



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #119 — APR. 18, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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Come On, Big Guy!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 18, 2012)

Maybe it's about time America did something about energy? Ooops! It's an election year. Republicans are dedicated to one thing only—the overthrow of the present government. President Obama doesn't seem to be leading very well on the subject. All the big money, especially big oil, is arrayed against any possible solution. Right now, the situation looks pretty hopeless. Perhaps...next year...with a Democratic Congress...

"Obama Launches Attack on Oil Speculators" by Jennifer Epstein, Politico

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0412/75244.html>)

President Barack Obama called Tuesday for greater federal oversight of oil markets, his latest effort to head off market manipulation as gas prices stay high ahead of the peak summer months.

"We can't afford a situation where some speculators can reap millions while millions of American families get the short end of the stick. That's not the way the market should work," Obama said in a Rose Garden speech, laying out a \$52 million proposal largely aimed at beefing up the Commodities Future Trading Commission's oversight and enforcement of the oil and gas markets.

As prices at the pump have risen since the start of the year and the Republican presidential candidates have attacked Obama on the issue, the White House pushed an "all of the above" strategy, which includes more drilling, the development of alternative fuels and ending tax credits for the oil and gas industry.

Another piece of cutting prices, the president said Tuesday, is to root out market manipulation.

The administration needs to "work extra hard to protect consumers from factors that should not affect the price of a barrel of oil," he said. "That includes doing everything we can to ensure that an irresponsible few aren't able to hurt consumers by illegally manipulating or rigging the energy markets for their own gain."

Obama wants Congress to approve new funding for at least a six-fold increase of "cops on the beat" to stop market manipulation and illegal speculation, a tenfold increase in civil and criminal penalties for manipulation and new funding to update the CFTC's technology to monitor markets. Obama is also taking executive action to share the commission's data with the Council of Economic Advisers.

The White House declined to predict how the moves would affect gasoline prices. "I'm not going to speculate about this provision or any other provision and the specific effects it would have on the price at the pump," Brian Deese of National Economic Council said.

The president has blamed oil speculators for rising prices before, and created a task force a year ago to deal with the issue. But the task force has met only a handful of times and has not issued a public report, McClatchy reported last month.

Obama spent much of February and March telling Americans that there is "no silver bullet" to cut gas prices while nonetheless stressing he was doing all he could to cut prices. With the price of a gallon of gas at \$3.90, according to AAA, down a bit from its recent peak, gas prices remain an issue where Obama is vulnerable.

Aware of that vulnerability, Republicans were skeptical of Obama's proposal Tuesday.

GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney didn't think much of the plan, saying that going after speculators won't lower prices at the pump. He also attacked the White House for trying to make greens happy.

"While American families struggle to pay gas prices that have doubled on his watch, the President's only solutions are to target oil and gas producers for higher taxes and now to dramatically increase federal regulation," Romney said in a statement. "And they will not distract the American people from the president's consistent record of sacrificing America's energy future to appease the environmental extremists in the Democratic Party."

Oil and natural gas magnate T. Boone Pickens also took issue with Obama for invoking Enron, the infamous Houston-based energy company that went bankrupt in 2001.

"We can't afford a situation where speculators artificially manipulate markets by buying up oil, creating the perception of a shortage, and driving prices higher — only to flip the oil for a quick profit," Obama said.

"And for anyone who thinks this cannot happen, just think back to how Enron traders manipulated the price of electricity to reap huge profits at everybody else's expense."

Pickens thought the Enron comparison was out of bounds. "To waste time comparing today's #energy commodity mkts to Enron is insulting. #Enron was a bunch of crooks," Pickens tweeted. He later added: "Be careful, the next card will be SPR release. That's the ultimate market manipulation."

"The Case of President Obama's Missing Oil Tax" by Carrie Budoff Brown, Politico

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0412/75224.html>)

Candidate Barack Obama pushed it hard in 2008: a tax on Big Oil company profits that would flow back to families in \$1,000 rebate checks.

President Barack Obama acts as if the idea never existed.

With gas prices at record highs during the campaign, Obama backed the so-called windfall profits tax as the top item of his energy agenda, arguing it was needed once oil tops \$80 per barrel. He ran TV ads in 18 states touting the idea and slammed GOP rival John McCain for taking oil company contributions "instead of taxing their windfall profits to help drivers."

But four years later, as oil sits well above the \$80 marker for the second year in a row and Republicans hammer Obama on energy policy, the idea is about as popular in the West Wing as \$4-per-gallon gas.

