



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #127 — APR. 30, 2012

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

Index to Friends of the Middle Newsletter #127 — Apr. 30, 2012

Mitt Romney Is a Liar

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Apr. 30, 2012)

We knew "unrealism" would be the strategy.

It starts with contempt for one's fellow man, which comes, ultimately, from self-hatred. We never hear confessions of empathy from the Right. Even when advocating the dismemberment of our meager social safety net, we never hear anything like, "Well, I certainly do feel sorry for those people who are going to suffer and die as a result of this policy, but it is in the best interest of the country." Unstated: Because the rich need to pay ridiculously low taxes—Richey-Rich Romney pays 15% or less, about half of what you might be paying if you're an average middle class wage earner (29%).

"Mitt Romney's Campaign Pledges Raise Questions" by Charles Babington, Huffington Post

Apr. 27, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/27/mitt-romneys-campaign_n_1459587.html?ref=topbar)

(WASHINGTON) Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is making campaign promises that could produce an economic miracle – or a more predictable list of broken vows.

Romney says he wants to put the nation on a path to a balanced budget while also cutting an array of taxes, building up the Navy and Air Force and adding 100,000 active-duty military personnel. He says he would slash domestic spending and reduce tax loopholes but has offered few details.

His comments raise eyebrows in Congress, long accustomed to easier-said-than-done promises. And even some conservatives have their doubts.

Christopher A. Preble, a vice president for the libertarian Cato Institute, says **Romney's promise to push military spending to 4 percent of the national economy would require dramatic increases that would raise, not lower, the federal deficit.**

Citing "the absurdity of Romney's plan," Preble wrote recently that the candidate "hasn't said what other spending he will cut, or what taxes he would increase."

"Until he does," Preble wrote, "it is logical to conclude that he plans to pile on more debt."

Romney says he will avoid that problem by making courageous cuts to federal programs if elected.

"I have three major ways that we can get ourselves to a balanced budget," he told voters this month in Warwick, R.I. "Number one is to eliminate some programs. Stop, eliminate them. Not just slow down their rate of growth. But look at programs and say, 'Too many, too big, too expensive, too ineffective, get rid of it.' Some programs you're going to like. I'm going to ask for sacrifice. But the sacrifice will not be taking more from your wallet.... **I'm not going to give anybody any free stuff.**"

Other Romney proposals would make states responsible for programs such as Medicaid, and reduce the federal workforce by 10 percent "through attrition."

It's not uncommon for candidates to promise unspecified spending cuts. Often, however, they find it extremely difficult to fulfill the pledges once elected. That's one reason the nation's debt has soared under Republican and Democratic presidents and congresses alike.

Romney has shown little willingness to cut popular programs so far. He joined President Barack Obama, and bucked some House Republicans, by backing an extension of low college loan rates for middle-income students, a \$6 billion government cost.

Voters may understand that candidates can't or won't keep all their promises.

"You campaign in fiction, and govern in fact," said Tom Davis, a former congressman who headed the Republicans' House campaign committee from 1998 to 2002.

He noted that Obama quickly backed off his campaign promise to close the Guantanamo Bay prison. Obama also pledged to tamp down Washington's partisan tone and to overhaul immigration laws, neither of which has happened.

Davis said it's the general thrust of Romney's proposals that matters most, not every specific item.

"What he's trying to do is sketch a different vision," Davis said. Details of how Romney's proposals will pan out, if he's elected, "will be determined by Congress and events," he said.

Rep. Steve LaTourette, R-Ohio, said Romney's proposals "are aspirations" more than firm promises. If elected, Romney may have to revisit his current rejection of tax increases and his vow to leave Social Security and Medicare unchanged for current and soon-to-be recipients, LaTourette said.

Romney and Obama "have to come to the realization that a big deal," which includes tax increases, spending cuts and changes to Social Security and Medicare, "is the only way" to address the nation's deficit dilemma, LaTourette said.

Romney calls for a host of tax cuts. But independent analysts say they will worsen the deficit unless offset by deep and politically unpopular spending cuts.

Romney would keep the Bush-era tax cuts, and further reduce all marginal income tax rates by 20 percent. He says he would lower the corporate tax rate, eliminate the estate tax, push a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution and make \$500 billion in unspecified domestic discretionary spending cuts in 2016.

He wants wider exploration for energy, including oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or ANWR.

Such promises draw loud cheers at GOP rallies. But for decades, Republican-run and Democratic-run congresses alike have rejected ANWR drilling, a balanced budget amendment, deep spending cuts and other mainstays of Romney's campaign.

Whether these campaign ideas are called proposals, aspirations or promises, they are easier to talk about than to achieve.

FotM NEWSLETTER #127 (Apr. 30, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120430-00		SteveB	Mitt R0mney Is a Liar by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney's Campaign Pledges Raise Questions")
20120427-01	08:53	Dale	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! & "Child Labor Groups Upset Farm Rules Being Dropped" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #126)
20120427-02	09:48	SteveB	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to Dale, above)
20120427-05	11:21	Dale	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120427-03	09:55	Pam	Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (FotM Newsletter #126)
20120427-06	11:42	Art	Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (reply to Pam, above)
20120427-07	12:17	SteveB	Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (reply to Pam, above) / Obama vs. R0mney
20120427-04	11:03	Art	Re: "Americans Put to Shame by Immigrants on Sample Civics Test" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #126)
20120427-08	13:34	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Donate \$5 to Assist "Republican Political Suicide"
20120427-10	15:37	SteveB	Fw: USAction Action: Tell Congress: Don't Let Student Loan Rates Double
20120427-17	19:29	SteveG	"Student Loan Rate Extension Passed Under Threat of Veto" & More
20120427-09	13:41	Jim	A Simple, Logical Declaration
20120427-11	15:49	SteveB	"The GOP's Death Wish: Why Republicans Can't Stop Pi*sing Off Hispanics, Women & Young People"
20120427-12	16:51	Dennis	"The Self-Made Myth: Debunking Conservatives' Favorite & Most Dangerous Fiction"
20120427-13	18:10	Pam	Re: "The Self-Made Myth" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120427-14	18:29	Art	Re: "The Self-Made Myth" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120427-15	18:36	Art	Bumper Sticker: Dogs Against R0mney
20120427-16	18:59	SteveB	Re: Bumper Sticker: Dogs Against R0mney
20120428-01	08:01	SteveB	"Paul Ryan Suddenly Does Not Embrace Ayn Rand's Teachings"
20120428-02	08:08	SteveB	"The Highest Tax Burdens in the World"
20120428-03	08:11	GaryF	Fw: Windows vs. Ford
20120428-04	09:30	Art	"Photo of the Day: Romney Puts Students to Sleep"
20120428-05	11:47	SteveG	Fw: Credo Action Action: Fight <i>Citizens United</i>
20120429-01	01:43	SteveM	"The President Has a List"
20120429-02	05:35	SteveB	Re: "The President Has a List" & "Obama-Phobia: <i>Wall Street Journal</i> , Fox News Revive Nixon's Enemies List" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120429-03	06:23	MarthaH	"GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat"
20120429-04	09:18	Pam	Re: "GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat"
20120429-05	09:42	Charis	Bolivian Recipe: <i>Picante de Pollo</i> (Spicy Chicken)
20120429-06	11:25	Pam	Is American Health Care the Best in the World?
20120429-07	11:54	SteveG	Re: Is American Health Care the Best in the World?
20120429-08	18:24	Dennis	"Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs & Crush Living Standards for Everyone"
20120429-09	20:08	SteveB	Re: "Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs & Crush Living Standards for Everyone"
20120429-10	23:59	Art	Photo: Bums Who Depend Upon Society for Their Lavish Lifestyle

20120427-01	08:53	Dale	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! & "Child Labor Groups Upset Farm Rules Being Dropped" (reply to SteveB, Apr. 26, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	------	--

Although you don't get it and surprisingly (maybe not so surprisingly) chose to reinforce the stereotype that "government knows best," the Labor Dept has withdrawn the proposed rules.

[See below. –SteveB]

As I said before, the concept, the execution and the timing were wrong on multiple levels. It represented more intrusion and more cost to monitor and enforce, even if that were possible. It brought to the surface again that the Secretary of Labor (and Obama) has no experience in rural life, yet seeks to impose their values and imply that parents cannot figure out how to raise and protect their children without Big Brother's help. Finally, strictly from a political perspective, why would they want to go out of their way to present this now? The answer is, nobody thought it through. It was another example of poor leadership or no leadership and an embarrassing reversal when there was a bipartisan blow back. The Rookie is still making Rookie moves, even after being in office for three years.

In the larger scheme of life, this is really a fairly petty issue. But, it is one more example. What infuriates small business owners are hundreds of seemingly "little" rules this administration has introduced that create wasted effort and expense without offering any benefit, at least in their opinion. More rules, more cost for government and businesses, lower earnings to be plowed back into growing an enterprise, fewer employees, less tax revenue.....this is the model that shows up, even when the intentions are good.

I am a little disappointed you chose the party line and didn't look more objectively at the issue, but I guess that's the way it is going to be from here until the election. After Romney gets elected, I'll get to read a bunch of bellyaching about how Obama was jobbed and it was someone else's fault. The Hidden Hand. A Conspiracy. Start working on your excuses.

"Child Labor Groups Upset Farm Rules Being Dropped" by Sam Hananel, AP

Apr. 27, 2012,

(http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_FARM_LABOR?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2012-04-26-19-44-56)

(WASHINGTON) Child labor groups say they are stunned and disappointed that the Obama administration is backing off a plan that would have prevented children from working on the most dangerous farm jobs.

Reid Maki, coordinator of the Child Labor Coalition, said the Labor Department's sudden decision late Thursday to withdraw the proposed rules means more children will die in farm accidents that could have been prevented.

"There was tremendous heat, and I don't think it helped that it was an election year," he said. "A lot of conservatives made a lot of political hay out of this issue."

Under pressure from farm groups and lawmakers from rural states, Labor Department said it is withdrawing proposed rules that would ban children younger than 16 from using most power-driven farm equipment, including tractors. The rules also would prevent those younger than 18 from working in feed lots, grain silos and stockyards.

