



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #112 — APR. 9, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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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 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."

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20120406-01	08:48	Norm	Re: Gomez (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #111)
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Thank you! Keep up the political news. :)

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.

20120406-03 10:52 MarthaH "Bosnia Remembers War, Still Scarred and Divided"

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 Kapic.

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.

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20120406-04	11:12	SteveB	Friends of the Middle Archive
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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
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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 vinsom@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)
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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)
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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
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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"
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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 unforeclosed 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 Voltaggio 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, Ramarley 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.)

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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)
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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)
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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)
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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 Rebuild the Dream"
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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*.)

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20120407-07	15:07	Pam	"The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage"
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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)
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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"
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["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
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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"
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"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!
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"Here Comes the Breeze" (Gomez)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvr44d_m3Tw&feature=

20120408-04	18:43	SteveB	3,868
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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)
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So can I get a 45 of this?

20120408-06	19:22	SteveB	Re: 3,868 (reply to Dennis, above)
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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

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