Obama dropped the plan soon after winning office, when the economic crisis depressed oil demand worldwide, and he hasn't talked about it since then. His aides also declined to address it on the record.

The arc of the tax from campaign cornerstone to administration dustbin illustrates the speed at which election-year promises can evaporate once the realities of governing set in. And it highlights Obama's difficulty matching his get-tough rhetoric on oil companies with results, particularly as the Senate lost its moderate core, Republican allies on the issue turned into opponents and longtime Democratic sponsors retired.

"This is a campaign pledge that disappeared in 2008 and never made it back into the mix," said Ben Schreiber, a climate and energy tax analyst with Friends of the Earth. "The truth of the matter is the president hasn't used his megaphone to promote it."

Within a week of Election Day, Obama's transition team dropped the tax from its website, according to the American Small Business League, which tracked the changes. An unnamed transition official quoted in news reports at the time said the reason was that the price of oil per barrel had dipped to about \$40. The abrupt shift infuriated progressives, who felt he'd abandoned the tax entirely and dubbed it Obama's first broken campaign promise.

Instead, Obama focused on eliminating tax incentives for oil and gas companies, which the administration included in each of its four budgets.

"Ending unwarranted subsidies for Big Oil, which represent billions in taxpayer dollars each year that could be used more effectively, is clearly more achievable, and so it makes sense for us to put our focus there," an administration aide said.

A second administration aide said the White House decided that it had a better chance at persuading Congress to repeal the tax subsidies than enact the tax on oil and gas company profits.

"Right now, the biggest oil companies are raking in record profits — profits that go up every time folks pull up into a gas station," Obama said last month. "But on top of these record profits, oil companies are also getting billions a year — billions a year in taxpayer subsidies. ... Think about that. It's like hitting the American people twice. You're already paying a premium at the pump right now. And on top of that, Congress, up until this point, has thought it was a good idea to send billions of dollars more in tax dollars to the oil industry."

On Tuesday, Obama spoke once again about the need for an "all-of-the-above strategy" as he pushed Congress to give oil market regulators more muscle to head off manipulation by speculators. The rest of the strategy includes more drilling, the development of alternative fuels and ending the oil industry tax credits — but not the windfall tax.

The Rose Garden event was latest in a string of efforts by the White House to show it isn't powerless, even though Obama has struggled to win over voters on his response to high gas prices. A Washington Post/ABC News Poll released last week found 62 percent of adults disapprove of his handling of the issue.

Elgie Holstein, a senior campaign adviser on energy policy in 2008 and co-director of Obama's energy transition team, said he could not recall any discussions during the transition on dropping one proposal in favor of another.

But he said the main reasons for doing so were likely the gyrating oil prices that would have made it difficult to structure the tax, an economic crisis that shifted priorities and a recognition that targeting the oil subsidies made more sense from a policy standpoint.

"In the big picture this is really all about how things in the course of a campaign season can change dramatically, so by the time a new president is inaugurated, the scale of the problems he or she has to confront changes dramatically and so do the solutions," said Holstein, now senior director of strategic planning for the Environmental Defense Fund.

But critics, and even some allies, of the president say the White House made more of a cold political calculation in abandoning the windfall profits tax.

The tax made it too easy for Republicans to tag Obama as a liberal in the mold of former President Jimmy Carter, who enacted a windfall profits tax that Congress repealed eight years later, after it failed to produce a windfall for the government.

"Maybe they took some classes and realized it didn't work," said Peter Van Doren, a scholar at the libertarian Cato Institute who has studied the issue.

Hiking taxes on oil company profits won support from 55 percent of adults nationwide in an ABC News/Planet Green/Stanford University poll in July 2008. But repealing the tax incentives for oil companies has earned higher marks from the public in various polls over the past year.

Seventy-seven percent of Americans said redirecting the oil tax incentives to fund investments in alternative fuels would either help a lot or somewhat help in addressing high gas prices, according to a March survey conducted by Hart Research for the liberal Center for American Progress. Sixty-three percent said the same about taxing oil company profits.

And then there is the congressional math. The House is now controlled by Republicans. In the Senate, of the 12 Republicans who supported procedural votes on bills to tax oil profits at some point over the past seven years, only four are still in office.

Among the remaining group, the support has dissolved. Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) said in the "current economic climate," she favors ending the tax subsidies rather than taxing oil company profits. A spokeswoman for Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) said he only supported opening debate on the energy bill, not the tax itself. A spokesman for Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) could not say where she stood on the issue. A spokeswoman for Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) could not be reached for comment.

