained a foothold in Spain.

The great crowds that greeted him at home or on his campaign "world tour" were no substitute for having even the slightest grasp of history and the reality of a world filled with really bad people with really bad intentions.

Oddly and perhaps even inevitably, his political experience, a cakewalk, has positioned him to destroy the Democrat Party's hold on power in Congress because in the end it was never about the Party. It was always about his communist ideology, learned at an early age from family, mentors, college professors, and extreme leftist friends and colleagues.

Obama is a man who could deliver a snap judgment about a Boston police officer who arrested an "obstreperous" Harvard professor-friend, but would warn Americans against "jumping to conclusions" about a mass murderer at Fort Hood who shouted "Allahu Akbar." The absurdity of that was lost on no one. He has since compounded this by calling the Christmas bomber "an isolated extremist" only to have to admit a day or two later that he was part of an al Qaeda plot.

He is a man who could strive to close down our detention facility at Guantanamo even though those released were known to have returned to the battlefield against America. He could even instruct his Attorney General to afford the perpetrator of 9/11 a civil trial when no one else would ever even consider such an obscenity. And he is a man who could wait three days before having anything to say about the perpetrator of yet another terrorist attack on Americans and then have to elaborate on his remarks the following day because his first statement was so lame.

The pattern repeats itself. He either blames any problem on the Bush administration or he naively seeks to wish away the truth.

Knock, knock. Anyone home? Anyone there? Barack Obama exists only as the sock puppet of his handlers, of the people who have maneuvered and manufactured this pathetic individual's life.

When anyone else would quickly and easily produce a birth certificate, this man has spent over a million dollars to deny access to his. Most other documents, the paper trail we all leave in our wake, have been sequestered from review. He has lived a make-believe life whose true facts remain hidden.

We laugh at the ventriloquist's dummy, but what do you do when the dummy is President of the United States of America?

20120424-22	23:21	SteveM	Video: "Obama Makes Free Speech a Felony"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

This one will blow your mind!

This is unbelievable! a law signed in secret, that allows the Secret Service ignore the 1st Amendment and charge protesters with a FELONY (more than a year in jail). The scumbags that protest at the burials of American service men and women do so FREELY, but if you hold up a sign as simple as "No More Obama" where the Secret Service can see it, you can be arrested for a federal felony!! On top of that, the President can decide who gets Secret Service protection . . . how long before his entire cabinet is protected by the Secret Service and the Secret Service (a historically 1st rate law enforcement organization) grows into Obama's Secret Police. Is nobody seeing the correlations of these actions with similar actions in recent history? (WWII) Do I need to worry that I could go to jail for writing this e-mail or that YOU may go just for reading it? OUR FREEDOMS ARE BEING STRIPPED AWAY FROM US AND WE MUST STOP THIS

New law makes it illegal to protest in Obama's presence

This means that, wherever Obama is at, his secret service can have you arrested, fined, and imprisoned for more than a YEAR if you ask him something he doesn't like...or say something he doesn't like...or if you are carrying a sign he doesn't like. Sound like he's more like Hitler than Lincoln to you?]

WATCH AND BE AMAZED AT HIS LATEST MOVE TO STAGE A TAKE OVER OF AMERICA ...

Guess you've probably heard about this, but sending it on anyway. It's probably the scariest thing this guy has done yet.

Are you aware of this new law, signed by Obama in early March 2012?

May the Lord have mercy on us!!!!

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=7SGWH3kirzg&vq=medium

"Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end." --Unknown

20120424-23	23:38	SteveM	"If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

"If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" by George Spelvin, ImpeachObamaCampaign.com

Apr. 24, 2012, (<http://www.impeachobamacampaign.com/>)

Years of living dangerously off of the U.S. taxpayers' dime have certainly served the Obama-Dunham family well, according to investigative journalist Wayne Madsen. Nevertheless, the downside for America is the Islamization of Africa and Asia in a remarkable example of unintended consequences of foreign entanglements gone bad- very bad, indeed.

A Wayne Madsen 32 page pdf file [<http://exopolitics.blogs.com/files/wayne-madsen-obama-all-in-the-company.pdf>]. See below. There are lots of good historical photos in the PDF file which do not appear in this Newsletter. –SteveB] is opening up a Pandora's Box of American foreign aid money dispensed wildly and broadly overseas. The reporter cites American dollars intended to buy starving villagers rice actually going to finance foreign military weapons purchases for various wars, conflicts, and insurgencies. Our tax dollars earned through the hard work and sweat equity have not been used to our benefit but rather to further the Islamization of these continents which is now almost complete.

The very aims and actions of politicians, faceless bureaucrats, and foreign service operatives (both covertly and not covertly) have come back to bite America at a time when our own citizens are suffering through economic trouble. The investigative reporter's dogged pursuit of the Obama-Dunham family odyssey in places from Jakarta to Jalalabad, and from the Ford Foundation to the Oval Office, makes for fascinating reading: But how to verify it?

Rumors abound that Madsen has grown so fearful for his life that he has broken up with a long time companion and left the country. A noted author and syndicated columnist, Madsen's reports have been widely circulated. He is the author of "Genocide and Covert Operations in Africa" and "Jaded Tasks: Big Oil, Black Ops & Brass Plates."

A picture of Stanley Ann Dunham "visiting a Balinese duck farm officially as part of her work to secure bank loans for small businesses" is included in the five-part report of international intrigue and American dollars. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner's father Peter Geithner acted as the Ford Foundation's grant selector for projects in Indonesia, and President Obama's mother worked for or with him as Madsen reports.

The report's dizzying array of abbreviations, acronyms, NGO's, and many other groups obfuscate duties, dollars, and destinies.

What a labyrinth to wade through! Lost in all of this overseas stewpot are the unsuspecting U.S. citizens who pay for everything. But where is Madsen now? Is all of what he says true? He filed communiqués from the Obama Korean summit recently, that much we know, but is he safe?

What really is appropriate here is the admonishment of George Washington who warned America in his Farewell Address delivered to our new nation on 17 September 1796. Washington said, "Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence the jealousy of free people ought to be constantly awake since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of a republican government."

Could any of our politicians look into the eyes of America's founder and say they have followed his advice when it comes to foreign aid? Mightily served by our founding fathers, America has been miserably served by her politicians!

[Maybe what the below shows is why President Obama is such a damned good President, and it's all a conspiracy within a conspiracy? You've, perhaps, been set-up, my friend. –SteveB]

Special Report: "The Story of Obama" by Wayne Madsen*

*Wayne Madsen Investigative journalist, author and syndicated columnist. His columns have appeared in a wide number of newspapers and journals. Madsen is a regular contributor on Russia Today. He has written *The Handbook of Personal Data Protection* (London: Macmillan, 1992); *Genocide and Covert Operations in Africa 1993-1999* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1999); *Jaded Tasks: Big Oil, Black Ops & Brass Plates* and *Overthrow a Fascist Regime on \$15 a Day* and co-authored *America's Nightmare: The Presidency of George Bush II* (Dandelion, 2003).

PART 1: The Story of Obama: All in The Company (Part I)

Investigative journalist Wayne Madsen has discovered CIA files that document the agency's connections to institutions and individuals figuring prominently in the lives of Barack Obama and his mother, father, grandmother, and stepfather. The first part of his report highlights the connections between Barack Obama, Sr. and the CIA-

sponsored operations in Kenya to counter rising Soviet and Chinese influence among student circles and, beyond, to create conditions obstructing the emergence of independent African leaders.

From 1983-84, Barack Obama worked as Editor at Business International Corporation, a Business International Corporation, a known CIA front company.

President Obama's own work in 1983 for Business International Corporation, a CIA front that conducted seminars with the world's most powerful leaders and used journalists as agents abroad, dovetails with CIA espionage activities conducted by his mother, Stanley Ann Dunham in 1960s post-coup Indonesia on behalf of a number of CIA front operations, including the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Ford Foundation. Dunham met and married Lolo Soetoro, Obama's stepfather, at the East-West Center in 1965. Soetoro was recalled to Indonesia in 1965 to serve as a senior army officer and assist General Suharto and the CIA in the bloody overthrow of President Sukarno.

Barack Obama, Sr., who met Dunham in 1959 in a Russian language class at the University of Hawaii, had been part of what was described as an airlift of 280 East African students to the United States to attend various colleges — merely "aided" by a grant from the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation, according to a September 12, 1960, Reuters report from London. The airlift was a CIA operation to train and indoctrinate future agents of influence in Africa, which was becoming a battleground between the United States and the Soviet Union and China for influence among newly-independent and soon-to-be independent countries on the continent.

The airlift was condemned by the deputy leader of the opposition Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU) as favoring certain tribes — the majority Kikuyus and minority Luos — over other tribes to favor the Kenyan African National Union (KANU), whose leader was Tom Mboya, the Kenyan nationalist and labor leader who selected Obama, Sr. for a scholarship at the University of Hawaii. Obama, Sr., who was already married with an infant son and pregnant wife in Kenya, married Dunham on Maui on February 2, 1961 and was also the university's first African student. Dunham was three month's pregnant with Barack Obama, Jr. at the time of her marriage to Obama, Sr.

The CIA allegedly recruited Tom M'Boya in a heavily funded "selective liberation" programme to isolate Kenya's founding President Jomo Kenyatta, who the American spy agency labelled as "unsafe."

KADU deputy leader Masinda Muliro, according to Reuters, said KADU would send a delegation to the United States to investigate Kenyan students who received "gifts" from the Americans and "ensure that further gifts to Kenyan students are administered by people genuinely interested in Kenya's development."

Mboya received a \$100,000 grant for the airlift from the Kennedy Foundation after he turned down the same offer from the U.S. State Department, obviously concerned that direct U.S. assistance would look suspicious to pro-Communist Kenyan politicians who suspected Mboya of having CIA ties. The Airlift Africa project was underwritten by the Kennedy Foundation and the African-American Students Foundation. Obama, Sr. was not on the first airlift but a subsequent one. The airlift, organized by Mboya in 1959, included students from Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland.

Reuters also reported that Muliro charged that Africans were "disturbed and embittered" by the airlift of the selected students. Muliro "stated that "preferences were shown to two major tribes [Kikuyu and Luo] and many U.S.-bound students had failed preliminary and common entrance examinations, while some of those left behind held first-class certificates."

Obama, Sr. was a friend of Mboya and a fellow Luo. After Mboya was assassinated in 1969, Obama, Sr. testified at the trial of his alleged assassin. Obama, Sr. claimed he was the target of a hit-and-run assassination attempt after his testimony.

Obama, Sr., who left Hawaii for Harvard in 1962, divorced Dunham in 1964. Obama, Sr. married a fellow Harvard student, Ruth Nidesand, a Jewish-American woman, who moved with him to Kenya and had two sons. They were later divorced. Obama, Sr. worked for the Kenyan Finance and Transport ministries as well as an oil firm. Obama,

Sr. died in a 1982 car crash and his funeral was attended by leading Kenyan politicians, including future Foreign Minister Robert Ouko, who was murdered in 1990.

CIA files indicate that Mboya was an important agent-of-influence for the CIA, not only in Kenya but in all of Africa. A formerly Secret CIA Current Intelligence Weekly Summary, dated November 19, 1959, states that Mboya served as a check on extremists at the second All-African People's Conference (AAPC) in Tunis. The report states that "serious friction developed between Ghana's Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah and Kenyan nationalist Tom Mboya who cooperated effectively last December to check extremists at the AAPC's first meeting in Accra." The term "cooperated effectively" appears to indicate that Mboya was cooperating with the CIA, which filed the report from field operatives in Accra and Tunis. While "cooperating" with the CIA in Accra and Tunis, Mboya selected the father of the president of the United States to receive a scholarship and be airlifted to the University of Hawaii where he met and married President Obama's mother.

An earlier CIA Current Intelligence Weekly Summary, secret, and dated April 3, 1958, states that Mboya "still appears to be the most promising of the African leaders." Another CIA weekly summary, secret and dated December 18, 1958, calls Mboya the Kenyan nationalist an "able and dynamic young chairman" of the People's Convention party who was viewed as an opponent of "extremists" like Nkrumah, supported by "Sino-Soviet representatives."

In a formerly Secret CIA report on the All-Africa Peoples Conference in 1961, dated November 1, 1961, Mboya's conservatism, along with that of Taleb Slim of Tunisia, are contrasted to the leftist policies of Nkrumah and others. Pro-communists who were elected to the AAPC's steering committee at the March 1961 Cairo conference, attended by Mboya, are identified in the report as Abdoulaye Diallo, AAPC Secretary General, of Senegal; Ahmed Bourmendjel of Algeria; Mario de Andrade of Angola; Ntau Mokhele of Basutoland; Kingue Abel of Cameroun; Antoine Kiwewa of Congo (Leopoldville); Kojo Botsio of Ghana; Ismail Toure of Guinea; T. O. Dosomu Johnson of Liberia; Modibo Diallo of Mali; Mahjoub Ben Seddik of Morocco; Djibo Bakari of Niger; Tunji Otegbeya of Nigeria; Kanyama Chiume of Nyasaland; Ali Abdullahi of Somalia; Tennyson Makiwane of South Africa, and Mohamed Fouad Galal of the United Arab Republic.

The only attendees in Cairo who were given a clean bill of health by the CIA were Mboya, who appears to have been a snitch for the agency, and Joshua Nkomo of Southern Rhodesia, B. Munanka of Tanganyika, Abdel Magid Shaker of Tunisia, and John Kakonge of Uganda.

Nkrumah would eventually be overthrown in a 1966 CIA-backed coup while he was on a state visit to China and North Vietnam. The CIA overthrow of Nkrumah followed by one year the agency's overthrow of Sukarno, another coup that was connected to President Obama's family on his mother's side. There are suspicions that Mboya was assassinated in 1969 by Chinese agents working with anti-Mboya factions in the government of Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta in order to eliminate a pro-U.S. leading political leader in Africa. Upon Mboya's death, every embassy in Nairobi flew its flag at half-mast except for one, the embassy of the People's Republic of China.

Mboya's influence in the Kenyatta government would continue long after his death and while Obama, Sr. was still alive. In 1975, after the assassination of KANU politician Josiah Kariuki, a socialist who helped start KANU, along with Mboya and Obama, Sr., Kenyatta dismissed three rebellious cabinet ministers who "all had personal ties to either Kariuki or Tom Mboya." This information is contained in CIA Staff Notes on the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, formerly Top Secret Umbra, Handle via COMINT Channels, dated June 24, 1975. The intelligence in the report, based on its classification, indicate the information was derived from National Security Agency intercepts in Kenya. No one was ever charged in the assassination of Kariuki.

The intercepts of Mboya's and Kariuki's associates are an indication that the NSA and CIA also maintain intercepts on Barack Obama, Sr., who, as a non-U.S. person, would have been lawfully subject at the time to intercepts carried out by NSA and Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ).

PART 2: Special Report. The Story of Obama: All in The Company - Part II

In the second part of his investigation Wayne Madsen focuses on Barack Obama's mother and stepfather. He follows their footsteps as CIA assets from the University of Hawaii, home to some of the CIA's blackest projects, to their activities in Indonesia where a vast US-sponsored anti-communist massacre was unfolding. It marked the start of globalisation in Asia and in the rest of the world. Unlike the Bush dynasty, Barack Obama has smartly concealed his own connections with the Agency and, in particular, those of his ancestors, until now. Madsen concludes with a question: Is Barack Obama a real-life "Manchurian Candidate?"

In Part I of this WMR special report, we revealed the connections between Barack Obama, Sr. and the CIA-affiliated Airlift Africa project to provide college degrees to and gain influence over a group of 280 eastern and southern African students from soon-to-be independent African nations to counter similar programs established by the Soviet Union and China. Barack Obama Sr. was the first African student to attend the University of Hawaii. Obama Sr. and Obama's mother Stanley Ann Dunham met in a Russian language class in 1959 and they married in 1961.

The African airlift program was administered by Kenyan nationalist leader Tom Mboya, a fellow Luo tribe mentor and friend of the senior Obama. According to CIA documents described in Part I, Mboya also served the CIA in ensuring that pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese African nationalists were stymied in their attempt to dominate pan-African nationalist political, student, and labor movements.

One of Mboya's chief opponents was Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, who was ousted in a CIA- inspired coup in 1966, one year before to Obama Sr's son, Barack Obama, Jr. and his mother joined Lolo Soetoro, an Indonesian who Obama's mother met at the University of Hawaii in 1965, when President Obama was four years old.

In 1967, Obama and his mother joined her husband in Jakarta. In 1965, Lolo Soetoro had been called back from Hawaii by General Suharto to serve as an officer in the Indonesian military to help launch a bloody CIA-backed genocide of Indonesian Communists and Indonesian Chinese throughout the expansive country. Suharto consolidated his power in 1966, the same year that Barack Obama, Sr.'s friend, Mboya, had helped to rally pro-U.S. pan-African support for the CIA's overthrow of Nkrumah in Ghana in 1966.

Ann Dunham met Soetoro at the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii. The center had long been affiliated with CIA activities in the Asia-Pacific region. In 1965, the year that Dunham met and married Soetoro, the center saw a new chancellor take over. He was Howard P. Jones who served a record seven years, from 1958 to 1965, as U.S. ambassador to Indonesia. Jones was present in Jakarta as Suharto and his CIA-backed military officers planned the 1965 overthrow of Sukarno, who was seen, along with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), as allies of China.

When Jones was chancellor of the East-West Center, he wrote an article for the *Washington Post*, dated October 10, 1965, in which he defended Suharto's overthrow of Sukarno. Jones was "invited" by the Post to comment on the Suharto coup, described as a "counter-coup" against the Communists. Jones charged that Suharto was merely responding to an earlier attempted Communist-led coup against Sukarno launched by Lt. Col. Untung, "a relatively unknown battalion commander in the palace guard."

Jones's article, which mirrored CIA situation reports from the U.S. embassy in Jakarta, continued by stating that the alleged leftist coup on September 30 "came within an inch of succeeding through the assassination of six of the top military command. It might well have succeeded had not Defense Minister Nasution and a number of other senior generals also maked for assassination acted fast in a dramatic counter-coup." Of course, what Jones did not inform the Post's readers was that the Suharto "counter-coup" had been assisted with the strong help of the CIA.

Sukarno never blamed the Communists for the assassination of the army generals nor did the Indonesian Cabinet, where the second- and third-ranking leaders of the PKI were present. The possibility that the assassination of the generals was a CIA/Suharto "false flag" operation to affix blame on the PKI cannot be ruled out. Two days after Suharto's coup, a CIA "rent-a-mob" burned down the PKI headquarters in Jakarta. As they marched past the U.S. Embassy, which was also the site of the CIA station, they yelled out, "Long live America!"

Untung later said that when he became aware that Suharto and the CIA were planning a coup on October 5, 1965 – Indonesian Armed Forces Day – forces loyal to him and Sukarno moved first. Jones described this as "typical

Communist propaganda." Suharto moved against Sukarno on October 1. Jones iterated that "there was not an iota of truth . . . in the accusation that the CIA was working against Sukarno." History has proven otherwise. Jones accused the Communists of taking advantage of Sukarno's failing health to beat out the other candidates to succeed him. The goal, according to Jones, was to have PKI boss D.N. Aidit succeed Sukarno. Sukarno did not die until 1970, while under house arrest.

A CIA paper, formerly classified Secret and undated, states "Sukarno would like to return to the status quo ante-coup. He has refused to condemn the PKI or the 30th September Movement [of Lt. Col. Untung]; instead, he calls for unity of Indonesia and asks that no vengeance be taken by one group against the other. But, he has not succeeded in forcing the Army to abandon its anti-PKI activities and, on the other hand, he has bowed to their demand by appointing its single candidate General Suharto as head of the Army." Suharto and Barry Obama Soetoro's step-father Lolo Soetoro would ignore Sukarno's call for no vengeance, as hundreds of thousands of Indonesians would soon discover.

After a failed coup attributed to leftist army officers in 1965, Suharto led bloody anti-communist purges in which a reported one million civilians were killed.

The mass murder by Suharto of Indonesian Chinese is seen in the CIA paper's description of the Baperki Party: "the leftist Baperki Party, with its major strength in rural areas, is largely Chinese-Indonesian in membership." A CIA Intelligence Memorandum, dated October 6, 1966 and formerly classified Secret, shows the extent of the CIA's monitoring of the anti-Sukarno coup from various CIA agents assigned as liaisons to Suharto's army units surrounding the Presidential Palace in Bogor and at various diplomatic posts around the country, including the U.S. Consulate in Medan, which was keeping track of leftists in that Sumatran city and, which, in an October 2, 1965, Intelligence Memo, reported to the CIA that the "Soviet consul-general in Medan has a plane standing by that could be used for evacuation of Soviet citizens from Sumatra." The October 6 memo also warns against allowing Untung from developing a following in Central Java.

A CIA formerly Secret "Weekly Summary Special Report" on Indonesia, dated August 11, 1967, and titled "The New Order in Indonesia," reports that in 1966, Indonesia re-aligned its economy in order to receive International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance. The CIA reports it is happy with the new triumvirate ruling Indonesia in 1967: Suharto, Foreign Minister Adam Malik, and the Sultan of Jogjakarta, who served as minister for economics and finance. The report also rejoices in the outlawing of the PKI, but states it "retains a significant following in East and Central Java," where Ann Dunham Soetoro would largely concentrate her later efforts on behalf of USAID, the World Bank, and the Ford Foundation, all front activities for the CIA to "win the hearts and minds" of the Javanese farmers and artisans.

A CIA Intelligence Memorandum, formerly Secret and dated July 23, 1966, clearly sees the Muslim Nahdatul Ulama party (NU), the largest party in Indonesia and Muslim, as a natural ally of the United States and the Suharto regime. The report states that helped Suharto put down the Communists in the post-coup time frame, especially where the NU was strongest: East Java, where Obama's mother would concentrate her activities, and North Sumatra and parts of Borneo. An April 29, 1966, formerly Secret CIA Intelligence Memorandum on the PKI states: "Moslem extremists in many instances outdid the army in hunting down and murdering members of the party [PKI] and its front groups."

Dunham dropped out of the University of Hawaii in 1960 while pregnant with Barack Obama. Barack Obama Sr. left Hawaii in 1962 to study at Harvard. Dunham and Obama divorced in 1964. In the fall of 1961, Dunham enrolled at the University of Washington while caring for her infant son. Dunham was re-enrolled at the University of Hawaii from 1963 to 1966. Lolo Soetoro, who Dunham married in March 1965, departed Hawaii for Indonesia on July 20, 1965, some three months prior to the CIA's coup against Sukarno. Soetoro, who served Suharto as an Army colonel, was clearly called back from the CIA-connected East-West Center to assist in the coup against Sukarno, one that would eventually cost the lives of some one million Indonesian citizens. It is a history that President Obama would like the press to ignore, which it certainly did during the 2008 primary and general election.

In 1967, after arriving in Indonesia with Obama, Jr., Dunham began teaching English at the American embassy in Jakarta, which also housed one of the largest CIA stations in Asia and had significant satellite stations in Surabaya in eastern Java and Medan on Sumatra. Jones left as East-West Center chancellor in 1968.

In fact, Obama's mother was teaching English for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which was a major cover for CIA activities in Indonesia and throughout Southeast Asia, especially in Laos, South Vietnam, and Thailand. The USAID program was known as Lembaga Pendidikan Pembinaan Manajemen. Obama's mother, painted as a free spirit and a "sixties child" by President Obama and people who claimed they knew her in Hawaii and Indonesia, had a curriculum vitae in Indonesia that contradicts the perception that Ann Dunham Soetoro was a "hippy."

Dunham Soetoro's Russian language training at the University of Hawaii may have been useful to the CIA in Indonesia. An August 2, 1966, formerly Secret memorandum from the National Security Council's Executive Secretary Bromley Smith states that, in addition to Japan, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, the Suharto coup was welcomed by the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies because it created a non-aligned Indonesia that "represents an Asian counterweight to Communist China." Records indicate that a number of CIA agents posted in Jakarta before and after the 1965 coup were, like Dunham Soetoro, conversant in Russian.

Dunham Soetoro worked for the elitist Ford Foundation, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Bank Rakyat (the majority government-owned People's Bank of Indonesia), and the CIA-linked USAID while she lived in Indonesia and later, Pakistan.

USAID was involved in a number of CIA covert operations in Southeast Asia. The February 9, 1971, Washington Star reported that USAID officials in Laos were aware that rice supplied to the Laotian Army by USAID was being re-sold to North Vietnamese army divisions in the country. The report stated that the U.S. tolerated the USAID rice sales to the North Vietnamese since the Laotian Army units that sold the rice found themselves protected from Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese attack. USAID and the CIA also used the supply of rice to force Laotian Meo tribesmen to support the United States in the war against the Communists. USAID funds programmed for civilians injured in the war in Laos and public health care were actually diverted for military purposes.

In 1971, the USAID-funded Center for Vietnamese Studies at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale was accused of being a CIA front. USAID-funded projects through the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities (MUCIA) — comprising the Universities of Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana and Michigan State — were accused of being CIA front projects, including those for "agricultural education" in Indonesia, as well as other "projects" in Afghanistan, Mali, Nepal, Nigeria, Thailand, and South Vietnam. The charge was made in 1971, the same year that Ann Dunham was working for USAID in the country.

In a July 10, 1971, New York Times report, USAID and the CIA were accused of "losing" \$1.7 billion appropriated for the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program in South Vietnam. CORDS was part of the CIA's Operation Phoenix program, which involved CIA assassination and torture of South Vietnamese village elders and Buddhist clerics. USAID money was also directed to the CIA's proprietary airline in Southeast Asia, Air America. In Thailand, USAID funds for the Accelerated Rural Development Program in Thailand were actually masking a CIA anti-Communist counter-insurgency operation. USAID funds programmed for public works projects in East Pakistan in 1971 were used for East Pakistan's military fortifications on its border with India, in the months before the outbreak of war with India, in contravention of U.S. law that prohibited USAID money for military purposes.

In 1972, USAID administrator Dr. John Hannah admitted to Metromedia News that USAID was being used as a cover for CIA covert operations in Laos. Hannah only admitted to Laos as a USAID cover for the CIA. However, it was also reported that USAID was being used by the CIA in Indonesia, Philippines, South Vietnam, Thailand, and South Korea. USAID projects in Southeast Asia had to be approved by the Southeast Asian Development Advisory Group (SEADAG), an Asia Society group that was, in fact, answerable to the CIA.

The U.S. Food for Peace program, jointly administered by USAID and the Department of Agriculture, was found in 1972 to be used for military purposes in Cambodia, South Korea, Turkey, South Vietnam, Spain, Taiwan, and Greece. In 1972, USAID funneled aid money only to the southern part of North Yemen, in order to aid North Yemeni forces against the government of South Yemen, then ruled by a socialist government opposed to U.S. hegemony in the region.

One of the entities affiliated with the USAID work in Indonesia was the Asia Foundation, a 1950s creation formed with the help of the CIA to oppose the expansion of communism in Asia. The East-West Center guest house in Hawaii was funded by the Asia Foundation. The guest house is also where Barack Obama Sr. first stayed after his airlift from Kenya to Hawaii, arranged by the one of the CIA's major agents of influence in Africa, Mboya.

Dunham would also travel to Ghana, Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Thailand working on micro-financing projects. In 1965, Barack Obama Sr. returned to Kenya from Harvard, with another American wife. The senior Obama linked up with his old friend and the CIA's "golden boy" Mboya and other fellow Luo politicians. The CIA station chief in Nairobi from 1964 to 1967 was Philip Cherry. In 1975, Cherry was the CIA station chief in Dacca, Bangladesh. Cherry was linked by the then-U.S. ambassador to Bangladesh, Eugene Booster, to the 1975 assassination of Bangladesh's first president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and members of his family. The hit on "Sheikh Mujib" and his family was reportedly ordered by then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Bangladesh was also on the micro- and macro-financing travel itinerary of CIA-linked Ann Dunham.

Meanwhile, Dunham Soetoro's mother, Madelyn Dunham, who raised young Obama when he returned to Hawaii in 1971 while his mother stayed in Indonesia, was the first female vice president at the Bank of Hawaii in Honolulu. Various CIA front entities used the bank. Madelyn Dunham handled escrow accounts used to make CIA payments to U.S.-supported Asian dictators like Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos, South Vietnamese President Nguyen van Thieu, and President Suharto in Indonesia. In effect, the bank was engaged in money laundering for the CIA to covertly prop up its favored leaders in the Asia-Pacific region.

One of the CIA's major money laundering fronts in Honolulu was the firm of Bishop, Baldwin, Rewald, Dillingham & Wong (BBRDW). After the CIA allowed the firm to collapse in 1983 amid charges that BBRDW was merely a Ponzi scheme, Senator Daniel Inouye of the US Senate Intelligence Committee said the CIA's role in the firm "wasn't significant." It would later be revealed that Inouye, who was one of the late Alaska Senator Ted Stevens's best friends in the Senate, was lying. In fact, BBRDW was involved heavily in funding covert CIA programs throughout Asia, including economic espionage against Japan, providing arms for Afghan mujaheddin guerrillas in their war against the Soviets and covertly supplying weapons to Taiwan. One of BBRDW's principals was John C. "Jack" Kindschi, who, before he retired in 1981, was the CIA station chief in Honolulu. BBRDW's chairman Ron Rewald had a counterfeit college degree certificate provided for the wall of his office by the CIA's forgery experts and his name was inserted in university records as an alumnus.