The plan specifically excluded children who work on farms owned or operated by their parents. But the proposal still became a popular political target for Republicans who called it an impractical, heavy-handed regulation that ignored the reality of small farms.

"It's good the Labor Department rethought the ridiculous regulations it was going to stick on farmers and their families," said Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa. "To even propose such regulations defies common sense and shows a real lack of understanding as to how the family farm works."

The surprise move comes just two months after the Labor Department modified the rule in a bid to satisfy opponents. **The agency made clear it would exempt children who worked on farms owned or operated by their parents, even if the ownership was part of a complex partnership or corporate agreement.**

That didn't appease farm groups like the American Farm Bureau that complained it would upset traditions in which many children work on farms owned by uncles, grandparents and other relatives to reduce costs and learn how a farm operates. **The Labor Department said Thursday it was responding to thousands of comments** that expressed concern about the impact of the changes on small family-owned farms.

"The Obama administration is firmly committed to promoting family farmers and respecting the rural way of life, especially the role that parents and other family members play in passing those traditions down through the generations," the agency said in a statement.

Instead, the agency said it would work with rural stakeholders, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Farmers Union and 4-H to develop an educational program to reduce accidents to young workers.

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., a grain farmer known to till his fields on weekends away from Washington, had come out strongly against the proposed rule. The Democrat continued to criticize the Obama administration rule even after it was tempered, saying the Labor Department "clearly didn't get the whole message" from Montana's farmers and ranchers.

Tester, who is in a tough race for re-election, on Thursday praised the decision to withdraw the rule and said he would fight "any measure that threatens that heritage and our rural way of life."

The move disappointed child safety groups who said the rules represent long-overdue protections for children working for hire in farm communities. Three-quarters of working children under 16 who died of work-related injuries in 2010 were in agriculture, according to the Child Labor Coalition.

(Associated Press writer Matt Gouras in Helena, Mont., contributed to this report.)

20120427-02	09:48	SteveB	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to Dale, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Then... It sounds a lot like government of the people working well, does it not? ("The Labor Dept. said it was responding to thousands of comments...")

This second article you sent ("Child Labor Groups Upset Farm Rules Being Dropped") is much more honest about the story than the party line from the Right referenced in your first email. It is so interesting to me that you ironically accuse me of following some party line of the left on this issue which, as far as I know, doesn't exist. As I said, I had never even heard of this story until you brought it to my attention. It was evidently a big deal in the Right-wing press, but not anywhere else. So, somehow, my quoting the press release from the Dept. of Agriculture was the same as disbursing propaganda. I'm sorry...it is not the same at all. Another major irony from the Right, you know?

By the way, all my life I've been a small businessman, and all my life I've heard complaints about rules and their cost, ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK! These small costs simply get passed on. Necessary? It's a free country. Is everything the most efficient possible? No. Are all rules bad? No. What is it, exactly, you have in mind?

By the way, a huge percentage of small businesses in the U.S. have no noticeable federal regulations affecting them, or paperwork or bothersome rules of any kind. My businesses and businesses I am familiar with never did. Are you taking about taxes? Well, la de da. The states handle almost all regulation of small business. I would guess somewhere between 90% and 95%. So how can President Obama "destroy" the country and the business world so effectively?

I talk to small business owners almost every day in the U.S. and I don't know anyone sane who is "infuriated". Who are these people and what are they infuriated about, exactly? That there is a black man in the White House who acts more like a Republican than a Democrat? Do these "infuriated" small business owners want higher interest rates on their loans? Do they want higher taxes? Do they want higher labor costs? Are they infuriated about these

all-important components of business? ALL ARE AT HISTORICALLY OPTIMAL LEVELS FOR SMALL BUSINESS RIGHT NOW, AS WE SPEAK! Seriously, am I wrong?

I remember doctors crying the worst during the Medicare debate. Oh, they wouldn't be able to handle the paperwork. Now doctors love Medicare and studies have proven even that rather large amount of paperwork to be surprisingly inexpensive for an existing office to process and well worth that cost.

How is there a "party line", my friend? I merely read the press release that the Right-wing media could not bother to interpret properly because maybe they can't read that well. All I did is re-state what the press release said: that family farms were omitted. It was nothing like you or the media claimed. Fact. Why run away from it?

Can't you see the extreme lies of the media in this, to claim some titanic deal that is a lie and tie it around President Obama's neck?

I find your election predictions interesting...but your candidate is so amazingly weak! And I well remember the predictions from the Right before the 2008 election. R0mney doesn't have a single real idea or principle in his head. He is going to be eaten alive in the first debate and will be afraid to debate after that. And that will be the election. Women, Hispanics, blacks, the poor, union members, teachers, students, and smart people will turn more and more against the Mittens. His unfavorable ratings will soar. That's my prediction. There's a reason there were no Republican non-zero candidates this year. This is one election that no sea of money and no mountain of lies can steal. Mark my words.

I look forward to your rejoinder. Have a great weekend.

[20120427-05](#) 11:21 Dale Re: Ban on Farm Chores — NOT! (reply to SteveB, above)

Have a nice weekend Steve. This is my 7th day on the road and I'll be happy to get home.

[20120427-03](#) 09:55 Pam Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (FotM Newsletter #126)

Robert Reich is my hero. He's just about the smartest, most reasonable, clearest thinking, most open-minded person on the public stage these days. I agree completely with his economic recommendations and his general philosophy of life. What sets him apart from all the other political voices bombarding us is his civility. He is serious but not angry, and he doesn't seek to inflame his audience. I've been trying in this forum to pry some honest discussion out of our conservative friends, but all I get is name-calling, misrepresentation, and avoidance of any substantive argument. I don't want to know what someone is (liberal, conservative, Martian), I want to know what he wants the government to do and WHY. Conservatives carry on about values and morality as if liberals couldn't possibly be "good" people. That may not be racial profiling, but it sure is political profiling. That's just one step away from religious profiling, which we already see in the Muslim community. We should all take Mr. Reich as a model. I always feel that the person who loses his temper has lost the argument.

[20120427-06](#) 11:42 Art Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (reply to Pam, above)

Very well said and a source of frustration for us all.

[20120427-07](#) 12:17 SteveB Re: Bill O'Reilly: "Robert Reich Is a Communist" (reply to Pam, above) / Obama vs. R0mney

Now yer talking my language, Pam! French! OMFG!

I really think these Republicans are going to waste vast sums of money this election simply alienating more and more of the electorate with their obvious poisoning of the airwaves. What can they say about O that they haven't

shouted out a million times? Do they have DNA proof that he's an alien? Are Michelle and the daughters prostitutes? Does O have a lover in Colombia?

Gee, maybe they'll have to talk about the issues...but R. will not. His only prescription seems to be that he will be George W. Bush II, with more of the same that got us into the mess in the first place.

I simply do not understand the latest poll results I have seen, showing it to be close between R and O. How can that be possible? I'd say it must be about even among white males. Period! Among women O must be leading 2-to-1.

If not, he shortly will be. Hispanics don't cotton to R one bit, even if they are lukewarm to O. Blacks? Get serious! Mormons? I think many of them have their doubts.

I don't think any knowledgeable person in the Republican Party thinks R can win, that's why no credible candidates ran against him. It's a dead end. But fortunately, he can select a home, go there, and play with his car elevator.

As my mother used to say, lies and bad deeds come home to roost with the chickens eventually. This is what will happen to the GOP. I can't wait for that first debate. It will be historic. Like Lincoln and ("Oops") Douglas.

I'm so happy we have our Lincoln!

20120427-04	11:03	Art	Re: "Americans Put to Shame by Immigrants on Sample Civics Test" (reply to MarthaH, Apr. 26, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Maybe this explains how supposedly thinking adults can still support the Republican agenda.

20120427-08	13:34	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Donate \$5 to Assist "Republican Political Suicide"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

from MoveOn:

In 2008, young people voted in record numbers and went for President Obama over John McCain by more than 2-to-1.¹ This year, every election expert agrees that if that happens again, Obama will win easily—and the Democrats will probably win back the Congress.

And now Republicans have handed us a golden opportunity to fire up young people to vote in 2012.

You see, because of Republican obstruction in Congress, interest rates on college loans are set to double this July—pouring even more debt on a generation already drowning in student loans. President Obama is pushing Congress to stop it, but as usual Republicans have dug in their heels.²

To make sure young people know what's happening, we're launching one of the largest online ad campaigns in MoveOn history—putting ads on the Facebook page of every college student in America to warn them about this Armageddon of student debt.

We've already tested several versions of these ads, and we know they're effective at getting students to take action. But we'll have to scrap the plan unless we can raise \$200,000 from MoveOn members.

Can you chip in \$5? Yes, I can contribute \$5 to help make sure young people vote in 2012:

https://civ.moveon.org/donatec4/studentdebt.html?bg_id=hpc5&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=1.

MoveOn has already heard from hundreds of thousands of young people freaking out about this—and we're already working to make sure they call Congress, register to vote, and keep taking action on campus.

But really, we need to reach the millions of young people who aren't hearing about this, and hands down the best way to reach them is on Facebook.

Facebook ads are awesome because unlike TV, radio, or newspaper ads, people can click on them and sign up to take action. And of course, Facebook is where young voters spend so much of their time.

Nothing strikes fear into the hearts of Republican strategists like the idea of another wave of young voter turnout like in 2008, and this Republican war on students gives us a chance to make it happen, if we can act fast.

Student debt has become an absolutely explosive issue among young people. Since 1999, student loan debt has increased by more than 500%. You may not realize it if you don't have kids or if you went to college 10 or 20 years ago, but it now costs on average more than \$21,000 a year to go to a public school with in-state tuition. The best private schools are almost triple that much.³

In fact, we've seen two of the largest petitions in MoveOn history in recent months calling on Congress to provide relief for those drowning in student debt. This is a sleeping giant of an issue, and in the coming weeks it can really blow up.

The Republicans' doubling of interest rates is just the latest attack on students. For years they've been slashing funding for higher education, leading directly to skyrocketing tuition at public colleges and universities. Just last year, they cut \$8 billion out of the Pell Grant program for low-income students and reduced the income threshold for eligibility for a full Pell Grant.⁴

This is the ultimate teachable moment for young voters, showing them who's on their side and why it's so important to vote. With your help, we can make this one of the key turning points of the 2012 election.