The Democratic sponsors — Sen. Hillary Clinton of New York, Sen. Byron Dorgan of North Dakota and Sen. Chris Dodd of Connecticut — are gone, too.

The increasingly polarized Senate isn't interested in repealing the tax subsidies, either. A bill to do so failed to advance last month on a 51-47 vote, short of the 60 votes needed to open debate.

If that bill can't advance, then taxing the windfall profits stands no chance — which is why nobody is really expecting Obama to return to the proposal, even though the price of oil has been above that \$80-per-barrel level that Obama identified in 2008 for five months. As of Monday, it was \$102.

"No one is talking about it right now," said Dan Weiss, director of climate strategy at the Center for American Progress.

That could change later in the month when the big five oil companies report their first-quarter profits, which could once again break records, Weiss said.

But even supporters of the proposal concede that prospects are dim. Not that they are happy about it.

"Barack Obama told the people of America that he would pass a windfall profits tax," said Lloyd Chapman, president of the American Small Business League, which first drew attention to Obama's shift away from the tax after his election. "Not doing so is one thing but to never explain why ... is a staggering lack of integrity. Obama needs to do what he said he would do."

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<u>20120417-01</u>	11:28	Bill	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Clark, Apr. 16, 2012)
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With respect to your second point as to Republican thinking (Meanwhile ...), Daniel Bernoulli may be one of the more powerful thinkers, despite his eighteenth century outlook. Here's a translation of his thought in a paper he wrote on risk- and wealth-related topics in St. Petersburg:

[The] utility resulting from any small increase in wealth will be inversely proportional to the quantity of goods previously possessed.

What might be abstracted from this is that further acquisition of wealth by the very wealthy may sometimes be mindless and not necessarily beneficial to the rest of society. I'm not going to put this on any banner that I carry into battle, but we do see many of the very, very wealthy apparently behaving in a manner that confirms this. I'm only a tinhorn economist, so I'm unable to address the real core of your point as to whether accumulation of wealth/capital has broader benefit to society.

<u>20120417-03</u>	12:16	Pam	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Bill)
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A couple of months ago Romney said he wanted "welfare mothers" to have to work, even if they have a 2-yr. old at home. It would, he said, teach them the "dignity of work." I guess his own wife didn't need that. This morning on NPR I heard the Minister of Women and Children in Bangladesh talk about what their government (not NGOs, the govt.) does for pregnant women and new mothers. It's a WHOLE lot more than we do here. Six months paid leave, prenatal care and encouragement to breastfeed, immunizations, etc. Americans (Republicans) don't want to help people; they want to punish them, as if they (Newt, Herman) have never made bad choices. Every civilized country--and some of the not-so-civilized--do more for families than we ever think of doing. It makes me sick, quite frankly.

I don't know if these benefits still obtain, but when I lived in Canada, I gave birth to Saskia for a total cost of \$40.00, and that was because I opted for a private room. We also got \$60/mo. for each child. Everyone got this, citizen or not, rich or poor. Canadians actually care about people--at least in my experience.

20120417-05	12:56	SteveG	Re: "Wealthy Already Lining Up Ways to Skirt Buffett Rule" (reply to Pam)
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Life expectancy, infant mortality rate, educational scores, happiness, medical service, student educational debt – how do we rate compared to other nations? But we do rate number 1 in defense spending. Kind of shows where our national priorities are doesn't it?

20120417-02	12:02	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Send a Fax to Rep. Paul Ryan
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from Daily Kos:

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) is perfectly willing to follow the dictates of the Catholic bishops on limiting women's access to reproductive health care. Funny how he ignores his church when it advises caring for the poor, ending war—and supporting President Obama's proposed federal budget instead of Ryan's own "starve the poor, help the wealthy" plan.

Perhaps the architect of the make-poor-people-pay plan hasn't read the recent guidance from the Conference of Catholic Bishops that "a just framework for future budgets cannot rely on disproportionate cuts in essential services to poor persons; it requires shared sacrifice by all, including raising adequate revenues, eliminating unnecessary military and other spending, and addressing the long-term costs of health insurance and retirement programs fairly."

Let's remind Paul Ryan of his church's advice.

Call out Paul Ryan by faxing him a copy of the statement from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops denouncing his budget proposal.

Thousands of faxes will let Ryan and his fellow conservatives know that you can't hide behind church teachings when it's in line with conservative thinking and ignore it when it's not. Voters are keeping track of the hypocrisy.

Please, click here to send a fax to Paul Ryan: http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=114.