A false history for BBRDW was concocted by the CIA claiming the firm had operated in Hawaii since it was a territory. President Obama is currently plagued by allegations that he has fake college and university transcripts, a phony social security number issued in Connecticut, and other padded resume items. Did Hawaii's fake BBRDW documents portend today's questions about Obama's past?

BBRDW conducted its business in the heart of Honolulu's business district, where the Bank of Hawaii was located and where Obama grandmother Madelyn Dunham ran the escrow accounts. The bank would handle much of BBRDW's covert financial transactions.

It is clear that Dunham Soetoro and her Indonesian husband, President Obama's step-father, were closely involved in the CIA's operations to steer Indonesia away from the Sino-Soviet orbit during the "years of living dangerously" after the overthrow of Sukarno. WMR has discovered that some of the CIA's top case officers were assigned to various official and non-official cover assignments in Indonesia during this time frame, including under the cover of USAID, the Peace Corps, and the U.S. Information Agency (USIA).

One of the closest CIA contacts for Suharto was former CIA Jakarta embassy officer Kent B. Crane. Crane was so close to Suharto after "retiring" from the CIA, he was reportedly one of the only "private" businessmen given an Indonesian diplomatic passport by Suharto's government. Crane's company, the Crane Group, was involved in supplying small arms to the military forces of the United States, Indonesia, and other nations. A foreign policy adviser to Vice President Spiro Agnew, Crane was later nominated as U.S. ambassador to Indonesia by President Ronald Reagan but the nomination was dead-on-arrival because of Crane's dubious links to Suharto. The ambassadorship would instead go to John Holdridge, a close colleague of Kissinger. Holdridge was succeeded in Jakarta by Paul Wolfowitz.

Suharto's cronies, who included Mochtar and James Riady of the Lippo Group, would later stand accused of funneling over \$1 million of illegal foreign contributions to Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign. President Obama has twice postponed official state visits to Indonesia, perhaps fearful of the attention such a trip would bring to the CIA connections of his mother and Indonesian step-father.

In the 1970s and 80s, Dunham was active in micro-loan projects for the Ford Foundation, the CIA-linked East-West Center, and USAID in Indonesia. One of the individuals assigned to the U.S. embassy and helped barricade the compound during a violent anti-U.S. student demonstration during the 1965 Suharto coup against Sukarno was Dr. Gordon Donald, Jr. Assigned to the embassy's Economic Section, Donald was responsible for USAID micro-financing for Indonesian farmers, the same project that Dunham Soetoro would work on for USAID in the 1970s, after her USAID job of teaching English in Indonesia. In a 1968 book, "Who's Who in the CIA," published in West Berlin, Donald is identified as a CIA officer who was also assigned to Lahore, Pakistan, where Dunham would eventually live for five years in the Hilton International Hotel while working on microfinancing for the Asian Development Bank.

Another "Who's Who in the CIA" Jakarta alumnus is Robert F. Grealy, who later became the director for international relations for the Asia-Pacific for J P Morgan Chase and a director for the American-Indonesian Chamber of Commerce. J P Morgan Chase's CEO Jamie Dimon is being mentioned as a potential replacement for Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, whose father, Peter Geithner, was the Ford Foundation's Asia grant-selector who funneled the money to Ann Dunham's Indonesian projects.

While in Pakistan, Dunham's son Barack visited her in 1980 and 1981. Obama visited Karachi, Lahore, and Hyderabad, India during his south Asia visits. It was during the time period that the CIA was beefing up its anti-Soviet operations in Afghanistan from Pakistan.

A January 31, 1958, heavily-redacted formerly Secret NOFORN [no foreign dissemination] memorandum for CIA Director Allen Dulles from the Deputy Assistant Director of the CIA for Research and Reports [name redacted] reports on a fact-finding mission to the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East from November 17 through December 21, 1957.

The CIA Office of Research and Reports (ORR) chief reports a meeting with the staff of retired Army General Jesmond Balmer, a senior CIA official in Hawaii, about requests by the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC) for "a number of detailed, time-consuming research studies." The ORR chief then reports about a CIA "survey of students at the University of Hawaii who have both Chinese language and research ability." The ORR chief also reports that at a South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) Counter Subversion Seminar at Baguio, Philippines held from November 26-29, 1957, the Economic Subcommittee discussed an "economic development fund" to combat "Sino-Soviet Bloc subversive activities in the area and a consideration of possible counter-measures which might be employed."

The Thailand and Philippines delegations were pushing hard for U.S. funding for an economic development fund, which may have provided the impetus for later USAID projects in the region, including those with which Peter Geithner and Obama's mother were intimately involved.

Although CIA geo-political covert operations at the University of Hawaii are well-documented, the agency's darker side of research and MK-UKTRA type operations has not generally been associated with the University of Hawaii.

A series of formerly Confidential CIA memoranda, dated May 15, 1972, points to the involvement of both the Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), the CIA, and the University of Hawaii in the CIA's behavioral science program. The memos are signed by then-Deputy Director of the CIA Bronson Tweedy, the chief of the Intelligence Community's Program Review Group (PRG) [name redacted], and CIA Director Richard Helms. The subject of the memos is "ARPA Supported Research Relating to Intelligence Product," The memo from the PRG chief discusses a conference held on May 11, 1972, attended by Lt. Col. Austin Kibler, ARPA's Director of Behavioral Research. Kibler was the chief for ARPA research into behavior modification and remote viewing. Others mentioned in the PRG chief's memo include CIA Deputy Director for Intelligence Edward Proctor, the CIA Deputy Director for Science and Technology Carl Duckett, and Director of the Office of National Estimates John Huizenga.

In 1973, after CIA Director James Schlesinger ordered a review of all CIA programs, the CIA developed a set of documents on various CIA programs collectively called the "Family Jewels." Most of these documents were released in 2007 but it was also revealed that Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, the CIA's director of MKULTRA, the agency's behavior modification, brainwashing, and drug testing component, had been ordered by Helms, before he resigned as CIA director, to be destroyed. Duckett, in one memo from Ben Evans of the CIA to CIA Director William Colby, dated May 8, 1973, conveys that he "thinks the Director would be ill-advised to say he is acquainted with this program," meaning Gottlieb's drug testing program under MKULTRA.

Senior Gerald Ford administration officials, including Chief of Staff Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, ensured that after the production of the "Family Jewels" documents, no CIA revelations were made about CIA psychological behavior-altering programs, including MKULTRA and Project ARTICHOKE.

The May 15, 1972, set of memos appears to be related to the CIA's initial research, code named SCANATE, in 1972 into psychic warfare, including the use of psychics for purposes of remote viewing espionage and mind control. The memo discussed Kibler from ARPA and "his contractor," which was later discovered to be Stanford Research Institute (SRI) in Menlo Park, California.

In a memo from CIA Director Helms to, among others, Duckett, Huizenga, Proctor, and the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, which later inherited remote viewing from the CIA under the code name GRILL FLAME, Helms insists that ARPA had been supporting research into behavioral science and its potential for intelligence production "for a number of years" at "M.I.T., Yale, the University of Michigan, U.C.L.A., and University of Hawaii and other institutions as well as in corporate research facilities."

The role of the University of Hawaii in CIA psych-war operations continues to this day. The chief of research for DIA's Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center (DCHC) Behavioral Sciences Program, Dr. Susan Brandon, who was reportedly involved in a covert program run by the American Psychological Association (APA), Rand Corporation, and the CIA to employ "enhanced interrogation" techniques, including sleep and sensory deprivation, intense pain, and extreme isolation on prisoners held at Bagram airbase in Afghanistan and other "black prisons," received her PhD in Psychology from the University of Hawaii. Brandon also served as assistant director of Social, Behavioral, and Educational Sciences for the Office of Science and Technology Policy in the George W. Bush White House.

The CIA's close connections to the University of Hawaii continued to the late 1970s, when the former President of the University of Hawaii from 1969 to 1974, Harlan Cleveland, was a special invited speaker at CIA headquarters on May 10, 1977. Cleveland served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs from 1961 to 1965 and Lyndon Johnson's ambassador to NATO from 1965 to 1969 before taking up his position at the University of Hawaii.

A CIA Director of Training memo dated May 21, 1971, reports on the active recruitment of a U.S. Marine officer who was entering graduate school at the University of Hawaii.

There are volumes of written material on the CIA backgrounds of George H. W. Bush and CIA-related activities by his father and children, including former President George W. Bush. Barack Obama, on the other hand, cleverly masked his own CIA connections as well as those of his mother, father, step-father, and grandmother (there is very little known about Obama's grandfather, Stanley Armour Dunham, who was supposedly in the furniture business in Hawaii after serving in Europe during World War II). Presidents and vice presidents do not require security background checks, unlike other members of the federal government, to hold office. That job is left up to the press. In 2008, the press failed miserably in its duty to vet the man who would win the White House. With the ties of Obama's parents to the University of Hawaii and its links to MKULTRA and ARTICHOKE, a nagging question remains: **Is Barack Obama a real-life "Manchurian Candidate?"**

PART 3: The Story of Obama: All in The Company (Part III)

WMR previously reported on the CIA links of President Obama's mother, father, step-father, grandmother to the CIA. Not much is known about Obama's grandfather, Stanley Armour Dunham, who Obama mistakenly referred to as "his father" in two speeches, one recently to the Disabled American Veterans.

What is officially known about Stanley Armour Dunham is that he served with the 9th Air Force in Britain and France prior to and after the D-Day invasion. After the war, Dunham and his wife, Madelyn and his daughter Stanley Ann — Obama's mother — moved to Berkeley, California; El Dorado, Kansas; Seattle; and Honolulu. Armour Dunham is said to have worked for a series of furniture stores.

Obama maintains that his mother and father first met in a Russian-language class at the University of Hawaii in 1959. However, a photograph has emerged of Stanley Armour welcoming Barack Obama, Sr., complete with traditional Hawaiian welcoming leis, from Kenya. Obama, Sr. was the only Kenyan student airlifted to Hawaii as part of the CIA-inspired Airlift Africa project that saw Obama and 279 other students from British eastern and southern African colonies brought to the United States for college degrees prior to their homelands gaining independence from Britain. The students were selected by Kenyan nationalist leader Tom Mboya who would later conduct surveillance for the CIA at pan-African nationalist meetings. Mboya was particularly focused on two African leaders who were seen as too close to the Sino-Soviet bloc, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sekout Toure of Guinea.

Stanley Armour Dunham with Barack Obama, Sr. at welcoming ceremony to Hawaii. The presence of two US Navy personnel indicates the plane may have landed at Hickam Air Force Base, an indication of the U.S. government's and CIA's role in the Airlift Africa project.

The photograph of Armour Dunham with Barack Obama, Sr., indicates that the "furniture salesman" in Hawaii was, in fact, working with a CIA-funded project to rapidly educate aspiring politicians to serve in post-independence African governments to counter Soviet- and Chinese-backed political leaders in the region.

There is a strong reason to believe that Armour Dunham worked in the 1950s for the CIA in the Middle East. An FBI file on Armour Dunham existed but the bureau claimed it destroyed the file on May 1, 1997. Considering the sour relations between the FBI and CIA during the Cold War, it is likely that Armour Dunham was being monitored by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover in the same manner as a number of other CIA officials and agents were being surveilled. Similarly, the pre-1968 passport records of Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, were destroyed by the State Department.

There is a photographic clue that the Dunhams may have been assigned by the CIA to Beirut, Lebanon in the early 1950s. A photograph of Obama's mother and grandparents has emerged that shows Stanley Ann Dunham wearing what may be a school uniform with the insignia of "NdJ," which stands for the College Notre-Dame de Jamhour, a private Jesuit Catholic French language school in Beirut, Lebanon. Graduates of the school include three former presidents of Lebanon, Amine Gemayel, Bashir Gemayel, and Charles Helou, all of whom maintained close relations with Washington.

There is also the curious nature of President Obama's Social Security Number, issued in Connecticut, a state where there is no other evidence of his ever being a resident. Adding to the mystery is a New York City address for a "male" named Stanley Ann Dunham, 235 E. 40th St Apt 8F, New York NY 10016-1747. The address is a few blocks away from the address of the Ford Foundation. Ann Dunham did work briefly in New York for the Ford Foundation.

On August 9, 2010, WMR reported, "In a December 19, 1971, article in the Boston Globe by Dan Pinck, [a historian and former OSS officer] titled 'Is everyone in the CIA?' it is alleged that identifying US Agency for International Development (USAID) officers as CIA agents was a 'reasonably accurate accounting of certain leading operatives and associates of the CIA.' President Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham Soetoro worked for USAID in rural Java in Indonesia. Pinck's article was a review of a 1968 book, *Who's Who in the CIA* published in Berlin."

WMR has obtained a rare copy of *Who's Who in the CIA*, from England. The book, published in West Berlin in 1968, lists some 3,000 CIA agents and agents-of-influence around the world.

The book also contains a reference to one CIA operative whose area of primary place of operation was Mercer Island, Washington. He was retired Air Force General Don Zabriskie Zimmermann, who was the Chief Engineer for the Boeing Company in Seattle. Before retiring from the Air Force, Zimmermann was the Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Development in Foreign Countries. Ann Stanley Dunham reportedly graduated from Mercer Island

High School in 1960 and met Obama later that year in a Russian language class after her parents moved to Hawaii. Stanley Ann's mother, Madelyn Dunham, worked at a Boeing plant in Wichita, Kansas during World War II.

The book lists the number of CIA agents in countries during the 1950s and 60s where Obama's father, mother, step-father Lolo Soetori, and allegedly, his grandmother and grandfather worked: Indonesia, Jakarta 64, Surabaya 12, Medan 8, Hollandia 1; Kenya, Nairobi 19, Mombassa 2; Lebanon, Beirut 61 (including one agent also assigned to Jakarta, Lahore, and Karachi and another assigned to Lahore) Hawaii, Honolulu 6 (one agent also assigned to Canton Island and another was fluent in French, Stanley Ann Dunham spoke French, Urdu, Bahasa Indonesian, and she studied Javanese at the University of Hawaii, in addition to Russian).

PART 4: The Story of Obama: All in The Company (Part IV)

Barack Obama's employment as an editor for CIA front Business International Corporation (BIC) after his graduation from Columbia University in 1983, came at a time when such small business and political risk consulting firms were mushrooming and their ranks growing with retired senior CIA personnel. The expansion of BIC and similar firms in the early 1980s also came at a time when major corporations were phasing out their internal risk departments and relying more on companies like BIC.

However, Obama's contacts with the CIA came earlier than his work for BIC. Obama's attendance at Occidental College in Los Angeles from 1979 to 1981 is significant considering the college's close ties with the CIA. Occidental's President, Richard C. Gilman, who retired in 1988, was a habitué of Los Angeles's version of New York's Council on Foreign Relations, the Los Angeles World Affairs Council (WAC). As a director of the WAC, Gilman rubbed shoulders with fellow WAC directors John McCone, a former CIA director; Simon Ramo, chairman of top CIA contractor TRW, Inc.; and the wealthy oil magnate Armand Hammer, chairman of Occidental Petroleum, himself no stranger to intelligence-oriented intrigue.

Occidental was, for many years, a top target for CIA recruiting efforts. WMR has obtained a CIA memorandum, formerly Secret and dated February 8, 1967, that details the CIA's "100 Universities Program," which, as stated by the author, "originally conceived [redacted] as a recruitment technique. Its purpose was to make better known on the campuses of America the very existence of the CIA and its mission and role in Government, to illustrate the vast range of vocational opportunities in the Agency."

A formerly Secret CIA memorandum for the Deputy Director for Administration from the acting Director of Personnel, dated February 8, 1979, discusses an active CIA recruitment effort at Occidental College on February 1, 1979. Obama reportedly attended Occidental later in 1979. The memo states, "[redacted] our [redacted] recruiter, reports that he briefed approximately seventy students at Occidental College in Los Angeles on 1 February and was very well received. He added that while they did not interrupt his presentation, about fifteen to twenty members of the Socialist Democratic Alliance demonstrated outside as he spoke and that their chanting of "CIA, go Away" could be heard. Larry also reported that the seventy attending his briefing was the largest number ever to attend a briefing at the school by an employer." A burning question is whether "Larry" ever tried to recruit a young Barack Obama, Jr. at Occidental and whether he was successful at the enthusiastically pro-CIA campus in 1979.

Stanley Ann Dunham's employer in Indonesia, the Ford Foundation, had a long-standing relationship with the CIA. While ostensibly working on micro-financing and rural development projects in Indonesia, Dunham's grant paymaster was Peter Geithner, the father of current Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner.

The rural development project funded by the Ford Foundation had long been a cover for U.S. intelligence activities in Indonesia. An Indonesian Permanent Mission to the UN bulletin dated November 19, 1959, states that a Ford Foundation grant funded the Village Community Development Bureau's work with "development projects in line with village custom and tradition."

The Ford Foundation helped establish two Cold War institutes at Columbia University and Harvard, two universities where Obama graduated. In the post-World War II years, Ford Foundation money helped create the Russian Institute at Columbia and the Russian Research Center at Harvard to promote the study of Soviet and Russian history and politics for a cadre of CIA Kremlinologists. In fact, Dunham and Obama, Sr. met at a Russian language

class at the University of Hawaii in 1960. Obama Sr.'s scholarship was courtesy of a partly CIA-funded operation called Airlift Africa, designed to educate and gain influence over a new generation of eastern and southern African leaders in the same year the USSR was doing the same by establishing the People's Friendship University of Moscow, later renamed Patrice Lumumba University.

The Ford and Rockefeller Foundations continued to fund Columbia's Soviet studies programs through the early 1980s, while Obama was allegedly a student enrolled in a Soviet studies program taught by Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former National Security Adviser under President Carter.

The Ford Foundation also funded CIA-directed propaganda campaigns around the world. In 1967, Shepherd Stone, born Shepherd Arthur Cohen, a former New York Times reporter and director of international affairs for the Ford Foundation, became president of the International Association of Cultural Freedom (IACF), which saw its name change from the Congress of Cultural Freedom after its direct funding from the CIA ceased.

Much like Barack Obama's post-Columbia employer, BIC, the Ford Foundation, through groups like the IACF, carried links with some of Europe's main leftist political parties, including the British Labor Party, the West German Social Democrats, and the French Socialists.

However, not every world leader was lulled into a false sense of security by the Ford Foundation. A formerly Secret CIA "Current Intelligence Weekly Summary," dated April 20, 1962, reports that Burmese strongman Ne Win ordered "the Asia Foundation and Ford Foundation to wind up their activities" in Burma. The CIA report attacks Ne Win for his decision to toss out both CIA-linked organizations, stating, "Ne Win is a narrow nationalist with a suspicious conspiratorial outlook, a short temper, and a tendency toward snap decisions."

Columnist Murray Kempton, writing in the October 3, 1967, New York Post lambasted Stone, the IACF, and the Ford Foundation for their close links to the CIA. Kempton wrote, "One standard apology for the CIA used to be that its subsidies were a considerable force for cultural progress, and that it could not really be distinguished from, say, the Ford Foundation. This is a sounder comparison than one would have thought possible before reading the annual report of the Ford Foundation, after which it is difficult with confidence to distinguish the international activities of the Ford Foundation from those of the CIA."

Kempton cites the Ford Foundation's \$8 million grant to MIT's Center for International Studies, adding that the center was established with CIA funds. In 1966, one of the architects of the Cold War policies of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, McGeorge Bundy, took over as the President of the Ford Foundation. Bundy also worked with the Council on Foreign Relations and CIA officers Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell to create a carve-out in the post-World War II Marshall Plan that covertly steered aid money to anti-Communist groups in Italy and France. After President Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Bundy began directing U.S. covert operations as chairman of the super-secret "303 Committee" in the Johnson White House.

Bundy signed a Secret memo on February 27, 1961, in which the Sprague Committee report on U.S. Information Activities Abroad was circulated to senior officials. The Sprague Committee, chaired by Mansfield D. Sprague of CIA-rife New Canaan, Connecticut, was commissioned by President Eisenhower and included Allen Dulles, CIA director, and the committee's executive director, Waldemar A. Nielsen, who was "loaned" by the Ford Foundation. The committee recommended integrating "psychological factors" into the United States "informational system."

The CIA's funding of foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller was so prevalent during the 1960s, New York Congressman William Fitts Ryan of New York introduced legislation in 1967 that would have prohibited the CIA from "granting, contributing, lending, or otherwise paying, directly or indirectly, any of its funds to any foundation or philanthropic organization, labor organization, publishing organization, radio or broadcasting organization, or educational institution – including organization composed of students or faculty members – incorporated in the United States."

In a case eerily reminiscent of the post-gall bladder surgery death of Pennsylvania Democratic Representative John Murtha last February, in September 1972, Ryan died suddenly following surgery on an ulcer and after he cast a vote against new Vietnam War appropriations.

Ryan was particularly incensed over the CIA's use of the National Student Association (NSA) and its global counterpart, the International Student Conference (ISC), to recruit agents. In fact, the Airlift Africa project that brought Obama, Sr. to the University of Hawaii appears to have been part of a larger CIA program to use the NSA and ISC to recruit young college students into its ranks. The CIA funded technical assistance, education, and student exchange programs, via the NSA and ISC, with Third World nations like Kenya and Indonesia, the home countries of President Obama's father and step-father, respectively.

Although Airlift Africa received a \$100,000 grant from the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation to pay for African students personally selected by the CIA's Kenyan nationalist asset, Tom Mboya, a mentor of Barack Obama, Sr., to travel to the United States to study at various colleges (Obama, Sr. was the first African student to attend the University of Hawaii), the CIA used a series of front foundations to launder money for such projects. The chief CIA fund used for such purposes in the early 1960s was the New York-based J. M. Kaplan Fund. The CIA used a network of other funds to pass money through the Kaplan Fund. These funds included, according to a March 1967, Ramparts magazine article, the Borden Trust of Philadelphia, the Price Fund of New York, the Edsel Fund of San Francisco, the Beacon Fund of Boston, and the Kentfield Fund of Dallas.

In 1958, a CIA-linked group called the Western Regional Assembly met at Lake Arrowhead, California in a seminar titled "The United States and Africa." Among those in attendance was Walter P. Coombs, the executive director of the Los Angeles World Affairs Council; Arthur N. Young, Trustee of Occidental College; and Frank LaMacchia, identified as "economic officer, American Consulate General, Nairobi, Kenya." However, the Julius Mader book published in 1968, "Who's Who in the CIA," identified LaMacchia as a CIA officer assigned to Nairobi, as well as Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, Seoul, and Baghdad.

The Lake Arrowhead conclave was told that for Africa's emerging nations, "furtherance of education on the college level is important, and the number of scholarships for Africans to American institutions of higher learning should be increased." In 1959, the CIA, likely through LaMacchia in Nairobi, and Mboya, kicked off Airlift Africa that saw 230 African students airlifted to the United States, including Barack Obama, Sr., a friend of Mboya, to Hawaii, via funding from the Kennedy and an entity called the African-American Students Foundation.

The Lake Arrowhead attendees also heard Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Joseph C. Satterthwaite warn, "persistent and ingenious Communists, skilled in subversive and revolutionary tactics, must be reckoned with" in Africa. The Airlift Africa project was a form of reckoning with the pro-Communists in Africa.

One of the Kenyan politicians who LaMacchia and Mboya kept a close eye on was Kenyan left-wing nationalist leader Oginga Odinga, whose son is now Kenya's Prime Minister. Odinga, a Luo like Mboya and Obama, Sr., had cultivated close relations with Soviet bloc countries and was dispatching Kenyan students to the east bloc for college educations.

One of the agencies that worked closely with the CIA to fund anti-communist student activities abroad was the US Agency for International Development (USAID), another one of Stanley Ann Dunham's employers in Indonesia. The CIA student operations were conducted through Langley's Covert Action Division No. Five, within the Plans Division. One of the chief missions of the CIA's foreign students was to infiltrate leftist student movements to either disrupt or recruit.

In our previous report on Obama's family and the CIA, WMR reported on the use of a Honolulu-based front company, Bishop, Baldwin, Rewald, Dillingham & Wong, (BBRDW) Inc., to pay off various Asian dictators, including President Suharto of Indonesia, who seized power in 1965 in a CIA-inspired anti-communist coup, merely two years before Stanley Ann Dunham and seven-year-old Barack moved to Jakarta to be with Dunham's new husband, Lolo Soetoro, a senior officer in Suharto's fascist armed forces. BBRDW used the facilities of the Bank of Hawaii to transmit funds to CIA operatives and dictators in Asia. The bank vice president in charge of the escrow accounts used for such purposes was Madelyn Dunham, Obama's grandmother, who died just two days before her grandson was elected President of the United States in 2008.

Although the CIA and Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye brushed off suggestions that BBRDW, which failed amid charges that it was a Ponzi scheme, was a CIA front, WMR has obtained from CIA files a letter, dated April 13, 1984, sent from the U.S. Attorney for the District of Hawaii to the Justice Department's Internal Security Criminal

Division and the CIA's Legislative Office forwarding a Honolulu article on the firm. The article reveals that the CIA stepped in to halt an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) investigation of BBRDW in January 1983. IRS Honolulu agent Joseph A. Campione confirmed that his IRS bosses in Washington, DC had ordered him to halt his investigation of BBRDW. The CIA's station chief in Honolulu, Jack Kindschi, retired from the CIA and joined BBRDW after it was established.

Ron Rewald, BBRDW's principal, was recruited in 1976 by the CIA's chief officer in Chicago. In addition to BBRDW, Rewald created a number of other CIA front firms in Honolulu, including H&H Enterprises and Canadian Far East Trade Corporation. Other firms that were joint CIA ventures with foreign millionaires, included Hawaiian-Arabian Investment Company and U.S. and United Arab Emirates Investment Company, registered in Hawaii and involving Rewald, millionaire Indonesian Indri Gautama, and UAE prince Saud Mohammed of the emirate of Sharjah.

Rewald told the Hawaii Investor that millions of dollars in CIA funds were "freely co-mingled" with the funds of innocent investors in accounts such as those maintained in the Bank of Hawaii, as well as in overseas accounts. BBRDW accounts in Hawaiian and overseas banks were used to launder money for the Sultan of Brunei, Philippine banker Enrique Zobel and his close friend President Ferdinand Marcos, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Gandhi's son and future Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and President Suharto of Indonesia.

Grandmother Madelyn's bank also had dealings with another CIA bank, Nugan Hand Bank of Australia, through which the CIA funded the constitutional coup d'etat against Australian Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1975. After Nugan Hand collapsed in the late 1970s, co-founder Frank Hand was found slumped over the steering wheel of his parked car near Sydney. Hand was shot through the head although a rifle on the seat beside him had been wiped clean of fingerprints. The world of Pacific finance that Obama's banker grandmother dealt with in the 1970s and 1980s dealt with much more than loaning money for beachfront properties in idyllic South Pacific settings.

Curiously, buried deep in the CIA files is an obscure invitation to then-CIA director Stansfield Turner to attend a "30th Anniversary of Teaching" for "Gil's" award from the American Chemical Society at the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii on April 3, 1979. It was at the East-West Center where Barack Obama, Sr. stayed in 1960 and where Stanley Ann Dunham met Lolo Soetoro in 1965. The East-West Center also served as a CIA front activity for the grooming of future Asian leaders from Japan and Okinawa to Indonesia and Micronesia.

Oddly, the name of the group celebrating the anniversary is redacted in the unclassified invitation, which also reveals "Gil's" 30 year teaching stint at the University of Hawaii and University of Illinois. The ceremony for "Gil" follows a "Division of Chemical Education Dinner." The return address on the invitation's envelope is also redacted and two pages of the file on the anniversary and award ceremony are withheld from disclosure. Previously, WMR reported that the University of Hawaii served as one of five universities favored by CIA director Richard Helms for the CIA's behavioral modification projects, part of the CIA's Office of Science and Technology's MK-ULTRA and Project Artichoke programs, which employed the use of, among other drugs, LSD for the CIA's human subjects.

One of President Obama's chief campaign promises was to run the most transparent administration in history. Considering the fact that his own personal history is one of the most opaque of any past president, there is little wonder why Obama's administration is the least transparent in recent history.

PART 5: The Story of Obama: All in The Company (Part V)

In this, the last of a five-part series on how Barack Obama, Jr. is a creation of the Central Intelligence Agency, WMR delves into the behavior modification, creative leadership, and phenomenological research programs that were at full throttle while Obama was an employee of CIA front Business International Corporation (BIC).

In 1984, while Obama was working as an editor at BIC in Manhattan, CIA deputy director for intelligence Robert Gates, who Obama retained as his Secretary of Defense from the Bush administration, renamed the CIA's Political Psychology Division the Political Psychology Center (PPC) and transferred the group from the Office of Global Issues (OGI) to the Office of Scientific and Weapons Research (OSWR).