Thanks for all you do.

--Steven, Joan, Wes, Marika, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"Young Voters in the 2008 Election," Pew Research Center for People & the Press, November 12, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274743&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=5>.

²"Obama To Make Student Loans a Campaign Issue," Slate, April 20, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274744&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=6>.

³"Chart of the Day: Student Loans Have Grown 511% Since 1999," The Atlantic, August 18, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274368&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=7>.

"College costs climb, yet again," CNN Money, October 29, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274745&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=8>.

⁴"Student loan rate hike: What you need to know," CNN Money, April 24, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=274746&id=40284-20195165-KZvYrpx&t=9>.

Paid for by MoveOn.org Civic Action, www.moveon.org, not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee. Want to support our work? MoveOn Civic Action is entirely funded by our 7 million members—no corporate contributions, no big checks from CEOs. And our tiny staff ensures that small contributions go a long way.

[20120427-10](#)

15:37

SteveB

Fw: USAction Action: Tell Congress: Don't Let Student Loan Rates Double

Come to think of it...banks have been paying essentially 0% interest to borrow money from the Fed or from depositors.

Why should student loan rates be so high to begin with? Why doesn't the Fed loan that money directly to students at, say, 1% interest and everybody would be better off. With the current rate of bank closures (six so far this month), the students would probably be a better risk for the government.

But the voice of big money and big banks talks very loudly in our society, does it not?

from USAction:

We thought it was a pretty reasonable idea for Congress to act before student loan rates double for millions of middle class students. But GOP Senate candidate Todd Akin just denounced YOU as part of a massive 'stage 3 cancer of socialism' for even suggesting that billionaires, not students, should chip in to fix our budget and economy.

Look - it's just plain cowardly to take from our students to protect CEO tax giveaways and Big Oil handouts. The House just voted on this TODAY and we can't win without you - tell Congress right here, because they need to hear it.

Tell Congress: Don't let student loan rates double.

<http://usaction.org/2012/04/action-dont-let-the-gop-double-student-loan-interest-rates-on-july-1st/>

We need to make college more affordable, not less. But some in Congress seem to have it backwards. First, under the Ryan Budget, Republicans have proposed eliminating Pell Grants for two million students.

And now, unless Congress acts soon, an important loan program that serves almost 8 million college students will double its interest rates! With the House vote today, now Republicans are refusing to prevent interest rates from rising unless they slash preventative care for women and cancer screenings! That's just wrong.

We all know that making college affordable for all Americans isn't just the right thing to do — it's right for the economy. Right for an America that wants to compete in the world. The U.S. once ranked first in college graduation rates; now we rank 12th.¹

That's just not right.

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) and Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT) have introduced the Student Loan Affordability Act, a bill that will prevent the interest rates on nearly 8 million Stafford loans from doubling — an increase that would cost the average student \$5,000.

Americans now owe more in tuition debt than credit card debt, with total outstanding student loan debt in America expected to exceed \$1 trillion this year.² Millions of hardworking, taxpaying, educated Americans are being crushed under the weight of their educational debts and it's doing further damage to our economy — students with outstanding debt can't buy homes and can't contribute to the economy as full consumers.

We need a real economic stimulus and jobs plan. Investing in our students is the way to do it.

Tell Congress to not let student loan rates double before it's too late!

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

¹<http://abcnews.go.com/WN/president-barack-obama-outlines-college-education-goal-university/story?id=11359759#.T5HHKYVnKyY>

²<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/20/education/student-loan-interest-rates-loom-as-political-battle.html>

P.S. Want to take it one step further? Chip in \$5 now so we can keep fighting for college affordability:

<http://act.truemajority.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=EtNdS9ZXFRhoYG6D9C14P8m39imHoxaH>.

20120427-17	19:29	SteveG	"Student Loan Rate Extension Passed Under Threat of Veto" & More
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

GAMES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

"Student Loan Rate Extension Passed Under Threat of Veto" by Chris Moody, Yahoo!/ABC News

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/student-loan-rate-extension-passed-threat-veto/story?id=16229243#.T51S0qtSSRQ>)

The House on Friday passed a Republican version of a bill that would extend the low 3.4 percent rate on government-subsidized student loans, despite pressure from conservative groups to oppose the measure and a veto threat from the White House.

The Republican bill, which passed by a close vote of 215-195, would extend the low interest rate on student loans for one year. Unless Republicans and Democrats can agree on a final bill, the rate for federally subsidized students loans will double this year. Democrats support extending the rate, but disagree with the way Republicans want to pay for it.

To make up for the \$5.9 billion shortfall that comes with an extension of the low rate, Republicans offered to eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which was created by the 2010 Affordable Care Act. The White House issued a statement before the vote vowing to veto the Republican House version, a promise that the debate over the legislation will continue.

"Student Loan Rate Extension Opposed by Conservative Groups Like Club for Growth" by Chris Moody, Yahoo! News/The Ticket

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/student-loan-rate-extension-opposed-conservative-groups-club-153247016.html>)

"Obama Would Veto Republican Student Loan Bill, Says White House" by Olivier Knox, Yahoo! News/The Ticket

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/obama-veto-republican-student-loan-bill-says-white-160233278.html>)

20120427-09	13:41	Jim	A Simple, Logical Declaration
-----------------------------	-------	-----	-------------------------------

If a statement is the truth, you should be able to check it out and accept it no matter who said first or passed it on.

If a statement is false or a lie, identifying a source or authority (the liar) does not convert it to the truth nor does repeating it over the airwaves or internet.

20120427-11	15:49	SteveB	"The GOP's Death Wish: Why Republicans Can't Stop Pi*sing Off Hispanics, Women & Young People"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

"The GOP's Death Wish: Why Republicans Can't Stop Pi*sing Off Hispanics, Women, and Young People" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Apr. 26, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/gop-s-death-wish-why-republicans-can-t-stop-pissing-hispanics-women-and-young-people-1335509215>)

What are the three demographic groups whose electoral impact is growing fastest? Hispanics, women, and young people. Who are Republicans pi*sing off the most? Latinos, women, and young people.

It's almost as if the GOP can't help itself.

Hispanics

Start with Hispanic voters, whose electoral heft keeps growing as they comprise an ever-larger portion of the electorate. Hispanics now favor President Obama over Romney by more than two to one, according to a recent Pew poll.

The movement of Hispanics into the Democratic camp has been going on for decades. What are Republicans doing to woo them back? Replicating California Republican Governor Pete Wilson's disastrous support almost twenty years ago for Proposition 187 – which would have screened out undocumented immigrants from public schools, health care, and other social services, and required law-enforcement officials to report any "suspected" illegals. (Wilson, you may remember, lost that year's election, and California's Republican Party has never recovered.)

The Arizona law now before the Supreme Court – sponsored by Republicans in the state and copied by Republican legislators and governors in several others – would authorize police to stop anyone looking Hispanic and demand proof of citizenship. It's nativism disguised as law enforcement.

Romney is trying to distance himself from that law, but it's not working. That may be because he dubbed it a "model law" during February's Republican primary debate in Arizona, and because its author (former state senator Russell Pearce, who was ousted in a special election last November largely by angry Hispanic voters) says he's working closely with Romney advisers.

Hispanics are also reacting to Romney's attack just a few months ago on GOP rival Texas Governor Rick Perry for supporting in-state tuition at the University of Texas for children of undocumented immigrants. And to Romney's advocacy of what he calls "self-deportation" – making life so difficult for undocumented immigrants and their families that they choose to leave.

As if all this weren't enough, the GOP has been pushing voter ID laws all over America, whose obvious aim is to intimidate Hispanic voters so they won't come to the polls. But they may have the opposite effect – emboldening the vast majority of ethnic Hispanics, who are American citizens, to vote in even greater numbers and lend even more support to Obama and other Democrats.

Women

Or consider women – whose political and economic impact in America continues to grow (women are fast becoming better educated than men and the major breadwinners in American homes). The political gender gap is huge. According to recent polls, women prefer Obama to Romney by over 20 percent.

So what is the GOP doing to woo women back? Attacking them. Last February, House Republicans voted to cut off funding to Planned Parenthood. Last May, they unanimously passed the "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act," banning the District of Columbia from funding abortions for low-income women. (The original version removed all exceptions – rape, incest, and endangerment to a mother's life – except "forcible" rape.)

Earlier this year Republican legislators in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Idaho, and Alabama pushed bills requiring women seeking abortions to undergo invasive vaginal ultrasound tests (Pennsylvania Republicans even wanted proof such had viewed the images).

Republican legislators in Georgia and Arizona passed bills banning most abortions after twenty weeks of pregnancy. The Georgia bill would also require that any abortion after 20 weeks be done in a way to bring the fetus out alive. Republican legislators in Texas have voted to eliminate funding for any women's healthcare clinic with an affiliation to an abortion provider – even if the affiliation is merely a shared name, employee, or board member.

All told, over 400 Republican bills are pending in state legislatures, attacking womens' reproductive rights.

But even this doesn't seem enough for the GOP. Republicans in Wisconsin just repealed a law designed to prevent employers from discriminating against women.

College Students

Or, finally, consider students – a significant and growing electoral force, who voted overwhelmingly for Obama in 2008. What are Republicans doing to woo them back? Attack them, of course.

Republican Budget Chair Paul Ryan's budget plan – approved by almost every House Republican and enthusiastically endorsed by Mitt Romney – allows rates on student loans to double on July 1 – from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. That will add an average of \$1,000 a year to student debt loads, which already exceed credit-card debt.

House Republicans say America can't afford the \$6 billion a year it would require to keep student loan rates down to where they are now. But that same Republican plan gives wealthy Americans trillions of dollars in tax cuts over the next decade. (Under mounting political pressure, House Republicans have come up with just enough money to keep the loan program going for another year – safely past Election Day – by raiding a fund established for preventive care in the new health-care act.)

Here again, Romney is trying to tiptoe away from the GOP position. He now says he supports keeping student loans where they were. Yet only a few months ago he argued that subsidized student loans were bad because they encouraged colleges to raise their tuition.