Keep fighting, Kaili Joy Gray, Daily Kos

20120417-04	12:32	SteveB	"Common Sense: What Goes Around"
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"Common Sense: What Goes Around" by Oliver North, *Human Events*

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=50863>)

(No one speaks of an "Arab Spring" anymore.)

Nine years ago this week, our Fox News team accompanied U.S. Marines as they swept into Baghdad and then north up the Tigris River to seize Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

It took less than three weeks to drive the tyrant from power in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and it appeared then that the force of American arms could ensure a new era of tranquility in a part of the world where brutality and anti-American despots had ruled for too long. But it was not so.

The Dec. 13, 2003, capture of the deposed dictator, dragged filthy and bedraggled from a "spider hole" within sight of his palace in Tikrit, failed to quell a rising insurgency. During the following spring and through the autumn of 2004, the U.S. Marines and soldiers we lived with in Anbar province were in daily gun battles with well-armed Sunni insurgents waging jihad against the "invaders."

To the east and in Baghdad, Shiite militias launched a campaign of terror against their Sunni countrymen and coalition troops. At home, critics of the war and the Bush administration prognosticated that the fights for Fallujah and Ramadi were prelude to all-out civil war. But that didn't happen, either.

In the spring of 2005, we were embedded with the Marines when they launched Operation Matador in Qaim, where the Euphrates River enters Iraq from Syria. Their mission: stanch the flow of weapons, munitions and suicidal Islamist militants flooding into Anbar province from Syria.

Interdicting the Damascus-supported ratlines turned out to be a very good idea. Five months later, we documented the first free national legislative election in Iraqi history -- and a better than 70 percent turnout.

U.S. military operations along Iraq's border with Syria didn't end the insurgency, but they made the subsequent "awakening" in Anbar -- and then the rest of the country -- possible.

By the time we were covering the "surge" five years ago, the bloody operation in Qaim was all but forgotten by those who once predicted catastrophe in Iraq. The reporters who didn't make it to Qaim in 2005 ought to go there now. This desert town on the banks of the Euphrates is once again the scene of a flood from Syria. But now it's a torrent of refugees fleeing the sanguinary carnage wrought by Bashar Assad.

None of us -- including the U.S. Marines we accompanied to Baghdad and beyond nine years ago this week -- expected the outcome we now see in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the attack on 9/11, the end of the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan was predictable. So, too, was the demise of Saddam Hussein once the battle in Iraq was joined. But no one in government or elsewhere spoke or wrote about these military operations precipitating a nearly spontaneous cascade of collapsing authoritarian regimes throughout the region. Yet that's what has happened.

When unarmed civilians protesting oppressive government policies, rampant unemployment and escalating food prices drove Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from power in Tunisia on Jan. 14 of last year, devotees of Barack Obama attributed the event to our president's Nobel Prize-winning oratorical skills. They called it the "transition in Tunis" and described it all as the beginning of an "Arab Spring." It was repeated yet again in February as crowds in Cairo forced Egyptian strongman Hosni Mubarak from power.

The term was still in vogue in October, when Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi fell to an armed rebellion -- and NATO airstrikes. Now it's happening in Syria -- but this time, the crowds are armed -- and no one speaks of an "Arab Spring" anymore.

This week's "cease-fire," brokered by former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, hasn't stopped Syrian refugees from trekking through the Syrian Desert and across the border into Qaim. Deterred by harsh conditions, lack of fuel and inadequate food and water and banned by the Iraqi government of Nouri al-Maliki from going any farther, they have become unwelcome squatters in the border town that once served as a refuge for terrorists.

The brutal irony in all this is that many of those who once passed through Qaim to threaten the government in Baghdad are now among the armed rebels menacing the regime in Damascus. For six years, Bashar Assad was deaf to U.S. pleas to cut the terror ratlines from Syria into Iraq. Instead, he did the opposite -- facilitating the movement of thousands of Islamist fighters into Anbar province to kill and maim. Now those same Islamists have turned on him, and he is learning one of the harsh realities of war: What goes around comes around.

20120417-06 14:12 SteveB "Thoughts on Tax Day 2012"

"Thoughts on Tax Day 2012" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/thoughts-tax-day-2012-1334677092>)

As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., wrote in 1904, "taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society."

But the wealthiest Americans, who haven't raked in as much of America's income and wealth since the 1920s, are today paying a lower tax rate than they have in over thirty years. Even though America faces a mammoth federal budget deficit. Even though public services at all levels of government continue to be slashed. Even though the median wage is still dropping, adjusted for inflation. Even though the typical American is paying more of his or her earnings in taxes – including payroll taxes, sales taxes, and property taxes – than ever before.