The CIA's political psychology program is directly linked to its overall psychological and behavioral science programs. In fact, the CIA continues to send CIA officers for training to the Stanford Institute for Political Psychology program at Stanford University. Stanford and Stanford Research Institute (SRI) figure prominently in the CIA behavioral science and modification programs that enabled Barack Obama to hurdle into political office.

A CIA memorandum from the chief of OSWR/PPC to the Associate Deputy Director for Intelligence, dated 1984, requests that a consultant member of the PPC's Senior Behavioral Science Panel be permitted to publish an unclassified paper prepared by the PPC at the University of Chicago. At the time of Gates's push for political psychology programs at the CIA, Obama was working on the very same psychological-propaganda "journalism" projects at BIC, a CIA front. The paper in question sought to depict Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini as intent on bringing down "'Western' supported regimes and to establish in their place one 'united Islamic Nation' guided by the Islamic Republic of Iran and Ayatollah Khomeini." The paper suggests Khomeini would accomplish his goals by stirring up the Shi'a populations of "Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Syria, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, and Iraq" and maintain "the Gulf and the Arab world in a state of crisis."

The CIA's push for political action on the international and domestic media is seen in a formerly SECRET/SENSITIVE agenda for a meeting on "Political Action," dated August 5, 1982 and attended by Secretary of State George Schultz, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, Deputy Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, CIA Director William Casey, US Information Agency director Charles Wick, and National Security Adviser William Clark.

The CIA's Project MOCKINGBIRD, developed under the aegis of Cord Meyer, was a Cold War-era program designed to influence the foreign and domestic media and its successor programs governed the CIA's use of BIC journalists, of which Obama was one, to push propaganda and disinformation at home and abroad. With the approval of the new Political Action doctrine by the Reagan administration, there was a major push to use companies like BIC and other private sector operations to push U.S. propaganda abroad. The cover for the Reagan administration had to be in the private sector for, as the memo states, "Obviously as a government we cannot and should not simply emulate Soviet methods. Nor will our political parties be able in the foreseeable future to play the international role of European parties. But there is much that we can do."

The memo states that there should be a private sector campaign to challenge the Soviets abroad and states that "even the *New York Times*" supported such an effort. The private sector propaganda effort was called PROJECT TRUTH and its details are outlined in a formerly Confidential memorandum from Wick to Clark dated April 23, 1982.

A major propaganda effort against the Soviets, using U.S. and foreign private – unions, parties, youth, church, business, etc. – and public persons and elements, is described. Particular targets for the initiative included the May 13–16 Bilderberg meeting in Norway, the Fall UN General Assembly meeting, the April 28 Washington meeting of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations, and a contrivance known as "International Afghanistan Day."

The Reagan national security team was clearly intent, using cut-outs like BIC and others, to increase the U.S. "ability to generate political initiatives and conduct political campaigns, using overt and covert resources and combining government and private efforts here and abroad."

CIA files indicate the PPC was partially involved with a project called LOOKING GLASS, which involved a group of CIA and top business officials whose mission included "cultivating talent" from an early age.

WMR has obtained an agenda from the "Conference on Cultivating Talent" held in Greensboro, North Carolina from January 17–18, 1984, and co-sponsored by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). CCL was founded in 1970 by H. Smith Richardson, founder of the Vick Chemical Company.

Among the participants were the CIA's director of training and education, former National Security Agency (NSA) director Admiral Noel Gayler, and William Verity, Jr., the former chairman of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and a director at BIC in Manhattan. Gayler also served as Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii from 1972 to 1976, succeeding Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., the father of Obama's 2008 challenger, Senator John S. McCain III of Arizona.

Verity, who was also chairman of Armco steel corporation, later succeeded Malcolm Baldrige, Jr. as Secretary of Commerce in the Reagan administration. Verity became Commerce Secretary after Baldrige died in a freak rodeo accident in California. During his directorship at BIC, Verity also served on the boards of Eli Lilly and Chase Manhattan Bank, as well as serving as chairman of the board of trustees of Ford's Theater in Washington, DC.

Most of the CCL participants at the two-day conference were behavioral scientists. In our previous report on Obama and the CIA, WMR revealed that CIA director Richard Helms considered the University of Hawaii, the alma mater of Obama's mother and father, as one of five top centers for the CIA's behavioral science research work. The others were MIT, Yale, University of Michigan, and UCLA.

Speaking at the CCL conference, in addition to Verity, were Billie L. Alban, President of Alban & Williams, Ltd., an international consultancy. Alban was a core faculty member at UCLA and previously served on the staff of the Tavistock Institute in London. Currently, she teaches at Columbia University. Part of Alban's biography held in CIA archival files, which states her clients included the CIA-linked Bankers Trust, is redacted. Today, CCL's board of governors includes faculty members from Columbia and Harvard universities.

Verity was joined at the conference by two executives of Armco. One cartoon from the conference found in the CIA archives depicts two men with one pointing to a group of people representing the bottom rungs of society and exclaiming, "There is the raw material for a new, dynamic world!" The presence of Verity of BIC at the conference attended by the CIA's chief of education and training raises the specter of BIC's role in supplying "raw material" from its ranks, individuals like Obama, for the CIA's "new, dynamic world."

Also known as the "Freud Hilton," Tavistock has long been involved in brainwashing techniques and CIA work since its foundation. The institute also has links to the Harvard Psychology Clinic, the CIA, and Stanford Research Institute (SRI), a major contractor for CIA psychic warfare activities in the 1970s and 80s. Alban told the 1984 CCL seminar, "talent should be nurtured and developed for tomorrow not today. If one focuses on today's requirements, by the time talents are nurtured one will find they are the talents required of yesterday. The focus must be visionary and look to the needs of the future."

The Tavistock Institute has long been linked with the CIA's MK-ULTRA and Projects BLUEBIRD and ARTICHOKE mind control and brain-washing operations, conducted by the CIA's top scientist for such matters, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb. Much of the records about MK-ULTRA and other CIA programs was destroyed on the order of Helms in 1972. BLUEBIRD documents describe what the CIA was trying to accomplish with behavioral modification in the early 1950s: "Can we 'alter' a person's personality? Can we devise a system for making unwilling subjects into willing agents and then transfer that control to untrained agency agents in the field by use of codes or identifying signs?" In other words, the movie "The Manchurian Candidate," was not purely a fictional account within the CIA's research and scientific community.

Considering Obama's penchant for homosexual encounters in Chicago and Washington, DC, the question of a continuation of Gottlieb's OPERATION MIDNIGHT CLIMAX continues to the present day. A sub-program of MK-ULTRA, MIDNIGHT EXPRESS employed prostitutes in the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City to lure targeted individuals into CIA safehouses where they would then be plied with drugs like LSD. They would then be tested for their susceptibility to sexual blackmail. The program was "officially" halted in 1966, but the continuing use of prostitutes by the CIA for blackmail purposes has been verified to WMR by workers in the sex industry.

Twelve pages in the CIA's director for training and education's January 25, 1984, report to the deputy director for administration remain classified to this day, but in a hand written note on the CIA transmittal sheet, he states "I think you will find Tab B to be very interesting." The deputy director for administration replies, also in a handwritten note, "I did – though I don't [subscribe]? to call the community on Tab C."

Tab B is the training and education director's comments to the CCL. The talking points include:

- Pleased to be invited to participate and to exchange ideas on the cultivating and nurturing of talent.
- Our recent visibility has been both an asset and a liability in this regard. More people know of the CIA and its activities than when I joined (tell the labor union story), and this attracts some good people. By the same token, it brings out the weird ones.

- We have an exceptional screening process involving security investigation, testing, (assessment – OSS-CCL) psychological screening, medical review, interviewing, polygraph, etc. (and a long processing time!) [Ed. note: it cannot be determined if this reference is to the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA or the CIA's Special Security Office. CCL, however, appears to indicate a past and on-going relationship between the CIA and the Center for Creative Leadership.]
- So, the people who come to us are, for the most part, exceptionally talented, thoroughly screened, and represent a real challenge for us to stretch, nurture and retain.
- Eventually reach the point where at least some people are identified early on as having high potential for senior agency-wide positions and are consciously developed toward that end.

A September 11, 1984 memo to Dan Carlin, the assistant director of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) from the CIA's executive assistant/executive director to director William Casey points out the academia sources for the past year's CIA undergraduate recruits. Two recruits came from Columbia University. Obama graduated from Columbia in 1983 after reportedly studying under Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former National Security Adviser to President Carter. The chairman of the PFIAB at the time of the stepped-up CIA college recruiting campaign was Anne Armstrong, the Ford administration's ambassador to London from 1976 to 1977 and a major backer of George H.W. and George W. Bush. A one-time board member of Halliburton, Armstrong was a mentor for Karl Rove when she served as co-chairman of the Republican National Committee from 1971 to 1973.

By way of comparison, one undergraduate was recruited from Harvard, one from Occidental College (where Obama attended before transferring to Columbia), one from Claremont Men's College, one from Pepperdine. Topping the list are five each from Georgetown and Dartmouth. Graduate recruits include one from Harvard Law, where Obama attended law school after his "community service" work in Chicago; three from the University of Michigan (one of Helms's favored behavioral science research campuses), and, trumpeting other graduate schools, American University in Washington, with five new recruits.

CIA archival records also indicate an on-going relationship between Obama's former college, Occidental, and the CIA in 1983. A MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour transcript shows a guest, Lawrence Caldwell of Occidental, as having been a scholar in residence at the CIA's Office of Soviet Analysis for two years.

A formerly Secret NOFORN [not releasable to foreign nationals] proposal for the CIA, dated December 31, 1992, and prepared for the CIA by Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) describes in great detail the agency's behavioral science programs, which included anomalous cognition (AC) and anomalous perturbation (AP). AC is defined as "the awareness of information that is considered otherwise shielded from all known sensory channels" and AP is "the perturbation of physical matter under conditions of complete physical and sensorial isolation."

The document states that research into both field began in 1973 with the CIA engaged in such research and was followed by U.S. military service and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) research with SRI through fiscal year 1990. The document also states "beginning in 1986, the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC) [Fort Detrick, Maryland] initiated the first coordinated long-term examination of AC and AP phenomenon."

SAIC proposed to conduct various research projects for the CIA are similar to some of the "enhanced interrogation" techniques used on detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Bagram airbase in Afghanistan, and other CIA "black sites" in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. The experiments, conducted by SRI since 1974, included exposing individuals to flashing light or no light to discover how their central nervous systems reacted to the visual stimuli. Experiment subjects were fitted with EEGs (electroencephalogram) monitors to measure their reaction to the flashing light stimuli. Part of the SAIC proposal remains redacted.

A sub-contractor to SAIC was the Lucidity Institute of Napa, California, founded in 1987 by Dr. Stephen LaBerge for the conduct of "research on lucid dreams and to help people learn to use them to enhance their lives. Lucid dreaming means dreaming while knowing that one is dreaming and allows people to consciously guide the direction of their dreams." Ironically, one of this summer's blockbuster movies, "Inception," dealt with the subject of invading people's dreams to steal secrets. Leonardo DiCaprio plays a secretive agent named Dom Cobb who is an

"extractor" agent operating in the para-psychological dream invasion program. What may be fiction in Hollywood was far from it in the CIA research with SAIC, SRI, and the Lucidity Institute.

One of the methods used by the SRI and SAIC program to determine "the differences between effective and ineffective liars" was called the Q-Sort technique. The technique was used to separate "highly talented" individuals in test "clusters."

The paragraph on the intelligence applications of anomalous cognition is 90 percent redacted from the SAIC proposal as are at least three reference works cited in the document. Academic institutions involved in the project included, in addition to SRI, Stanford University, Brookhaven National Laboratory, the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, and UCLA (one of Helms's favorite CIA behavioral science research centers).

The CIA-SAIC-SRI project principals had either worked at or attended the Biofeedback Institute of San Francisco; SAIC; Yale (another of Helms's favored research centers); Columbia University; Harvard; Bellevue Hospital in New York; the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; the Stanford Hypnosis Research Laboratory; Carnegie-Mellon University; MIT (another one of Helms's favored behavioral science centers); the World Bank; the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio; University of Minnesota; the Brain Research Institute; the Behavioral Research Foundation of St. Kitts, West Indies; the Tavistock Institute in London; the A.K. Rice Institute of Rainier, Washington, an off-shoot of the Tavistock Institute; Sleep Disorders Clinic, Provo, Utah; Neurology Study Section of the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland; Tibetan government-in-exile, Dharamsala, India; U.S. Veterans Administration; University of Wisconsin-Madison; US Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, DC; and perhaps, most interestingly, the University of Hawaii (also designated by Helms as one of the CIA's favored behavioral science research centers and where two of the principals involved in the SAIC-CIA project had an affiliation).

The research director for the CIA-SAIC program was Dr. Edwin C. May, an internationally-recognized parapsychology expert who is the executive director for the Cognitive Sciences Laboratory of the Laboratories for Fundamental Research in Palo Alto, California. May was a lead researcher for the CIA's STARGATE remote viewing and ESP project until it was closed down in 1995. WMR has previously reported that the program moved from the CIA to the National Security Agency and involved research carried out with Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and the Monroe Institute in Faber, Virginia, south of Charlottesville. The Monroe Institute was also heavily involved in the STARGATE program. The current research is also linked to the Parapsychology Foundation of New York City.

Other members of the team included a retired Army Major General who now specializes in human bionics a radio astrophysicist; an expert who maintains that sexual orientation may be influenced by experiences in childhood; a counselor for survivors of the People's Temple cult of Reverend Jim Jones (itself linked to a CIA MK-ULTRA behavioral modification and mind control operation); a current specialist with the Farsight Institute of Atlanta, a remote viewing research center; a neuro-linguistic programming expert; a toxicology specialist; a principal of the Pentagon's PANDORA project on the use of electro-magnetic weapons to roboticize human beings; an expert in the imaging and computer mapping of the human brain; an inventor of the cochlear implant; an expert on the mass popular opposition of Okinawans to the U.S. military presence on the island; a future warfare expert for the Pentagon and member of the National Security Agency Scientific Advisory Board and Defense Intelligence Agency Scientific Advisory Committee; a former Army Undersecretary for acquisition; a Defense Intelligence Agency psi-tech officer who worked on electro-magnetic weaponry for battlefield psychological purposes – PROJECT SLEEPING BEAUTY – who worked with another Army Intelligence psi-tech officer who was partially the inspiration for the movie "Men Who Stare At Goats;" a specialist on the brainwashing techniques, including sleep deprivation, by the North Koreans on American prisoners of war and the Church of Scientology who was an expert witness on the brainwashing techniques of the Symbionese Liberation Army on heiress Patty Hearst; and, lastly, a University of Hawaii-linked specialist on the psychological effects of prison and prison brutality on prisoners who later defended, as an expert witness, one of the prison guards at Abu Ghraib in Baghdad.

The presence of a Jonestown de-programmer on the CIA-SAIC team is noteworthy. On August 31, 2007, WMR reported: "During the time of the Jonestown massacre, the People's Temple's ship, the 'Cudjoe,' was en route to Trinidad with members of the Temple on board. Temple members soon set up operations in Trinidad and Grenada, where [Prime Minister Eric] Gairy, a CIA client, who, in a 1977 speech before the UN General Assembly, called for the UN to establish an Agency for Psychic Research into Unidentified Flying Objects and the Bermuda Triangle, was

in charge. According to the Oakland Tribune, the St. George's University Medical School in Grenada had on its staff one Dr. Peter Bourne, the son of the university's vice chancellor Sir Geoffrey Bourne. Peter Bourne is a graduate of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), where he studied the psychological effects of stress on those in combat. He also served one year in Vietnam as the head of the Army's psychiatric research team. Bourne later became an Assistant UN Secretary General and an adviser to then-Congressman Bill Richardson. It was under the guise of rescuing American medical students at the university, that the Reagan administration launched a 1983 invasion to overthrow Bernard Coard, who had ousted and executed Bishop in a coup. Both Bournes said the medical students were never in any danger. [Some believe that author Robert Ludlum got the idea for CIA mind-controlled assassins in his novel "The Bourne Identity" and its sequels from Geoffrey Bourne's work.]

The Jonestown connection to the U.S. war in Southeast Asia does not end there. The U.S. ambassador to Guyana at the time of the Jonestown massacre was John Burke, who served with his Deputy Chief of Mission Richard Dwyer, were allegedly working for the CIA in Bangkok during the Vietnam war. Dwyer was wounded in the Port Kaituma shootings where [Representative Leo] Ryan and the others were killed. On Sept. 27, 1980, Jack Anderson reported that Dwyer was a CIA agent and a friend of Jones. Anderson reported that on one of the tapes made during the mass suicide Jones was heard saying, 'Get Dwyer out of here before something happens to him.' Dwyer reportedly left Guyana for Grenada after the massacre. The US Consular Officer at the embassy in Georgetown, Guyana was Richard McCoy, who allegedly liaised with Jim Jones and was a U.S. Air Force intelligence official. Another alleged CIA employee, operating under State Department cover, was Dan Webber, who also visited the Jonestown the day after the massacre. Joe Holsinger, Ryan's assistant and friend, later said that he believed that Jonestown was a massive mind control experiment and that the CIA and military intelligence was involved in the program."

The nexus of Obama's almae matres: Occidental, Columbia, and Harvard, as well as that of his parents, the University of Hawaii, in the CIA's mind control, behavioral modification, and mass hypnosis projects is deeply troubling. The fact that Obama has failed to provide a full accounting of his past academic and professional employment history, coupled with the presence of a major CIA presence within his and his parents', grandparents', and step-father's backgrounds opens up the real possibility that Obama was, to use the CIA's own term, "nurtured," for a higher calling. Obama told the nation that his would be the most open and transparent in recent recent history. However, Obama's biography and those of his parents and guardians are full of more holes than a slice of Swiss cheese. It is well past time for the President to make good on that promise and fully release his past academic, passport, employment, and overseas travel records.

After eight brutal years of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, the nation was ready for any change. Unfortunately, the CIA, through LOOKING GLASS, MK-ULTRA, ARTICHOKE, PANDORA, and other behavioral science programs were ready to answer the call. The CIA answered the call with Obama and most of us bought him and his "Hope and Change" propaganda fecundity "nurtured" by CIA programs going back some sixty years.

Copyright © 2010 Wayne Madsen

More Info: The CIA and it's Links to the Rise of Obama

For your information, this researcher [Wayne Madsen] has uncovered a number of credible sources (books, documentaries, articles, etc.) that clearly draw an Intelligence "hierarchy" that is nothing like we are led to believe (supporting articles with citations forthcoming).

In a nut-shell, be advised, the CIA, MI6, Israeli MOSSAD, and OSI are all products of "The Reich" of Nazi Germany (see book entitled "Blowback", by Christopher Simpson, McMillan Publishing Company, 1988). These agencies are the "enforcement and execution arm" of the Committee of 300, Royal Institute of International Affairs, and the Jesuit Superior General's Office in Vatican City. When the orders come down "from above", these intelligence agencies (murderous spies) execute them.

Also, be advised, Israeli MOSSAD agents were arrested after being seen celebrating in public when the World Trade Centers were demolished.

It may take years to fully execute a given PROJECT. But the orders are always executed with deadly precision as history has shown.

20120424-24	23:56	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Action: Start Your Own Petition
-------------	-------	--------	---

Today is a big day for Avaaz. If you join in, Avaaz might just move from having a small team of 40 campaigners to having 40,000!!

When I started Avaaz, it was just a crazy idea. But I loved the idea, and shared it, and now it's an idea that 14,000,000 people share! I've been blown away by the passion, creativity, smarts and commitment of everyone in this community. **Every day Avaaz members send in brilliant and important ideas for new campaigns** to create the world we all want -- more than our small staff could ever carry out alone.

So, to unlock all the incredible potential of our community to change the world, **we've developed our website tools to allow any Avaazer to instantly start their *own* online petitions**, tell friends, and win campaigns.

The site just went live -- will you give it a try? **Think of a petition you'd like to start on any issue** -- something impacting your local community, some bad behaviour by a distant corporation, or a global cause that you think other Avaaz members would care about. If your petition takes off, it may become an Avaaz campaign -- either to members in your area, or even to the whole world! Click here to get started -- **it takes just a few minutes to create your own campaign!**

http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/start_a_petition/?v

I'm so excited about this. In just five years, Avaaz has run an incredible number of hard-hitting campaigns and grown to be the largest-ever global movement for change, all with just a tiny staff -- **imagine what's possible with all of us starting and winning amazing campaigns!** I can't wait.

With much respect and hope, Ricken

<http://www.bbka.org.uk/>

A bee doing his bee thing (thank God!)



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>

FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #125 — APR. 26, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

Conservatives and Liberals

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 26, 2012)

Conservative utterances tend to be like little bombs thrown into our midst. Those of progressives are more like hooks cast upon the waters... (SteveB)

20120425-01 08:26 SteveB Fw: NationofChange Donation Plea

This is an important organization for us here at Friends of the Middle. Since Dennis discovered them years ago, we've gotten tons of information and great articles from the people at NationofChange. If you read any of this, it's worth the \$5 they're requesting. I know it is for me. Thanks!

from NationofChange:

As you know, we are raising \$50,000 for our Spring fundraiser. So far we're off to a good start, but we're still \$40,000 from our goal. If you can afford to make a \$5 donation, please do so. If you can afford more, whether it's \$50, \$500, or \$5,000 we'll continue to put it to good use. Your contribution is %100 tax decuctible.

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

The corporatocracy has put our health and our very lives beneath the treads of the machine of profit. The crops they sell to us are mercilessly modified abominations which are harmful to our bodies and catastrophic to our biosphere all the while agencies designated to protect us have been bought and paid for by the Monsantos and Beef Products Inc.s of this world.

These corporations are knowingly putting our lives and our environment at risk, and we're just beginning to scratch the surface of the problem. For example, this weekend we revealed how BP covered up a blow-out two years prior to deadly deepwater horizon spill.

How do they get away with it?

They spend. They buy our science. They purchase our politicians. They acquire competing technologies. They all but own our mass media.

Yet, there's one institution that the plutocrats can not afford.

NationofChange is a 501(c)3 nonprofit for the people. We have no owners. We accept no corporate financing. We don't allow advertisements or paid content from anyone, ever.

In this world, where it seems that everything and everyone is for sale, it's vital that we have organizations that we can trust to expose the truth and fight back on behalf of the 99%.

Unlike most other independent media outlets, we don't just report what's happening in the movement to fight back against power.

We're on the ground, posting flyers, raising funds, and getting arrested with our sisters and brothers. We're disobeying. In just the last few months alone NationofChange has taken on Monsanto, Koch Industries, and has been a vital player in the Occupation movement from coast to coast.

If you think that NationofChange is a cause worth supporting, then please give generously now.

Please click the button below to make a secure tax-deductible donation or call in your donation at 1-800-803-6045. You can also mail a check to: 6319 Dante Ln NW, Albuquerque, NM 87114

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

20120425-02	09:35	SteveG	Re: "Take Action Against 'Agent Orange' GMO Crops" (reply to SteveB, Apr. 24, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

My thoughts exactly – you have to have someone watching the companies and setting the standards, enforcing the rules or companies will take us down another rocky road because there is a quarter down there. This all leads to the discussion of big versus small government. In my mind one cannot trust the companies to be in it for the people and the good crop. Sad that we have gotten to that point, but whether it be pesticides, fertilizers, hip replacements, etc. there has to be someone looking out for the customer. Business will not always do the right thing. Medicines aren't made because the profit ratio is not high enough. I could go on, but I think I am beating the point to death.

20120425-03	10:47	SteveB	Fw: USAction/True Majority Action: Don't Let Student Loan Rates Double
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

from USAction:

We need to make college more affordable, not less. But some in Congress seem to have it backwards. First, under the Ryan Budget, Republicans have proposed eliminating Pell Grants for two million students.

And now, unless Congress acts soon, an important loan program that serves almost 8 million college students will double its interest rates! A vote in the Senate may be just a couple weeks away, so please contact your Senators now.

We all know that making college affordable for all Americans isn't just the right thing to do — it's right for the economy. Right for an America that wants to compete in the world. The U.S. once ranked first in college graduation rates; now we rank 12th.

That's just not right.

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) and Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT) have just introduced the Student Loan Affordability Act, a bill that will prevent the interest rates on nearly 8 million Stafford loans from doubling — an increase that would cost the average student \$5,000.

Will you tell Congress to not let student loan rates double before it's too late?

<http://usaction.org/2012/04/action-dont-let-the-gop-double-student-loan-interest-rates-on-july-1st/>

Americans now owe more in tuition debt than credit card debt, with total outstanding student loan debt in America expected to exceed \$1 trillion this year. Millions of hardworking, taxpaying, educated Americans are being crushed under the weight of their educational debts and it's doing further damage to our economy — students with outstanding debt can't buy homes and can't contribute to the economy as full consumers.

We need a real economic stimulus and jobs plan. Investing in our students is the way to do it.

Tell Congress to not let student loan rates double before it's too late!

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

20120425-04	13:14	SteveB	Republicans, War, and the Deficit
-----------------------------	-------	--------	-----------------------------------

From FotM Newsletter #124: **"At least 95 percent of the national debt is war-related."**

Why don't Republicans care about the deficit?

Instead, they seek to rob Social Security, Medicare, the Post office, and (they hope) Obamacare. They pay the lowest effective tax rates in the industrialized world, but they want to pay lower. They say the public schools are going to hell, so they want to establish competition for them, where the richest and brightest students can leave the others behind.

Instead, they want to **wage war on the world and the citizens of America** who don't happen to be rich or male (almost entirely) or white (mostly).

Sounds to me like the babies need safer toys! And a timeout in their playpens!

To quote a great general:

War! What is it good for? Absolutely nothin'! I'll say it again. War!

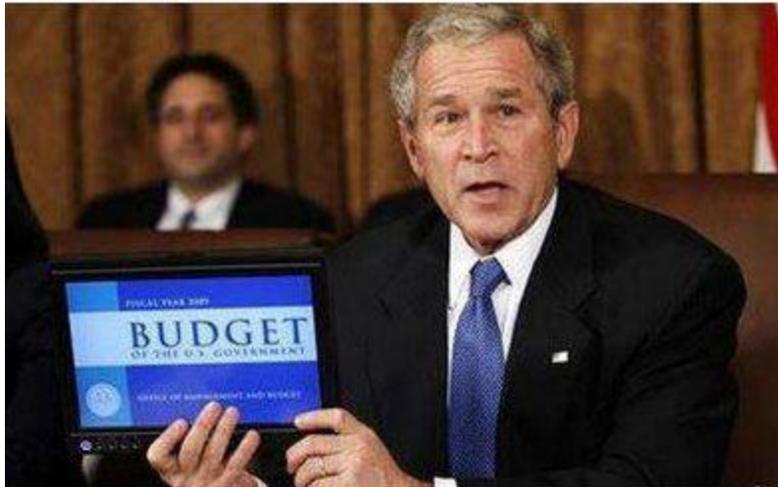
(Actually, I guess it is good for the deficit! You can't ever have both war and surpluses, especially without actually taxing the rich. Republicans don't even bother to choose one or the other. THEY WANT BOTH! War and surpluses. Mmmmm...wonder who they must want to pay for that?

Why don't they care if we know they think we are dumb as rocks? How do you get elected with that as a platform? We saw it in the Republican Primaries extensively. The candidates would essentially say "Hey, I'm actually dumb as a rock, but you citizens must be dumber because you believe this drivel and you're going to actually vote for me, scum bags."

20120425-06	14:30	Dennis	Re: Republicans, War, and the Deficit (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Why don't Republicans care about the deficit?

2001: The Heritage Foundation predicted the Bush tax cuts would pay down the Federal debt by Fiscal Year 2010!!



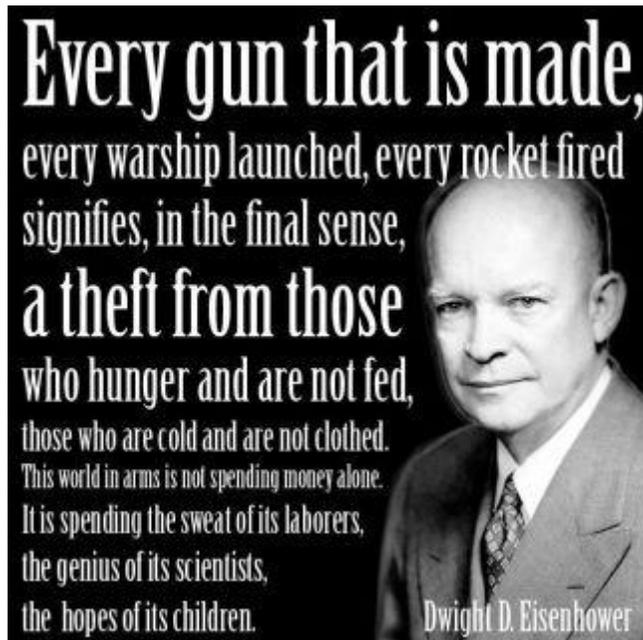
In 2011 Paul Ryan's budget proposal is based on numbers supplied by GUESS WHO!!