How can a political party be so dumb as to pi*s off Hispanics, women, and young people? Because the core of its base is middle-aged white men – and it doesn't seem to know how to satisfy its base without at the same time turning off everyone who's not white, male, and middle-aged.

20120427-12	16:51	Dennis	"The Self-Made Myth: Debunking Conservatives' Favorite & Most Dangerous Fiction"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

"The Self-Made Myth: Debunking Conservatives' Favorite -- And Most Dangerous -- Fiction" by Sara Robinson, AlterNet

Posted on April 25, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155149/>)

The self-made myth is one of the most cherished foundation stones of the conservative theology. Nurtured by Horatio Alger and generations of beloved boys' stories, It sits at the deep black heart of the entire right-wing worldview, where it provides the essential justification for a great many other common right-wing beliefs. It feeds the accusation that government is evil because it only exists to redistribute wealth from society's producers (self-made, of course) and its parasites (who refuse to work). It justifies conservative rage against progressives, who are seen as wanting to use government to forcibly take away what belongs to the righteous wealthy. It's piously invoked by hedge fund managers and oil billionaires, who think that being required to reinvest any of their wealth back into the public society that made it possible is "punishing success." It's the foundational belief on which all of Ayn Rand's novels stand.

If you've heard it once from your Fox-watching uncle, you've probably heard it a hundred times. "The government never did anything for me, dammit," he grouses. "Everything I have, I earned. Nobody ever handed me anything. I did it all on my own. I'm a self-made man."

He's just plain wrong. Flat-out, incontrovertibly, inarguably wrong. So profoundly wrong, in fact, that we probably won't be able to change the national discourse on taxes, infrastructure, education, government investment, technology policy, transportation, welfare, or our future prospects as a country until we can effectively convince the country of the monumental wrongness of this one core point.

The Built-Together Reality

Brian Miller and Mike Lapham have written the book that lays out the basic arguments we can use to begin to set things right. *The Self-Made Myth: The Truth About How Government Helps Individuals and Businesses Succeed* is a clear, concise, easy-to-read-and-use summary that brings forward a far more accurate argument about government's central role in creating the conditions for economic prosperity and personal opportunity.

Miller, the executive director of United For a Fair Economy, and Lapham, a co-founder of UFE's Responsible Wealth project, argue that the self-made myth absolves our economic leaders from doing anything about inequality, frames fair wages as extortion from deserving producers, and turns the social safety net into a moral hazard that can only promote laziness and sloth. They argue that progressives need to overwrite this fiction with the far more supportable idea of the "built-together reality," which points up the truth that nobody in America ever makes it alone. Every single private fortune can be traced back to basic public investments that have, as Warren Buffet argues in the book, created the most fertile soil on the planet for entrepreneurs to succeed.

To their credit, Miller and Lapham don't ask us to take this point on faith. Right out of the gate, they regale us with three tales of famous "self-made" men -- Donald Trump, Ross Perot and the Koch brothers -- whose own stories put the lie to the myth. (This section alone is worth the price of admission -- these guys so did not make it on their own!) Once those treasured right-wing exemplars are thoroughly discredited, the middle of the book offers a welcome corrective: interviews with 14 wealthy Americans -- including well-known names like Warren Buffet, Ben Cohen, Abigail Disney, and Amy Domini -- who are very explicit about the ways in which government action laid the groundwork for their success. Over and over, these people credit their wealth to:

- An excellent education received in public schools and universities. Jerry Fiddler of Wind River Software (you're probably running his stuff in your cell phone or car) went to the University of Chicago, and started his computer career at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. Bookseller Thelma Kidd got her start at Texas Tech and the University of Michigan. Warren Buffet went to the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Nebraska as an undergrad. And beyond that: several interviewees paid for their educations with federal Pell Grants and Stafford loans. Over and over, the point gets made: public universities -- and the good public schools that feed them, and the funding programs that put them within financial reach -- have hatched millions of American entrepreneurs who might not have been fledged without that opportunity to get an education.
- The support of the Small Business Administration and other government agencies. Ben Cohen notes that almost all the business training he and Jerry Greenfield had came from extension courses at the University of Vermont and Penn State, and small brochures produced by the SBA. And as they spun up, they also got an Urban Development Action Grant from the federal government. Other interviewees started their businesses in incubators or other quarters provided or arranged by their local city governments.
- A strong regulatory environment that protected their businesses from being undercut by competitors willing to cut corners, and ensured that their manufacturing inputs are of consistently high quality. Glynn Lloyd of Boston's City Fresh Foods points out that nobody in the food business can get by without reliable sources of clean water; and that the USDA inspection process is an important piece of his quality control.
- Enforceable copyright and intellectual property laws that enabled them to protect good ideas. Abigail Disney recalls that her father, Roy Disney, and her Uncle Walt made and lost one great cartoon character --

Oswald the Rabbit -- because they didn't have copyright protection. They didn't repeat that mistake when Mickey Mouse was born three years later, launching the Disney empire.

- A robust system of roads, ports, airports, and mass transit that enabled them to reliably move their goods both within the US, and around the world. Kim Jordan of New Belgium Brewing (the makers of Fat Tire beer) points out that "Beer is heavy, and it needs to be transported in vehicles. Certainly, the highway system has been important to New Belgium Brewing." Lloyd also points out that Boston's excellent public transit system enables him to draw on a far wider employee base.
- The government's role in creating the Internet, without which almost no modern company can function. Anirvan Chatterjee built Bookfinder.com (now a subsidiary of Amazon.com), the world's biggest online used-book marketplace, as an entirely Internet-based company -- an achievement that wouldn't have been remotely imaginable without DARPA, the establishment and enforcement of common protocols, and significant congressional investment in the 1980s to take the Internet commercial.
- The ability to issue public stock in a fair, reliable, regulated marketplace -- a benefit that raised the value of several interviewees' companies by about 30 percent overnight. Peter Barnes, founder of Working Assets, spoke with concern about the loss of trust in this system over the past decade. "The corporate scandals [Enron and Worldcom] caused people to stop trusting the numbers that companies were reporting. Imagine how much value is created by trust and the whole system that assures that trust?"

Besides the government, most of those interviewed also locate their companies in the context of a large community of customers they utterly depend on for their success. "It takes a village to raise a business," says Nikhil Arora of Back to the Roots, a sustainable products company that came about through partnerships and grants from UC Berkeley, Peet's Coffee and other interested parties.

Others are quick to acknowledge the contributions of their employees, without whom their companies wouldn't exist. When Gun Denhart and her husband sold their company, children's clothier Hanna Andersson, in 2003, they distributed a healthy portion of the sale proceeds to their employees, prorated on the basis of their length of service.

All businesses exist within a vast network of human connections -- customers, vendors, employees, investors, and the communities that support their work. These stories make it clear: saying you did it all yourself and therefore don't owe anybody anything is about as absurd (and self-centered) as saying that you raised yourself from babyhood, without any input from your parents, and therefore don't have any further obligations to your family.

The Role of Luck and Timing

We all know wealth isn't just a matter of hard work, brains or talent. Most of us probably know hard-working, brilliant, or extraordinarily talented people who aren't being rewarded at anything close to their true value. So perhaps the most intriguing and useful part of the book is a long discussion of the many other essential factors that go into making someone wealthy -- factors that are blithely brushed off the table whenever the self-made myth is invoked.

Rich conservatives have to downplay the role of luck. After all, if we think they're just lucky, rather than exceptionally deserving of exceptional wealth, we'll be a lot more justified in taxing their fortunes. But luck -- the fortunate choice of parents, for example, or landing in the right job or industry at the right time -- plays a huge role in any individual's success. Timing also matters: most of the great fortunes of the 19th century were accumulated by men born during the 1830s, who were of an age to capitalize on the huge economic boom created by the expansion of the railroads after the Civil War. Likewise, the great tech fortunes almost all belong to people born between 1950 and 1955, who were well-positioned to create pioneering companies in the tech boom of the late 1970s and 1980s. Such innovative times don't come along very often; and being born when the stars lined up just so doesn't make you more entitled. It just makes you luckier.

Because Americans in general like to think we're an equal society, we're also quick to discount the importance of race, gender, appearance, class, upbringing, and other essential forms of social capital that can open doors for

people who have it -- and close them on those who don't. The self-made myth allows us to deflect our attention from these critical factors, undermining our determination to level the playing field for those who don't start life with a pocket full of advantages.

What Changes?

The book winds up with specific policy prescriptions that can bring the built-together reality back into sharper political and cultural focus. The last section shows how abandoning the self-made myth for a built-together reality creates fresh justification for a more progressive income tax, the repeal of the capital gains exemption and raising corporate and inheritance taxes. It also makes a far more compelling philosophical backdrop against which progressives can argue for increased investment in infrastructure, education, a fair minimum wage, a strong social safety net, and better anti-discrimination laws.

But the most striking thing about the book -- implicit throughout, but explicit nowhere -- was the alternative vision of capitalism it offers. Throughout the book, Miller and Lapham seem to be making the tacit case that businesses premised on the built-together reality are simply more fair, more generous, more sustainable, and more humane. While far from perfect (Disney's empire being one case in point), they are, as a group, markedly more aware of the high costs of exploiting their workers, their customers, the economy, or the environment. Owners who believe themselves to be beholden to a community for their success will tend to value and invest back into that community, and they seem to be far more willing to realize when they've got enough and it's time to start giving back.

The implication is clear: if we can interrupt America's long love affair with the self-made myth, we will effectively pull the center tent pole out from under the selfish assumptions that shelter most of the excesses of corporate behavior that characterize our age. This isn't just another point of contention between progressives and conservatives; it's somewhere near the very center of the disconnect between our worldviews. *The Self-Made Myth* is an essential primer that gives us the language and stories to begin talking about this difference, and the tools to begin to bend that conversation in some new and more hopeful directions.

(Sara Robinson, MS, APF is a social futurist and the editor of AlterNet's Vision page. Follow her on Twitter, or subscribe to AlterNet's Vision newsletter for weekly updates.)

© 2012 Independent Media Institute

20120427-13	18:10	Pam	Re: "The Self-Made Myth" (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

This is wonderful!

20120427-14	18:29	Art	Re: "The Self-Made Myth" (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Good stuff, thanks!