I'm not a class warrior. I'm a class worrier. And my worries go to why all this has happened.

I worry about the political power that comes with great wealth – such as the power of the wealthy to reduce their taxes, cut the public services most other Americans depend on, while at the same time garnering special subsidies and tax breaks for their businesses – big oil, big pharma, big agriculture, military contractors, big insurance, Wall Street.

I worry about the well-financed big lies that the very rich are the nation's "job creators," that the benefits from tax cuts on the rich "trickle down" to everyone else, that American corporations will create more jobs if only their taxes are lowered and if regulations protecting health, safety, and the environment were jettisoned.

I worry about the increasing dominance of Wall Street over our economy and democracy, and the near political impossibilities of closing the "carried interest" loophole that allows private-equity and hedge-fund managers to treat their income as capital gains subject to only 15% tax; of resurrecting the Glass-Steagall Act separating investment from commercial banking, and of breaking up the big banks to protect against another financial crash and bailout of the Street.

You and I have every right to be class worriers – and to be outraged at what has occurred. But we must get beyond worry and outrage, and do everything in our power to take back our economy and reclaim our democracy.

It was another justice of the Supreme Court, Louis Brandeis, who wrote in 1897, "**We may have a democracy or we may have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both.**"

20120417-07	14:14	SteveG	Fw: Emily's List Action: Tell the GOP Women Deserve Equal Pay
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If you sign the petition, it will flip to a contribution site – the idea of women making 77% of a man's pay is ridiculous.

from Emily's List:

Today is Equal Pay Day. The sad fact is, in 2012, American women still earn an average of only 77 cents for every dollar men make. This terrible wage gap has dire consequences for not only women, but for their families as well.

But Republicans think that 77 cents is more than enough for women. Just a few weeks ago, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker repealed an equal pay law, yet again turning the clocks back. When Mitt Romney campaigned in Wisconsin, he repeatedly called Scott Walker a "hero" and a "man of courage." And just last week, Republican Pete Hoekstra, running for Senate in Michigan against EMILY's List champion Debbie Stabenow, called the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act "a nuisance."

Let's get real: there's nothing courageous about attacking the economic security of women and their families. Rolling back equal pay laws is just another battle in the Republican War on Women. And we're simply not going to stand for it.

Click here to tell the GOP: we support equal pay for equal work for all American women:
http://emilyslist.org/action/20120417_equal_pay/.

How do we fight back against the Republican War on Women? We must go all out to take back the House and keep our Senate firewall of pro-choice Democratic women. Just like Senator Barbara Mikulski said, "Women make this country run -- we are business leaders, entrepreneurs, politicians, mothers and more." And we must stand together against this extremism and make sure women get fair and equal treatment.

It's up to us to ensure that 2012 is an historic year for American women. We must unite our voices against the backwards policies of Republicans like Scott Walker and Mitt Romney.

Click now to tell Republicans that women deserve more than 77 cents. Stand up for equal pay for women across this country.

The GOP would love it if we remained silent in the face of this draconian agenda. But I know that supporters like you will help protect our values of equality and fairness. Join me today in sending a clear message: we have had enough.

Thanks for everything you do.

All the best, Amy K. Dacey, Executive Director

20120417-12	18:20	Art	Re: Emily's List Action: Tell the GOP Women Deserve Equal Pay
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Done.

20120417-08	15:21	SteveG	"Broadcasters Are 'Against Transparency,' Says FCC Chairman"
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Spread the word.

Broadcasters are hiding the real truth.

We have a right to know who is paying for the political advertisements.

"Broadcasters Are 'Against Transparency,' Says FCC Chairman" by Justin Elliott, ProPublica

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://www.propublica.org/article/broadcasters-are-against-transparency-says-fcc-chair>)

Television stations, which have been fighting a government proposal to make political ad data more accessible, came in for some harsh criticism yesterday at their annual trade show in Las Vegas. In a keynote speech Monday afternoon at the National Association of Broadcasters convention, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski unleashed on the industry.

"[S]ome in the broadcast industry have elected to position themselves against technology, against transparency and against journalism," said Genachowski, who favors the proposed rule, which would create an FCC website for political ad data.

The data is already public but kept only on paper at TV stations. (That's why ProPublica has launched Free the Files. We're inviting volunteers to visit the stations and help collect the data so anybody can see it. The data can provide information not available through traditional campaign finance filings.)