How's that trickle down workin for ya so far!

Because they still believe in the Reagan's Voodoo Economics?

Or, because Republicans became chicken hawks who think that wars can be fought at no cost?



This guy would be considered a socialist by today's Republicans!

[20120425-05](#) 13:18 Pam Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #124)

I read some of this long article on Obama and his putative connections with the CIA, but I confess I only skimmed it, as it was a bit long. I'm not sure I got the gist of it. Bottom line, is Obama being accused of being a "mole" for the CIA who is simultaneously working to spread Islam worldwide? Who is this person who wrote the essay?

[20120425-07](#) 15:03 SteveB Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to Pam, above)

You are a brave soul. I'm hoping Art will be intrigued with all the spy stuff. All I know is what's on the websites. It's sure "from the other side". Way other.

The writer has written seemingly Progressive tomes.

I believe the article preceding offers a sort of summary.

[20120425-09](#) 16:05 Pam Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to SteveB, above)

What especially gets me is the going all the way back to grandparents and great-grandparents and the assumption that baby Barack was born to take over the world. It's like science fiction. It's also interesting how we view the CIA as this nefarious enterprise, as if it were the KBG or something. I know the CIA gets up to stuff we wouldn't like, but wouldn't we be in more danger without it? I'm sure that when we were in Afghanistan my dad was working for a front for the CIA, not that he was aware of it. I don't doubt there's a lot that goes on in secret. That's why it's good to keep an open mind. I remember when I was in college, someone told me the FBI kept files on people. I didn't believe it. Silly me.

[20120425-08](#) 15:29 SteveB "Why Anyone Should Care That Bill O'Reilly Calls Me a Communist"

"Why Anyone Should Care That Bill O'Reilly Calls Me a Communist" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Apr. 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-anyone-should-care-bill-o-reilly-calls-me-communist-1335358919>)

Bill O'Reilly, the tumescent personality of Fox News, said on his Friday show "Robert Reich is a communist who secretly adores Karl Marx." (This came after Fox News' Neil Cavoto called me a "sanctimonious twit" for suggesting the rich should pay more in taxes.)

O'Reilly's accusation is odd, to say the least. If we were living in the 1950s, amid Senator Joe McCarthy's communist witch-hunts, the claim might have some bite and cause me injury. But these days it's hard to find a full-throated communist anywhere in the world.

O'Reilly's accusation isn't even logical. How can he know if I secretly adore Karl Marx, if it's a secret?

For the record, I'm not a communist and I don't secretly adore Karl Marx.

Ordinarily I don't bother repeating anything Bill O'Reilly says. But this particular whopper is significant because it represents what O'Reilly and Fox News, among others, are doing to the national dialogue.

They're burying it in doo-doo.

O'Reilly based his claim on an interview I did last week with Jon Stewart on the Daily Show, in which I argued that because America's big corporations were now global we could no longer rely on them to make necessary investments in human capital or to lobby for public investments in education, infrastructure, and basic R&D. So, logically, government has to step in.

Since when does an argument for public investment in education, infrastructure, and basic R&D make someone a communist or a secret adorer of Karl Marx?

Obviously, O'Reilly has no interest in arguing anything. **Ad hominem attacks are always the last refuges of intellectual boors lacking any logic or argument.** (Whoops, I think I just stooped to name-calling. Sorry, Bill.)

Yet this is what's happening to all debate all over America: It's disappearing. All we're left with is a nasty residue.

In Washington, Democrats and Republicans no longer even talk. They just vent charges and counter-charges.

The 2012 election doesn't seem likely to clarify any issue. At this moment the candidates and their surrogates are debating the treatment of dogs.

Across the nation, conservatives right-wingers and liberal or progressive lefties have stopped debating their respective views, or even listening to anyone they disagree with. They just find broadcasters and bloggers who confirm their views.

We're even sorting by belief according to where we live. Today your neighbors are more likely to agree with your politics than disagree. We've settled into like-minded enclaves where we don't need to think because everyone we meet confirms what we assume we already know.

It's not that the nation is more polarized than it's been in the past. America has been through searing conflicts, some within the living memories of most of us. The communist witch-hunts of the 1950s were followed by the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, battles over women's reproductive rights and gay marriage.

What makes America's current polarization remarkable isn't the severity of our disagreements but our utter lack of engagement debating them.

So many Americans are so angry and frustrated these days – vulnerable to loss of job and healthcare and home, without a shred of economic security – they're easy prey for demagogues offering simple answers and ready scapegoats. Take, for example, Bill O'Reilly and his colleagues at Fox News.

But people can only learn from others who disagree with them — or at least from witnessing debates between people who respectfully and civilly disagree. Without respect and civility, it's not a debate – it's just name-calling.

A democracy depends on public deliberation and debate. Without it, the members of a society have no means of understanding what they believe or why. The Lincoln-Douglas debates were notable not because they solved anything but because they helped Americans clarify where they agreed and disagreed on the wrenching issue of slavery.

Hence the danger today – when deliberation has stopped.

This morning I left a message on Bill O'Reilly's office phone asking him to invite me onto his show to debate whether public investments in education and infrastructure are needed.

What are the odds he'll invite me on?

Get #BeyondOutrage.

20120425-10	16:57	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Support Sen. Bernie Sanders Progressive Budget
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

from Daily Kos:

Please join with Senator Bernie Sanders, and help change the conversation about deficits in Washington, DC, by co-signing his progressive budget proposal. Click here to add your name:

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=127.

Imagine if Democrats in Congress made opening bids that were not already compromises. For example, what if the Democratic leadership had started the health care fight by proposing a single-payer plan instead of a public option?

Bernie Sanders actually did start the health care fight by proposing a single-payer plan. He stuck to it for a long time, and only agreed to support the final bill after \$10 billion in additional funding for non-profit, community health centers was included. Because of his shrewdness, these community health centers now provide affordable primary care to tens of millions more low-income Americans than they did before the Affordable Care Act.

Now, as the fight over the federal budget moves to the Senate, Sanders is once again coming out with a strong opening bid. He is introducing a budget that reduces the deficit by making big corporations and the very wealthy pay their fair share, by reducing defense spending, by strengthening Social Security and Medicare, and by creating good paying jobs. It's a truly progressive alternative to the horrifying Republican budget, and who knows what we can accomplish if we make it our opening bid.

Please join with Senator Bernie Sanders, and help change the conversation about deficits in Washington, DC, by co-signing his progressive budget proposal.

Keep fighting,
Chris Bowers, Daily Kos

20120425-11	20:26	Charis	Bolivia
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---------

1. A video slideshow by featuring 76 photos from Santa Cruz:

<http://tripwow.tripadvisor.com/tripwow/ta-0376-ec3e-2a8d>

2. All about the International Baroque Music Festival of the Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos, Bolivia:

<http://www.boliviabella.com/international-baroque-music-festival-of-the-jesuit-missions-of-chiquitos-bolivia.html>

<http://www.facebook.com/l/-AQFIQIqmAQGf2sBjT8NZGY4E5jGpcCwDZGfu4QGg-5YHag/tripwow.tripadvisor.com/tripwow/ta-0456-6c92-ad01?ln>

<http://www.facebook.com/l/5AQFfuyjx/festivalesapac.com/festival-de-musica-2012>

20120425-12	22:38	SteveG	The High Cost of U.S. Colleges & Medical Schools
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

On the news tonight:

- Young lady is graduating from medical school this spring.
- She is officially \$300,000 in debt from student loans.
- She will have to pay \$2,000 per month for 30 years to repay the loans plus interest.
- There is a national shortage of primary care physicians.
- The state of Washington started a new medical school 4 years ago.
- Indiana is starting a new medical school
- Are other states starting new medical schools?

Sad statements!

20120425-13	23:19	SteveM	Fw: Video: "Real Time with Bill Maher, Mar. 16, 2012: Alexandra Pelosi Interviews Welfare Recipients in NYC"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Please watch our tax dollars at work...

This has to be troubling. It was made by the daughter of Nancy Pelosi for Bill Maher, no conservatives these. It was not edited by Fox Cable News, or the RNC. Extreme examples you may say, but with 43% of the nation on food stamps, highest welfare rates ever, and at least some of the people on our 99 week in no hurry to get back to work, one wonders how many could and should be working and aren't by choice.

[Source of original email unknown, but the video must be genuine. -SteveB]

Subject: "Gim Me Da Stamps, Ma Brother."

Very enlightening - for those few who aren't already aware of this...

I'm going to pass this on, as is. Nancy Pelosi's daughter is an aspiring film producer. She made this short but disturbing video which has caused quite a stir in the "progressive" community. I imagine her mother was furious. Our tax dollars, hard at work!!!!!!!!!!

Video: "Real Time with Bill Maher Mar. 16, 2012: Alexandra Pelosi Interviews Welfare Recipients in NYC"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2kGPdxkofo>

20120425-14	23:22	SteveM	Fw: Great Letter to the AARP
-----------------------------	-------	--------	------------------------------

This is pretty interesting, and certainly expresses why so many have dropped arrp membership . She may go a little oveboard in a couple areas, but in general is pretty much right on as far as why AARP is no longer relevant to seniors it purports to represent and defend.

If you agree with it, fine; if not that's your business, and your right.

[Source of this email unknown, but it is correctly attributed: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/aarp.asp>. -- SteveB]

This letter was sent to Mr. Rand who is the Executive Director of AARP.

THIS LADY NOT ONLY HAS A GRASP OF 'THE SITUATION' BUT AN INCREDIBLE COMMAND OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE!

Dear Mr. Rand (Sept., 2009),

Recently you sent a letter encouraging us to renew our lapsed membership in AARP by the requested date. We know this is not the letter you were looking for, but this is the most honest response we can give you.

Our gap in coverage is merely a microscopic symptom of the real problem, a deepening lack of faith. While we have proudly maintained our membership for several years and have long-admired AARP's goals and principles, we regret that we cannot endorse its abdication of our values.

Your letter specifically stated that we may depend on AARP to speak up for our rights, yet the voice we hear is not ours—it's yours. Your offer of keeping us up to date on important issues through Divided We Fail presents neither an impartial view nor the one we have come to embrace. We do believe that when two parties agree all the time on everything presented to them, one is probably not necessary. But when the opinions and long-term goals of the two parties are diametrically opposed, divorce is imminent.

This is the philosophy that spawned our 200 years of government. At one time we looked forward to being part of the senior demographic. We looked to AARP to provide certain benefits and give our voice a power we could not possibly hope to achieve on our own. AARP gave us a sense of belonging, one that we no longer enjoy. The socialist politics practiced by the present administration, and empowered by AARP, serve only to raise the blood pressure our medical insurance strives to contain—clearly a conflict of interest!

We do not understand AARP's posture. We feel greatly betrayed by the guiding forces that we expected to map out our senior years, and we leave your ranks with a great sense of regret. We mitigate that disappointment with the relief of knowing that we are not contributing to the problem anymore by renewing our membership. There are numerous other organizations that offer discounts without threatening our way of life or offending our sensibilities.

This administration scares the living daylights out of us, not just for ourselves, but also for our proud and bloodstained heritage, and even more important, for what our children and grandchildren will inherit. Washington has rendered Soylent Green a prophetic cautionary tale rather than a fictional scare tactic.

We have never endorsed any militant or radical groups, yet now we find ourselves listening to them. We don't have to agree with them to appreciate the fear that birthed their existence. Their borderline insanity presents little more than a balance to the voice of the socialist mindset of those in power. We became Americans by a great stroke of luck in some cosmic uterine lottery, but as adults we choose to embrace our heritage, and we embrace and nurture the freedoms it represents and the responsibilities it requires.

Your website generously offers us the opportunity to receive all communications in Spanish. Are you kidding? People are breaking into our houses and invading our homes without our invitation or consent. And now our president insists that we keep the invaders in comfort and learn their language so we can communicate our reluctant welcome to them.

We do not choose to welcome them.

We do not choose to support them.

We do not choose to educate them.

We do not choose to medicate them.

We do not choose to feed, clothe or house them.

American home invaders are arrested. Please explain to us why foreign lawbreakers enjoy privileges on American soil that Americans do not have. Legal immigrants must comply with our immigration laws to be welcomed, yet illegal "immigrants" need only break and enter to be welcomed!

We travel for a living. We transport horses all over this great country, averaging more than 10,000 miles a month. While out there we meet more people than a politician overdosed on caffeine. Of all the many good folks we met on our last 10,000 miles, the trip yielded only one supporter of this administration. Either we, or those that determine policy at AARP, are out of touch with mainstream America. Since our poll is conducted without funding, I have more faith in it than any poll which is power driven.

We have decided to forward this letter to everyone on our mailing list, and will encourage all to do the same. With several hundred people in our address book, we have faith that the eventual exponential factor will make a credible statement to you.

We are disappointed as hell.

We are scared as hell.

We are mad as hell and we're not gonna take it any more!

Walt and Cyndy, Miller Farms Equine Transport

20120425-15	23:23	SteveM	Fw: Here's Your Change
-----------------------------	-------	--------	------------------------

So, tell me again, what is it about Obama that makes him so brilliant and impressive? Can't think of anything? Don't worry. He's done all this in 29 months -- so you'll have about 8 months to come up with an answer. Every statement in this email is factual and directly attributable to Barrack Hussein Obama. Every bumble is a matter of record and completely verifiable.

After three years of Obama, here's your change...

Statistic	Jan., 2009	Feb., 2011	% chg
Avg. retail price/gallon gas in U.S.	\$1.83	\$3.104	69.6% ¹
Crude oil, European Brent (barrel)	\$43.48	\$99.02	127.7% ²
Crude oil, West TX Inter. (barrel)	\$38.74	\$91.38	135.9% ²
Gold: London (per troy oz.)	\$853.25	\$1,369.50	60.5% ²
Corn, No.2 yellow, Central IL	\$3.56	\$6.33	78.1% ²
Soybeans, No. 1 yellow, IL	\$9.66	\$13.75	42.3% ²
Sugar, cane, raw, world, lb. fob	\$13.37	\$35.39	164.7% ²
Unemployment rate, non-farm, overall	7.6%	9.4%	23.7% ³
Unemployment rate, blacks	12.6%	15.8%	25.4% ³
Number of unemployed	11,616,000	14,485,000	24.7% ³
Number of fed. employees, ex. military*	2,779,000	2,840,000	2.2% ³
Median household income (2008 v 2009)	\$50,112	\$49,777	-0.7% ⁴
Number food stamp recipients (10/10)	31,983,716	43,200,878	35.1% ⁵
Number unemployed (12/10)	7,526,598	9,193,838	22.2% ⁶
Number of long-term unemployed	2,600,000	6,400,000	146.2% ³
Poverty rate, individuals (2008 v 2009)	13.2%	14.3%	8.3% ⁴
People in poverty in U.S. (2008 v 2009)	39,800,000	43,600,000	9.5% ⁴
U.S. Economic Freedom World Rankings	5	9	n/a ¹⁰
Present Situation Index (curr = 12/10)	29.9	23.5	-1.4% ¹¹
Failed banks (curr = 2010 + 2011 to date)	140	164	17.1% ¹²
U.S. dollar vs. Japanese yen exchange rate	89.76	82.03	-8.6% ²
U.S. money supply, M1, in billions*	1,575.1	1,865.7	18.4% ¹³
U.S. money supply, M2, in billions*	8,310.9	8,852.3	6.5% ¹³
National debt, in trillions	\$10.627	\$14.052	32.2% ¹⁴

*Dec., 2010 prelim.

Just take this last item: In the last two years we have accumulated national debt at a rate more than 27 times as fast as during the rest of our entire nation's history. Over 27 times as fast! Metaphorically, speaking, if you are driving in the right lane doing 65 MPH and a car rockets past you in the left lane 27 times faster, it would be doing 7,555 MPH! This is a disaster!

Sources: (1) U.S. Energy Information Administration; (2) *Wall Street Journal*; (3) Bureau of Labor Statistics; (4) Census Bureau; (5) U.S.D.A.; (6) U.S. Dept. of Labor; (7) FHFA; (8) Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller; (9) RealtyTrac; (10) Heritage Foundation and WSJ; (11) The Conference Board; (12) FDIC; (13) Federal Reserve; (14) U.S. Treasury

20120425-16 23:58 SteveB Re: Here's Your Change (reply to SteveM, above)

This is an email we have had forwarded to Friends of the Middle previously. The first time was in Feb., 2011, purportedly written to mark the second anniversary of President Obama's term in office.

I believe it is fairly easily debunked, as Jim and others pointed out before. Here's another refutation:

posted by Jazmin, May 29, 2011, (<http://www.thoughts.com/jimw/after-2-years-of-obama-heres-your-change>)

This screed is junk. It is clearly another Anti-Obama, Anti-Democratic negative politics document. As usual, who the document came from was not available.

Here's who generated a somewhat thoughtful answer: <http://www.corbintreehouse.com/blog/2011/04/political-email-scams-against-obama/> (see below).

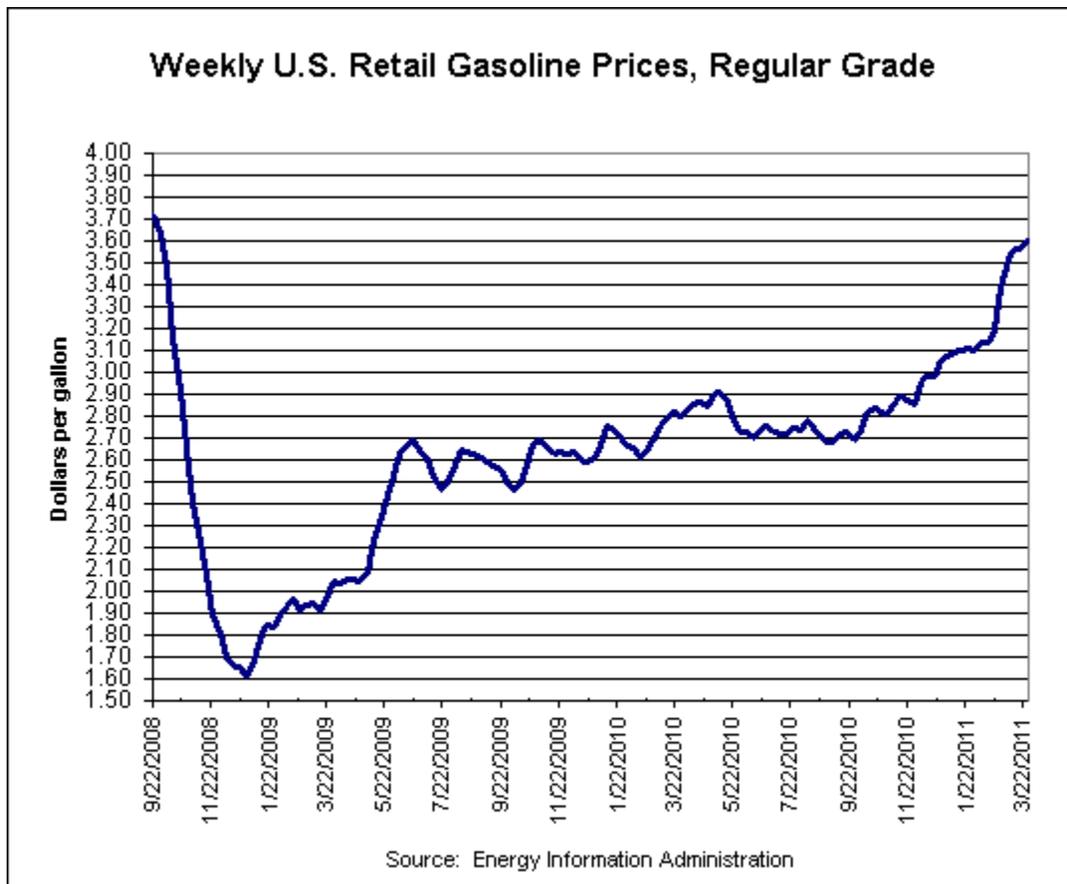
And here's the link to the original version online, the American Jingoist:
<http://theamericanjingoist.net/index.php/2011/04/25/after-two-years-of-obama-heres-your-change/>.

Almost none of the sourcing included leads to an actual source story, except for the links to the Census. Even those links are misleading as the data from the census was improperly used. If you want to see some commentary that is valid on this screed, google the headline on it and check with urbanlegends.com and snopes.com which sometimes take the time and energy to debunk this junk. More and more though, loads of websites bring a critical approach to these assertions which are typically OPINION presented from NOWHERE!

posted by corbin, Apr. 2, 2011, on Corbin's Treehouse (<http://www.corbintreehouse.com/blog/2011/04/political-email-scams-against-obama/>)

The first and easiest thing to fact check is to see if this person can do math. The answer is no. Why? Well, look at the last line: If you are driving in the right lane doing 65MPH and a car goes past you at 27 times faster, then how fast is it going? The claim is 7,555 MPH. Man that is fast! But hold on, let's make sure they are doing their math right. $65 \text{ MPH} * 27 = 1755 \text{ MPH}$. People with common mathematical sense will quickly spot that claim as being *way* off, and it sure was! If they can't multiply $27*65$, then what the heck makes me want to believe any of the other numbers they gave?

Now, this chart is praying on people who are ignorant and easily forget things. Let's see, when was the first time crude oil was over \$100/gallon? And gas prices fluctuate heavily. If I was to generate a chart like the above, I would want to scam people into believing things are worse than they were before by taking the absolute maximum and minimum values. Let's consider the first item, gas at \$1.83 a gallon. Let's fact check that. I visit: http://www.eia.doe.gov/oil_gas/petroleum/data_publications/wrgp/mogas_home_page.html and see the chart below:

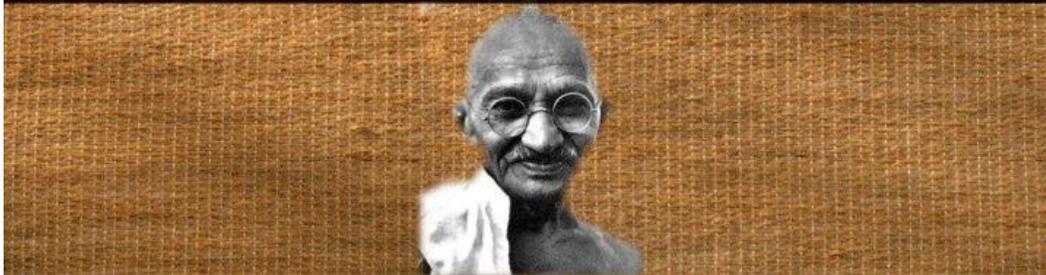


Yup, it was about \$1.83/gallon in January 2009, but they conveniently picked the lowest part in the graph. Heck, 4 months prior it was > \$3.70/gallon! Wait a minute, that means it is currently 19% lower than it was before!

Please don't blindly believe anything circulating on the internet.

[20120425-17](#) 23:58 SteveG Quote: Gandhi on Love

I observe in the limited field in which I find myself, that unless I can reach the hearts of men and women, I am able to do nothing. I observe further that so long as the spirit of hate persists in some shape or other, it is impossible to establish peace or to gain our freedom by peaceful effort. We cannot love one another, if we hate Englishmen. We cannot love the Japanese and hate Englishmen. We must either let the law of love rule us through and through or not at all. Love among ourselves based on hatred of others breaks down under the slightest pressure. The fact is such love is never real love. It is an armed peace. War will only be stopped when the conscience of mankind has become sufficiently elevated to recognize the undisputed supremacy of the Law of Love in all the walks of life. Some say this will never come to pass. I shall retain the faith till the end of my earthly existence that it shall come to pass.
~ Mohandas K. Gandhi



<http://www.cactuslovers.com/tucson-arizona.htm>

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

Desert Mountains near Tucson (Joel Smith)



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #126 — APR. 27, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: click here.](#)

Bill O'Reilly: 'Robert Reich Is a Communist'

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

This McCarthy crap is getting to be a little too much for me!

"Why Anyone Should Care That Bill O'Reilly Calls Me a Communist" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Apr. 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-anyone-should-care-bill-o-reilly-calls-me-communist-1335358919>)

Bill O'Reilly, the tumescent personality of Fox News, said on his Friday show "Robert Reich is a communist who secretly adores Karl Marx." (This came after Fox News' Neil Cavoto called me a "sanctimonious twit" for suggesting the rich should pay more in taxes.)

O'Reilly's accusation is odd, to say the least. If we were living in the 1950s, amid Senator Joe McCarthy's communist witch-hunts, the claim might have some bite and cause me injury. But these days it's hard to find a full-throated communist anywhere in the world.

O'Reilly's accusation isn't even logical. How can he know if I secretly adore Karl Marx, if it's a secret?

For the record, I'm not a communist and I don't secretly adore Karl Marx.

Ordinarily I don't bother repeating anything Bill O'Reilly says. But this particular whopper is significant because it represents what O'Reilly and Fox News, among others, are doing to the national dialogue.

They're burying it in doo-doo.

O'Reilly based his claim on an interview I did last week with Jon Stewart on the Daily Show, in which I argued that because America's big corporations were now global we could no longer rely on them to make necessary investments in human capital or to lobby for public investments in education, infrastructure, and basic R&D. So, logically, government has to step in.

Since when does an argument for public investment in education, infrastructure, and basic R&D make someone a communist or a secret adorer of Karl Marx?

Obviously, O'Reilly has no interest in arguing anything. **Ad hominem attacks are always the last refuges of intellectual boors lacking any logic or argument.** (Whoops, I think I just stooped to name-calling. Sorry, Bill.)

Yet this is what's happening to all debate all over America: It's disappearing. All we're left with is a nasty residue.

In Washington, Democrats and Republicans no longer even talk. They just vent charges and counter-charges.

The 2012 election doesn't seem likely to clarify any issue. At this moment the candidates and their surrogates are debating the treatment of dogs.

Across the nation, conservatives right-wingers and liberal or progressive lefties have stopped debating their respective views, or even listening to anyone they disagree with. They just find broadcasters and bloggers who confirm their views.

We're even sorting by belief according to where we live. Today your neighbors are more likely to agree with your politics than disagree. We've settled into like-minded enclaves where we don't need to think because everyone we meet confirms what we assume we already know.

It's not that the nation is more polarized than it's been in the past. America has been through searing conflicts, some within the living memories of most of us. The communist witch-hunts of the 1950s were followed by the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, battles over womens' reproductive rights and gay marriage.

What makes America's current polarization remarkable isn't the severity of our disagreements but our utter lack of engagement debating them.

So many Americans are so angry and frustrated these days – vulnerable to loss of job and healthcare and home, without a shred of economic security – they're easy prey for demagogues offering simple answers and ready scapegoats. Take, for example, Bill O'Reilly and his colleagues at Fox News.

But people can only learn from others who disagree with them — or at least from witnessing debates between people who respectfully and civilly disagree. Without respect and civility, it's not a debate – it's just name-calling.

A democracy depends on public deliberation and debate. Without it, the members of a society have no means of understanding what they believe or why. The Lincoln-Douglas debates were notable not because they solved anything but because they helped Americans clarify where they agreed and disagreed on the wrenching issue of slavery.

Hence the danger today – when deliberation has stopped.

This morning I left a message on Bill O'Reilly's office phone asking him to invite me onto his show to debate whether public investments in education and infrastructure are needed.

What are the odds he'll invite me on?

20120426-01	10:14	Art	Re: The High Cost of U.S. Colleges & Medical Schools (reply to SteveG, Apr. 25, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Wow! That pretty well highlights the problem.

20120426-02	10:17	SteveG	A Thought or Two on Immigration
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---------------------------------

Just a thought or two:

- The house, senate, and executive branch cannot take care of immigration – a planned gridlock?
- If there is no effective national immigration policy, the states implement their own laws – planned because the gridlock?
- State laws are upheld by the supreme court because there were no adequate federal laws handling immigration.
- If so we would potentially have 50 different state immigration laws.
- One way to get smaller government?

20120426-03	11:12	SteveB	"Welcome to Political Chaos"
-------------	-------	--------	------------------------------

I hate to sound like Dennis...but could chaos, as we've been saying, be in America's future? (Dramatic organ music in the background, preferably The Band's Garth Hudson playing the introduction to "Chest Fever": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLDmOgDI_3Y&feature=related. (Still one of the greatest things ever recorded!))

This conservative financial writer predicts turmoil, "...unless leaders take drastic action to lighten the load on the many at the expense of the few."

I'm pretty sure he's not making a threat or advocating such a potentially catastrophic turn of events...just stating facts, but this is pretty much what most of us have been saying here for quite some time—now, here are more details:

"Welcome to Political Chaos" by Anthony Mirhaydari, MSN Money

Apr. 25, 2012, (<http://money.msn.com/investing/welcome-to-political-chaos-mirhaydari.aspx?page=0>)

(With leaders in Europe and elsewhere offering only austerity and pain for the foreseeable future, they're inviting political upheaval. Now that it has begun, drastic action will be needed to stop it.)

In the thousands of years of human history, law by popular consent has been the exception, not the rule. Domination of unruly populations by strongmen, warlords, tribal leaders and monarchs is much more common than democracy.

