



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

MAY, 2012 NEWSLETTERS

Edited by Steven W. Baker for FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

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<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
(01-12) 2012 PRIMARIES			
20120518-09	13:16	Tom	Video: Aimee Allen Sings the "Ron Paul" Anthem!
SEN. RICHARD LUGAR			
20120505-01	05:58	MarthaH	"Lugar Says He Needs Help – Fast"
20120505-03	08:21	Art	Re: "Lugar Says He Needs Help – Fast" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120507-08	15:04	Pam	Re: "Lugar Says He Needs Help – Fast" (reply to MarthaH, ForM Newsletter #132)
20120506-07	09:32	Art	Taking Out Dick Lugar"
20120507-09	15:12	Pam	Re: "Taking Out Dick Lugar" (reply to Art, ForM Newsletter #132)
20120508-31	17:27	MarthaH	"First Thoughts: Five Reasons Lugar Likely Loses"
20120508-36	23:57	Bill	Senator Richard Lugar Concedes
20120509-02	06:27	MarthaH	"Sen. Richard Lugar Loses Primary to Richard Mourdock"
20120509-04	09:37	SteveB	Dark Lord Defeats Genial Old Codger — Re: "Sen. Richard Lugar Loses Primary to Richard Mourdock"
20120509-06	11:03	MarthaH	"Lugar's Goodbye"
20120509-13	15:16	MarthaH	"Murdock: Compromise Is About Dems Siding with GOP"
20120509-16	15:33	Pam	Re: "Murdock: Compromise Is About Dems Siding with GOP" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120509-21	17:46	Art	Re: "Murdock: Compromise Is About Dems Siding with GOP" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120509-14	15:19	MarthaH	"Joe Donnelly & Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem"
20120509-15	15:26	Pam	Re: "Joe Donnelly & Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120509-22	17:49	Art	Re: "Joe Donnelly & Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120509-24	20:32	MarthaH	Re: "Joe Donnelly & Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem" (reply to Pam, above)
20120509-23	18:03	Art	Fw: Another Take: 'Anti-Gun Republican Loses'
20120511-00		MarthaH	Once Upon a Time... by MarthaH
20120510-01	09:00	Pam	Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120510-03	09:56	Art	Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120510-10	15:07	SteveB	Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120510-12	15:26	Pam	Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to all, above)
20120522-01	06:53	MarthaH	"Lugar Presides Over His Last Armed Forces Day at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway"
(02-12) 2012 ELECTIONS			
20120510-08	14:18	MarthaH	"Election 2012: The End of the Middle of Everything"
20120528-00		SteveB	My 2012 Election Poem by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("How to Forget on Memorial Day")
20120530-04	13:06	SteveB	"Money Man Pulls Even with Black Guy in Latest Poll"
BARACK OBAMA			
20120503-04	13:14	SteveB	"Why Obama's Bin Laden Ad Drives Republicans Crazy"
20120509-10	13:03	SteveM	Fw: CraigsList Ad

