



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #113 — APR. 10, 2012

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

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Stop Pure Speculation in the Oil Markets

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 10, 2012)

All that has to happen is that, if you buy oil futures, you must take delivery of that oil or pay a hefty penalty at the time any future is re-sold. This principle should be applied to all commodities markets, but oil is obviously the most crucial at this moment. This action would impose nothing but fairness on any participant and would lower the apparent demand and price.

"Sen. Bernie Sanders: Oil Speculators Must Be Stopped and the CFTC 'Needs to Obey the Law'" by Morgan Korn, The Daily Ticker/Yahoo! Finance

Mar. 7, 2012, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/daily-ticker/oil-speculators-must-stopped-ctfc-needs-obey-law-182903332.html>)

The recent rise in gasoline prices has prompted Congressional hearings and a call to federal regulators to curb what many see as the cause for the spike: oil speculators.

A House subcommittee held a hearing on "The American Energy Initiative" Wednesday morning that focused solely on rising pump prices. Seventy members of Congress signed a letter this week to regulators at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), urging immediate action on oil speculation by enacting "strong position limits" and to "utilize all authorities available to...make sure that the price of oil and gasoline reflects the fundamentals of supply and demand."

The CFTC was given authority in the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to impose position caps on oil traders beginning in January 2011. These limits have not yet been implemented by the CFTC. In an interview Wednesday with The Daily Ticker, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) says the CFTC doesn't "have the will" to enact these limits and "needs to obey the law."

"What we need to do is...limit the amount of oil any one company can control on the oil futures market," says Sanders, who has long advocated limits on speculation. "The function of these speculators is not to use oil but to make profits from speculation, drive prices up and sell."

The average price of a gallon of gasoline in the U.S. has increased nearly 30 cents in one month according to the AAA's Daily Fuel Gauge Report. U.S. oil prices have jumped more than six percent since Feb. 1 even though oil demand in the U.S. is at its lowest level since April 2007. The International Energy Agency (IEA) reported that the

world's oil supply rose by 1.3 million barrels a day in the last three months of 2011 while world demand increased just 0.7 million barrels per day during that same time period.

This is not the first time oil speculators have been blamed for higher energy prices. In 2008 U.S. oil prices skyrocketed to \$145 per barrel and gasoline prices averaged well above \$4 per gallon. There were calls to increase domestic offshore drilling and legislation was proposed that would have required buyers of oil to physically own and store the oil barrels. Then the 2008 financial crisis hit causing oil and gasoline prices to plummet.

Blaming the speculators may seem like scapegoating to some (namely, oil traders) but speculators control more than 80 percent of the energy futures market, up from 30 percent a decade ago, and there is mounting evidence that speculation contributes to higher prices:

- At a Senate hearing last June, Rex Tillerson, the CEO of ExxonMobil, said speculation was driving up the price of a barrel of oil by as much as 40 percent.
- A study conducted by the nonpartisan consumer advocacy group Consumer Federation of America found that speculation caused the average American household to spend an additional \$600 on gasoline expenditures in 2011. Moreover, the report concluded that excessive speculation (which the organization estimated added about \$30 per barrel to the cost of oil in 2011) drained the U.S. economy of more than \$200 billion in consumer spending in 2011.
- The St. Louis Federal Reserve has also recommended that the CFTC do more to prevent oil speculators from driving up the price of oil. Fed officials studied the effect of oil traders on the price oil over five years and determined that "speculation contributed to around 15 percent to oil prices increases."
- CFTC Chair Gary Gensler declared last year that "huge inflows of speculative money create a self-fulfilling prophecy that drives up commodity prices."

There are many components reflected in the current price of oil, including old-fashioned supply and demand and geopolitical factors (such as a possible attack on Iran). Rising gasoline prices are a huge pocketbook issue for many Americans, a reason alone for politicians to focus on the role of the speculators.

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20120409-08	16:55	SteveB	"Obama Campaign Mocks R0mney's 'Car Elevators'"
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R0mney's 'car elevator' problem...

"Obama Campaign Mocks Romney's 'Car Elevators'" by posted by Byron Tsu, Politico

Apr. 9, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/04/obama-campaign-mocks-romneys-car-elevators-120020.html#comments>)

President Obama's campaign manager Jim Messina Monday slammed Mitt Romney as a hypocrite for trying to paint President Obama as an out-of-touch Harvard elitist.