As we've previously reported, the National Association of Broadcasters, led by former Sen. Gordon Smith, has been lobbying the FCC to water down the proposed rule requiring stations to post the data. The commission will vote on it April 27.

Genachowski criticized television stations for opposing the transparency measure despite the "proud history of broadcast journalism."

Genachowski also answered broadcasters' objections point by point. Here's the key portion of his speech:

The arguments, made in the public record, shouldn't go unanswered.

First, cost. The argument is that meeting existing disclosure obligations online instead of on paper would be a heavy financial burden and indeed a "jobs destroyer." But the facts demonstrate the unsurprising conclusion that the cost of online disclosure is nominal and that, indeed, once the transition from paper to digital is complete, it will save money — save money for broadcasters and for other stakeholders: including political candidates, journalists and the public at large.

It's also noteworthy that any disclosure costs tied to putting the political file online relate directly to political advertising revenue received by broadcasters, which is estimated to be in the \$3 billion range this year, up by large amounts over past years.

Another argument that's been made: This isn't an FCC issue. That argument is refuted by the plain language of the law. Congress explicitly requires broadcasters to "maintain, and make available for public inspection, a complete record of a request to purchase broadcast time that is made by or on behalf of a legally qualified candidate, etc."

Congress placed this requirement in the Communications Act, and explicitly charged the FCC with the obligation to carry out these provisions. It gave both the FEC and the FCC roles, understanding the unique role broadcasters play and that some of the information Congress requires broadcasters to make public is never provided to the FEC, and what is provided is sent weeks or months later. The FCC's role here is clear, essential and very longstanding.

Another objection is that the disclosed information is "proprietary," particularly the rates broadcasters charge for political advertising. But, one, Congress explicitly requires broadcasters to disclose this information, and, two, broadcasters already do.

In other words, the argument against moving the public file online is that required broadcaster disclosures shouldn't be too public. But in a world where everything is going digital, why have a special exemption for broadcasters' political disclosure obligation?

20120417-09	17:11	SteveG	Fw: The Other 98% Petition: Help Close the GE Tax Hole
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from The Other 98%:

What do you call it when a major US corporation lobbies and receives its own, special tax law that is just for them, and then pays negative tax rates for years on end, netting billions of dollars in pure profit?

We call it the GE Tax Hole.

GE has paid a cumulative tax rate of negative 18% over the last 5 years - WTF?

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. Join our Tax Day letter to Congress: let's close the GE Tax Hole NOW!

<http://other98.com/close-the-ge-tax-hole-now/>

How does GE pull off this massive scam? By having their army of tax lobbyists craft, write and pass a tax law just for them: it's called Active Financing, but a better name is Active Tax-Dodging. Active Financing is an uber-complex scheme, designed to use loopholes in foreign leasing law to prevent GE's US profits from ever being taxed.

How much of a scam is the GE Tax Hole? Even GE's own tax lawyers joke publicly about how much of a scam it is: their top Tax attorney, John Samuels, publicly joked at a conference that they created "a heads-I-win, tails-I-break even situation."

GE ain't just hoping the American people don't notice - they are literally and openly laughing at us.

Let's make this a Tax Day that GE doesn't ever forget - join our joint letter to Congress NOW.

GE and other major corporations aren't just playing a short-term money game - they're shifting the burden of funding the common good onto us and our kids. In the mid-50s, according to Citizens For Tax Justice, corporate tax receipts accounted for roughly a third of all federal revenue - today, it accounts for a teeny-tiny 6.6%.

This corporate looting has to stop.

It's time to end the corporate tax holiday. It's time to close the GE Tax Hole. Join us.

Thank you for all you do to make this movement real.

Sincerely, Andrew Boyd, The Other 98%

[20120417-10](#) 17:34 SteveG Fw: MoveOn Petition: Support the Student Loan Forgiveness Act

from MoveOn:

Since 1999, average student loan debt has increased by a shameful 511%. In 2010, total outstanding student loan debt exceeded total outstanding credit card debt in America for the first time ever. In 2012, total outstanding student loan debt is expected to exceed \$1 trillion.

In response to this crisis, U.S. Representative Hansen Clarke of Michigan has just introduced H.R. 4170, the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012, which would extend a helping hand to those struggling under massive amounts of student loan debt.

That's why I created a petition to Rep. John Kline, Chairman of the House Education and the Workplace Committee; the United States House of Representatives and Senate; and President Barack Obama on SignOn.org, which says:

Total outstanding student loan debt in America is expected to exceed \$1 TRILLION this year. Millions of hardworking, taxpaying, educated Americans are being crushed under the weight of their educational debts, while the economy continues to sputter. Support a REAL economic stimulus and jobs plan. Support the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012 (H.R. 4170).