20120427-15	18:36	Art	Bumper Sticker: Dogs Against R0mney
-----------------------------	-------	-----	-------------------------------------

For those who are looking for the perfect bumper sticker for the upcoming election try:
<http://www.dogsagainstromney.com>.

Just say'n.



[Sounds like a "socialist" organization to me! –SteveB]

[20120427-16](#) 18:59 SteveB Re: Bumper Sticker: Dogs Against R0mney

Those dogs are damned smart!

[20120428-01](#) 08:01 SteveB "Paul Ryan Suddenly Does Not Embrace Ayn Rand's Teachings"

More hypocrisy! They can't even be true to their much vaunted, famous heroes! What a super-creep!!!

"Paul Ryan Suddenly Does Not Embrace Ayn Rand's Teachings" by Jennifer Bendery, Huffington Post

Apr. 27, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/27/paul-ryan-ayn-rand_n_1459098.html?ref=elections-2012)



(WASHINGTON) Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) tried to send the message this week that, contrary to "urban legend," he is not obsessed with philosopher and author Ayn Rand.

"I reject her philosophy," Ryan told *National Review* on Thursday. "It's an atheist philosophy. It reduces human interactions down to mere contracts and it is antithetical to my worldview. If somebody is going to try to paste a person's view on epistemology to me, then give me Thomas Aquinas. Don't give me Ayn Rand."

Best known for her novels *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand advocated a philosophy that emphasizes the individual over the collective, and viewed capitalism as the only system truly based on the protection of the individual. She has been a significant influence on libertarians and conservatives.

Ryan, whose name has been floated as a possible running mate for GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney, appeared to be distancing himself from Rand in response to a public letter he received this week from nearly 90 faculty and administrators at Georgetown University. In their letter, they criticize him for misusing Catholic social teaching in defending his budget, which hurts the poor by proposing significant cuts to anti-hunger programs, slashing Pell Grants for low-income students and calling for a replacement of Medicare with a voucher-like system. They also invoke Rand's name.

"As scholars, we want to join the Catholic bishops in pointing out that his budget has a devastating impact on programs for the poor," said Jesuit Father Thomas J. Reese, one of the organizers of the letter. "Your budget appears to reflect the values of your favorite philosopher, Ayn Rand, rather than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Her call to selfishness and her antagonism toward religion are antithetical to the Gospel values of compassion and love."

But any urban legend about Ryan's affinity for Rand surely started with Ryan himself, who, prior to this week, had no qualms about gushing about Rand's influence on his guiding principles.

"The reason I got involved in public service, by and large, if I had to credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand," Ryan said during a 2005 event honoring Rand in Washington, D.C., the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported in April 2009.

During the 2005 gathering, Ryan told the audience, "Almost every fight we are involved in here on Capitol Hill ... is a fight that usually comes down to one conflict -- individualism versus collectivism." The event was hosted by The Atlas Society, which prominently features a photo of Rand on its website and describes itself as a group that "promotes open Objectivism: the philosophy of reason, achievement, individualism, and freedom."

Ryan also said during a 2003 interview with the *Weekly Standard*, "I give out *Atlas Shrugged* as Christmas presents, and I make all my interns read it. Well ... I try to make my interns read it." He noted that he "looked into" Rand's work when he was younger, but reiterated that he is a Christian and reads the Bible often.

In 2009, Ryan posted two videos on his Facebook page raving about the importance of Rand's views.

"If *Atlas Shrugged* author Ayn Rand were alive today, here's the urgent message I think she'd be conveying," Ryan wrote alongside the first video, titled "Ayn Rand's Relevance in 2009."

He says in the video:

What's unique about what's happening today in government, in the world, in America, is it's as if we're living in an Ayn Rand novel right now. I think Ayn Rand did the best job of anybody to build the moral case for capitalism. And that morality of capitalism is under assault. And we are going to replace it with a crony capitalism, collectivist, government-run system which is creeping its way into government. And so if Ayn Rand were here today, I think she would do a great job in showing us just how wrong what government is doing is. Not the quantitative analysis, not the numbers, but the morality of what is wrong with what government is doing today.

In the second video, titled "Ayn Rand & 2009 America, Part 2," Ryan says it doesn't surprise him that sales of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* have "surged" since President Barack Obama took office.

"It's that kind of thinking, that kind of writing, that is sorely needed right now. And I think a lot of people would observe that we are living in an Ayn Rand novel right now, metaphorically speaking," Ryan says. "The attack on Democratic capitalism, on individualism and freedom in America is an attack on the moral foundation of America. And Ayn Rand more than anyone else did a fantastic job of explaining the morality of capitalism, the morality of individualism. This, to me, is what matters most."

Some of Ryan's critics took a shot at him for suddenly distancing himself from Rand.

"Not pure enough on entitlement cuts @philipaklein @robertcostaNRO Paul Ryan on Ayn Rand: 'I reject her philosophy,'" Austan Goolsbee, the former chairman of Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, tweeted Thursday.

UPDATE: Ryan spokesman Kevin Seifert downplayed the lawmaker's apparent change of tune on Rand.

"I wouldn't make too much of this one way or another. Congressman Ryan was not 'distancing himself' from Rand, merely correcting several false storylines that are out there, such as the myth that he requires all of his staffers to read Atlas Shrugged. Saying he 'rejects Ayn Rand's philosophy' was simply meant to correct a popular falsehood that Congressman Ryan is an Objectivist -- he isn't now and never claimed to be," Seifert said in a statement to The Huffington Post.

(Flickr photo courtesy of Francisco Diez.)

20120428-02 08:08 SteveB "The Highest Tax Burdens in the World"

Notice that most of these countries also top the annual lists of "World's Happiest Countries". If it's good enough for Finland and Sweden, it's good enough for me! And at least Italy has great food, so they're able to put-up with the corruption, etc., that has caused their high taxes, corruption very similar to America's.

AT LEAST MAYBE SOME OF US SHOULD QUIT BITCHING SO MUCH ABOUT HOW HIGH OUR TAXES ARE! MITT, YOU TOO!

"The Highest Tax Burdens in the World" by Khadeeja Safdar, Huffington Post

Apr. 27, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/27/highest-income-tax-burdens_n_1459311.html?ref=money)

Do you cringe every payday when you see a large chunk of your hard-earned cash deducted for social security and income taxes?

If so, take comfort in the fact that the residents of some other countries have it a lot worse.

American taxpayers paid an average of 29.5 percent of their incomes in taxes and social security, but out of a consortium of 34 countries known as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 24 nations have a higher tax and social security burden than the United States, according to the OECD.

In addition, more than three-quarters of OECD countries saw a rise in their income tax rates in 2011 from the year before with Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and the Slovak Republic seeing some of the largest increases. The U.S., on the other hand, was among the minority whose average tax burdens actually fell last year, the OECD reports.

Here are the 10 OECD countries with the highest tax burdens:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------|
| 1. Belgium: | 55.5% |
| 2. Germany: | 49.8% |
| 3. Hungary: | 49.4% |
| 4. France: | 49.4% |
| 5. Austria: | 48.4% |
| 6. Italy: | 47.6% |
| 7. Sweden: | 42.8% |
| 8. Finland: | 42.7% |
| 9. Slovenia: | 42.6% |
| 10. Czech Republic: | 42.5% |
| 11. Estonia: | 40.1% |

20120428-03 08:11 GaryF Fw: Windows vs. Ford

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Windows vs. Ford

For all of us who feel only the deepest love and affection for the way computers have enhanced our lives, read on. At a recent computer expo (COMDEX), Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated,

"If Ford had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving \$25 cars that got 1,000 miles to the gallon."

In response to Bill's comments, Ford issued a press release stating:

If Ford had developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics (and I just love this part):

1. For no reason whatsoever, your car would crash.....twice a day.
2. Every time they repainted the lines in the road, you would have to buy a new car.
3. Occasionally your car would die on the freeway for no reason. You would have to pull to the side of the road, close all of the windows, shut off the car, restart it, and reopen the windows before you could continue. For some reason you would simply accept this.
4. Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart, in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.
5. Macintosh would make a car that was powered by the sun, was reliable, five times as fast and twice as easy to drive - but would run on only five percent of the roads.
6. The oil, water temperature, and alternator warning lights would all be replaced by a single "This Car Has Performed An Illegal Operation" warning light.
7. I love the this one!!!) The airbag system would ask, "Are you sure?" before deploying.
8. Occasionally, for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.
9. Every time a new car was introduced car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car.
10. You'd have to press the "Start" button to turn the engine off.

PS - I'd like to add that when all else fails, you could call "customer service" in some foreign country and be instructed in some foreign language how to fix your car yourself!!!!

20120428-04	09:30	Art	"Photo of the Day: Romney Puts Students to Sleep"
-------------	-------	-----	---

A picture is worth a thousand words, indeed!

"Photo of the Day: Romney Puts Students to Sleep" by Henry Decker, *National Memo*

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/photo-of-the-day-romney-puts-students-to-sleep/>)

Two Otterbein University students had trouble staying awake at Mitt Romney's "guest lecture" this afternoon (hat tip to Benjy Sarlin.)

[I think they're Young Conservatives members who stayed up too late last night reading *Atlas Shrugged!* –SteveB]



20120428-05 11:47 SteveG Fw: Credo Action Action: Fight *Citizens United*

from Credo Action:

The U.S. Supreme Court's disastrous *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling has allowed corporate CEOs to unleash a torrent of secret corporate spending into our political system.

Indefensibly, CEOs are able to keep both the public and their own shareholders in the dark about the use of company funds for political ends.

This gives CEOs free rein to make political expenditures that they would never be able to justify publicly — including campaigns so toxic they would inevitably tarnish the company's brand were the funding source made public.

And the results have been absolutely corrosive to our democracy.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which is a federal agency, can require publicly traded companies to disclose the money they spend on politics. And they are accepting public comments on the merits of doing so.

To be clear, what we really need is to get all corporate money out of politics, to roll back *Citizens United*, end corporate personhood and institute public financing of elections. And we are working hard toward those long term goals.

But in the short term, given how corrupt the system is, disclosure of corporate political spending would be a meaningful, though small, step forward. And it's one we can achieve.