"I would brand it simply hypocrisy," Messina said on a conference call with reporters. "I mean, come on, Romney's also a Harvard graduate"

"Romney trying to say someone's out of touch is a little difficult when he's shopping for car elevators," Messina said, referring to POLITICO reporter Reid Epstein's revelation that Romney's La Jolla, Calif. home will have elevators for his cars.

"We have a president, who I think is a nice guy, but he spent too much time at Harvard," Romney, who himself earned two degrees at Harvard, said recently about Obama.

The Obama campaign also pointed to Romney's defense of lower tax rates for investment income as an example of his lack of a common touch.

"It all goes back to one simple questions: **why should Mitt Romney pay a lower tax rate than average Americans?**" Messina said. "Romney's a beneficiary of a broken tax system. He wants a system where firefighters, cops, teachers and middle class Americans all pay a higher tax rate than he does."

20120409-01	12:05	SteveB	See What I Mean? The Beatles.
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The best Beatles song in the lot is the first one, written by Gomez.

Gomez - Whippin' Piccadilly:

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

Gomez - Getting Better (Beatles cover):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VKDfWJsja>.

Gomez - Hey Bulldog (Beatles cover):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8_BO1uaPkc.

Gomez - Sun King (Beatles cover):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhqayG1NNE0&feature=related>.

20120409-02	12:38	Pam	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to SteveB, above)
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The Beatles rock.

20120409-04	13:33	SteveB	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to Pam, above)
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The Beatles rock(ed).

20120409-05	13:44	Pam	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to SteveB, above)
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Well, yeah. I heard Paul McCartney sing recently, and he was awful. They were great once though.

20120409-06	14:04	SteveB	Re: See What I Mean? The Beatles. (reply to Pam, above)
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They were...and genius lives. It will not be denied.

Now, don't get me wrong. I love old music too. And I find it sort of cool to relive the spirit of past times evoked by music, which works even better than smells, I think.

And many of those times music evokes in me were very good times. When I was younger I didn't realize so much how gone the past is. I wasn't entirely free of the idea that there was plenty of time to bring them back, if I so desired. So they were not so lost, if you know what I mean. But as time goes on, one realizes that those particular moments, even the golden ones, are gone. There might still be some sense of enjoyment in going back, but it is now tinged with a sense of loss that I don't always want with my music.

I guess I'm lucky because I have been able, somehow, to avoid becoming what I call "stuck in time" as far as music goes. There seems to be a formative time in most people's lives, usually when they are teenagers, when the particular music providing the sound track to their lives at that moment becomes their music. For many, it becomes the only music they ever want to listen to. Anything newer sounds alien. They are stuck in time. My Dad was like that. My Mom was not. When Elvis and the Beatles arrived, my father rejected them outright, my mother embraced them.

Do you suppose that "Democratic brain vs. Republican brain" thing has something to do with this? Maybe in some very complicated way...

Living in two cultures as I do gives me plenty of opportunity to see this formative effect at work. My Bolivian wife loves music and dancing, maybe even more than I do, but it must be the music of her younger years or very similar. Blues, jazz, rock, reggaeton are all lost on her. She's lucky in Bolivia because all the locally popular music

Why Obamacare is necessary...

"Why the Insurance Industry Needs Obamacare to Stay in Business" by Wendell Potter, NationofChange

Apr. 9, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-insurance-industry-needs-obamacare-stay-business-1333986118>)

If there is a group of people more anxious about how the Supreme Court will rule on the health care reform law than President Obama and the millions of Americans who are already benefiting from it, it is health insurance executives.

Not only have their companies been spending millions of dollars implementing the parts of the law that pertains to them — and most of them do — but they also have been counting on the law as very possibly the only thing that can preserve the free market system of health insurance in this country. This is why it is so ironic that defenders of the free market are the most vocal critics of the law and the ones hoping most ardently that the Court will declare it unconstitutional.