Why? For one, it's easier to get big things done. But also because democracy and humanity's innate selfishness don't mix -- especially when it comes to money. It's easy to lose our way, voting for low taxes and higher benefits, while allowing things like the housing bubble or the deficit problem to build unchecked.

But people power can also be a catalyst for good, which I think is happening now.

Late last year, in "Why All Signs Point to Chaos" [in FotM Newsletter #??? –SteveB] I warned that strict austerity from governments, especially in Europe, was making harsh economic realities even worse. Higher fuel and food prices only add to the toxic mix. When this has happened historically, people get angry. Social disorder follows. But positive change can come out of it.

Economists see this phenomenon, too. In fact, what inspired that column was a study that found protests, labor strikes, political upheaval and even riots and assassinations increase as people are faced with higher taxes and fewer benefits, along with joblessness and stagnant wages. This kind of chaos was in decline for most of the past 20 years.

It's on the rise now, with last year's Arab Spring being answered by political upheaval in Europe and the rising popularity of fringe parties -- just a preview of the turbulence to come. (As I wrote last week, the United States isn't immune, as it faces its own fiscal cliff in just eight months.)

The stage is set for socioeconomic turmoil on a scale not seen since the 1970s and 1980s -- turmoil that rich-world countries won't be able to avoid unless leaders take drastic action to lighten the load on the many at the expense of the few. Otherwise, the people will elect someone who will. And if they can't, they'll take to the streets.

Long term, this turmoil could be a positive. But, for the moment, welcome to chaos.

Where there's smoke

The first act started in March in Europe and accelerated this week, sending shudders through global markets. I'll spare you the long and tortuous history of the eurozone debt crisis, which started more than two years ago, but here are the highlights:

- Many eurozone countries, particularly Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Ireland, are suffering from uncompetitive economies, bloated governments, rising debt levels and deep budget deficits.
- These are caused by lax enforcement of European Union limits on national deficits, Germany's trade mercantilism, lax banking regulation and the fallout from excess credit creation during the 2002-2007 boom. The European Central Bank, worried about slow growth and high unemployment in Germany, kept interest rates low. But that was too low for fast-growing countries like Spain and Portugal, leading to housing and credit bubbles.
- Three nations have already required bailouts from the eurozone to stay afloat, and the worry is that Italy and Spain will need help, too.
- In response, Germany and other AAA-rated members of the eurozone, along with France, are pushing for harsh budget austerity in a bid to restore market confidence and keep Italian and Spanish borrowing costs down.
- But this austerity -- read: cuts in government spending and payrolls -- is deepening a new eurozone recession and causing the weaker countries to rebel against the central authority's mandate.

In early March, new Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, under pressure with youth unemployment north of 50% as the country sinks into recession, announced that his government would go a little easier on the economy. He set a deficit target of 5.8% of gross domestic product for 2012, rather than the 4.4% target Spain had agreed on with European Union leaders in Brussels. This still translates to a massive 2.7% cut to economic growth this year in an economy that's already in recession.

The EU and the paymasters in Berlin balked, though, and the target was pushed back to 5.3%. This was the catalyst that sent Spanish and Italian borrowing costs climbing again and helped slam the brakes on the multimonth stock rally here at home.

The problem isn't just in the weaker EU nations. This week, the Dutch government -- one of the five AAA-rated eurozone countries and a fervent supporter of the austerity-led approach to Europe's woes -- collapsed after members balked over domestic budget cuts.

In France, the results of the first round of voting suggest the left will capture the presidency for the first time in 24 years. Polling suggests Socialist candidate François Hollande will win and force a renegotiation of the EU's strict budget agreement. He would balance the French budget one year later than current President Nicolas Sarkozy, and he favors steep tax hikes on the rich rather than deep cuts to state spending.

Meanwhile, in Greece, officials have taken a knife to 2012 growth forecasts, as protests and labor strikes continue. It's becoming increasingly clear that the country has no future in the eurozone. The head of German economics institute Ifo said in New York this week that there's "no chance for Greece to become competitive" unless it exits the eurozone and restores the drachma.

"If Greece is kept in the eurozone, there will be ongoing mass unemployment. But if they exit, they will see a very sudden recovery," he said, as lower prices boost competitiveness. Something similar happened in Iceland after that country devalued its currency, the króna.

Both Greece and France will hold elections May 6. The Dutch are expected to vote in September. Democracy is reasserting itself in Italy and Greece after unelected technocrats favored by Brussels and Berlin were installed in Rome and Athens. Elections have already swept away governments in Slovakia, Ireland, Portugal and Spain.

The threat is that the conservative Franco-German alliance that has been steering Europe through this crisis with maxims of "austerity before bailouts" and "bankers before taxpayers" will collapse. A breakdown increases the risk that a country such as Greece will exit the eurozone due to a lack of rescue funding.

And it increases the risk that Germany, realizing that it's milked all it can from the euro (via massive trade surplus with the weaker peripheral countries) packs up and leaves rather than providing more rescue funding. Without Germany -- the eurozone country with the deepest pockets -- there is no orderly resolution to the debt crisis.

It's as simple as this: The eurozone's strategy of rigid austerity is resulting in economic asphyxiation, with any support it had crumbling under the weight of popular dissatisfaction. Massive injections of cheap cash from the European Central Bank late last year bought everyone time and sent stocks and other risky assets screaming higher. But with Europe's economy stalling, that money running out and political frustrations rising, time's up.

That's bringing the endgame into focus, and Europe has two main choices.

One, it can follow the current strategy, get rid of democracy and force the average men, women and children in the weakest parts of Europe to suffer an internal devaluation on a scale not seen since the Great Depression as joblessness grows, wages fall and the cost of living rises.

The second choice would be to vote for a restart, a new beginning, even if it means pain and losses for the big investors and bankers who have thus far been the ones rescued.

Surveying the damage

Europe's prospects are grim.

New data this week confirm a slowdown -- weakness that will only add to the budget issues being faced there as tax revenues drop (due to less sales and income tax) and spending rises (with the need for unemployment pay and social benefits).

Manufacturing activity is contracting quickly. Monday's April flash reading staggered in at a provisional 46.0, two full points below the consensus and well off March's figure of 47.7. Any reading under 50 indicates a month-to-month contraction.

New orders and unfilled orders declined for the 11th straight month, and output fell at its steepest pace since November. Even stalwart Germany couldn't pick up the slack. German manufacturing contracted at a 46.3 pace, down from an already-negative 48.4 and hitting its slowest pace since the depths of recession in January 2009.

Activity in the services sector wasn't much better -- the 47.9 reading was 2.1 points short of the growth threshold, which the market was hoping the index would approach, and more than a point slower than the March reading. Output collapsed in the service sector as well, and unfilled orders declined for the 10th straight month. The decline in new orders makes for eight straight months.

The chief economist at financial services company MarkIt said the readings extend "what appears to be a double-dip recession into a third consecutive quarter."

Separately, the Spanish central bank announced that Spain's economy shrank by 0.5% in the first quarter. The bank added that the Spanish economy "faces several quarters of uncertainty" and is looking for a 1.5% drop in 2012 overall. Austerity measures will bring that figure down even more.

Confidence throughout Europe is slipping badly, as you might expect, and that loss of confidence is driving social unrest and political turbulence. The ISAE consumer confidence index in Italy plummeted from 96.3 to 89, a level last seen in 1996. Istat, the index's publisher, noted a "wave of pessimism in all sectors" and said Italians are anticipating a surge in unemployment over the next few months. French business sentiment dropped 3 points, from 98 to 95.

The reach of chaos

The problem is global, of course, and it is debt. Not just government debt but overall debt, including households, which, in real debt-to-GDP terms, quadrupled in the 18 richest countries between 1980 and 2010. Credit Suisse estimates that the rich world is holding around \$8 trillion in excess credit. This, like an infection, travels through the veins of the economic and financial system and then festers on government balance sheets.

Household debt is elevated in places such as the United States, Spain, Iceland and Ireland, but also in the Netherlands, which is now coming under pressure. Loans eventually sour as home prices fall and wages drop, putting pressure on banks. Governments are forced to backstop the banks as taxpayers subsidize spendthrift consumers and reckless loan officers and bank risk managers. The weak growth that results creates deficit woes.

Whether a country such as Italy (high government debt) or Spain (high household debt) can sustain its leverage depends on its economic competitiveness. The trouble is, competitiveness is low for a variety of reasons: high wages, closed professions, state meddling -- the list is long.

The response from policymakers has been massive central bank intervention mixed with stiff budget austerity, reforms and bank deleveraging. All this is done to placate the equity, credit and credit-derivatives markets and keep cash flowing into troubled countries at low interest rates. This prevents runs on weak banks and holds stock prices higher in an attempt to boost consumer confidence and spending. It's a delicate balancing act prone to failure.

Clearly, it's not working. Over the past year, the unemployment rates in Italy, France, Portugal, Greece and Spain have all increased. Growth is faltering. Inflation has increased on higher food and fuel prices. Real wages are falling. And now, governments are threatened by electorates desperate for a different plan -- and increasingly willing to fight, sometimes violently, for it.

I've been saying for months that the financial elite running this mess risk a rerun of the disastrous 1937 double-dip that extended the Great Depression. Their motivation seems to be a misplaced desire to avoid taking more dramatic action, such as nationalizing zombie banks or creating a new euro bond backed by the entire eurozone.

But offering populations austerity with no end in sight is a recipe for chaos.

A return to Mesopotamia

Is there an answer?

A team at the Boston Consulting Group led by David Rhodes and Daniel Stelter suggests our distant history (.pdf file) offers a way out: A widespread debt restructuring. This was the tradition of ancient Mesopotamia, where debts were commonplace and individual balances were recorded on clay tablets.

Periodically, when a new monarch took power, debts were forgiven. The slate was wiped clean.

Governments such as Spain would follow Greece's example by simply announcing they will only pay a portion of their outstanding debt. In the private sector, homeowners with negative equity would get a principal reduction on their mortgages. Banks would be forced to take massive losses. The Chinese, Saudis and Japanese would take a hit on their reserve bond holdings, too.

But it would end the long, balance-sheet recession and debt deleveraging nightmare we're in.

We've already tried the alternative. The solution coming out of the 2008 financial crisis was to fence off the banks, keep them in private hands using public money and protect the fantasy that government debt is a risk-free asset that banks can rely upon. The results have been uninspiring.

It's time for a fresh start. It's time to let the fire clear the forest.

According to the Boston Consulting Group calculations, the required reboot of the financial system could be paid for with a one-time wealth tax -- which would address the rising income inequality problem that's beginning to worry even the International Monetary Fund. The downside is, it might create a huge backlash by rewarding reckless borrowers, something that fueled the genesis of the Tea Party. (Of course, one could argue the reckless bankers have already been rewarded, as Occupy Wall Street complains.)

It's not a perfect solution. But it's more desirable than the alternative: a protracted downturn spiked with chaos and maybe the rise of tyranny. Just look at what's happening in Hungary.

The BCG report says that if we tip into a new recession now, as the elites' play for time fails, it'll be very, very hard to get back out with government coffers empty and central bankers out of ammunition.

If this happens, it says, "there will be no place to hide."

[20120426-04](#) 11:25 Art Re: "Welcome to Political Chaos" (reply to SteveB, above)

Interesting - why is it all so complicated?

One thing on Greece, I believe it still has the highest ration of Defense spending to GNP in the world. In line with yesterday's discussion on Defense spending.

[20120426-06](#) 12:15 Pam Re: "Welcome to Political Chaos" (reply to SteveB, above)

This is a fascinating article; I think I understand most of it, especially the part about ancient Mesopotamia. Wiping the slate clean sounds like a plan to me. I cannot imagine what will happen if the government raises interest rates on student loans. Loans for education are already like loans from the Mafia: the one debt you can't ever get out of. There will be chaos. I only hope there won't be blood. Unless virtually everyone feels financially secure, there is no security for anyone, including the rich. Republicans like to argue that a big tax on the rich won't solve the budget crisis. I disagree. I think it would go a long way toward easing this crisis and it would be good public relations for Romney & co. Manufacturing has been restructured in recent decades, with a lot of it going overseas, and middle class workers have taken the hit. Now it's time for the "nobility" to pony up. No one proposes reducing the rich to pauperism. They'll still have at least two homes and as many cars as they want. Maybe they won't be able to throw \$4 million birthday parties, but is that a tragedy? I've been living with an austerity budget for over thirty years, this is not an abstraction to me. The Romneys of this world really don't have a clue about how "real" people live. Why people who have no financial worries are so desperate to hang onto their surplus wealth is a mystery to me. Millions of Americans have seen their standard of living slide downwards. The very rich could be taxed up the wazoo and still not have to trim the grocery budget. The queen of Denmark rides a bicycle to get around. She is one of the people, and if she isn't she's at least perceived that way. Good examples need to begin at the top. It's an obscenity that this Presidential campaign is going to be the most costly in history, with the advantage going to the candidate with the most money. The media doesn't ask, How many votes does candidates X have but how much money has he raised?. Money is the measure of all things. It used to be man. If the rich want to keep enjoying the benefits of democracy, they need to be a big part of the solution. The private sector hasn't created enough jobs, and trickle-down economics is voodoo economics. Our only way out is to figure out how to forgive much of middle-class debt, raise taxes on the wealthy, tax capital gains at the same rate as income, and use government money to improve the infrastructure and education, not prop up reckless banks. Obama couldn't let

the banks fail and risk a depression, but the time for protecting bad decisions is over. It is complicated, but at the end of the day it's all about whose goat gets gored. The poor and the middle class have suffered enough. Many have lost their homes and their retirement. Let's see what the rich can give up now. I can already imagine your counter-arguments, SteveBA. Bring it on!

[20120426-08](#) 13:27 SteveB Re: "Welcome to Political Chaos" (reply to Pam, above)

Amen!

[20120426-05](#) 11:53 Art Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to SteveB, above)

I am sure that movie will set hair on fire for some. It is irritating and I wonder how prevalent?

I have tried to get into the conspiracy theory but it is so tedious. I will spend a little more time on it today. It frankly reminds me of all my time in the Arab world. They seem to collectively love conspiracy theories and see the CIA behind every bush. I remember a Tunisian at the General Staff College presenting a paper on the rise of Bourguiba. He really got into his paper but because the presentation was in English he had to read from his paper. My memory at some point was " and then he scratched his nose with his left hand, while holding the pistol clearly showing that he supported the liberation movement only on Tuesdays", and on and on and on.

Thought the AARP letter also interesting. My experience with immigrants has all been pretty positive. They work their butts off for the most part and do a lot of jobs natural born wont do. The other day my neighbor hired a yard service group out of the phone book. All young white men with one exception a black kid. They took three days to do what a couple of Mexicans would have done in a morning. They ordered too much mulch and tried to get the neighbor to pay for the excess amount. Seemed to me they spent most of their time on cell phones or standing around. The only one that worked was the black kid. Not a particularly good example of our youth in action. Things like this are why I have problems with immigrant bashing. Also believe read somewhere that over half the start up business in America are done by immigrants.

[20120426-10](#) 15:10 SteveB Re: "If Even Some of This Is True, Obama Is So Much More Dangerous Than We Thought" (reply to Art, above)

Immigrants, yeh raw! Illegal immigrants, I'm not so sure.

I'm hoping you can tell me if the CIA and intelligence really acts like that. The Obama stuff, as Pam says, seems like science fiction, yet his mother did have a strange life and spoke Russian and had traveled all over...???

Thanks for wading into it...even a little...I love for someone to verify my sanity, even if they're a little crazy themselves...ooops!

[Art, I noticed, yesterday, a poster on the front wall of one of our supermarkets. And this is a poor country, right? It was a poster for a lost golden retriever, with a picture of him and a reward for \$5000! I think they want their doggie back!]

[20120426-07](#) 12:53 SteveB "The R0mney Opportunity"

Amazingly erroneous.

"The Romney Opportunity" *Wall Street Journal* editorial

Apr. 25, 2012,

(http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304723304577365980491312146.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEAD_Top)

Running on biography and the economy won't be enough.

With Newt Gingrich finally leaving the GOP Presidential race, Mitt Romney is now closer to realizing the ambition he has so long pursued: He has an even-money chance to become America's 45th President. He's more likely to fulfill that ambition if he overcomes his cautious nature and runs a campaign that is equal to America's current political moment.

This will not be the instinct of Mr. Romney or his close-knit group of advisers. Looking at the polls, they see a nearly even race, with President Obama below 50% despite the beating Mr. Romney took in the primaries.

The temptation will be to assume the public has decided to fire the incumbent and so run a campaign to become the safe alternative. Take no policy risk, stress Mr. Romney's biography, his attractive family and the seven habits of highly effective businessmen, and then hammer away on the economy.

It's possible, if job creation sputters again or Europe goes into bond-market arrest, that this kind of campaign will be enough to win. It's also possible—more likely in our view—that this will play into Mr. Obama's strengths of personal likability and Oval Office experience, especially if the economy keeps chugging on its current slow-growth path. Mr. Romney will have to make a case not merely against Mr. Obama's failings but also for why he has the better plan to restore prosperity.

On the economy in particular, such a larger argument would fit the country's current mood. The public's anxiety isn't merely about the failures of the last three years, as important as it is for Mr. Romney to score this Administration for its failed stimulus, crony capitalism, hyperregulation, soaring debt and ObamaCare.

Americans are more deeply worried than at any time since the 1970s about their country's long-term prospects. Why aren't middle-class incomes rising? Why are nonmilitary public institutions failing—from K-12 education to entitlements?

Mr. Obama understands these anxieties, even if he has no new answer for them. So his diversionary re-election strategy will be a combination of class warfare, more government subsidies (free student loans!), and personal attacks on Mr. Romney for being wealthy. Mr. Romney will need allies who can rebut these attacks.

But he'll find it easier to defeat Mr. Obama's argument—even to transcend it—if he offers his own economic narrative that reaches back to the mistakes of the Bush Administration to explain how we got here and how he can get us out. Politically, this will help shield Mr. Romney from Mr. Obama's inevitable attempt to link the Republican to the Bush era. Such a critique also has the advantage of being true.

Before Mr. Obama's stimulus, Mr. Bush joined with Nancy Pelosi and Larry Summers on the blunder of "targeted, temporary" tax cuts. Mr. Bush began playing business favorites for ethanol and green energy fads. Republicans in Congress spent like Democrats and protected Fannie Mae and the housing lobby. And Mr. Bush and most Republicans embraced an easy-money Federal Reserve that favored Wall Street and asset bubbles at the expense of real middle-class incomes.

Coming from outside Washington and with his business background, Mr. Romney can make the case for an economic restoration that corrects the mistakes of both the Bush and Obama eras. He can join with the younger generation of GOP reformers—in the states and on Capitol Hill—to pursue an agenda that promises to fix our ailing public institutions, wean Wall Street from Washington, and create more opportunity for all Americans.

This does not require a daily recitation of Paul Ryan's House budget. But it will require more policy content than the gauzy American exceptionalism that Mr. Romney offered in his Tuesday night speech. His remarks had the right tone, the necessary optimism and some nice lines, such as the rebuke of politicians who end up "spreading poverty"

in the name of spreading the wealth. But the speech was policy-free. To be credible, a reform agenda has to have some reform substance.

To offer one example, Mr. Romney might as well go on offense on Medicare. This will no doubt horrify Stuart Stevens and his other advisers, since entitlements are supposed to be a Democratic strength. But it's not as if Mr. Romney can dodge the argument.

He has already endorsed enough of Mr. Ryan's premium-support plan to have to defend it, and Mr. Obama is vulnerable with his Medicare cuts and unaccountable rationing board that are part of ObamaCare. Mr. Romney won't win the election on Medicare, but even a draw will be a political victory. Leading on the debate will show voters he is willing to take on difficult issues and give him a reform mandate if he wins.

One of Mr. Romney's trickiest challenges will be how to handle Mr. Obama's, er, veracity. More than any President we've seen, this incumbent is willing to say things that aren't in the area code of the truth. Thus he gives himself credit for the natural gas drilling boom, the deficits are still Mr. Bush's fault, Mr. Obama has never raised taxes, and "green jobs" in his dream economy are blooming by the millions.

Mr. Romney can't let the President get away with this, or Mr. Obama will conjure a vision of unreality that enough voters might believe. The challenger has to find a way to mock the mirage of an "economy built to last" without sounding arch or personal. He needs his version of Reagan's "there he goes again."

For all of his challenges, the most important political news is that Mr. Romney has a fighting chance to win. The incumbent's accomplishments are unpopular and the economy is failing average Americans. To win the GOP nomination, Mr. Romney has shown reserves of tenacity and discipline. To win the White House, he'll need to show a larger vision and the nerve to pursue it.

20120426-09	13:27	SteveB	"Small Donor Spin" (I'd call it "Blatant Romney Lies")
-------------	-------	--------	--

Here's some great election advice from a commenter to the below article (also good, about how R0mney lies):

Posted by Dan Dean Mutispaugh:

It appears that many Americans don't vote with their pocketbooks or brains. **Try looking at the candidate who will protect your child's public education, college loans, and your Social Security/Medicare, and won't waste your money by starting new wars or trying to revive a Cold War.** Think about it.

Somehow I don't think he's recommending the R0mney.

"Small Donor Spin" by Joshua Chaffee, NOW/MSNBC

Apr. 26, 2012 (<http://nowwithalex.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/04/26/11353456-small-donor-spin?lite>)



A Mitt Romney campaign announcement declaring its latest fundraising figures raised a few eyebrows on our team - not because of the amount of money that was raised, but rather because of how the campaign characterized its contributors. The press release highlighted that "84% Of All Donations Received Through The End Of March Were \$250 Or Less," which seems to suggest a groundswell of grassroots support for the former governor. While the percentage the campaign cites is correct, it doesn't illustrate the role small donors play in the campaign's overall fundraising. A closer look at the numbers reveals that in fact, a majority of Romney's money has come from people who donated the maximum amount of \$2,500 -- 64 percent through March, according to the Campaign Finance Institute (CFI).

What the "84 percent" figure really means is that roughly 8 out of 10 checks received by the Romney campaign were \$250 or less, not that 84% of the campaign's total fundraising came from checks of that size. The press release says these donations have totaled \$11.6, or 13 percent of the nearly \$87 million the campaign has raised so far. But even that doesn't tell the whole story, since it can include donors who have cumulatively given more than \$250 in smaller increments -- for instance, 2,500 checks in the amount of \$1. The CFI weeds out these repeat contributors once they cross certain donation thresholds. We had the CFI crunch the numbers for \$250 and they found just 11 percent of Romney's cash has come from contributions of \$250 or less. When you compare this to his rival, the CFI found 49 percent of the president's fundraising has come from donors who gave \$250 or less.

It's important to note that \$250 is a somewhat arbitrary figure. Reports typically refer to "small donors" as those who have given \$200 or less, as those contributions are filed as "unitemized" with the FEC. The Romney campaign's April FEC file shows his campaign pulled in \$9.1 million from small donations through March 31, which is 10.5 percent of its total fundraising (according to the CFI, that falls to just under 9 percent if you exclude repeat donors who have cumulatively have given more than \$200). On the other hand, Obama for America's latest filing shows \$85 million, or 57.9% of his total haul so far, has come from small donor contributions (44 percent by the CFI calculation).

Team Romney appears eager to tout its small donor support, but looking inside their books shows his campaign is overwhelmingly funded by large checks. The campaign is certainly looking to appeal to more small donors. Currently \$5 buys you a chance to "Grab a Bite with Ann," and in March a \$3 donation gave you a chance to watch a baseball game with the Romney family.

Added pressure for Team Romney is that nearly two-thirds of his money is from supporters who have maxed out their contributions. Not only does the president hold a tremendous advantage in tapping small donors, but just 16 percent of his cash has come from those who have given the full \$2,500.

20120426-11 15:49 SteveB "Killing the Messenger: The Downsizing & Death of the Postal Service"

Has anybody but me noticed that Dean Baker looks a lot like Dennis?

"Killing the Messenger: The Downsizing and Death of the Postal Service" by Dean Baker, NationofChange

Apr. 26, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/killing-messenger-downsizing-and-death-postal-service-1335445785>)

It is fashionable to think of the postal service as an antiquated relic of a different era in the same way that all right-thinking people regarded standard 30-year fixed rate mortgages as old-fashioned at the peak of the housing bubble. Many of the same people who assured us that we could effectively manage risk through mortgage securitization are now anxious to hand the postal service a death sentence.

Death, or at least a near-death experience, is the likely outcome of S.1789, the bill to downsize the Postal Service that the Senate is scheduled to vote on Tuesday night. The bill would end Saturday delivery and also raise the target delivery time from 1-2 days to 2-3 days.

The idea is that people won't generally care if a letter takes three days rather than two to reach its destination. While that is probably true, this will certainly increase the frequency with which a letter takes a week or more to reach its destination, and people do care about and remember these instances. This additional delay is likely to seriously reduce the standing of the Postal Service in most people's eyes, leading to a further erosion of business.

The certain effect of this bill is to cut 100,000 jobs over the next three years. This is somewhat better than the 200,000 job loss that would result from a bill being pushed by Representative Darrell Issa and the House Republicans, but any final bill is likely to end up somewhere in the middle. If we assume 150,000 lost jobs, that is equivalent to more than 5 weeks of job growth at the March rate.

Or, to take another comparison in the news, the Postal Service would be eliminating about 20 times as many jobs as would be created by the Keystone Pipeline. Even if the Postal Service were wracked by waste and inefficiency as its critics contend, it doesn't make sense to apply the ax at a time when the economy is still suffering from massive unemployment. The haste to reduce Postal jobs now will simply add to unemployment.

But the assumption that the Postal Service is an uncompetitive basket case requires closer examination. The Postal Service has been crippled by a series of accounting rulings that have imposed enormous penalties on it ever since it was first established as a government-run company (as opposed to a government agency) in the early '70s.

The initial sin was the division of pension liabilities between the new company and government for its workforce at the time it became independent. A fair division of liabilities would have implied that a private buyer would have paid neither more nor less for the Postal Service due to its remaining pension liabilities.

As the deal went down, the Postal Service was stuck with a large portion of the liabilities that were effectively accrued prior to its establishment as an independent company. Independent auditors put the hit to the postal service in the range of \$50-\$75 billion. That would cover the cumulative losses of the system over the last decade several times over.

The second accounting hit to the Postal Service is the restriction that it can only invest its pension in government bonds, rather than the stocks and other assets held by private pension funds. Since bonds provide a considerably lower rate of return on average, this means the Postal Service must put aside much more money to offer the same pension as a private competitor like UPS.

The difference in returns is a big deal. If the Postal Service will need to pay \$20 billion in pensions in 30 years, it would have to put aside roughly \$2 billion this year using the rate of return assumption that private pensions had traditionally used. On the other hand, it would have to put aside almost \$4 billion using the assumed rate of return on government bonds. The restriction that the pension can only invest in government bonds is a very serious handicap for the Postal Service.

Finally, in 2006 Congress decided that the Postal Service had to rapidly pre-fund its retirement health benefits. The extent of prefunding required by this measure vastly exceeds the level of prefunding for retiree benefits in any private company in the entire country.

If the explicit intent of Congress was to destroy the Postal Service it would be difficult to envision a more effective route than imposing a huge and arbitrary prefunding burden like this one. If the Postal Service had a more reasonable prefunding requirement and were allowed to invest its pension in the same way as private companies, it would have run a profit over the last decade.

This does not change the fact that the Post Service faces enormous challenges going forward. First class mail volume, the system's bread and butter, has collapsed. Some of this is due to the recession, but most of it is clearly technological. It's easier and cheaper to pay bills online.

But the Postal Service can and is moving into new markets. For example, it actually acts as the delivery agent for almost one-third of the packages shipped through FedEx's ground division. Its massive nationwide network offers many potential opportunities, if Congress will give it the chance.

This means relaxing the arbitrary pre-funding restrictions. Caution is great, but Google and Apple didn't get ahead by prefunding their real estate taxes for the next century.

Congress also has to be prepared to allow the Postal Service to win. About a decade ago, the Postal Service had an extremely effective ad campaign highlighting the fact that its express mail service was just a fraction of the price charged for overnight delivery by UPS and FedEx.

The two companies actually went to court to try to stop the ad campaign. When the court told them to get lost, they went to Congress. Their friends in Congress then leaned on the Postal Service and got it to end the ads.

The goal is to have a public Postal Service that can compete effectively in the market. But it's not a fair fight when we shove it into the ring with its shoes tied together and both hands tied behind its back.

20120426-12	19:43	Dale	Ban on Farm Chores — Really?
-----------------------------	-------	------	------------------------------

This is a stupid maneuver on so many levels I cannot believe it has happened.

1. The rules demonstrate a lack of understanding of farm life and work ethic.
2. It plays directly into the Conservative belief that the Obama administration and progressive liberals are ready at every turn to introduce intrusive meddling in private citizens lives.
3. It supports those who believe large city liberals, the core of the left, think they know better than everyone else what is good for them and centralized government control is the answer for all perceived ills.

Tactically, I can think of few moves that will motivate the right to action more than this simpleton rule, and what good does it achieve.....for anyone? No one is going to jump up and say "Woo Hoo, what a brilliant a necessary thing this is." But, it will tick off a lot of people in farming states. It is another boneheaded decision that demonstrates what a lame administration this is. What were they thinking?