While the likes of the *Wall Street Journal's* Editorial Board are opposed to this idea, it's actually a commonsense idea that is not especially ideological.

In fact, nearly 60% of the S&P 100 companies already voluntarily disclose their political spending to investors. And of the remaining S&P 100 corporations, 50 had shareholder votes about political issues in 2011.¹

Already one SEC Commissioner has come out in favor of the idea. We just need two more to agree.

Tell the SEC: Don't let corporations hide their political spending. Click the link below to submit a public comment:

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6883064&id=39232-3891339-C%3Dntjpx&t=7>.

Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

¹Committee on Disclosure of Corporate Political Spending's "Petition for Rulemaking" sent to Elizabeth M. Murphy, Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 08-03-11.

20120429-01	01:43	SteveM	"The President Has a List"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	----------------------------

"The President Has a List" by Kimberley A. Strassel, *Wall Street Journal*

Apr. 26, 2012, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304723304577368280604524916.html>)

Try this thought experiment: You decide to donate money to Mitt Romney. You want change in the Oval Office, so you engage in your democratic right to send a check.

Several days later, President Barack Obama, the most powerful man on the planet, singles you out by name. His campaign brands you a Romney donor, shames you for "betting against America," and accuses you of having a "less-than-reputable" record. The message from the man who controls the Justice Department (which can indict you), the SEC (which can fine you), and the IRS (which can audit you), is clear: You made a mistake donating that money.

Are you worried?

Richard Nixon's "enemies list" appalled the country for the simple reason that presidents hold a unique trust. Unlike senators or congressmen, presidents alone represent all Americans. Their powers—to jail, to fine, to bankrupt—are also so vast as to require restraint. Any president who targets a private citizen for his politics is de facto engaged in government intimidation and threats. This is why presidents since Nixon have carefully avoided the practice.

Save Mr. Obama, who acknowledges no rules. This past week, one of his campaign websites posted an item entitled "Behind the curtain: A brief history of Romney's donors." In the post, the Obama campaign named and shamed eight private citizens who had donated to his opponent. Describing the givers as all having "less-than-reputable records," the post went on to make the extraordinary accusations that "quite a few" have also been "on the wrong side of the law" and profiting at "the expense of so many Americans."

These are people like Paul Schorr and Sam and Jeffrey Fox, investors who the site outed for the crime of having "outsourced" jobs. T. Martin Fiorentino is scored for his work for a firm that forecloses on homes. Louis Bacon (a hedge-fund manager), Kent Burton (a "lobbyist") and Thomas O'Malley (an energy CEO) stand accused of profiting from oil. Frank VanderSloot, the CEO of a home-products firm, is slimed as a "bitter foe of the gay rights movement."

These are wealthy individuals, to be sure, but private citizens nonetheless. Not one holds elected office. Not one is a criminal. Not one has the barest fraction of the position or the power of the U.S. leader who is publicly assaulting them.

"We don't tolerate presidents or people of high power to do these things," says Theodore Olson, the former U.S. solicitor general. "When you have the power of the presidency—the power of the IRS, the INS, the Justice Department, the DEA, the SEC—what you have effectively done is put these guys' names up on 'Wanted' posters in

government offices." Mr. Olson knows these tactics, having demanded that the 44th president cease publicly targeting Charles and David Koch of Koch Industries, which he represents. He's been ignored.

The real crime of the men, as the website tacitly acknowledges, is that they have given money to Mr. Romney. This fundraiser of a president has shown an acute appreciation for the power of money to win elections, and a cutthroat approach to intimidating those who might give to his opponents.

He's targeted insurers, oil firms and Wall Street—letting it be known that those who oppose his policies might face political or legislative retribution. He lectured the Supreme Court for giving companies more free speech and (falsely) accused the Chamber of Commerce of using foreign money to bankroll U.S. elections. The White House even ginned up an executive order (yet to be released) to require companies to list political donations as a condition of bidding for government contracts. Companies could bid but lose out for donating to Republicans. Or they could quit donating to the GOP—Mr. Obama's real aim.

The White House has couched its attacks in the language of "disclosure" and the argument that corporations should not have the same speech rights as individuals. But now, says Rory Cooper of the Heritage Foundation, "he's doing the same at the individual level, for anyone who opposes his policies." Any giver, at any level, risks reprisal from the president of the United States.

It's getting worse because the money game is not going as Team Obama wants. Super PACs are helping the GOP to level the playing field against Democratic super-spenders. Prominent financial players are backing Mr. Romney. The White House's new strategy is thus to delegitimize Mr. Romney (by attacking his donors) as it seeks to frighten others out of giving.

The Obama campaign has justified any action on the grounds that it has a right to "hold the eventual Republican nominee accountable," but this is a dodge. Politics is rough, but a president has obligations that transcend those of a candidate. He swore an oath to protect and defend a Constitution that gives every American the right to partake in democracy, free of fear of government intimidation or disfavored treatment. If Mr. Obama isn't going to act like a president, he bolsters the argument that he doesn't deserve to be one

20120429-02

05:35

SteveB

Re: "The President Has a List" & "Obama-Phobia: *Wall Street Journal*, Fox News Revive Nixon's Enemies List"

"Obama-Phobia: *Wall Street Journal*, Fox News Revive Nixon's Enemies List" posted by Mark

Apr. 28, 2012, (<http://www.newscorpse.com/ncWP/>)

The classic symptoms of obsessive paranoia are exhibiting themselves again in the psyches of delusional right-wingers. The villainous shadows they conjure up in every corner of their warped minds betrays how desperately sick they have become.

The latest blood vessel to burst in these over-anxious conservative foreheads is displayed in an article published yesterday in the *Wall Street Journal*, the once respected financial paper that Rupert Murdoch has transformed into another of his tabloid rags. The item's headline blared ominously that, "The President Has a List" (cue spooky music).

OMG! Is he checking it twice? The article's author, Kimberley Strassel, seems to be alleging that President Obama has usurped the powers of Santa Claus and is preparing to rain a frosty judgment down on Republicans who were naughty this election year. They know who they are, and now, with his new North Pole Initiative, so does Obama. He even knows when they're asleep and/or awake.

The article's sub-head went into a little more panicky detail saying, "*Barack Obama attempts to intimidate contributors to Mitt Romney's campaign.*" That's a pretty scary thought. What will become of our democracy if powerful political players go around harassing the financial backers of their opponents? It could end up instigating slanderous attacks on private citizens who merely want to participate in the democratic process. The GOP would

never contemplate doing such a thing to backers of Democrats. Notice the respect with which they always regard George Soros and Barbara Streisand. Nevertheless, Strassel rolls out the big guns with allusions to the famously paranoid Richard Nixon:

Richard Nixon's 'enemies list' appalled the country for the simple reason that presidents hold a unique trust. Unlike senators or congressmen, presidents alone represent all Americans. Their powers—to jail, to fine, to bankrupt—are also so vast as to require restraint. Any president who targets a private citizen for his politics is de facto engaged in government intimidation and threats.

Exactly! So if mega-wealthy conservative activists drop boatloads of cash into dishonest campaigns designed to demonize the President as an anti-American, Marxist, alien, aligned with Al-Qaeda, the President and his supporters should just shut their mouths and permit those poor billionaires to do as they please. If God didn't want filthy rich robber barons and corporations to pervert democracy he wouldn't have given them the *Citizen's United* Supreme Court decision.

The source of this bubbling cauldron of conservative angst is a web site that the Obama campaign operates to counter the abundant feces-flinging from the right. It is produced by Obama's "Truth Team" and consists entirely of disseminating documented information with the ghastly purpose of helping people to make informed decisions. In particular, there is an article titled "Behind the Curtain: A Brief History of Romney's Donors" (<http://www.keepinggophonest.com/behind-the-curtain-a-brief-history-of-romneys-donors>) that reveals who is bankrolling Romney's campaign and what their motivations might be. It begins by saying...

As the presumptive GOP nominee, Mitt Romney is relying on a cadre of high-dollar and special-interest donors to fund his campaign. Giving information about his real policy intentions and high-level access for cash, Romney and Republicans are working hard to pull in as much money as they can from wealthy lobbyists, corporations, and PACs.

No wonder the Right is worried. We certainly can't have people going around telling the truth about wealthy special interests who are trying to help Romney buy this election. And even though none of the atrocities Strassel mentions in her column ("*to jail, to fine, to bankrupt*") are occurring, it's bad enough that truthful biographies and affiliations are being brought into the light of day.

Adding to the cacophony of crazy is Rupert Murdoch's cable crew at Fox News. Neil Cavuto took up the very same topic as Strassel's *WSJ* story (by coincidence, I'm sure) and engaged in a profound exchange with Fox legal analyst Lis Wiehl:

Cavuto: Called out for shelling out. Private donors to Mitt Romney outed on an Obama campaign web site. The site ripping their record, even saying that they're betting against America by giving cash to Romney's campaign. Is this legal?

Lis Wiehl: It may be. I went on the web site today. It is frightening. I mean, I don't like to get on any list, unless it's a birthday party list or something like that, but a Nixon enemy list, McCarthyism...

First of all, Cavuto and Wiehl are just plain delusional in speculating that there is anything illegal about posting truthful information about political donors. And while Cavuto is just an idiot, Wiehl is a lawyer and should know better. Secondly, the web site does not say that Romney donors are "*betting against America by giving cash to Romney's campaign.*" It says they are betting against America by outsourcing American jobs, closing American factories, and unlawfully foreclosing on American homeowners. Then they take their tainted winnings and parlay them into Romney's Wheel of Nefarious Fortune. But the best example of the looming dementia on the part of these dimwits is Wiehl's allusion to her sterling investigative skills. She seemed so proud of herself for navigating the byzantine maze that Obama's functionaries constructed to hide their true identities. She bragged to Cavuto that...

Wiehl: You've got to through a few links. It's not that easy. I'm not a computer person, but I did manage to do it myself.

Here is the maze of deception through which Wiehl had to rummage (at <http://www.keepinggophonest.com/behind-the-curtain-a-brief-history-of-romneys-donors>):



How on earth did she ever discover the real source of this web site? Only a crack investigator with Wiehl's superior legal experience could have figured out how to scroll to the bottom of the page. Those Obama web developers are mighty crafty, but no match for Wiehl.