Health insurers have known for years that their business practices of excluding growing numbers of Americans from coverage and shifting more and more of the cost of care to policyholders are not sustainable over the long haul. That's why their top priority during the health care reform debate was to make sure whatever bill Congress passed included the much-vilified individual mandate. And it's also why the big insurance companies have been working almost frantically to reinvent themselves lately.

Cigna and Aetna recently became the latest of the biggest national firms to rebrand themselves and roll out new logos and self-descriptions. Cigna is now "a global health service company" while Aetna is now "one of the nation's leading health care benefits companies." What this means is that these companies and their competitors have come to understand that the very policies that enabled them to make Wall Street-pleasing profits over several years has led to a health insurance marketplace that is shrinking. And as it continues to shrink, so will their profit margins.

Cigna and Aetna and a handful of other companies got to be the giants they are today largely by acquiring scores of their smaller competitors in the 1990s and 2000s. Their acquisition strategy now is very different because they know the glory days of being able to report profits every quarter that are greater than what they reported a year earlier, which shareholders demand, are over. So instead of acquiring other insurers, the big firms are now diversifying by buying data and care management businesses and, to the alarm of many consumer advocates, hospitals and physician groups.

They are doing this because they have failed miserably at expanding coverage and controlling skyrocketing medical costs, as they promised they could do as they were torpedoing Bill and Hillary Clinton's health care reform bill two decades ago. Even though they hated many of the Clintons' proposals, they recognized even then that government intervention in the health insurance business would be necessary, that we couldn't rely solely on them or the free market to fix our broken system.

Here's what Karen Igagni, who heads America's Health Insurance Plans, the industry's largest PR and lobbying group, told a Congressional panel in the fall of 1993:

The need for national health care reform has been well documented ... Universal coverage at broadly affordable cost becomes possible only when insurance risks are spread across a large community. Currently, most health coverage is priced using 'experience rating,' where high premiums are set for high cost groups and low premiums are set for low cost groups. Experience rating financially discriminates against populations that experience high costs: the very young, the very old, the chronically ill, and those with pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes.

And here's what Larry English, the former president of Cigna HealthCare, told that same Congressional committee:

There are many specifics in the President's plan we believe should be supported enthusiastically. Among them are universal coverage, portability, the elimination of pre-existing condition limitations, the elimination of cream-skimming and cherry picking underwriting practices, the use of community rating, a standard benefit plan and malpractice reform.

When it became clear, however, that some of the regulations the Clintons were proposing might curtail profits, the insurers began to disown what they had told Congress. They embarked on a campaign to persuade the public that the "invisible hand of the market," as English said in a speech the next year, would do a much better job of controlling costs and expanding coverage than the Clinton plan.

When the Clinton bill died in Congress, that invisible hand went to work. But it proved to be so ham-fisted that physicians and patients soon rebelled. As it turned out, people didn't like being required to change doctors, as many of them had to do. And women didn't like being forced out of the hospital within hours of having a baby or undergoing a mastectomy. So insurers had to ditch many of the practices that presumably would bring down health care costs.

The free-market solution the insurers came up with after the failure of managed care was to herd people into high-deductible plans, just as they herded us into restrictive HMOs 20 years ago. The problem, of course, is that the insurers have to keep increasing both premiums and deductibles to keep meeting Wall Street's profit expectations. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see how that is not a sustainable strategy — unless, of course, the government requires all of us buy coverage and gives subsidies to people who can't afford the premiums on their own.

Without the individual mandate, so loathed by free market lovers, the pool of people willing and able to buy coverage will continue to shrink, as will insurers' profit margins. Over the coming years, that pool will become increasingly older and sicker, meaning premiums will soar. Insurers will begin to desert the marketplace. They will not go out of business, but, as their acquisition strategy shows, they will be very different companies.

Insurance executives know they will have to transform their companies even more rapidly — and get out of the risk business sooner rather than later — if the individual mandate is struck down. They have run out of silver bullets. As for those who believe the free market can work in health care just as well as any other sector of the economy, they will see, if the Court declares the law unconstitutional, that it simply does not.

Wendell Potter is a former CIGNA executive-turned-whistleblower, writing about the health care industry and the ongoing battle for health reform. Potter is the author of *Deadly Spin: An Insurance Company Insider Speaks Out on How Corporate PR is Killing Health Care and Deceiving Americans.*

20120409-09 17:17 Dennis Video: How Conservatives (and Liberals?) Think

Okay conservatives (and liberals), is this really how you think?