Will you sign the petition? Click here to add your name, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=272847&id=39566-18997482-pkHYGbx&t=2>

Thanks! –Robert Applebaum

[20120417-11](#) 17:42 SteveG "Ted Nugent's Obama Comments Buzz Around Romney"

Gotta love Ted Nugent and the NRA!

"Ted Nugent's Obama Comments Buzz Around Romney" by Catalina Camia, USA Today

Apr. 17, 2012, (<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/onpolitics/post/2012/04/ted-nugent-obama-threat-mitt-romney-/1?loc=interstitialskip#.T43jK9krmvI>)

Rocker Ted Nugent's controversial remarks about President Obama this weekend have put a spotlight on his support of Mitt Romney, as the likely GOP presidential nominee ratchets up his White House campaign.

Nugent slammed the Obama administration and singled out four members of the Supreme Court as not supporting the Constitution during his remarks at the National Rifle Association's annual conference in St. Louis. Nugent, best known for his hit "Cat Scratch Fever", is an NRA board member.

"If you want more of those kinds of evil anti-American people in the Supreme Court, then don't get involved and let Obama take office again," Nugent said Saturday. "Because I'll tell you this right now: If Barack Obama becomes the president in November again, I will either be dead or in jail by this time next year."

Nugent's comments sparked an outcry from Obama's allies. Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz said in an e-mail to supporters that Nugent's remarks were "clearly beyond the pale" and called on Romney to denounce them.

Andrea Saul, a spokeswoman for the Romney campaign, said in a statement, "Divisive language is offensive no matter what side of the political aisle it comes from. Mitt Romney believes everyone needs to be civil."

Asked about Nugent's comments, White House spokesman Jay Carney did not directly respond to its specifics. "We can't as a general rule police the statements of every supporter," Carney said, adding Obama is focused on issues such as the economy.

The U.S. Secret Service is looking into the matter. "We are aware of the situation, and we're conducting an appropriate follow-up," said Brian Leary, a Secret Service spokesman.

20120417-13	21:03	SteveBA	"Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now"
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I thought I'd send this article, after you spent a lot of time congratulating Obama for saving GM.

"Great News: 'Too Big to Fail' Banks Even Bigger Now" by Ed Morrissey, HotAir.com

Apr. 15, 2012, (<http://hotair.com/archives/2012/04/16/great-news-too-big-to-fail-banks-even-bigger-now/>)

More than two years ago, Barack Obama railed against "too big to fail" banks and pledged to prevent the "further consolidation" of the banking system. Did Obama succeed? According to Bloomberg, the five banks that held assets equal to 43% of the US economy in 2007 before the financial crisis and the bank bailout now control assets that equal 56% of the US economy:

Two years after President Barack Obama vowed to eliminate the danger of financial institutions becoming "too big to fail," the nation's largest banks are bigger than they were before the credit crisis.

Five banks – JPMorgan Chase & Co. (JPM), Bank of America Corp., Citigroup Inc., Wells Fargo & Co., and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. — held \$8.5 trillion in assets at the end of 2011, equal to 56 percent of the U.S. economy, according to the Federal Reserve.

Five years earlier, before the financial crisis, the largest banks' assets amounted to 43 percent of U.S. output. The Big Five today are about twice as large as they were a decade ago relative to the economy,

sparking concern that trouble at a major bank would rock the financial system and force the government to step in as it did during the 2008 crunch.

"Market participants believe that nothing has changed, that too-big-to-fail is fully intact," said Gary Stern, former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

That specter is eroding faith in Obama's pledge that taxpayer-funded bailouts are a thing of the past. It is also exposing him to criticism from Federal Reserve officials, Republicans and Occupy Wall Street supporters, who see the concentration of bank power as a threat to economic stability.

Obama made these pledges in early 2010 in support of the Dodd-Frank bill. That passed in the summer of 2010 with some bipartisan support. After more than 18 months in effect, the only impact this has had on "too big to fail" (TBTF) is to raise capital requirements and an "unwinding" plan in case of financial failure. Those plans have already been called "unrealistic" by former TARP Inspector General Neil Barofsky, who scoffed at the notion that an institution with more than \$2 trillion in assets can be rationally "unwound," and insists that the Obama administration has made "almost no progress" on ending TBTF.