This isn't the first time that the Murdoch empire has attempted to associate Obama with Nixon and McCarthy. A couple of months ago the *Wall Street Journal* published an article by Ted Olsen that accused the President of similar list crimes. On that occasion it was the infamous Koch brothers who were being set up for presidential attacks. It's too bad that the billionaire Koch brothers are so defenseless that they have to resort to having their lawyer (Olsen) be given space in the *Wall Street Journal* to whine about being criticized by the president they have vowed to destroy.

It's also a little ironic that the right is so vociferously disturbed by tactics made popular by people they now regard as heroes. Both Nixon and McCarthy have been the beneficiaries of recent rehabilitations by their fellow Republicans. We even have GOP stars like Allen West declaring that commies are running rampant through the corridors of congress. McCarthy would be so proud. And Glenn Beck sanitized Nixon's enemies list by saying that it was "*just about who's not coming to state dinners.*" Yet conservatives will still site these historical scumbags in a negative sense if they think they can tarnish the President with it. Oh what a tangled web.....

20120429-03	06:23	MarthaH	"GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat"
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---

"GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat" by Tom Curry, MSNBC

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://nbcpolitics.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/04/27/11413886-gop-infighting-gives-democrats-hope-of-picking-up-indiana-senate-seat?lite>)

In the 2010 midterm elections, the GOP was jarred by an array of suddenly-potent Tea Party-backed challengers taking on the party establishment. The movement achieved mixed results overall, but resulted in a Republican Party heavily influenced by it.

History is repeating itself in Indiana where one of the Senate's two longest-serving Republicans, Richard Lugar, 80, who was first elected in 1976, is facing a challenge in the May 8 primary from state Treasurer Richard Mourdock, who became famous in 2009 for opposing the auto industry bailout and the forced write-downs for Chrysler bond holders.

Murdock is backed by Tea Party activists, the Club for Growth, the National Rifle Association, and old-line social conservatives like Phyllis Schlafly.

As Lugar struggles to fend off Mourdock's challenge, Democrats hope their candidate, Rep. Joe Donnelly, will profit from the GOP schism and pick up the incumbent's seat in November.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, said Wednesday, "The race is very close now and it'll be decided on May 8 and a number of factors could apply."

Obviously turnout is important. Gov. (Mitch) Daniels's ad supporting Sen. Lugar is a very positive development for him," he said. "But our job is to hold the seat (in November) and we'll support the nominee in the general election, but I think we will hold that seat regardless of what happens in the primary."

A Lugar loss would end the political career of a man who was first elected in 1964 to the Indianapolis school board and who in the 1970s was known as "Richard Nixon's favorite mayor" when he held that office in Indianapolis. Since taking his Senate seat in 1977, Lugar has become his party's cerebral foreign policy expert.

Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn. who serves alongside Lugar on the Foreign Relations Committee, said "the knowledge that Sen. Lugar has – having worked on these issues for decades – has been invaluable ... Certainly he's someone who's very respected in the Senate and he's listened to by both sides of the aisle."

But no matter how deeply respected Lugar is on Capitol Hill, Mourdock's charge is that Lugar isn't conservative enough – although Lugar's lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union, based on dozens of roll call votes, is 77 out 100, putting him a long way from Senate GOP centrists such as Olympia Snowe of Maine, who has a 48.5 lifetime ACU rating.

Murdock's campaign ads regularly link Lugar with Democratic President Barack Obama. Early in Obama's Senate stint, Lugar helped him establish his foreign policy credentials. In 2005 Obama accompanied Lugar on a trip to Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan to inspect weapons dumps and sites where smallpox and other pathogens were kept.

"When Dick Lugar moved to Washington, he left behind his conservative Hoosier values," Mourdock says in one of his television spots. "How else to explain his support for amnesty, for Obama's liberal Supreme Court choices, even his vote to bail out Greece?"

An ad the NRA has run against Lugar tells viewers that, "Some things shouldn't change. Our Indiana values, stewardship of the land, and the protection of our Second Amendment and hunting rights. But over his 36 years in Washington, Dick Lugar *has* changed ... He's become the only Republican candidate in Indiana with an "F" rating from the NRA."

The NRA grievance against Lugar goes way back: he voted for Bill Clinton's 1993 Brady handgun bill and for the ban on certain semiautomatic weapons, called "assault weapons" by gun control advocates.

Lugar, always avuncular and courteous, told reporters this week in Washington that his battle with Mourdock is "a very close contest (and) has been throughout."

Asked about Mourdock's view that he has changed in his years in Washington, Lugar chuckled amiably and said "I think it's his view but we're getting along fine with voters."

Since last year, Democrats have accused Lugar of being detached from Indiana issues and denounced him for living in Virginia. They gained ammunition when he had to reimburse the Treasury for some hotel stays in Indiana that

were charged to his Senate office account. On the residency issue, Lugar said Tuesday, "It was clearly somebody engaging in negative campaign research, trying to find some difficulty."

Since this is his first primary challenge since 1976, is it difficult since he's perhaps out of practice? "No," Lugar replied, "I've been campaigning all over the country for the last 35 years and I'm campaigning vigorously again this time ... This is a very vigorous experience and we're doing the best we can."

The Republican fratricide in Senate races two years ago had at best mixed results for party leaders.

One of the GOP incumbents, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, ultimately survived after losing the Republican primary by running in November as a write-in candidate.

Establishment GOP candidates in Arizona, Indiana, New Hampshire, and Missouri defeated their conservative primary opponents and went on to win in November. The party favorite in Washington beat his conservative challenger in the primary, then lost in November.

Elsewhere, conservative challengers forced one GOP senator, Robert Bennett, into retirement in Utah and another, Arlen Specter, into switching parties in Pennsylvania.

Conservative favorites won four Senate seats (in Pennsylvania, Utah, Kentucky, and Florida), but lost to Democrats in four other Senate contests (Delaware, Connecticut, Nevada, and Colorado) – races which more mainstream Republican candidates might have won.

One of the Establishment GOP victims of the Tea Party surge in 2010, was former Rep. Mike Castle of Delaware, who lost to Christine O'Donnell – who then was defeated by Democrat Chris Coons in November.

Castle is now a partner with the DLA Piper law firm.

Reflecting on the parallels with his bitter loss to O'Donnell two years ago, Castle said if Lugar loses the primary, "it has the effect of making it more and more difficult for people who take middle-of-the-road positions, who try to work with both sides of the aisle to get things done"

The Tea Party trend puts such pragmatism, Castle said, "at jeopardy in the Republican Party ... It moves the party not just further to the right, but to a much more conservative stance than it used to have. It's going to ultimately lead to a minority status in the country."

Pointing to the danger of Mourdock winning the primary but losing to Donnelly in November, Castle said that for Indiana Republicans, Lugar "may not be 100 percent what they might want, but the alternative is you may elect somebody from the other party."

Castle's campaign fund has given \$1,000 to Lugar's campaign.

Seeing the race from a different angle, South Carolina Sen. Jim DeMint, whose Senate Conservatives PAC supported O'Donnell against Castle and Sharron Angle in Nevada in 2010, said, "Richard is a friend of mine – but of course, we've got two Richards in that race. Dick Lugar is a friend of mine, but I'd be honored to serve with Mourdock. He's clearly someone who is in line with some of the things we're trying to do," but he added, "I'm not going to get involved" in the Lugar versus Mourdock primary. "I'm not involved in any incumbent races right now."

Meanwhile Democrats are waiting to take on the survivor of the GOP primary. "While Joe Donnelly has been focused on jobs and the economy, both Richard Mourdock and Dick Lugar have spent the last year slinging mud, pandering to the Tea Party, and showing voters that they're both of touch with Indiana's middle class. Joe's candidacy gives us an excellent chance of winning in November regardless of who Republicans nominate," said Shripal Shah, a spokesman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

Despite the Democrats touting Donnelly's chances, there are echoes of Indiana's 2010 Senate race when Democrats had hopes for former Rep. Brad Ellsworth, a centrist Democrat with a voting record much like Donnelly's.

Ellsworth ended up losing by 14 percentage points to Republican Dan Coats. Democrats say 2012 isn't 2010; turnout this year is going to be significantly higher and the economy is healthier now than it was in 2010.

But Donnelly voted for the Obama health care bill and for his stimulus plan, neither of which will help with conservative voters in Indiana. And his fund-raising has been less than stellar.

Democrats privately say that Donnelly runs stronger against Mourdock than against Lugar.

"Yeah, I understand that," Cornyn said. "Sen. Lugar is a legend in Indiana. To show how quickly things change, six years ago, he was uncontested in the Republican primary and in the general election ... But it will probably make it more of a contest if Sen. Lugar is not the nominee, but I'm confident we'll hold the seat." Cornyn said the Indiana race "is not one of my worries."

20120429-04	09:18	Pam	Re: "GOP Infighting Gives Democrats Hope of Picking Up Indiana Senate Seat"
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I've been away from Indiana politics for a long time, but Lugar was always one Republican I liked.

20120429-05	09:42	Charis	Bolivian Recipe: <i>Picante de Pollo</i> (Spicy Chicken)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

[Picante de Pollo \(Spicy chicken\) by Alura Gonzales \(Santa Cruz, Bolivia\)](#)

<http://www.boliviabella.com/picante-de-pollo-spicy-chicken.html>



This recipe is from Cochabamba.

You'll need:

- 3 pounds chicken, divided into parts
- ¼ cup ají (or ground cayenne pepper)
- 2 cups of white onion, cut into small strips
- 1 cup tomato, peeled and finely chopped
- ½ cup fresh locoto or chili pepper, finely chopped
- 1 cup green peas, peeled

½ cup parsley, finely chopped
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon crumbled oregano
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 tablespoon salt
3 garlic cloves, peeled, chopped and roasted
3 cups broth or water
2 spoonfuls oil

How to prepare:

1. In a large casserole put the chicken pieces with all the other ingredients. Pour the broth or water until covering the ingredients completely. Set to cook over high heat until it boils, and later over low heat for at least an hour and a half or until the chicken is soft. Stir occasionally.
2. If while cooking the broth diminished much, add a little bit more of broth or water so that when serving there is enough liquid.
3. In a deep plate serve one piece of spicy chicken with one boiled potato, cooked aside, *chuiño phuti* (little dried potatoes), and uncooked sauce on top. Finally, sprinkle the chopped parsley on top of the spicy chicken.