Video: <http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/04/09/how-conservatives-think-this-video-needs-to-go-viral-video/>

Adam Strange (no relation to Dr. Strange) put together this short video describing the fundamental difference between the conservative world view and the liberal world view. It's another take on the Authoritarians and puts the actions of the right into perspective. Essentially, conservatives NEED winners and losers in order for the world to make sense. It doesn't matter if they happen to be the losers and if the winners got to the top through immoral, illegal or just downright inhumane means, as long as a hierarchy is preserved. Liberals desire equality of opportunity (as opposed to equality of result which would be Communism, something only people looking for excuses to complain about liberals think we stand for).

Add that to the Steak Rule, "Conservatives cannot enjoy a steak unless they know that, somewhere, someone else can't have a steak of their own" and you can understand the majority of conservative social and economic policies.

(If you're unfamiliar with the woman laying on the floor while the police step over her [in the above video], her name was Anna Brown and she was left to die on the floor from an easily treatable condition. The hospital had her dragged away by the police because she was black and poor. Proof that not only do hospitals not always provide emergency care if they think they won't get paid (they didn't run a single test on her) but that there are death panels. Not the paranoid delusional ones of the right, but the very real ones brought about by the profit motive of our current system.

[I love these quotes from the comments section. —SteveB]

from Richard Bellacera:

"If by a 'Liberal' they mean someone who looks ahead and not behind, someone who welcomes new ideas without rigid reactions, someone who cares about the welfare of the people — their health, their housing, their schools, their jobs, their civil rights, and their civil liberties — someone who believes we can break through the stalemate and suspicions that grip us in our policies abroad, if that is what they mean by a 'Liberal,' then I'm proud to say I'm a 'Liberal.'" —John F. Kennedy, 1960

"We're all connected to each other biologically. To the Earth, chemically. To the Universe, atomically." —Neil deGrasse Tyson.

"Many people, especially ignorant people, want to punish you for speaking the truth, for being correct, for being you. Never apologize for being correct, or for being years ahead of your time. If you're right and you know it, speak your mind. Speak your mind. Even if you are a minority of one, the truth is still the truth." —Mohandas Gandhi

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." —Mohandas Gandhi

Decisions for civil behavior, society & global economy should be "arrived at" via Science, best ever-emerging technologies, reason/logic, what is best for the individual, group and the planet as a whole (i.e., what brings least harm & most benefit), Earth's carrying capacity & available resources & the Ethic of Reciprocity; NOT based on any leader, bureaucracy, money/profit, personal, religious or political belief or ideology, opinion or popular vote. A better world's possible. —me

Please stop thinking like a slave to the Wealthy elite. Its time we, as a HUMAN SPECIES consciously, selflessly and CONSCIENTIOUSLY EVOLVE to value life over greed. Our current monetary system promotes corruption by INCENTIVE. The Earth is the ONLY home we have right now and the faster corporate greed develops the faster we are destroying our home. Christians don't care 'cause they delusionally think "So what, Jesus is coming back and he'll give us a New Earth". WAKE UP. Its an extremely short-sighted CON! —me

Never stop asking questions and never stop learning. When you stop asking questions you cease your path to enlightenment. Consciously evolve. —me

"The old appeals to racial and sexual and religious chauvinism, to rabid nationalist fervor, are beginning not to work. A new consciousness is developing which sees the Earth as a single organism, and recognizes that an organism at war with itself is doomed. We are One Planet." —Carl Sagan

"This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career." —Albert Einstein

"A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it." —Max Planck (Father of Quantum Mechanics)

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." —Margaret Mead

"Reason obeys itself; Ignorance submits to what is dictated to it." —Thomas Paine

MORALITY IS DOING WHAT IS RIGHT, NO MATTER WHAT YOU ARE TOLD. FAITH IS DOING WHAT YOU ARE TOLD, NO MATTER WHAT IS RIGHT.

"May the Great Bird of the Galaxy bless your planet" —Hikaru Sulu (Star Trek)

20120409-10 17:45 MarthaH "Dick Lugar: Too Mild to Be Memorable?"