20120426-15	23:58	SteveB	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to Dale, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

I wasn't sure what you were referring to, Dale, so I had to look it up. The Press Release appears to be from almost a year ago. I wasn't aware of this story, so thank you!

Looks to me like they aren't talking about the family farm (and children have NO place in grain bins or silos!):

"Prohibited places of employment," a Department press release read, "would include country grain elevators, grain bins, silos, feed lots, stockyards, livestock exchanges and livestock auctions."

It seems like they're only talking about places where employers might replace adult labor with child labor, and with so many adults not working, this seems like a good thing to me.

I knew this didn't sound right. It's been vastly distorted by your right-wing news media. I grew up in farming country, I worked on farms, I know there are real dangers there and I see no harm in protecting children from them. That's all the proposed changes are about, not what you imply that kids won't be able to work on their farms doing chores. Simply not true.

Also, President Obama is NOT the Dept. of Labor.

From the press release: **"The FLSA also provides a complete exemption for youths employed on farms owned by their parents."**

It is the "Information Age" so we might as well take advantage of it. I have also included an article I found which seems to completely misinterpret what's actually happening.

WHD News Release: (08/31/2011) (<http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/whd/WHD20111250.htm>)

Contact Name: Laura McGinnis or Sonia Melendez
Phone Number: (202) 693-4653 or x4672
Release Number: 11-1250-NAT

US Labor Department proposes updates to child labor regulations

Aims to improve safety of young workers employed in agriculture and related fields

(WASHINGTON) The U.S. Department of Labor is proposing revisions to child labor regulations that will strengthen the safety requirements for young workers employed in agriculture and related fields. The agricultural hazardous occupations orders under the Fair Labor Standards Act that bar young workers from certain tasks have not been updated since they were promulgated in 1970.

The department is proposing updates based on the enforcement experiences of its Wage and Hour Division, recommendations made by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and a commitment to bring parity between the rules for young workers employed in agricultural jobs and the more stringent rules that apply to those employed in nonagricultural workplaces. The proposed regulations would not apply to children working on farms owned by their parents.

"Children employed in agriculture are some of the most vulnerable workers in America," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "Ensuring their welfare is a priority of the department, and this proposal is another element of our comprehensive approach."

The proposal would strengthen current child labor regulations prohibiting agricultural work with animals and in pesticide handling, timber operations, manure pits and storage bins. It would prohibit farmworkers under age 16 from participating in the cultivation, harvesting and curing of tobacco. And it would prohibit youth in both agricultural and nonagricultural employment from using electronic, including communication, devices while operating power-driven equipment.

The department also is proposing to create a new nonagricultural hazardous occupations order that would prevent children under 18 from being employed in the storing, marketing and transporting of farm product raw materials. Prohibited places of employment would include country grain elevators, grain bins, silos, feed lots, stockyards, livestock exchanges and livestock auctions.

Additionally, the proposal would prohibit farmworkers under 16 from operating almost all power-driven equipment. A similar prohibition has existed as part of the nonagricultural child labor provisions for more than 50 years. A

limited exemption would permit some student learners to operate certain farm implements and tractors, when equipped with proper rollover protection structures and seat belts, under specified conditions.

The Wage and Hour Division employs a combination of enforcement, compliance assistance and collaboration strategies in partnership with states and community-based organizations to protect children working in the United States. When violations of law are found, the division uses all enforcement tools necessary to ensure accountability and deter future violations.

The division is responsible for enforcing the FLSA, which establishes federal child labor provisions for both agricultural and nonagricultural employment, and charges the secretary of labor with prohibiting employment of youth in occupations that she finds and declares to be particularly hazardous for them. The FLSA establishes a minimum age of 18 for hazardous work in nonagricultural employment and 16 in agricultural employment. Once agricultural workers reach age 16, they are no longer subject to the FLSA's child labor provisions. The FLSA also provides a complete exemption for youths employed on farms owned by their parents.

The public is invited to provide comments on this important proposal, which must be received by Nov. 1. A public hearing on the proposal will be held following the comment period. More information, including a complete list of the proposed revisions, will be available in the Federal Register on Sept. 2.

"Farm Chores for Kids May Soon Be Against the Law" by Norm Van Ness, WNWO Meteorology Dept.

Apr. 26, 2012, (<http://www.northwestohio.com/news/story.aspx?id=746778#.T5pmx6tSSRQ>)

There are still a bunch of family farms here in NW Ohio and SE Michigan. Membership in the Future Farmers of America and 4-H clubs is still healthy and strong.

But a new measure being worked through the U.S. Department of Labor could soon outlaw kids under the age of 18 from doing many of the daily chores family farms need done each day to get by.

The rule has already drawn criticism from members of Congress who represent rural districts and the prospect is proving equally unpalatable for the children the rule is meant to 'protect'.

The Labor Department says "Under the rules, children under 18 could no longer work in the storing, marketing and transporting of farm product raw materials."

"Prohibited places of employment," a Department press release read, "would include country grain elevators, grain bins, silos, feed lots, stockyards, livestock exchanges and livestock auctions."

A County Farm Bureau president, Jeff Clark, explains that the problem isn't merely about farm families losing vital labor from their children.

He told educationnews.org, "Losing that work-ethic — it's so hard to pick this up later in life. There's other ways to learn how to farm, but it's so hard. You can learn so much more working on the farm when you're 12, 13, 14 years old."

The new regulations were first proposed last August by Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, and will additionally revoke approval of safety training and certification by independent groups like the F.F.A. and 4-H, instead mandating a federal 90-hour government training course.

Republican Senator Jerry Moran, from Kansas, was already angry about farmers being cited by inspectors for chores that the Labor Department didn't think were age appropriate and the new regulations will only exacerbate this problem.

"The consequences of the things that you put in your regulations lack common sense," Moran said. "And in my view, if the federal government can regulate the kind of relationship between parents and their children on their

own family's farm, there is almost nothing off-limits in which we see the federal government intruding in a way of life."

Do you think kids should be banned from common farm chores? Would the ban be detrimental to already suffering family farm operations? Relate your experiences as a kid on the farm...and what that work means now to you as an adult.

20120426-13	20:09	MarthaH	"Americans Put to Shame by Immigrants on Sample Civics Test"
-------------	-------	---------	--

"Americans Put to Shame by Immigrants on Sample Civics Test" by Gregory Korte, AP

Apr. 26, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-04-26/immigrant-civics-test-americans-fail/54563612/1>)

(WASHINGTON) Immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship have to pass a 10-question civics test asking basic questions about American history and government, and about 93% succeed.

But only 65% of native-born Americans could get the required six out of 10 right answers when asked the same questions in a telephone poll.

That's the finding from the Center for the Study of the American Dream at Xavier University in Cincinnati, which commissioned the telephone survey of 1,023 native-born Americans last month. Michael Ford, the director of the center, said the results are particularly troubling in an election year featuring competing visions of a Constitution that many citizens may not understand.

"If we are civic illiterates, the chances of losing our freedom is greater than being invaded by aliens or a foreign country," he said.

Most Americans agree. In a separate survey, 77% said all Americans ought to be able to pass the citizenship test, and 60% said it should be a requirement for high school graduation.

The survey was designed to mimic the actual test. The 10 questions were selected from the same bank of 100 questions that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) uses. Like the test, the answers are open-ended — no multiple choice — and can have multiple valid answers.

One difference: Unlike citizenship candidates, the survey respondents didn't have time to study.

"The citizenship candidates who have decided to file their application for naturalization and begin their life in the United States, they want it really bad," said Christopher Bentley, a USCIS spokesman. "That said, it is stuff that people would have learned in Civics 101 class."

They are not learning it, said Gene Koo, director of iCivics, an education non-profit founded by Sandra Day O'Connor, a former Supreme Court justice. Many schools aren't teaching civics as they used to — an unintended consequence of the justifiable emphasis on science and math, he said.

"We always assumed that those who grew up here were getting that in the school system. That stopped being true a couple decades ago, and you can see the results of that in this study," he said.

Ford noted that 44% of those with a high school education or less passed the test, rising to 82% among college grads. "They're still getting whopped by immigrants. ... I don't blame the educational system. We have personal responsibilities as citizens. Not just rights."

[My wife just passed this last year in Tampa. Got 100%. It's really extremely easy if you know English –SteveB]

[20120426-14](#) 20:42 SteveG Upcoming '60 Minutes' Segment on Torture

On Sunday April 29, 2012 be certain to watch "60 Minutes." Segment on enhanced interrogation, water boarding, torture, whatever you want to call it – all authorized by the CI and up. Make you proud?

[20120426-16](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: American Farm Life

<http://costonscomplaint.blogspot.com/2011/12/department-of-labor-outlaws-american.html>



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #127 — APR. 30, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

Mitt R0mney Is a Liar

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 30, 2012)

We knew "unrealism" would be the strategy.

It starts with contempt for one's fellow man, which comes, ultimately, from self-hatred. We never hear confessions of empathy from the Right. Even when advocating the dismemberment of our meager social safety net, we never hear anything like, "Well, I certainly do feel sorry for those people who are going to suffer and die as a result of this policy, but it is in the best interest of the country." Unstated: Because the rich need to pay ridiculously low taxes—Richey-Rich R0mney pays 15% or less, about half of what you might be paying if you're an average middle class wage earner (29%).

"Mitt Romney's Campaign Pledges Raise Questions" by Charles Babington, Huffington Post

Apr. 27, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/27/mitt-romneys-campaign_n_1459587.html?ref=topbar)

(WASHINGTON) Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is making campaign promises that could produce an economic miracle – or a more predictable list of broken vows.

Romney says he wants to put the nation on a path to a balanced budget while also cutting an array of taxes, building up the Navy and Air Force and adding 100,000 active-duty military personnel. He says he would slash domestic spending and reduce tax loopholes but has offered few details.

His comments raise eyebrows in Congress, long accustomed to easier-said-than-done promises. And even some conservatives have their doubts.

Christopher A. Preble, a vice president for the libertarian Cato Institute, says **Romney's promise to push military spending to 4 percent of the national economy would require dramatic increases that would raise, not lower, the federal deficit.**

Citing "the absurdity of Romney's plan," Preble wrote recently that the candidate "hasn't said what other spending he will cut, or what taxes he would increase."

"Until he does," Preble wrote, "it is logical to conclude that he plans to pile on more debt."

Romney says he will avoid that problem by making courageous cuts to federal programs if elected.

"I have three major ways that we can get ourselves to a balanced budget," he told voters this month in Warwick, R.I. "Number one is to eliminate some programs. Stop, eliminate them. Not just slow down their rate of growth. But look at programs and say, 'Too many, too big, too expensive, too ineffective, get rid of it.' Some programs you're going to like. I'm going to ask for sacrifice. But the sacrifice will not be taking more from your wallet.... **I'm not going to give anybody any free stuff.**"

Other Romney proposals would make states responsible for programs such as Medicaid, and reduce the federal workforce by 10 percent "through attrition."

It's not uncommon for candidates to promise unspecified spending cuts. Often, however, they find it extremely difficult to fulfill the pledges once elected. That's one reason the nation's debt has soared under Republican and Democratic presidents and congresses alike.

Romney has shown little willingness to cut popular programs so far. He joined President Barack Obama, and bucked some House Republicans, by backing an extension of low college loan rates for middle-income students, a \$6 billion government cost.

Voters may understand that candidates can't or won't keep all their promises.

"You campaign in fiction, and govern in fact," said Tom Davis, a former congressman who headed the Republicans' House campaign committee from 1998 to 2002.

He noted that Obama quickly backed off his campaign promise to close the Guantanamo Bay prison. Obama also pledged to tamp down Washington's partisan tone and to overhaul immigration laws, neither of which has happened.

Davis said it's the general thrust of Romney's proposals that matters most, not every specific item.

"What he's trying to do is sketch a different vision," Davis said. Details of how Romney's proposals will pan out, if he's elected, "will be determined by Congress and events," he said.

Rep. Steve LaTourette, R-Ohio, said Romney's proposals "are aspirations" more than firm promises. If elected, Romney may have to revisit his current rejection of tax increases and his vow to leave Social Security and Medicare unchanged for current and soon-to-be recipients, LaTourette said.

Romney and Obama "have to come to the realization that a big deal," which includes tax increases, spending cuts and changes to Social Security and Medicare, "is the only way" to address the nation's deficit dilemma, LaTourette said.

Romney calls for a host of tax cuts. But independent analysts say they will worsen the deficit unless offset by deep and politically unpopular spending cuts.

Romney would keep the Bush-era tax cuts, and further reduce all marginal income tax rates by 20 percent. He says he would lower the corporate tax rate, eliminate the estate tax, push a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution and make \$500 billion in unspecified domestic discretionary spending cuts in 2016.

He wants wider exploration for energy, including oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or ANWR.

Such promises draw loud cheers at GOP rallies. But for decades, Republican-run and Democratic-run congresses alike have rejected ANWR drilling, a balanced budget amendment, deep spending cuts and other mainstays of Romney's campaign.

Whether these campaign ideas are called proposals, aspirations or promises, they are easier to talk about than to achieve.

20120427-01

08:53

Dale

Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! & "Child Labor Groups Upset Farm Rules Being Dropped" (reply to SteveB, Apr. 26, 2012)

Although you don't get it and surprisingly (maybe not so surprisingly) chose to reinforce the stereotype that "government knows best," the Labor Dept has withdrawn the proposed rules.

[See below. –SteveB]

As I said before, the concept, the execution and the timing were wrong on multiple levels. It represented more intrusion and more cost to monitor and enforce, even if that were possible. It brought to the surface again that the Secretary of Labor (and Obama) has no experience in rural life, yet seeks to impose their values and imply that parents cannot figure out how to raise and protect their children without Big Brother's help. Finally, strictly from a political perspective, why would they want to go out of their way to present this now? The answer is, nobody thought it through. It was another example of poor leadership or no leadership and an embarrassing reversal when there was a bipartisan blow back. The Rookie is still making Rookie moves, even after being in office for three years.

In the larger scheme of life, this is really a fairly petty issue. But, it is one more example. What infuriates small business owners are hundreds of seemingly "little" rules this administration has introduced that create wasted effort and expense without offering any benefit, at least in their opinion. More rules, more cost for government and businesses, lower earnings to be plowed back into growing an enterprise, fewer employees, less tax revenue.....this is the model that shows up, even when the intentions are good.

I am a little disappointed you chose the party line and didn't look more objectively at the issue, but I guess that's the way it is going to be from here until the election. After Romney gets elected, I'll get to read a bunch of bellyaching about how Obama was jobbed and it was someone else's fault. The Hidden Hand. A Conspiracy. Start working on your excuses.

"Child Labor Groups Upset Farm Rules Being Dropped" by Sam Hananel, AP

Apr. 27, 2012,

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_FARM_LABOR?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2012-04-26-19-44-56

(WASHINGTON) Child labor groups say they are stunned and disappointed that the Obama administration is backing off a plan that would have prevented children from working on the most dangerous farm jobs.

Reid Maki, coordinator of the Child Labor Coalition, said the Labor Department's sudden decision late Thursday to withdraw the proposed rules means more children will die in farm accidents that could have been prevented.

"There was tremendous heat, and I don't think it helped that it was an election year," he said. "A lot of conservatives made a lot of political hay out of this issue."

Under pressure from farm groups and lawmakers from rural states, Labor Department said it is withdrawing proposed rules that would ban children younger than 16 from using most power-driven farm equipment, including tractors. The rules also would prevent those younger than 18 from working in feed lots, grain silos and stockyards.

The plan specifically excluded children who work on farms owned or operated by their parents. But the proposal still became a popular political target for Republicans who called it an impractical, heavy-handed regulation that ignored the reality of small farms.

"It's good the Labor Department rethought the ridiculous regulations it was going to stick on farmers and their families," said Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa. "To even propose such regulations defies common sense and shows a real lack of understanding as to how the family farm works."

The surprise move comes just two months after the Labor Department modified the rule in a bid to satisfy opponents. **The agency made clear it would exempt children who worked on farms owned or operated by their parents, even if the ownership was part of a complex partnership or corporate agreement.**

That didn't appease farm groups like the American Farm Bureau that complained it would upset traditions in which many children work on farms owned by uncles, grandparents and other relatives to reduce costs and learn how a farm operates. **The Labor Department said Thursday it was responding to thousands of comments** that expressed concern about the impact of the changes on small family-owned farms.

"The Obama administration is firmly committed to promoting family farmers and respecting the rural way of life, especially the role that parents and other family members play in passing those traditions down through the generations," the agency said in a statement.

Instead, the agency said it would work with rural stakeholders, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Farmers Union and 4-H to develop an educational program to reduce accidents to young workers.

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., a grain farmer known to till his fields on weekends away from Washington, had come out strongly against the proposed rule. The Democrat continued to criticize the Obama administration rule even after it was tempered, saying the Labor Department "clearly didn't get the whole message" from Montana's farmers and ranchers.

Tester, who is in a tough race for re-election, on Thursday praised the decision to withdraw the rule and said he would fight "any measure that threatens that heritage and our rural way of life."

The move disappointed child safety groups who said the rules represent long-overdue protections for children working for hire in farm communities. Three-quarters of working children under 16 who died of work-related injuries in 2010 were in agriculture, according to the Child Labor Coalition.

(Associated Press writer Matt Gouras in Helena, Mont., contributed to this report.)

20120427-02 09:48 SteveB Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to Dale, above)

Then... It sounds a lot like government of the people working well, does it not? ("The Labor Dept. said it was responding to thousands of comments...")

This second article you sent ("Child Labor Groups Upset Farm Rules Being Dropped") is much more honest about the story than the party line from the Right referenced in your first email. It is so interesting to me that you ironically accuse me of following some party line of the left on this issue which, as far as I know, doesn't exist. As I said, I had never even heard of this story until you brought it to my attention. It was evidently a big deal in the Right-wing press, but not anywhere else. So, somehow, my quoting the press release from the Dept. of Agriculture was the same as disbursing propaganda. I'm sorry...it is not the same at all. Another major irony from the Right, you know?

By the way, all my life I've been a small businessman, and all my life I've heard complaints about rules and their cost, ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK! These small costs simply get passed on. Necessary? It's a free country. Is everything the most efficient possible? No. Are all rules bad? No. What is it, exactly, you have in mind?

By the way, a huge percentage of small businesses in the U.S. have no noticeable federal regulations affecting them, or paperwork or bothersome rules of any kind. My businesses and businesses I am familiar with never did. Are you taking about taxes? Well, la de da. The states handle almost all regulation of small business. I would guess

somewhere between 90% and 95%. So how can President Obama "destroy" the country and the business world so effectively?

I talk to small business owners almost every day in the U.S. and I don't know anyone sane who is "infuriated". Who are these people and what are they infuriated about, exactly? That there is a black man in the White House who acts more like a Republican than a Democrat? Do these "infuriated" small business owners want higher interest rates on their loans? Do they want higher taxes? Do they want higher labor costs? Are they infuriated about these all-important components of business? ALL ARE AT HISTORICALLY OPTIMAL LEVELS FOR SMALL BUSINESS RIGHT NOW, AS WE SPEAK! Seriously, am I wrong?

I remember doctors crying the worst during the Medicare debate. Oh, they wouldn't be able to handle the paperwork. Now doctors love Medicare and studies have proven even that rather large amount of paperwork to be surprisingly inexpensive for an existing office to process and well worth that cost.

How is there a "party line", my friend? I merely read the press release that the Right-wing media could not bother to interpret properly because maybe they can't read that well. All I did is re-state what the press release said: that family farms were omitted. It was nothing like you or the media claimed. Fact. Why run away from it?

Can't you see the extreme lies of the media in this, to claim some titanic deal that is a lie and tie it around President Obama's neck?

I find your election predictions interesting...but your candidate is so amazingly weak! And I well remember the predictions from the Right before the 2008 election. R0mney doesn't have a single real idea or principle in his head. He is going to be eaten alive in the first debate and will be afraid to debate after that. And that will be the election. Women, Hispanics, blacks, the poor, union members, teachers, students, and smart people will turn more and more against the Mittens. His unfavorable ratings will soar. That's my prediction. There's a reason there were no Republican non-zero candidates this year. This is one election that no sea of money and no mountain of lies can steal. Mark my words.

I look forward to your rejoinder. Have a great weekend.

20120427-05	11:21	Dale	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	------	--

Have a nice weekend Steve. This is my 7th day on the road and I'll be happy to get home.

20120427-03	09:55	Pam	Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (FotM Newsletter #126)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Robert Reich is my hero. He's just about the smartest, most reasonable, clearest thinking, most open-minded person on the public stage these days. I agree completely with his economic recommendations and his general philosophy of life. What sets him apart from all the other political voices bombarding us is his civility. He is serious but not angry, and he doesn't seek to inflame his audience. I've been trying in this forum to pry some honest discussion out of our conservative friends, but all I get is name-calling, misrepresentation, and avoidance of any substantive argument. I don't want to know what someone is (liberal, conservative, Martian), I want to know what he wants the government to do and WHY. Conservatives carry on about values and morality as if liberals couldn't possibly be "good" people. That may not be racial profiling, but it sure is political profiling. That's just one step away from religious profiling, which we already see in the Muslim community. We should all take Mr. Reich as a model. I always feel that the person who loses his temper has lost the argument.

20120427-06	11:42	Art	Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (reply to Pam, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Very well said and a source of frustration for us all.

[20120427-07](#) 12:17 SteveB Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (reply to Pam, above) / Obama vs. R0mney

Now yer talking my language, Pam! French! OMFG!

I really think these Republicans are going to waste vast sums of money this election simply alienating more and more of the electorate with their obvious poisoning of the airwaves. What can they say about O that they haven't shouted out a million times? Do they have DNA proof that he's an alien? Are Michelle and the daughters prostitutes? Does O have a lover in Colombia?

Gee, maybe they'll have to talk about the issues...but R. will not. His only prescription seems to be that he will be George W. Bush II, with more of the same that got us into the mess in the first place.

I simply do not understand the latest poll results I have seen, showing it to be close between R and O. How can that be possible? I'd say it must be about even among white males. Period! Among women O must be leading 2-to-1.

If not, he shortly will be. Hispanics don't cotton to R one bit, even if they are lukewarm to O. Blacks? Get serious! Mormons? I think many of them have their doubts.

I don't think any knowledgeable person in the Republican Party thinks R can win, that's why no credible candidates ran against him. It's a dead end. But fortunately, he can select a home, go there, and play with his car elevator.

As my mother used to say, lies and bad deeds come home to roost with the chickens eventually. This is what will happen to the GOP. I can't wait for that first debate. It will be historic. Like Lincoln and ("Oops") Douglas.

I'm so happy we have our Lincoln!

[20120427-04](#) 11:03 Art Re: "Americans Put to Shame by Immigrants on Sample Civics Test" (reply to MarthaH, Apr. 26, 2012)

Maybe this explains how supposedly thinking adults can still support the Republican agenda.

[20120427-08](#) 13:34 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Action: Donate \$5 to Assist "Republican Political Suicide"

from MoveOn:

In 2008, young people voted in record numbers and went for President Obama over John McCain by more than 2-to-1.¹ This year, every election expert agrees that if that happens again, Obama will win easily—and the Democrats will probably win back the Congress.

And now Republicans have handed us a golden opportunity to fire up young people to vote in 2012.

You see, because of Republican obstruction in Congress, interest rates on college loans are set to double this July—pouring even more debt on a generation already drowning in student loans. President Obama is pushing Congress to stop it, but as usual Republicans have dug in their heels.²

To make sure young people know what's happening, we're launching one of the largest online ad campaigns in MoveOn history—putting ads on the Facebook page of every college student in America to warn them about this Armageddon of student debt.

We've already tested several versions of these ads, and we know they're effective at getting students to take action. But we'll have to scrap the plan unless we can raise \$200,000 from MoveOn members.

Can you chip in \$5? Yes, I can contribute \$5 to help make sure young people vote in 2012:

https://civ.moveon.org/donatec4/studentdebt.html?bg_id=hpc5&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=1.

MoveOn has already heard from hundreds of thousands of young people freaking out about this—and we're already working to make sure they call Congress, register to vote, and keep taking action on campus.

But really, we need to reach the millions of young people who aren't hearing about this, and hands down the best way to reach them is on Facebook.

Facebook ads are awesome because unlike TV, radio, or newspaper ads, people can click on them and sign up to take action. And of course, Facebook is where young voters spend so much of their time.

Nothing strikes fear into the hearts of Republican strategists like the idea of another wave of young voter turnout like in 2008, and this Republican war on students gives us a chance to make it happen, if we can act fast.

Student debt has become an absolutely explosive issue among young people. Since 1999, student loan debt has increased by more than 500%. You may not realize it if you don't have kids or if you went to college 10 or 20 years ago, but it now costs on average more than \$21,000 a year to go to a public school with in-state tuition. The best private schools are almost triple that much.³

In fact, we've seen two of the largest petitions in MoveOn history in recent months calling on Congress to provide relief for those drowning in student debt. This is a sleeping giant of an issue, and in the coming weeks it can really blow up.

The Republicans' doubling of interest rates is just the latest attack on students. For years they've been slashing funding for higher education, leading directly to skyrocketing tuition at public colleges and universities. Just last year, they cut \$8 billion out of the Pell Grant program for low-income students and reduced the income threshold for eligibility for a full Pell Grant.⁴

This is the ultimate teachable moment for young voters, showing them who's on their side and why it's so important to vote. With your help, we can make this one of the key turning points of the 2012 election.

Thanks for all you do.

--Steven, Joan, Wes, Marika, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"Young Voters in the 2008 Election," Pew Research Center for People & the Press, November 12, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274743&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=5>.

²"Obama To Make Student Loans a Campaign Issue," Slate, April 20, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274744&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=6>.

³"Chart of the Day: Student Loans Have Grown 511% Since 1999," The Atlantic, August 18, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274368&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=7>.

"College costs climb, yet again," CNN Money, October 29, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274745&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=8>.

⁴"Student loan rate hike: What you need to know," CNN Money, April 24, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274746&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=9>.

Paid for by MoveOn.org Civic Action, www.moveon.org, not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee. Want to support our work? MoveOn Civic Action is entirely funded by our 7 million members—no corporate contributions, no big checks from CEOs. And our tiny staff ensures that small contributions go a long way.

20120427-10

15:37

SteveB

Fw: USAction Action: Tell Congress: Don't Let Student Loan Rates Double

Come to think of it...banks have been paying essentially 0% interest to borrow money from the Fed or from depositors.

Why should student loan rates be so high to begin with? Why doesn't the Fed loan that money directly to students at, say, 1% interest and everybody would be better off. With the current rate of bank closures (six so far this month), the students would probably be a better risk for the government.

But the voice of big money and big banks talks very loudly in our society, does it not?

from USAction:

We thought it was a pretty reasonable idea for Congress to act before student loan rates double for millions of middle class students. But GOP Senate candidate Todd Akin just denounced YOU as part of a massive 'stage 3 cancer of socialism' for even suggesting that billionaires, not students, should chip in to fix our budget and economy.

Look - it's just plain cowardly to take from our students to protect CEO tax giveaways and Big Oil handouts. The House just voted on this TODAY and we can't win without you - tell Congress right here, because they need to hear it.

Tell Congress: Don't let student loan rates double.

<http://usaction.org/2012/04/action-dont-let-the-gop-double-student-loan-interest-rates-on-july-1st/>

We need to make college more affordable, not less. But some in Congress seem to have it backwards. First, under the Ryan Budget, Republicans have proposed eliminating Pell Grants for two million students.

And now, unless Congress acts soon, an important loan program that serves almost 8 million college students will double its interest rates! With the House vote today, now Republicans are refusing to prevent interest rates from rising unless they slash preventative care for women and cancer screenings! That's just wrong.

We all know that making college affordable for all Americans isn't just the right thing to do — it's right for the economy. Right for an America that wants to compete in the world. The U.S. once ranked first in college graduation rates; now we rank 12th.¹

That's just not right.

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) and Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT) have introduced the Student Loan Affordability Act, a bill that will prevent the interest rates on nearly 8 million Stafford loans from doubling — an increase that would cost the average student \$5,000.

Americans now owe more in tuition debt than credit card debt, with total outstanding student loan debt in America expected to exceed \$1 trillion this year.² Millions of hardworking, taxpaying, educated Americans are being crushed under the weight of their educational debts and it's doing further damage to our economy — students with outstanding debt can't buy homes and can't contribute to the economy as full consumers.

We need a real economic stimulus and jobs plan. Investing in our students is the way to do it.

Tell Congress to not let student loan rates double before it's too late!

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

¹<http://abcnews.go.com/WN/president-barack-obama-outlines-college-education-goal-university/story?id=11359759#.T5HHKYVnKyY>

²<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/20/education/student-loan-interest-rates-loom-as-political-battle.html>

P.S. Want to take it one step further? Chip in \$5 now so we can keep fighting for college affordability:

<http://act.truemajority.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=EtNdS9ZXRhoYG6D9C14P8m39imHoxaH>.