Note: This dish has variations as well, included a non-spicy one and another which is served with *chuiño* in a peanut and cheese sauce.

20120429-06	11:25	Pam	Is American Health Care the Best in the World?
-------------	-------	-----	--

Here is a story (true) for you to ponder. A friend and colleague of ours (semi-retired chemistry prof.) fell ill several months ago and nearly died. He was in intensive care in our local hospital, which is a teaching hospital and consider to be very good, but he wasn't getting better. His regular doctor didn't see him in the hospital, because when a patient is admitted he is assigned to a hospitalist/specialist, who has probably never seen him before. Days went by, various doctors came and went. No one could figure it out, but our friend's kidneys were failing. His wife was by his side. She is an elegant, highly intelligent woman who is not reluctant to express her opinions and feelings, so I imagine she was a good advocate for her husband. At one point the specialist du jour stopped by and casually mentioned to the nurse, "The cortisone was started yesterday, right?" Nurse looked puzzled. Wife looked surprised. You could say, "What we have here is a failure of communication." Eventually our friend was transferred to Chapel Hill U. Hospital, the premier hospital in the area, where he received copious attention and was brought back from the brink. The only reason he went to Chapel Hill was because his wife's best friend is on the admissions committee of the Medical School and knew a specialist there who specialized in our friend's rare disease. The luck of friendship is what saved our friend's life. I am left wondering what happens to people who are less assertive and less well-connected but just as sick.

20120429-07	11:54	SteveG	Re: Is American Health Care the Best in the World?
-------------	-------	--------	--

They die or get worse or at the minimum stay in the hospital longer. A few years ago I had a problem that started on Saturday morning – two trips to the ER & 2 different doctors resulted in an overnight admission for 6 hours, saw a 3rd doctor on Sunday, transferred to an ER 50 miles away, saw 2 different doctors who called in 2 other doctors who performed a procedures – 3 days in ICU got me a trip home. Medical care really stinks. This was in Indiana. In Yakima the health care is worse – all of the specialties are here but you have to have a strong connection to a family doctor to get anything done – options are 2.5 to 4 hours away. There is a med school in town graduating its first class this year and most doctors are some type of adjunct, but they do not schedule more than a month in advance, saying they will call you for the next appointment, but they do not. U.S. medical care stinks!

"Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs and Crush Living Standards for Everyone" by Marshall Auerback, AlterNet

Apr. 24, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155132/>)

Senator Tom Harkin, Democrat of Iowa, has introduced a bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$9.80 from its present level of \$7.25. Polls are showing many voters in favor, though they are confused about what it would mean for the job market. The truth is that a move would be good for a slow economy and have a positive impact on the jobs crisis. Naturally, this has led to the usual cries of opposition, largely based on the notion that raising the minimum wage hurts the very people it is supposed to help. Typical of this view is a letter to the *New York Times* from Michael Saltsman, a fellow at the Employment Policies Institute, a business-backed nonprofit research group (surprise!).

Saltsman trots out the old canards against the minimum wage, claiming that research indicates that a minimum wage increase "simply doesn't help the poor — in fact, it hurts them." He cites studies which showed that states with their minimum wages between 2003 and 2007 found no associated decline in state poverty rates. Saltsman gives three reasons for this:

1. A majority of working-age individuals who live in poverty don't work, and thus cannot benefit from the raise.
2. A clear majority of those who do earn the minimum wage live in households that aren't in poverty.
3. Less skilled and less experienced employees lose employment opportunities when the cost to hire and train them rises as a result of a minimum-wage increase.

Let's take these arguments in turn. Implicit in the first point is that a majority of working-age individuals don't work because they choose not to (i.e. they are lazy scroungers), or because unemployment is caused by laziness or lack of training. The argument they often use is that "I can get a job, therefore all the unemployed could get jobs if only they tried harder, or got better education and training."

The way I go about demonstrating that fallacy is a dogs-and-bones example. Say we have 10 dogs and we bury nine bones in the backyard. We send the dogs out to find bones. At least one dog will come back without a bone.

We decide that the problem is lack of training. We put that dog through rigorous training in the latest bone-finding techniques. We bury nine bones and send the 10 dogs out again. The trained dog ends up with a bone, but some other dog comes back without a bone (empty-mouthed, so to speak).

The problem is that there are not enough bones and jobs to go around. The "bones" in the jobs discussion are insufficient spending power in the economy. It is certainly true that a well-trained and highly motivated jobseeker can usually find a job. But that is no evidence that aggregate unemployment is caused by laziness or lack of training. And besides, we could easily determine how much unemployment is truly voluntary. The government could serve as the "employer of last resort" under a job guarantee program modeled on the WPA (the Works Progress Administration, in existence from 1935 to 1943) and the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942). The program would offer a job to any American who was ready and willing to work at the federal minimum wage, plus legislated benefits. No time limits. No means testing. No minimum education or skill requirements.

It's hard to believe that reducing or even eliminating the minimum wage (which is the corollary of Saltsman's point), would actually enhance employment, when the problem is a basic lack of demand. Business will not hire more workers until it has more sales. Consumers will not spend more until they've got more jobs. A private-sector recovery requires 300,000 new jobs every month. But the private sector doesn't need 300,000 new workers per month until there exists sufficient spending power in the economy to induce them to hire those workers. How is retaining a static, or reduced minimum wage, going to achieve this?

Higher wages means higher income and thus higher consumption spending, which induces firms to employ more labor. So the truth is that economic theory does not tell us that raising minimum wages will lead to more

unemployment, indeed, theory tells us it can go the other way—raising the minimum wage could increase employment. That’s one of the reasons why Henry Ford believed in paying his workers a decent wage: so that they could buy his product.

To be sure, even an increase in the minimum wage to \$12 or \$15 an hour is not going to provide the means to purchase a Ford (or GM) today. And so what if, as Saltsman argues, the workers earning this minimum wage are not living in poverty? Does that mean they wouldn’t spend the money derived from an increased minimum wage? I wonder if Saltsman would also argue that tax cuts across the board are unnecessary because most of the people who receive them are not living in poverty?

That argument is a red herring. The truth is, if you earn your money through wages (unlike many of the 1 percent, who earn through things like investments and a tax system biased in favor of capital gains over income) then a higher wage, minimum or otherwise, would mean that you'd spend the additional dollars, creating jobs for other workers. You'd pay down your mortgages and car loans, getting yourself out of debt. You'd pay more taxes — on sales and property, mostly — thereby relieving the fiscal crises of states and localities. More teachers, police and firefighters would keep their jobs. America would get a virtuous cycle toward higher employment and, more importantly, the cycle would be based on a policy which creates higher incomes, not higher debt via credit expansion.

Then there's the common belief that minimum wages cause unemployment, which relates to Saltman’s third point – namely that less skilled and less experienced employees lose employment opportunities when the cost to hire and train them rises as a result of a minimum-wage increase. It is at least partly true that for an individual firm, higher wages reduce the number of workers hired. But we cannot extrapolate that to the economy as a whole. The issue of eroding wage competitiveness, which allegedly follows from a higher minimum wage, doesn’t really apply to jobs which offer the minimum wage. It might apply to areas such as manufactured goods and traded services like insurance and banking. But these are sectors in which most people already earn far more than the minimum wage.

As far as the minimum wage goes, the jobs we’re talking about are in non-traded services like checkout clerks, haircutters, domestic help, and food-service workers. When checkout clerks and cooks earn more in wages, then businesses start getting the sales required to induce them to hire more workers. And if sales are robust enough, then guess what? Even more workers will be hired, or wages will actually be increased.

The point is: wages are a source of demand, as well as a cost input. Reduce wages and demand plummets, which more than overrides any cost savings derived from paying less to workers (especially given today's paltry minimum wage, which is hardly a living wage for any American).

Let's be clear; Americans have never embraced welfare. For better or worse, our nation has always preferred a more libertarian path: self-help, personal responsibility, individual initiative. As a result, our welfare programs have always been stingy, temporary and purposely demeaning. But maintaining the minimum wage at today’s ridiculously depressed level does not enhance anybody’s employment prospects. In fact, it makes it worse, because it sucks demand out of the economy and minimizes the chances of those now receiving unemployment benefits or other assistance to quickly get back into the workforce, to "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps," as conservatives like to say. They cannot do that when our work force continues to focus on policies which merely enhance the incomes of the top 1 percent.

© 2012 Independent Media Institute

[20120429-09](#)

20:08

SteveB

Re: "Why Low Minimum Wages Kill Jobs & Crush Living Standards for Everyone"

I sure agree with this! And of course, it is the opposite of the Republican party-line.

You know what also kills jobs and crushes living standards?

Part-time jobs!

Walmart's and McDonald's, etc. special gift to the American worker—enough pay to maybe live and maybe eat on, minimum wage for maybe 20 hours a week, add it up, for millions of workers...grim! Part-time jobs are almost completely illegal in Bolivia and so is a "job" without benefits. Nobody minds. It's just the way a society should be. Jobs are that important. Bolivia has very good pregnancy, child-birth, and after benefits for women too. Again, just like people in a democracy must be taught to read and write, why would women with babies not be held in high esteem and accorded commensurate benefits? It's what you'd want for your mother, daughter, wife, or sister, no?

American culture doesn't improve the poor's situation. There's almost no practical public transportation anywhere except the largest cities. The poorest Third World workers get by without having to own a car, but in the U.S., just about any job, no matter how crappy, necessitates a car or access to one—a real problem for minimum wage part-time workers, or even full-time workers, unless they're kids (up to 30 years old?) living at home or rich people working as a hobby.

20120429-10 23:59 Art Photo: Bums Who Depend Upon Society for Their Lavish Lifestyle

Dependents of Obama's Socialist Welfare State (Friends of Art's)



[And they really look like mean-a*s dogs, if I ever saw one! I wouldn't get near that car! Might get licked to death! I really wish they'd just get a job and get off the dole! Bums! -SteveB]

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

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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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