From MarthaH (Apr. 9, 2012, 5:45 pm)—Mild Dick Lugar

"Dick Lugar: Too Mild to Be Memorable?" by Melinda Henneberger, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 9, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/dick-lugar-too-mild-to-be-memorable/2012/04/09/gIQASHKL6S_story.html)

(COLUMBUS, Ind.) The lead story in the morning paper had delivered just the latest kick in the shins to Dick Lugar in the hottest Senate primary in the country. "Like many Senate Republicans who have spent a few decades in Washington," it said, "U.S. Senator Richard Lugar was for the individual health mandate before he was against it."

Ouch!

Yet a far worse sign for Lugar, who turned 80 this week, was that nobody at the Rotary Club luncheon where he was speaking asked him about the story — or about the controversy over whether he has a legal address in Indiana, where he last owned a home in 1977.

Instead, the Q&A that followed his remarks was about the geopolitics of food security and his early days running his family's black walnut farm. It was not just polite, but too polite, especially this close to the May 8 primary.

How does polling work?

Is Super PAC money good or bad?

Will the Ryan budget pass, do you think?

Sure, this was Rotary, not "Hardball." But even here, tougher questions would have suggested voters were still deciding between the icon and his challenger, tea party favorite and State Treasurer Richard Mourdock.

Lugar, the ranking member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is a gentleman of the old school, referring to the Affordable Care Act as "so-called Obamacare," in campaign speeches and even correctly identifying Harry Reid as a member of the Democratic, rather than "Democrat" Party. At a time when Republicans routinely insist on denying Democrats that courtesy, hearing the proper usage from a Republican's lips is a reminder of how unusual it's become.

Yet if the question is whether Lugar is too mild for this highly polarized moment, his answer has not been to reinvent himself. Instead, his pitch about making the world safer by helping African farmers get better yields is a double-shot of decaf, resolutely out-of-sync with the anger of the moment.

The ad war here is well funded but within bounds so far, with Lugar accused of being open to raising the gas tax at one point, which is true, and Mourdock of counting on outside money, also true.

The race is, however, unpredictable, **as a result of that outside money, from groups including the Club for Growth and FreedomWorks, both of which are supporting Mourdock.** In the middle of the country and the middle of the political spectrum, Indiana's governorship and Senate seats tend to swing back and forth between the

parties, and a Mourdock victory could also open a path for moderate Democrat Joe Donnelly, the congressman from South Bend, who narrowly won reelection in his bellwether district two years ago.

Murdock, the primary challenger who threatens to end Lugar's long career, is an introverted 60-year-old geologist who hates parties and loves marathon-running and motorcycles. He is a bomb-thrower only by Hoosier standards.

Most Saturdays since October, Mourdock has been out knocking on doors, asking registered Republicans to vote for him in the primary, though his natural inclination is hermetic, and by his own account he'd prefer to be doing "something normal."

On a recent such outing, in his home territory in Evansville, in southern Indiana, he got a generally positive reception, and only one outright no. "It's time for a change," said Dianne Hensley, who answered her door and promised him her vote. "Even I had to retire."

Over coffee later at the Donut Bank, the compact, quiet challenger described himself as a thoroughly reluctant politician, though he has been campaigning pretty much nonstop since 1988 – and three times ran unsuccessfully for a House seat. In 2010, however, he improbably led his party's ticket, even from way down-ballot, and as state treasurer has some establishment as well as tea party support.

To those who first encouraged him to challenge Lugar, he said his reaction was, "What did I ever do to you? That's an awfully big bus to throw me under." Not because he thought he couldn't win, but because he knew he'd have to sacrifice his privacy: "I hate that part of it! My wife and I are very private people, and I know the next 30 days are going to change my life forever. My wife says, 'What happened to my shy geologist?' I loved looking through a microscope because it meant I didn't have to deal with people."

When a motorcycle roared by, Mourdock looked out the window and said, "That's what I'd rather be doing" — especially because out on the open road, he's anonymous. "I have a full-mask helmet and nobody knows who I am. I have a flaw as a politician — emotionally, for my ego, I don't have to do this."