20120427-17	19:29	SteveG	"Student Loan Rate Extension Passed Under Threat of Veto" & More
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

GAMES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

"Student Loan Rate Extension Passed Under Threat of Veto" by Chris Moody, Yahoo!/ABC News

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/student-loan-rate-extension-passed-threat-veto/story?id=16229243#.T51S0qtSSRQ>)

The House on Friday passed a Republican version of a bill that would extend the low 3.4 percent rate on government-subsidized student loans, despite pressure from conservative groups to oppose the measure and a veto threat from the White House.

The Republican bill, which passed by a close vote of 215-195, would extend the low interest rate on student loans for one year. Unless Republicans and Democrats can agree on a final bill, the rate for federally subsidized students loans will double this year. Democrats support extending the rate, but disagree with the way Republicans want to pay for it.

To make up for the \$5.9 billion shortfall that comes with an extension of the low rate, Republicans offered to eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which was created by the 2010 Affordable Care Act. The White House issued a statement before the vote vowing to veto the Republican House version, a promise that the debate over the legislation will continue.

"Student Loan Rate Extension Opposed by Conservative Groups Like Club for Growth" by Chris Moody, Yahoo! News/The Ticket

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/student-loan-rate-extension-opposed-conservative-groups-club-153247016.html>)

"Obama Would Veto Republican Student Loan Bill, Says White House" by Olivier Knox, Yahoo! News/The Ticket

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/obama-veto-republican-student-loan-bill-says-white-160233278.html>)

20120427-09	13:41	Jim	A Simple, Logical Declaration
-----------------------------	-------	-----	-------------------------------

If a statement is the truth, you should be able to check it out and accept it no matter who said first or passed it on.

If a statement is false or a lie, identifying a source or authority (the liar) does not convert it to the truth nor does repeating it over the airwaves or internet.

20120427-11

15:49

SteveB

"The GOP's Death Wish: Why Republicans Can't Stop Pi*sing Off Hispanics, Women & Young People"

"The GOP's Death Wish: Why Republicans Can't Stop Pi*sing Off Hispanics, Women, and Young People" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Apr. 26, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/gop-s-death-wish-why-republicans-can-t-stop-pissing-hispanics-women-and-young-people-1335509215>)

What are the three demographic groups whose electoral impact is growing fastest? Hispanics, women, and young people. Who are Republicans pi*sing off the most? Latinos, women, and young people.

It's almost as if the GOP can't help itself.

Hispanics

Start with Hispanic voters, whose electoral heft keeps growing as they comprise an ever-larger portion of the electorate. Hispanics now favor President Obama over Romney by more than two to one, according to a recent Pew poll.

The movement of Hispanics into the Democratic camp has been going on for decades. What are Republicans doing to woo them back? Replicating California Republican Governor Pete Wilson's disastrous support almost twenty years ago for Proposition 187 – which would have screened out undocumented immigrants from public schools, health care, and other social services, and required law-enforcement officials to report any "suspected" illegals. (Wilson, you may remember, lost that year's election, and California's Republican Party has never recovered.)

The Arizona law now before the Supreme Court – sponsored by Republicans in the state and copied by Republican legislators and governors in several others – would authorize police to stop anyone looking Hispanic and demand proof of citizenship. It's nativism disguised as law enforcement.

Romney is trying to distance himself from that law, but it's not working. That may be because he dubbed it a "model law" during February's Republican primary debate in Arizona, and because its author (former state senator Russell Pearce, who was ousted in a special election last November largely by angry Hispanic voters) says he's working closely with Romney advisers.

Hispanics are also reacting to Romney's attack just a few months ago on GOP rival Texas Governor Rick Perry for supporting in-state tuition at the University of Texas for children of undocumented immigrants. And to Romney's advocacy of what he calls "self-deportation" – making life so difficult for undocumented immigrants and their families that they choose to leave.

As if all this weren't enough, the GOP has been pushing voter ID laws all over America, whose obvious aim is to intimidate Hispanic voters so they won't come to the polls. But they may have the opposite effect – emboldening the vast majority of ethnic Hispanics, who are American citizens, to vote in even greater numbers and lend even more support to Obama and other Democrats.

Women

Or consider women – whose political and economic impact in America continues to grow (women are fast becoming better educated than men and the major breadwinners in American homes). The political gender gap is huge. According to recent polls, women prefer Obama to Romney by over 20 percent.

So what is the GOP doing to woo women back? Attacking them. Last February, House Republicans voted to cut off funding to Planned Parenthood. Last May, they unanimously passed the "No Taxpayer Funding for

Abortion Act," banning the District of Columbia from funding abortions for low-income women. (The original version removed all exceptions – rape, incest, and endangerment to a mother's life – except "forcible" rape.)

Earlier this year Republican legislators in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Idaho, and Alabama pushed bills requiring women seeking abortions to undergo invasive vaginal ultrasound tests (Pennsylvania Republicans even wanted proof such had viewed the images).

Republican legislators in Georgia and Arizona passed bills banning most abortions after twenty weeks of pregnancy. The Georgia bill would also require that any abortion after 20 weeks be done in a way to bring the fetus out alive. Republican legislators in Texas have voted to eliminate funding for any women's healthcare clinic with an affiliation to an abortion provider – even if the affiliation is merely a shared name, employee, or board member.

All told, over 400 Republican bills are pending in state legislatures, attacking womens' reproductive rights.

But even this doesn't seem enough for the GOP. Republicans in Wisconsin just repealed a law designed to prevent employers from discriminating against women.

College Students

Or, finally, consider students – a significant and growing electoral force, who voted overwhelmingly for Obama in 2008. What are Republicans doing to woo them back? Attack them, of course.

Republican Budget Chair Paul Ryan's budget plan – approved by almost every House Republican and enthusiastically endorsed by Mitt Romney – allows rates on student loans to double on July 1 – from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. That will add an average of \$1,000 a year to student debt loads, which already exceed credit-card debt.

House Republicans say America can't afford the \$6 billion a year it would require to keep student loan rates down to where they are now. But that same Republican plan gives wealthy Americans trillions of dollars in tax cuts over the next decade. (Under mounting political pressure, House Republicans have come up with just enough money to keep the loan program going for another year – safely past Election Day – by raiding a fund established for preventive care in the new health-care act.)

Here again, Romney is trying to tiptoe away from the GOP position. He now says he supports keeping student loans where they were. Yet only a few months ago he argued that subsidized student loans were bad because they encouraged colleges to raise their tuition.

How can a political party be so dumb as to pi*s off Hispanics, women, and young people? Because the core of its base is middle-aged white men – and it doesn't seem to know how to satisfy its base without at the same time turning off everyone who's not white, male, and middle-aged.

20120427-12	16:51	Dennis	"The Self-Made Myth: Debunking Conservatives' Favorite & Most Dangerous Fiction"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

"The Self-Made Myth: Debunking Conservatives' Favorite -- And Most Dangerous -- Fiction" by Sara Robinson, AlterNet

Posted on April 25, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155149/>)

The self-made myth is one of the most cherished foundation stones of the conservative theology. Nurtured by Horatio Alger and generations of beloved boys' stories, It sits at the deep black heart of the entire right-wing worldview, where it provides the essential justification for a great many other common right-wing beliefs. It feeds

the accusation that government is evil because it only exists to redistribute wealth from society's producers (self-made, of course) and its parasites (who refuse to work). It justifies conservative rage against progressives, who are seen as wanting to use government to forcibly take away what belongs to the righteous wealthy. It's piously invoked by hedge fund managers and oil billionaires, who think that being required to reinvest any of their wealth back into the public society that made it possible is "punishing success." It's the foundational belief on which all of Ayn Rand's novels stand.

If you've heard it once from your Fox-watching uncle, you've probably heard it a hundred times. "The government never did anything for me, dammit," he grouses. "Everything I have, I earned. Nobody ever handed me anything. I did it all on my own. I'm a self-made man."

He's just plain wrong. Flat-out, incontrovertibly, inarguably wrong. So profoundly wrong, in fact, that we probably won't be able to change the national discourse on taxes, infrastructure, education, government investment, technology policy, transportation, welfare, or our future prospects as a country until we can effectively convince the country of the monumental wrongness of this one core point.

The Built-Together Realty

Brian Miller and Mike Lapham have written the book that lays out the basic arguments we can use to begin to set things right. *The Self-Made Myth: The Truth About How Government Helps Individuals and Businesses Succeed* is a clear, concise, easy-to-read-and-use summary that brings forward a far more accurate argument about government's central role in creating the conditions for economic prosperity and personal opportunity.

Miller, the executive director of United For a Fair Economy, and Lapham, a co-founder of UFE's Responsible Wealth project, argue that the self-made myth absolves our economic leaders from doing anything about inequality, frames fair wages as extortion from deserving producers, and turns the social safety net into a moral hazard that can only promote laziness and sloth. They argue that progressives need to overwrite this fiction with the far more supportable idea of the "built-together reality," which points up the truth that nobody in America ever makes it alone. Every single private fortune can be traced back to basic public investments that have, as Warren Buffet argues in the book, created the most fertile soil on the planet for entrepreneurs to succeed.

To their credit, Miller and Lapham don't ask us to take this point on faith. Right out of the gate, they regale us with three tales of famous "self-made" men -- Donald Trump, Ross Perot and the Koch brothers -- whose own stories put the lie to the myth. (This section alone is worth the price of admission -- these guys so did not make it on their own!) Once those treasured right-wing exemplars are thoroughly discredited, the middle of the book offers a welcome corrective: interviews with 14 wealthy Americans -- including well-known names like Warren Buffet, Ben Cohen, Abigail Disney, and Amy Domini -- who are very explicit about the ways in which government action laid the groundwork for their success. Over and over, these people credit their wealth to:

- An excellent education received in public schools and universities. Jerry Fiddler of Wind River Software (you're probably running his stuff in your cell phone or car) went to the University of Chicago, and started his computer career at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. Bookseller Thelma Kidd got her start at Texas Tech and the University of Michigan. Warren Buffet went to the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Nebraska as an undergrad. And beyond that: several interviewees paid for their educations with federal Pell Grants and Stafford loans. Over and over, the point gets made: public universities -- and the good public schools that feed them, and the funding programs that put them within financial reach -- have hatched millions of American entrepreneurs who might not have been fledged without that opportunity to get an education.
- The support of the Small Business Administration and other government agencies. Ben Cohen notes that almost all the business training he and Jerry Greenfield had came from extension courses at the University of Vermont and Penn State, and small brochures produced by the SBA. And as they spun up, they also got an Urban Development Action Grant from the federal government. Other interviewees started their businesses in incubators or other quarters provided or arranged by their local city governments.

- A strong regulatory environment that protected their businesses from being undercut by competitors willing to cut corners, and ensured that their manufacturing inputs are of consistently high quality. Glynn Lloyd of Boston's City Fresh Foods points out that nobody in the food business can get by without reliable sources of clean water; and that the USDA inspection process is an important piece of his quality control.
- Enforceable copyright and intellectual property laws that enabled them to protect good ideas. Abigail Disney recalls that her father, Roy Disney, and her Uncle Walt made and lost one great cartoon character -- Oswald the Rabbit -- because they didn't have copyright protection. They didn't repeat that mistake when Mickey Mouse was born three years later, launching the Disney empire.
- A robust system of roads, ports, airports, and mass transit that enabled them to reliably move their goods both within the US, and around the world. Kim Jordan of New Belgium Brewing (the makers of Fat Tire beer) points out that "Beer is heavy, and it needs to be transported in vehicles. Certainly, the highway system has been important to New Belgium Brewing." Lloyd also points out that Boston's excellent public transit system enables him to draw on a far wider employee base.
- The government's role in creating the Internet, without which almost no modern company can function. Anirvan Chatterjee built Bookfinder.com (now a subsidiary of Amazon.com), the world's biggest online used-book marketplace, as an entirely Internet-based company -- an achievement that wouldn't have been remotely imaginable without DARPA, the establishment and enforcement of common protocols, and significant congressional investment in the 1980s to take the Internet commercial.
- The ability to issue public stock in a fair, reliable, regulated marketplace -- a benefit that raised the value of several interviewees' companies by about 30 percent overnight. Peter Barnes, founder of Working Assets, spoke with concern about the loss of trust in this system over the past decade. "The corporate scandals [Enron and Worldcom] caused people to stop trusting the numbers that companies were reporting. Imagine how much value is created by trust and the whole system that assures that trust?"

Besides the government, most of those interviewed also locate their companies in the context of a large community of customers they utterly depend on for their success. "It takes a village to raise a business," says Nikhil Arora of Back to the Roots, a sustainable products company that came about through partnerships and grants from UC Berkeley, Peet's Coffee and other interested parties.

Others are quick to acknowledge the contributions of their employees, without whom their companies wouldn't exist. When Gun Denhart and her husband sold their company, children's clothier Hanna Andersson, in 2003, they distributed a healthy portion of the sale proceeds to their employees, prorated on the basis of their length of service.

All businesses exist within a vast network of human connections -- customers, vendors, employees, investors, and the communities that support their work. These stories make it clear: saying you did it all yourself and therefore don't owe anybody anything is about as absurd (and self-centered) as saying that you raised yourself from babyhood, without any input from your parents, and therefore don't have any further obligations to your family.

The Role of Luck and Timing

We all know wealth isn't just a matter of hard work, brains or talent. Most of us probably know hard-working, brilliant, or extraordinarily talented people who aren't being rewarded at anything close to their true value. So perhaps the most intriguing and useful part of the book is a long discussion of the many other essential factors that go into making someone wealthy -- factors that are blithely brushed off the table whenever the self-made myth is invoked.

Rich conservatives have to downplay the role of luck. After all, if we think they're just lucky, rather than exceptionally deserving of exceptional wealth, we'll be a lot more justified in taxing their fortunes. But luck -- the fortunate choice of parents, for example, or landing in the right job or industry at the right time -- plays a huge role in any individual's success. Timing also matters: most of the great fortunes of the 19th century were accumulated by men born during the 1830s, who were of an age to capitalize on the huge economic boom created by the

expansion of the railroads after the Civil War. Likewise, the great tech fortunes almost all belong to people born between 1950 and 1955, who were well-positioned to create pioneering companies in the tech boom of the late 1970s and 1980s. Such innovative times don't come along very often; and being born when the stars lined up just so doesn't make you more entitled. It just makes you luckier.

Because Americans in general like to think we're an equal society, we're also quick to discount the importance of race, gender, appearance, class, upbringing, and other essential forms of social capital that can open doors for people who have it -- and close them on those who don't. The self-made myth allows us to deflect our attention from these critical factors, undermining our determination to level the playing field for those who don't start life with a pocket full of advantages.

What Changes?

The book winds up with specific policy prescriptions that can bring the built-together reality back into sharper political and cultural focus. The last section shows how abandoning the self-made myth for a built-together reality creates fresh justification for a more progressive income tax, the repeal of the capital gains exemption and raising corporate and inheritance taxes. It also makes a far more compelling philosophical backdrop against which progressives can argue for increased investment in infrastructure, education, a fair minimum wage, a strong social safety net, and better anti-discrimination laws.

But the most striking thing about the book -- implicit throughout, but explicit nowhere -- was the alternative vision of capitalism it offers. Throughout the book, Miller and Lapham seem to be making the tacit case that businesses premised on the built-together reality are simply more fair, more generous, more sustainable, and more humane. While far from perfect (Disney's empire being one case in point), they are, as a group, markedly more aware of the high costs of exploiting their workers, their customers, the economy, or the environment. Owners who believe themselves to be beholden to a community for their success will tend to value and invest back into that community, and they seem to be far more willing to realize when they've got enough and it's time to start giving back.

The implication is clear: if we can interrupt America's long love affair with the self-made myth, we will effectively pull the center tent pole out from under the selfish assumptions that shelter most of the excesses of corporate behavior that characterize our age. This isn't just another point of contention between progressives and conservatives; it's somewhere near the very center of the disconnect between our worldviews. *The Self-Made Myth* is an essential primer that gives us the language and stories to begin talking about this difference, and the tools to begin to bend that conversation in some new and more hopeful directions.

(Sara Robinson, MS, APF is a social futurist and the editor of AlterNet's Vision page. Follow her on Twitter, or subscribe to AlterNet's Vision newsletter for weekly updates.)

© 2012 Independent Media Institute

20120427-13	18:10	Pam	Re: "The Self-Made Myth" (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

This is wonderful!

20120427-14	18:29	Art	Re: "The Self-Made Myth" (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Good stuff, thanks!

20120427-15 18:36 Art Bumper Sticker: Dogs Against R0mney

For those who are looking for the perfect bumper sticker for the upcoming election try:
<http://www.dogsagainstromney.com>.

Just say'n.



[Sounds like a "socialist" organization to me! –SteveB]

20120427-16 18:59 SteveB Re: Bumper Sticker: Dogs Against R0mney

Those dogs are damned smart!

20120428-01 08:01 SteveB "Paul Ryan Suddenly Does Not Embrace Ayn Rand's Teachings"

More hypocrisy! They can't even be true to their much vaunted, famous heroes! What a super-creep!!!

"Paul Ryan Suddenly Does Not Embrace Ayn Rand's Teachings" by Jennifer Bendery, Huffington Post

Apr. 27, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/27/paul-ryan-ayn-rand_n_1459098.html?ref=elections-2012)



(WASHINGTON) Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) tried to send the message this week that, contrary to "urban legend," he is not obsessed with philosopher and author Ayn Rand.

"I reject her philosophy," Ryan told *National Review* on Thursday. "It's an atheist philosophy. It reduces human interactions down to mere contracts and it is antithetical to my worldview. If somebody is going to try to paste a person's view on epistemology to me, then give me Thomas Aquinas. Don't give me Ayn Rand."

Best known for her novels *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand advocated a philosophy that emphasizes the individual over the collective, and viewed capitalism as the only system truly based on the protection of the individual. She has been a significant influence on libertarians and conservatives.

Ryan, whose name has been floated as a possible running mate for GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney, appeared to be distancing himself from Rand in response to a public letter he received this week from nearly 90 faculty and administrators at Georgetown University. In their letter, they criticize him for misusing Catholic social teaching in defending his budget, which hurts the poor by proposing significant cuts to anti-hunger programs, slashing Pell Grants for low-income students and calling for a replacement of Medicare with a voucher-like system. They also invoke Rand's name.

"As scholars, we want to join the Catholic bishops in pointing out that his budget has a devastating impact on programs for the poor," said Jesuit Father Thomas J. Reese, one of the organizers of the letter. "Your budget appears to reflect the values of your favorite philosopher, Ayn Rand, rather than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Her call to selfishness and her antagonism toward religion are antithetical to the Gospel values of compassion and love."

But any urban legend about Ryan's affinity for Rand surely started with Ryan himself, who, prior to this week, had no qualms about gushing about Rand's influence on his guiding principles.

"The reason I got involved in public service, by and large, if I had to credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand," Ryan said during a 2005 event honoring Rand in Washington, D.C., the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported in April 2009.

During the 2005 gathering, Ryan told the audience, "Almost every fight we are involved in here on Capitol Hill ... is a fight that usually comes down to one conflict -- individualism versus collectivism." The event was hosted by The Atlas Society, which prominently features a photo of Rand on its website and describes itself as a group that "promotes open Objectivism: the philosophy of reason, achievement, individualism, and freedom."

Ryan also said during a 2003 interview with the *Weekly Standard*, "I give out *Atlas Shrugged* as Christmas presents, and I make all my interns read it. Well ... I try to make my interns read it." He noted that he "looked into" Rand's work when he was younger, but reiterated that he is a Christian and reads the Bible often.

In 2009, Ryan posted two videos on his Facebook page raving about the importance of Rand's views.

"If *Atlas Shrugged* author Ayn Rand were alive today, here's the urgent message I think she'd be conveying," Ryan wrote alongside the first video, titled "Ayn Rand's Relevance in 2009."

He says in the video:

What's unique about what's happening today in government, in the world, in America, is it's as if we're living in an Ayn Rand novel right now. I think Ayn Rand did the best job of anybody to build the moral case for capitalism. And that morality of capitalism is under assault. And we are going to replace it with a crony capitalism, collectivist, government-run system which is creeping its way into government. And so if Ayn Rand were here today, I think she would do a great job in showing us just how wrong what government is doing is. Not the quantitative analysis, not the numbers, but the morality of what is wrong with what government is doing today.

In the second video, titled "Ayn Rand & 2009 America, Part 2," Ryan says it doesn't surprise him that sales of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* have "surged" since President Barack Obama took office.

"It's that kind of thinking, that kind of writing, that is sorely needed right now. And I think a lot of people would observe that we are living in an Ayn Rand novel right now, metaphorically speaking," Ryan says. "The attack on

Democratic capitalism, on individualism and freedom in America is an attack on the moral foundation of America. And Ayn Rand more than anyone else did a fantastic job of explaining the morality of capitalism, the morality of individualism. This, to me, is what matters most."

Some of Ryan's critics took a shot at him for suddenly distancing himself from Rand.

"Not pure enough on entitlement cuts @philipaklein @robertcostaNRO Paul Ryan on Ayn Rand: 'I reject her philosophy,'" Austan Goolsbee, the former chairman of Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, tweeted Thursday.

UPDATE: Ryan spokesman Kevin Seifert downplayed the lawmaker's apparent change of tune on Rand.

"I wouldn't make too much of this one way or another. Congressman Ryan was not 'distancing himself' from Rand, merely correcting several false storylines that are out there, such as the myth that he requires all of his staffers to read Atlas Shrugged. Saying he 'rejects Ayn Rand's philosophy' was simply meant to correct a popular falsehood that Congressman Ryan is an Objectivist -- he isn't now and never claimed to be," Seifert said in a statement to The Huffington Post.

(Flickr photo courtesy of Francisco Diez.)

20120428-02	08:08	SteveB	"The Highest Tax Burdens in the World"
-------------	-------	--------	--

Notice that most of these countries also top the annual lists of "World's Happiest Countries". If it's good enough for Finland and Sweden, it's good enough for me! And at least Italy has great food, so they're able to put-up with the corruption, etc., that has caused their high taxes, corruption very similar to America's.

AT LEAST MAYBE SOME OF US SHOULD QUIT BITCHING SO MUCH ABOUT HOW HIGH OUR TAXES ARE! MITT, YOU TOO!

"The Highest Tax Burdens in the World" by Khadeeja Safdar, Huffington Post

Apr. 27, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/27/highest-income-tax-burdens_n_1459311.html?ref=money)

Do you cringe every payday when you see a large chunk of your hard-earned cash deducted for social security and income taxes?

If so, take comfort in the fact that the residents of some other countries have it a lot worse.

American taxpayers paid an average of 29.5 percent of their incomes in taxes and social security, but out of a consortium of 34 countries known as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 24 nations have a higher tax and social security burden than the United States, according to the OECD.

In addition, more than three-quarters of OECD countries saw a rise in their income tax rates in 2011 from the year before with Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and the Slovak Republic seeing some of the largest increases. The U.S., on the other hand, was among the minority whose average tax burdens actually fell last year, the OECD reports.

Here are the 10 OECD countries with the highest tax burdens:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------|
| 1. Belgium: | 55.5% |
| 2. Germany: | 49.8% |
| 3. Hungary: | 49.4% |
| 4. France: | 49.4% |
| 5. Austria: | 48.4% |
| 6. Italy: | 47.6% |
| 7. Sweden: | 42.8% |
| 8. Finland: | 42.7% |
| 9. Slovenia: | 42.6% |
| 10. Czech Republic: | 42.5% |
| 11. Estonia: | 40.1% |

20120428-03 08:11 GaryF Fw: Windows vs. Ford

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Windows vs. Ford

For all of us who feel only the deepest love and affection for the way computers have enhanced our lives, read on. At a recent computer expo (COMDEX), Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated,

"If Ford had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving \$25 cars that got 1,000 miles to the gallon."

In response to Bill's comments, Ford issued a press release stating:

If Ford had developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics (and I just love this part):

1. For no reason whatsoever, your car would crash.....twice a day.
2. Every time they repainted the lines in the road, you would have to buy a new car.
3. Occasionally your car would die on the freeway for no reason. You would have to pull to the side of the road, close all of the windows, shut off the car, restart it, and reopen the windows before you could continue. For some reason you would simply accept this.
4. Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart, in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.
5. Macintosh would make a car that was powered by the sun, was reliable, five times as fast and twice as easy to drive - but would run on only five percent of the roads.
6. The oil, water temperature, and alternator warning lights would all be replaced by a single "This Car Has Performed An Illegal Operation" warning light.
7. I love the this one!!!) The airbag system would ask, "Are you sure?" before deploying.
8. Occasionally, for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.

9. Every time a new car was introduced car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car.

10. You'd have to press the "Start" button to turn the engine off.

PS - I'd like to add that when all else fails, you could call "customer service" in some foreign country and be instructed in some foreign language how to fix your car yourself!!!!

20120428-04 09:30 Art "Photo of the Day: Romney Puts Students to Sleep"

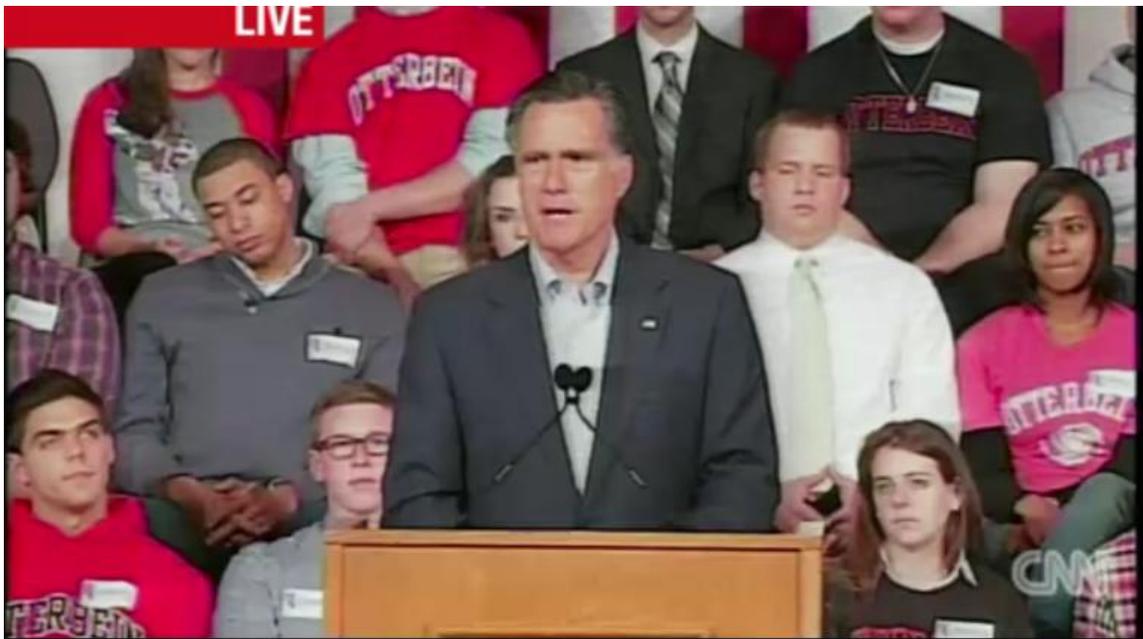
A picture is worth a thousand words, indeed!

"Photo of the Day: Romney Puts Students to Sleep" by Henry Decker, *National Memo*

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/photo-of-the-day-romney-puts-students-to-sleep/>)

Two Otterbein University students had trouble staying awake at Mitt Romney's "guest lecture" this afternoon (hat tip to Benjy Sarlin.)

[I think they're Young Conservatives members who stayed up too late last night reading *Atlas Shrugged!* –SteveB]



20120428-05 11:47 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Action: Fight *Citizens United*

from CREDO Action:

The U.S. Supreme Court's disastrous *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling has allowed corporate CEOs to unleash a torrent of secret corporate spending into our political system.

Indefensibly, CEOs are able to keep both the public and their own shareholders in the dark about the use of company funds for political ends.

This gives CEOs free rein to make political expenditures that they would never be able to justify publicly — including campaigns so toxic they would inevitably tarnish the company's brand were the funding source made public.

And the results have been absolutely corrosive to our democracy.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which is a federal agency, can require publicly traded companies to disclose the money they spend on politics. And they are accepting public comments on the merits of doing so.

To be clear, what we really need is to get all corporate money out of politics, to roll back *Citizens United*, end corporate personhood and institute public financing of elections. And we are working hard toward those long term goals.

But in the short term, given how corrupt the system is, disclosure of corporate political spending would be a meaningful, though small, step forward. And it's one we can achieve.

While the likes of the *Wall Street Journal's* Editorial Board are opposed to this idea, it's actually a commonsense idea that is not especially ideological.

In fact, nearly 60% of the S&P 100 companies already voluntarily disclose their political spending to investors. And of the remaining S&P 100 corporations, 50 had shareholder votes about political issues in 2011.¹

Already one SEC Commissioner has come out in favor of the idea. We just need two more to agree.

Tell the SEC: Don't let corporations hide their political spending. Click the link below to submit a public comment:

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6883064&id=39232-3891339-C%3Dntjpx&t=7>.

Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

¹Committee on Disclosure of Corporate Political Spending's "Petition for Rulemaking" sent to Elizabeth M. Murphy, Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 08-03-11.

20120429-01	01:43	SteveM	"The President Has a List"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	----------------------------

"The President Has a List" by Kimberley A. Strassel, *Wall Street Journal*

Apr. 26, 2012, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304723304577368280604524916.html>)

Try this thought experiment: You decide to donate money to Mitt Romney. You want change in the Oval Office, so you engage in your democratic right to send a check.

Several days later, President Barack Obama, the most powerful man on the planet, singles you out by name. His campaign brands you a Romney donor, shames you for "betting against America," and accuses you of having a "less-than-reputable" record. The message from the man who controls the Justice Department (which can indict you), the SEC (which can fine you), and the IRS (which can audit you), is clear: You made a mistake donating that money.

Are you worried?

Richard Nixon's "enemies list" appalled the country for the simple reason that presidents hold a unique trust. Unlike senators or congressmen, presidents alone represent all Americans. Their powers—to jail, to fine, to bankrupt—are also so vast as to require restraint. Any president who targets a private citizen for his politics is de facto engaged in government intimidation and threats. This is why presidents since Nixon have carefully avoided the practice.

Save Mr. Obama, who acknowledges no rules. This past week, one of his campaign websites posted an item entitled "Behind the curtain: A brief history of Romney's donors." In the post, the Obama campaign named and shamed eight private citizens who had donated to his opponent. Describing the givers as all having "less-than-reputable records," the post went on to make the extraordinary accusations that "quite a few" have also been "on the wrong side of the law" and profiting at "the expense of so many Americans."

These are people like Paul Schorr and Sam and Jeffrey Fox, investors who the site outed for the crime of having "outsourced" jobs. T. Martin Fiorentino is scored for his work for a firm that forecloses on homes. Louis Bacon (a hedge-fund manager), Kent Burton (a "lobbyist") and Thomas O'Malley (an energy CEO) stand accused of profiting from oil. Frank VanderSloot, the CEO of a home-products firm, is slimed as a "bitter foe of the gay rights movement."

These are wealthy individuals, to be sure, but private citizens nonetheless. Not one holds elected office. Not one is a criminal. Not one has the barest fraction of the position or the power of the U.S. leader who is publicly assaulting them.

"We don't tolerate presidents or people of high power to do these things," says Theodore Olson, the former U.S. solicitor general. "When you have the power of the presidency—the power of the IRS, the INS, the Justice Department, the DEA, the SEC—what you have effectively done is put these guys' names up on 'Wanted' posters in government offices." Mr. Olson knows these tactics, having demanded that the 44th president cease publicly targeting Charles and David Koch of Koch Industries, which he represents. He's been ignored.

The real crime of the men, as the website tacitly acknowledges, is that they have given money to Mr. Romney. This fundraiser of a president has shown an acute appreciation for the power of money to win elections, and a cutthroat approach to intimidating those who might give to his opponents.

He's targeted insurers, oil firms and Wall Street—letting it be known that those who oppose his policies might face political or legislative retribution. He lectured the Supreme Court for giving companies more free speech and (falsely) accused the Chamber of Commerce of using foreign money to bankroll U.S. elections. The White House even ginned up an executive order (yet to be released) to require companies to list political donations as a condition of bidding for government contracts. Companies could bid but lose out for donating to Republicans. Or they could quit donating to the GOP—Mr. Obama's real aim.

The White House has couched its attacks in the language of "disclosure" and the argument that corporations should not have the same speech rights as individuals. But now, says Rory Cooper of the Heritage Foundation, "he's doing the same at the individual level, for anyone who opposes his policies." Any giver, at any level, risks reprisal from the president of the United States.

It's getting worse because the money game is not going as Team Obama wants. Super PACs are helping the GOP to level the playing field against Democratic super-spenders. Prominent financial players are backing Mr. Romney. The White House's new strategy is thus to delegitimize Mr. Romney (by attacking his donors) as it seeks to frighten others out of giving.

The Obama campaign has justified any action on the grounds that it has a right to "hold the eventual Republican nominee accountable," but this is a dodge. Politics is rough, but a president has obligations that transcend those of a candidate. He swore an oath to protect and defend a Constitution that gives every American the right to partake in democracy, free of fear of government intimidation or disfavored treatment. If Mr. Obama isn't going to act like a president, he bolsters the argument that he doesn't deserve to be one

[20120429-02](#)

05:35

SteveB

Re: "The President Has a List" & "Obama-Phobia: *Wall Street Journal*, Fox News Revive Nixon's Enemies List"

"Obama-Phobia: *Wall Street Journal*, Fox News Revive Nixon's Enemies List" posted by Mark

Apr. 28, 2012, (<http://www.newscorpse.com/ncWP/>)

The classic symptoms of obsessive paranoia are exhibiting themselves again in the psyches of delusional right-wingers. The villainous shadows they conjure up in every corner of their warped minds betrays how desperately sick they have become.

The latest blood vessel to burst in these over-anxious conservative foreheads is displayed in an article published yesterday in the *Wall Street Journal*, the once respected financial paper that Rupert Murdoch has transformed into another of his tabloid rags. The item's headline blared ominously that, "The President Has a List" (cue spooky music).

OMG! Is he checking it twice? The article's author, Kimberley Strassel, seems to be alleging that President Obama has usurped the powers of Santa Claus and is preparing to rain a frosty judgment down on Republicans who were naughty this election year. They know who they are, and now, with his new North Pole Initiative, so does Obama. He even knows when they're asleep and/or awake.

The article's sub-head went into a little more panicky detail saying, "*Barack Obama attempts to intimidate contributors to Mitt Romney's campaign.*" That's a pretty scary thought. What will become of our democracy if powerful political players go around harassing the financial backers of their opponents? It could end up instigating slanderous attacks on private citizens who merely want to participate in the democratic process. The GOP would never contemplate doing such a thing to backers of Democrats. Notice the respect with which they always regard George Soros and Barbara Streisand. Nevertheless, Strassel rolls out the big guns with allusions to the famously paranoid Richard Nixon:

Richard Nixon's 'enemies list' appalled the country for the simple reason that presidents hold a unique trust. Unlike senators or congressmen, presidents alone represent all Americans. Their powers—to jail, to fine, to bankrupt—are also so vast as to require restraint. Any president who targets a private citizen for his politics is de facto engaged in government intimidation and threats.

Exactly! So if mega-wealthy conservative activists drop boatloads of cash into dishonest campaigns designed to demonize the President as an anti-American, Marxist, alien, aligned with Al-Qaeda, the President and his supporters should just shut their mouths and permit those poor billionaires to do as they please. If God didn't want filthy rich robber barons and corporations to pervert democracy he wouldn't have given them the *Citizen's United* Supreme Court decision.

The source of this bubbling cauldron of conservative angst is a web site that the Obama campaign operates to counter the abundant feces-flinging from the right. It is produced by Obama's "*Truth Team*" and consists entirely of disseminating documented information with the ghastly purpose of helping people to make informed decisions. In particular, there is an article titled "Behind the Curtain: A Brief History of Romney's Donors" (<http://www.keepinggophonest.com/behind-the-curtain-a-brief-history-of-romneys-donors>) that reveals who is bankrolling Romney's campaign and what their motivations might be. It begins by saying...

As the presumptive GOP nominee, Mitt Romney is relying on a cadre of high-dollar and special-interest donors to fund his campaign. Giving information about his real policy intentions and high-level access for cash, Romney and Republicans are working hard to pull in as much money as they can from wealthy lobbyists, corporations, and PACs.

No wonder the Right is worried. We certainly can't have people going around telling the truth about wealthy special interests who are trying to help Romney buy this election. And even though none of the atrocities Strassel mentions in her column ("*to jail, to fine, to bankrupt*") are occurring, it's bad enough that truthful biographies and affiliations are being brought into the light of day.

Adding to the cacophony of crazy is Rupert Murdoch's cable crew at Fox News. Neil Cavuto took up the very same topic as Strassel's *WSJ* story (by coincidence, I'm sure) and engaged in a profound exchange with Fox legal analyst Lis Wiehl:

Cavuto: Called out for shelling out. Private donors to Mitt Romney outed on an Obama campaign web site. The site ripping their record, even saying that they're betting against America by giving cash to Romney's campaign. Is this legal?

Lis Wiehl: It may be. I went on the web site today. It is frightening. I mean, I don't like to get on any list, unless it's a birthday party list or something like that, but a Nixon enemy list, McCarthyism...

First of all, Cavuto and Wiehl are just plain delusional in speculating that there is anything illegal about posting truthful information about political donors. And while Cavuto is just an idiot, Wiehl is a lawyer and should know better. Secondly, the web site does not say that Romney donors are "*betting against America by giving cash to Romney's campaign.*" It says they are betting against America by outsourcing American jobs, closing American factories, and unlawfully foreclosing on American homeowners. Then they take their tainted winnings and parlay them into Romney's Wheel of Nefarious Fortune. But the best example of the looming dementia on the part of these dimwits is Wiehl's allusion to her sterling investigative skills. She seemed so proud of herself for navigating the byzantine maze that Obama's functionaries constructed to hide their true identities. She bragged to Cavuto that...

Wiehl: You've got to through a few links. It's not that easy. I'm not a computer person, but I did manage to do it myself.

Here is the maze of deception through which Wiehl had to rummage (at <http://www.keepinggophonest.com/behind-the-curtain-a-brief-history-of-romneys-donors>):



How on earth did she ever discover the real source of this web site? Only a crack investigator with Wiehl's superior legal experience could have figured out how to scroll to the bottom of the page. Those Obama web developers are mighty crafty, but no match for Wiehl.

This isn't the first time that the Murdoch empire has attempted to associate Obama with Nixon and McCarthy. A couple of months ago the *Wall Street Journal* published an article by Ted Olsen that accused the President of similar list crimes. On that occasion it was the infamous Koch brothers who were being set up for presidential attacks. It's too bad that the billionaire Koch brothers are so defenseless that they have to resort to having their lawyer (Olsen) be given space in the *Wall Street Journal* to whine about being criticized by the president they have vowed to destroy.

It's also a little ironic that the right is so vociferously disturbed by tactics made popular by people they now regard as heroes. Both Nixon and McCarthy have been the beneficiaries of recent rehabilitations by their fellow Republicans. We even have GOP stars like Allen West declaring that commies are running rampant through the corridors of congress. McCarthy would be so proud. And Glenn Beck sanitized Nixon's enemies list by saying that it was *"just about who's not coming to state dinners."* Yet conservatives will still site these historical scumbags in a negative sense if they think they can tarnish the President with it. Oh what a tangled web.....

20120429-03

06:23

MarthaH

"GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat"

"GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat" by Tom Curry, MSNBC

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://nbcpolitics.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/04/27/11413886-gop-infighting-gives-democrats-hope-of-picking-up-indiana-senate-seat?lite>)

In the 2010 midterm elections, the GOP was jarred by an array of suddenly-potent Tea Party-backed challengers taking on the party establishment. The movement achieved mixed results overall, but resulted in a Republican Party heavily influenced by it.

History is repeating itself in Indiana where one of the Senate's two longest-serving Republicans, Richard Lugar, 80, who was first elected in 1976, is facing a challenge in the May 8 primary from state Treasurer Richard Mourdock, who became famous in 2009 for opposing the auto industry bailout and the forced write-downs for Chrysler bond holders.

Murdock is backed by Tea Party activists, the Club for Growth, the National Rifle Association, and old-line social conservatives like Phyllis Schlafly.

As Lugar struggles to fend off Mourdock's challenge, Democrats hope their candidate, Rep. Joe Donnelly, will profit from the GOP schism and pick up the incumbent's seat in November.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, said Wednesday, "The race is very close now and it'll be decided on May 8 and a number of factors could apply.

Obviously turnout is important. Gov. (Mitch) Daniels's ad supporting Sen. Lugar is a very positive development for him," he said. "But our job is to hold the seat (in November) and we'll support the nominee in the general election, but I think we will hold that seat regardless of what happens in the primary."

A Lugar loss would end the political career of a man who was first elected in 1964 to the Indianapolis school board and who in the 1970s was known as "Richard Nixon's favorite mayor" when he held that office in Indianapolis. Since taking his Senate seat in 1977, Lugar has become his party's cerebral foreign policy expert.

Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn. who serves alongside Lugar on the Foreign Relations Committee, said "the knowledge that Sen. Lugar has – having worked on these issues for decades – has been invaluable ... Certainly he's someone who's very respected in the Senate and he's listened to by both sides of the aisle."

But no matter how deeply respected Lugar is on Capitol Hill, Mourdock's charge is that Lugar isn't conservative enough – although Lugar's lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union, based on dozens of roll call votes, is 77 out 100, putting him a long way from Senate GOP centrists such as Olympia Snowe of Maine, who has a 48.5 lifetime ACU rating.

Murdock's campaign ads regularly link Lugar with Democratic President Barack Obama. Early in Obama's Senate stint, Lugar helped him establish his foreign policy credentials. In 2005 Obama accompanied Lugar on a trip to Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan to inspect weapons dumps and sites where smallpox and other pathogens were kept.

"When Dick Lugar moved to Washington, he left behind his conservative Hoosier values," Mourdock says in one of his television spots. "How else to explain his support for amnesty, for Obama's liberal Supreme Court choices, even his vote to bail out Greece?"

An ad the NRA has run against Lugar tells viewers that, "Some things shouldn't change. Our Indiana values, stewardship of the land, and the protection of our Second Amendment and hunting rights. But over his 36 years in Washington, Dick Lugar *has* changed ... He's become the only Republican candidate in Indiana with an "F" rating from the NRA."

The NRA grievance against Lugar goes way back: he voted for Bill Clinton's 1993 Brady handgun bill and for the ban on certain semiautomatic weapons, called "assault weapons" by gun control advocates.

Lugar, always avuncular and courteous, told reporters this week in Washington that his battle with Mourdock is "a very close contest (and) has been throughout."

Asked about Mourdock's view that he has changed in his years in Washington, Lugar chuckled amiably and said "I think it's his view but we're getting along fine with voters."

Since last year, Democrats have accused Lugar of being detached from Indiana issues and denounced him for living in Virginia. They gained ammunition when he had to reimburse the Treasury for some hotel stays in Indiana that were charged to his Senate office account. On the residency issue, Lugar said Tuesday, "It was clearly somebody engaging in negative campaign research, trying to find some difficulty."

Since this is his first primary challenge since 1976, is it difficult since he's perhaps out of practice? "No," Lugar replied, "I've been campaigning all over the country for the last 35 years and I'm campaigning vigorously again this time ... This is a very vigorous experience and we're doing the best we can."

The Republican fratricide in Senate races two years ago had at best mixed results for party leaders.

One of the GOP incumbents, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, ultimately survived after losing the Republican primary by running in November as a write-in candidate.

Establishment GOP candidates in Arizona, Indiana, New Hampshire, and Missouri defeated their conservative primary opponents and went on to win in November. The party favorite in Washington beat his conservative challenger in the primary, then lost in November.

Elsewhere, conservative challengers forced one GOP senator, Robert Bennett, into retirement in Utah and another, Arlen Specter, into switching parties in Pennsylvania.

Conservative favorites won four Senate seats (in Pennsylvania, Utah, Kentucky, and Florida), but lost to Democrats in four other Senate contests (Delaware, Connecticut, Nevada, and Colorado) – races which more mainstream Republican candidates might have won.

One of the Establishment GOP victims of the Tea Party surge in 2010, was former Rep. Mike Castle of Delaware, who lost to Christine O'Donnell – who then was defeated by Democrat Chris Coons in November.

Castle is now a partner with the DLA Piper law firm.

Reflecting on the parallels with his bitter loss to O'Donnell two years ago, Castle said if Lugar loses the primary, "it has the effect of making it more and more difficult for people who take middle-of-the-road positions, who try to work with both sides of the aisle to get things done ... "

The Tea Party trend puts such pragmatism, Castle said, "at jeopardy in the Republican Party ... It moves the party not just further to the right, but to a much more conservative stance than it used to have. It's going to ultimately lead to a minority status in the country."

Pointing to the danger of Mourdock winning the primary but losing to Donnelly in November, Castle said that for Indiana Republicans, Lugar "may not be 100 percent what they might want, but the alternative is you may elect somebody from the other party."

Castle's campaign fund has given \$1,000 to Lugar's campaign.

Seeing the race from a different angle, South Carolina Sen. Jim DeMint, whose Senate Conservatives PAC supported O'Donnell against Castle and Sharron Angle in Nevada in 2010, said, "Richard is a friend of mine – but of course, we've got two Richards in that race. Dick Lugar is a friend of mine, but I'd be honored to serve with Mourdock. He's clearly someone who is in line with some of the things we're trying to do," but he added, "I'm not going to get involved" in the Lugar versus Mourdock primary. "I'm not involved in any incumbent races right now."

Meanwhile Democrats are waiting to take on the survivor of the GOP primary. "While Joe Donnelly has been focused on jobs and the economy, both Richard Mourdock and Dick Lugar have spent the last year slinging mud, pandering to the Tea Party, and showing voters that they're both of touch with Indiana's middle class. Joe's candidacy gives us an excellent chance of winning in November regardless of who Republicans nominate," said Shripal Shah, a spokesman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

Despite the Democrats touting Donnelly's chances, there are echoes of Indiana's 2010 Senate race when Democrats had hopes for former Rep. Brad Ellsworth, a centrist Democrat with a voting record much like Donnelly's.

Ellsworth ended up losing by 14 percentage points to Republican Dan Coats. Democrats say 2012 isn't 2010; turnout this year is going to be significantly higher and the economy is healthier now than it was in 2010.

But Donnelly voted for the Obama health care bill and for his stimulus plan, neither of which will help with conservative voters in Indiana. And his fund-raising has been less than stellar.

Democrats privately say that Donnelly runs stronger against Mourdock than against Lugar.

"Yeah, I understand that," Cornyn said. "Sen. Lugar is a legend in Indiana. To show how quickly things change, six years ago, he was uncontested in the Republican primary and in the general election ... But it will probably make it more of a contest if Sen. Lugar is not the nominee, but I'm confident we'll hold the seat." Cornyn said the Indiana race "is not one of my worries."

20120429-04	09:18	Pam	Re: "GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat"
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I've been away from Indiana politics for a long time, but Lugar was always one Republican I liked.

Picante de Pollo (Spicy chicken) by Alura Gonzales (Santa Cruz, Bolivia)

(<http://www.boliviabella.com/picante-de-pollo-spicy-chicken.html>)



This recipe is from Cochabamba.

You'll need:

- 3 pounds chicken, divided into parts
- ¼ cup ají (or ground cayenne pepper)
- 2 cups of white onion, cut into small strips
- 1 cup tomato, peeled and finely chopped
- ½ cup fresh locoto or chili pepper, finely chopped
- 1 cup green peas, peeled
- ½ cup parsley, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon crumbled oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled, chopped and roasted
- 3 cups broth or water
- 2 spoonfuls oil

How to prepare:

1. In a large casserole put the chicken pieces with all the other ingredients. Pour the broth or water until covering the ingredients completely. Set to cook over high heat until it boils, and later over low heat for at least an hour and a half or until the chicken is soft. Stir occasionally.
2. If while cooking the broth diminished much, add a little bit more of broth or water so that when serving there is enough liquid.
3. In a deep plate serve one piece of spicy chicken with one boiled potato, cooked aside, *chufño phuti* (little dried potatoes), and uncooked sauce on top. Finally, sprinkle the chopped parsley on top of the spicy chicken.

Note: This dish has variations as well, included a non-spicy one and another which is served with *chuíño* in a peanut and cheese sauce.

[20120429-06](#) 11:25 Pam Is American Health Care the Best in the World?

Here is a story (true) for you to ponder. A friend and colleague of ours (semi-retired chemistry prof.) fell ill several months ago and nearly died. He was in intensive care in our local hospital, which is a teaching hospital and consider to be very good, but he wasn't getting better. His regular doctor didn't see him in the hospital, because when a patient is admitted he is assigned to a hospitalist/specialist, who has probably never seen him before. Days went by, various doctors came and went. No one could figure it out, but our friend's kidneys were failing. His wife was by his side. She is an elegant, highly intelligent woman who is not reluctant to express her opinions and feelings, so I imagine she was a good advocate for her husband. At one point the specialist du jour stopped by and casually mentioned to the nurse, "The cortisone was started yesterday, right?" Nurse looked puzzled. Wife looked surprised. You could say, "What we have here is a failure of communication." Eventually our friend was transferred to Chapel Hill U. Hospital, the premier hospital in the area, where he received copious attention and was brought back from the brink. The only reason he went to Chapel Hill was because his wife's best friend is on the admissions committee of the Medical School and knew a specialist there who specialized in our friend's rare disease. The luck of friendship is what saved our friend's life. I am left wondering what happens to people who are less assertive and less well-connected but just as sick.

[20120429-07](#) 11:54 SteveG Re: Is American Health Care the Best in the World?

They die or get worse or at the minimum stay in the hospital longer. A few years ago I had a problem that started on Saturday morning – two trips to the ER & 2 different doctors resulted in an overnight admission for 6 hours, saw a 3rd doctor on Sunday, transferred to an ER 50 miles away, saw 2 different doctors who called in 2 other doctors who performed a procedures – 3 days in ICU got me a trip home. Medical care really stinks. This was in Indiana. In Yakima the health care is worse – all of the specialties are here but you have to have a strong connection to a family doctor to get anything done – options are 2.5 to 4 hours away. There is a med school in town graduating its first class this year and most doctors are some type of adjunct, but they do not schedule more than a month in advance, saying they will call you for the next appointment, but they do not. U.S. medical care stinks!

[20120429-08](#) 18:24 Dennis "Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs & Crush Living Standards for Everyone"

"Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs and Crush Living Standards for Everyone" by Marshall Auerback, AlterNet

Apr. 24, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155132/>)

Senator Tom Harkin, Democrat of Iowa, has introduced a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$9.80 from its present level of \$7.25. Polls are showing many voters in favor, though they are confused about what it would mean for the job market. The truth is that a move would be good for a slow economy and have a positive impact on the jobs crisis. Naturally, this has led to the usual cries of opposition, largely based on the notion that raising the minimum wage hurts the very people it is supposed to help. Typical of this view is a letter to the *New York Times* from Michael Saltsman, a fellow at the Employment Policies Institute, a business-backed nonprofit research group (surprise!).

Saltsman trots out the old canards against the minimum wage, claiming that research indicates that a minimum wage increase "simply doesn't help the poor — in fact, it hurts them." He cites studies which showed that states with their minimum wages between 2003 and 2007 found no associated decline in state poverty rates. Saltsman gives three reasons for this:

1. A majority of working-age individuals who live in poverty don't work, and thus cannot benefit from the raise.

2. A clear majority of those who do earn the minimum wage live in households that aren't in poverty.
3. Less skilled and less experienced employees lose employment opportunities when the cost to hire and train them rises as a result of a minimum-wage increase.

Let's take these arguments in turn. Implicit in the first point is that a majority of working-age individuals don't work because they choose not to (i.e. they are lazy scroungers), or because unemployment is caused by laziness or lack of training. The argument they often use is that "I can get a job, therefore all the unemployed could get jobs if only they tried harder, or got better education and training."

The way I go about demonstrating that fallacy is a dogs-and-bones example. Say we have 10 dogs and we bury nine bones in the backyard. We send the dogs out to find bones. At least one dog will come back without a bone.

We decide that the problem is lack of training. We put that dog through rigorous training in the latest bone-finding techniques. We bury nine bones and send the 10 dogs out again. The trained dog ends up with a bone, but some other dog comes back without a bone (empty-mouthed, so to speak).

The problem is that there are not enough bones and jobs to go around. The "bones" in the jobs discussion are insufficient spending power in the economy. It is certainly true that a well-trained and highly motivated jobseeker can usually find a job. But that is no evidence that aggregate unemployment is caused by laziness or lack of training. And besides, we could easily determine how much unemployment is truly voluntary. The government could serve as the "employer of last resort" under a job guarantee program modeled on the WPA (the Works Progress Administration, in existence from 1935 to 1943) and the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942). The program would offer a job to any American who was ready and willing to work at the federal minimum wage, plus legislated benefits. No time limits. No means testing. No minimum education or skill requirements.

It's hard to believe that reducing or even eliminating the minimum wage (which is the corollary of Saltsman's point), would actually enhance employment, when the problem is a basic lack of demand. Business will not hire more workers until it has more sales. Consumers will not spend more until they've got more jobs. A private-sector recovery requires 300,000 new jobs every month. But the private sector doesn't need 300,000 new workers per month until there exists sufficient spending power in the economy to induce them to hire those workers. How is retaining a static, or reduced minimum wage, going to achieve this?

Higher wages means higher income and thus higher consumption spending, which induces firms to employ more labor. So the truth is that economic theory does not tell us that raising minimum wages will lead to more unemployment, indeed, theory tells us it can go the other way—raising the minimum wage could increase employment. That's one of the reasons why Henry Ford believed in paying his workers a decent wage: so that they could buy his product.

To be sure, even an increase in the minimum wage to \$12 or \$15 an hour is not going to provide the means to purchase a Ford (or GM) today. And so what if, as Saltsman argues, the workers earning this minimum wage are not living in poverty? Does that mean they wouldn't spend the money derived from an increased minimum wage? I wonder if Saltsman would also argue that tax cuts across the board are unnecessary because most of the people who receive them are not living in poverty?

That argument is a red herring. The truth is, if you earn your money through wages (unlike many of the 1 percent, who earn through things like investments and a tax system biased in favor of capital gains over income) then a higher wage, minimum or otherwise, would mean that you'd spend the additional dollars, creating jobs for other workers. You'd pay down your mortgages and car loans, getting yourself out of debt. You'd pay more taxes — on sales and property, mostly — thereby relieving the fiscal crises of states and localities. More teachers, police and firefighters would keep their jobs. America would get a virtuous cycle toward higher employment and, more importantly, the cycle would be based on a policy which creates higher incomes, not higher debt via credit expansion.

Then there's the common belief that minimum wages cause unemployment, which relates to Saltman's third point — namely that less skilled and less experienced employees lose employment opportunities when the cost to hire and train them rises as a result of a minimum-wage increase. It is at least partly true that for an individual firm, higher

wages reduce the number of workers hired. But we cannot extrapolate that to the economy as a whole. The issue of eroding wage competitiveness, which allegedly follows from a higher minimum wage, doesn't really apply to jobs which offer the minimum wage. It might apply to areas such as manufactured goods and traded services like insurance and banking. But these are sectors in which most people already earn far more than the minimum wage.

As far as the minimum wage goes, the jobs we're talking about are in non-traded services like checkout clerks, haircutters, domestic help, and food-service workers. When checkout clerks and cooks earn more in wages, then businesses start getting the sales required to induce them to hire more workers. And if sales are robust enough, then guess what? Even more workers will be hired, or wages will actually be increased.

The point is: wages are a source of demand, as well as a cost input. Reduce wages and demand plummets, which more than overrides any cost savings derived from paying less to workers (especially given today's paltry minimum wage, which is hardly a living wage for any American).

Let's be clear; Americans have never embraced welfare. For better or worse, our nation has always preferred a more libertarian path: self-help, personal responsibility, individual initiative. As a result, our welfare programs have always been stingy, temporary and purposely demeaning. But maintaining the minimum wage at today's ridiculously depressed level does not enhance anybody's employment prospects. In fact, it makes it worse, because it sucks demand out of the economy and minimizes the chances of those now receiving unemployment benefits or other assistance to quickly get back into the workforce, to "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps," as conservatives like to say. They cannot do that when our work force continues to focus on policies which merely enhance the incomes of the top 1 percent.

© 2012 Independent Media Institute

20120429-09	20:08	SteveB	Re: "Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs & Crush Living Standards for Everyone"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

I sure agree with this! And of course, it is the opposite of the Republican party-line.

You know what also kills jobs and crushes living standards?

Part-time jobs!

Walmart's and McDonald's, etc. special gift to the American worker—enough pay to maybe live and maybe eat on, minimum wage for maybe 20 hours a week, add it up, for millions of workers...grim! Part-time jobs are almost completely illegal in Bolivia and so is a "job" without benefits. Nobody minds. It's just the way a society should be. Jobs are that important. Bolivia has very good pregnancy, child-birth, and after benefits for women too. Again, just like people in a democracy must be taught to read and write, why would women with babies not be held in high esteem and accorded commensurate benefits? It's what you'd want for your mother, daughter, wife, or sister, no?

American culture doesn't improve the poor's situation. There's almost no practical public transportation anywhere except the largest cities. The poorest Third World workers get by without having to own a car, but in the U.S., just about any job, no matter how crappy, necessitates a car or access to one—a real problem for minimum wage part-time workers, or even full-time workers, unless they're kids (up to 30 years old?) living at home or rich people working as a hobby.

Dependents of Obama's Socialist Welfare State (Friends of Art's)



[And they really look like mean-a*s dogs, if I ever saw one! I wouldn't get near that car! Might get licked to death! I really wish they'd just get a job and get off the dole! Bums! -SteveB]

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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com