They're not talking about it much anymore, either. While JP Morgan's assets increased 15% since the time Obama signed Dodd-Frank, a search on the White House website for "too big to fail" + "banks" nets only 200 hits, most from two years ago. In contrast, a search for "contraception" gets 295 hits, which seems to indicate that the Obama administration considers contraception almost 50% more important than TBTF.

Okay, that may have been a little too snarky for your taste. How about comparing it to another major part of the Obama economic message? A search for "Buffett Rule" at the White House website results in 20,800 hits, 104 times the number for TBTF banks. That only makes sense if one thinks that the danger of 400 families complying with current tax code and a potential revenue of no more than \$5 billion a year in taxes (under static analysis) is 104 times more important than the consolidation of the banking industry and the continuance of the need for taxpayers to backstop huge banks to keep the American financial system from collapsing.

This is what passes for priorities in Obamanomics and in governance in the Hope and Change era.

20120417-14	21:18	SteveBA	Fw: After Three Years of Obama...Here's Your Change!
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More good news about your buddy Obama.

[Source of original email unknown]

[After three years of Obama.... Here's your change!](#)

<http://juniperinthedesert.blogspot.com/2012/03/all-change-you-want-and-more-courtesy.html>

	January 2009	TODAY	% chg	Source
Avg. Retail price/gallon gas in U.S.	\$1.83	\$3.44	84%	1
Crude oil, European Brent (barrel)	\$43..48	\$99..02	127.7%	2
Crude oil, West TX Inter. (barrel)	\$38..74	\$91..38	135.9%	2
Corn, No.2 yellow, Central IL	\$3.56	\$6.33	78.1%	2
Soybeans, No. 1 yellow, IL	\$9.66	\$13..75	42.3%	2
Sugar, cane, raw, world, lb. Fob	\$13..37	\$35..39	164.7%	2
Unemployment rate, non-farm, overall	7.6%	9.4%	23.7%	3
Unemployment rate, blacks	12.6%	15.8%	25.4%	3
Number of unemployed	11,616,000	14,485,000	24.7%	3
Number of fed. Employees	2,779,000	2,840,000	2.2%	3
Real median household income	\$50,112	\$49,777	-0.7%	4
Number of food stamp recipients	31,983,716	43,200,878	35.1%	5
Number of unemployment benefit recipients	7,526,598	9,193,838	22.2%	6
Number of long-term unemployed	2,600,000	6,400,000	146.2%	3
Poverty rate, individuals	13.2%	14.3%	8.3%	4
People in poverty in U.S.	39,800,000	43,600,000	9.5%	4
U.S. Rank in Economic Freedom World Rankings	5	9	n/a	10
Present Situation Index	29.9	23.5	-21.4%	11
Failed banks	140	164	17.1%	12
U.S. Dollar versus Japanese yen exchange rate	89.76	82.03	-8.6%	2
U.S. Money supply, M1, in billions	1,575.1	1,865.7	18.4%	13
U.S. Money supply, M2, in billions	8,310.9	8,852.3	6.5%	13
National debt, in trillions	\$10..627	\$14..052	32.2%	14

Sources: (1) U.S. Energy Information Administration; (2) Wall Street Journal; (3) Bureau of Labor Statistics; (4) Census Bureau; (5) USDA; (6) U.S. Dept. Of Labor; (7) FHFA; (8) Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller; (9) RealtyTrac; (10) Heritage Foundation and WSJ; (11) The Conference Board; (12) FDIC; (13) Federal Reserve; (14) U.S. Treasury.

Just take this last item: In the last two years we have accumulated national debt at a rate more than 27 times as fast as during the rest of our entire nation's history.

Over 27 times as fast. Metaphorically speaking, if you are driving in the right lane doing 65 MPH and a car rockets past you in the left lane. 27 times faster, it would be doing 7,555 MPH!

So, tell me again, what is it about Obama that makes him so brilliant and impressive? Can't think of anything? Don't worry. He's done all this in 29 months -- so you'll have about 11 months to come up with an answer. Every statement in this email is factual and directly attributable to Barack Hussein Obama. Every bumble is a matter of record and completely verifiable.

EVERYONE SHOULD READ THIS... I WONDER HOW MANY WILL FORWARD THIS?



"It is well that the people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system, for if they did, I believe there would be a REVOLUTION before tomorrow morning."

- Henry Ford

FREE YOUR MIND and THINK

[http://journals.worldnomads.com/kurenai/story/26114/Japan/The-kouyou-\(red-leaves\)-of-Kyoto](http://journals.worldnomads.com/kurenai/story/26114/Japan/The-kouyou-(red-leaves)-of-Kyoto)

Toji Temple, Kyoto, Japan



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

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