He said he realized years ago that he'd gotten into a bad habit: "Go to work, go home, watch TV, go to bed," repeat. With TV eating so many hours and brain cells, "I gave myself the goal of reading 10 pages of history a night" instead, and as a result, he began thinking more about politics.

His eyes filled with tears repeatedly during the interview — when talking about his feelings about his country, his wife, whom he introduces as "Saint Marilyn," and "all those nights" he pondered a certain quote from Lincoln, who as a kid spent 14 years in Southern Indiana.

"This is essentially a people's contest," Lincoln said of the Civil War. "On the side of the Union, it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men ... to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life."

Today, as Mourdock sees it, the "government picks winners and losers, and that infuriates me." How so? With bailouts, giveaways and attempts to "give the children of immigrants special rights." In fact, he sees the current moment as strikingly similar to the Civil War era, with the question of the proper role of government dividing Americans.

At bottom, he said, the split is between "those who say, 'You can't have my stuff,' and those who say, 'I want your stuff,' though they don't know that's what they're saying."

Dick Lugar is an artisan of understatement. He tells supporters at a fundraiser at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis that "this has not been a very productive period," in terms of passing a budget, that our dependence on foreign oil has been "lamented by the last five presidents without visible activity," and that, in his current primary race, "we are involved in obviously a very vigorous and strenuous effort."

He told some 200 old friends at the event that although he understands the public's anger, anger in itself is no answer: "It takes no talent to flail about," shouting about jobs, he said, and held up Indiana training programs

inside companies as a model for the country, and Indiana genetically modified seed as a farming model to the world.

Twice during his remarks, he referred to Paul Ryan as "Jim Ryan," and in conclusion, said he'll hopefully be around for six months more, when of course he meant six years.

But after the event, on a barstool in the empty hall outside where the Pacers play, he had no trouble articulating why voters should renew his contract: "I believe I can make a significant difference in American foreign policy, ag policy and economic policy. I hope it's not too grandiose a vision to say we have an opportunity to help people all over the world." Then he went back to talking about world hunger.

Grandiose, no. But in the primary fight of his life, such talk is as radical in its way as anything tea party or Occupy protesters could write on a sign.

When asked about the residency controversy, he didn't try to minimize the impact of the issue, but on the contrary went on a little bit about his awe at the stacks and stacks of press clips on the subject: "It's all about residency, and almost nothing about the campaign!"

So how did a 35-year-veteran of the Senate wind up using the address of a home he sold in 1977 on his license and voter registration until just recently? The answer is nothing if not old-fashioned.

"At the time I left to serve in the Senate — and I don't want to go too far with this, but it's somewhat like going off to the military," which as a Navy vet he's also done, "I followed the legal advice of the AG" of Indiana to use the last address he'd had before his election. Now that he's been cleared to use the address at his family farm, though he's never lived there, he said, "I was out there yesterday — a sentimental journey — just to make sure no one had destroyed the house, and my son Bob had done a good job cleaning out the rubbish." The place is impossible to miss, he said with a smile, "because there's a sign on the gate, Richard G. Lugar, Tree Farmer of the Year, 2005."

Lugar recently repaid the state for the \$14,000 he'd charged taxpayers for the hotels he's always stayed in during trips back to Indiana and says he had no idea he'd been flouting the "arcane" Senate rule that members can't be compensated for stays within 35 miles of their home — or in his case, former home.

He not only makes no apology for selling his Indiana home 35 years ago, but notes that the Congress functioned better when more of its members spent enough time in Washington to get to know one another better.

When asked about the much-discussed charge that he "let" Obama use a photo of the two of them together in an '08 ad in the state, he said facetiously, "Maybe I'm just not alert enough to the possibilities, and should have threatened a lawsuit." But more was accomplished, he said, when it was less scandalous to be seen standing next to someone from across the aisle. And if this campaign does turn out to mark the end of Lugar's long career, no one will be able to say he didn't stay true to himself, in its final weeks.

(Melinda Henneberger anchors the She the People blog on washingtonpost.com.)

20120409-12	19:07	Art	Re: "Dick Lugar: Too Mild to Be Memorable?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Holy cr*p. It's kinda hard to decide who to vote against.

<http://www.gadgetreview.com/2010/03/indoor-car-elevator-is-beyond-practical-but-so-cool.html>



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

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