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20120517-02	10:00	MarthaH	"G.O.P. 'Super PAC' Weighs Hard-Line Attack on Obama"
20120517-03	10:23	Pam	Re: "G.O.P. 'Super PAC' Weighs Hard-Line Attack on Obama" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120517-09	17:32	MarthaH	"GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright"
20120518-02	08:53	Pam	Re: "GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #141)
20120518-08	12:26	Art	Re: "GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright" (reply to Pam, above)
20120517-05	10:38	Paula	Fw: This Belongs in the Email Hall of Fame!
20120517-14	21:11	SteveB	Re: This Belongs in the Email Hall of Fame!
20120522-09	17:18	Art	"Obama Spending Binge Never Happened"
20120525-25	21:34	SteveB	"Obama Pot-Smoking Details Revealed in David Maraniss Book"
20120526-01	01:58	SteveM	Photo: I Have a Dream
20120528-07	18:26	SteveM	Fw: Photos: The Problem Is Not How They Got In, But How to Get Them Out!
MITT ROMNEY			
20120501-00		SteveB	Mitt Romney Is a Liar, Part 2 by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Eric Fehrnstrom: Auto Bailout Was Mitt Romney's Idea")
20120430-12	19:30	SteveBA	Fw: What Are the Facts? (About Romney's Being Rich)
20120502-05	13:28	SteveB	"Reboot the R0mney-Bot"
20120502-11	23:08	SteveM	Fw: R0mney Saves Manager's Daughter's Life
20120502-12	23:35	SteveB	Re: R0mney 'Saves' Manager's Daughter's Life & "Mitt's Runaway Tale" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120506-09	12:13	SteveB	"Rove Misfires, Pitting Obama Celebrity vs. Romney Void"
20120510-14	15:34	Pam	"Mitt Romney Apologizes for the 'Dumb Things' He Did in Prep School"
20120510-19	17:24	SteveG	"Mitt Romney's Prep School Classmates Recall Pranks, But Also Troubling Incidents"
20120514-00		SteveB	Where Lies the Truth? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB (" <i>The Washington Post's</i> Romney Hit Piece Comes Apart")
20120511-01	10:10	Art	Re: "Mitt Romney's Prep School Classmates Recall Pranks..." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #136)
20120511-03	16:40	SteveB	"What the China Crisis (& His Gay Crisis) Revealed About Mitt"
20120515-00		SteveB	The War on Gays Continues by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney Bullying Story Creates Message Headache for House Vote")
20120514-07	16:38	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Condemn Mitt Romney for Meanness / "Prank or Pattern? Why Romney's Bullying Is Relevant to the Election"
20120515-03	14:30	SteveB	From the Right: "Mitt Romney's Plan of Attack"
20120517-00		SteveB	'Willard the Bain' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("If You Know Anything About the Vikings, You Know Everything You Need to Know About Willard Romney & Bain Capital!")
20120517-04	10:23	Pam	Re: 'Willard the Bain' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #140)
20120516-09	14:15	SteveB	"Public vs. Private Morality"
20120518-00		SteveB	'I Stand by What I Said, Whatever It Was' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney: Ricketts Plan to Use Rev. Jeremiah Wright Against Obama Is 'Wrong Course'")
20120521-01	07:46	MarthaH	"A Mormon Moment"
20120521-02	10:21	Art	"A Choice of Capitalisms"
20120521-05	11:47	GaryF	"A Choice of Capitalisms"
20120523-00		SteveB	The 'Vulture Capitalist' at His Best by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Bain Capital: 9 Toughest Attacks" [to Defend!])
20120523-10	19:09	Art	Mitt R0mney's 'Character'
20120523-11	19:18	SteveB	"Tall Tales About Private Equity"

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20120526-10	19:05	SteveB	"Romney Messes Up, Tells the Truth About Austerity"
20120529-01	07:30	SteveB	"Romney's Mormon Faith in Spotlight"
(03) CONSERVATIVE MIND, THE			
20120501-02	14:01	SteveB	"Welcome to the Asylum"
20120502-06	18:32	Dennis	"Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?" — The Alternate Reality Right-Wingers Inhabit Is Terrifying
20120502-08	18:48	SteveG	Re: "Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120503-02	09:18	Art	Re: "Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #130)
20120503-07	16:57	Pam	"Why Won't They Listen?"
20120507-13	21:15	SteveB	Why Is the Right So Pi*sed?
20120508-03	09:54	Art	Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #133)
20120508-04	10:13	Pam	Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to SteveB & Art, above)
20120508-07	10:48	SteveB	Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to Art & Pam, above)
20120508-12	12:39	Art	Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to SteveB, above)
20120507-14	22:00	SteveG	Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to SteveB, above) & "Life-Saving Cancer Drugs for Children Stuck in Federal Legislative Limbo"
20120508-02	08:33	Pam	Re: "Life-Saving Cancer Drugs for Children Stuck in Federal Legislative Limbo" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #133)
20120509-01	06:20	MarthaH	"Conservative Author Jonah Goldberg Drops Claim of Two Pulitzer Nominations"
20120509-05	09:53	Art	Re: "Conservative Author Jonah Goldberg Drops Claim of Two Pulitzer Nominations" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120509-09	12:42	Pam	Re: "Conservative Author Jonah Goldberg Drops Claim of Two Pulitzer Nominations" (reply to Art, above)
20120512-02	09:24	Art	"GOP Elephant in the Room: Themselves"
20120512-06	14:35	Dennis	"How the Ayn Rand-Loving Right Is Like a Bunch of Teen Boys Gone Crazy"
20120515-08	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Christian Nation?
20120517-07	16:47	SteveB	From the Right: "The Menace of Bipartisanship"
20120517-15	23:58	SteveG	Quote: George Carlin on Groups of Stupid People
20120521-09	17:11	SteveB	From the Right: "2012 GOP Platform Must Aim to Restore American Innovation"
20120522-04	10:31	SteveB	From the Right: "Leftists Continue to Misuse & Undermine American Exceptionalism"
20120524-02	11:59	Pam	Re: From the Right: "Leftists Continue to Misuse & Undermine American Exceptionalism" (FotM Newsletter #144)
20120524-06	13:37	SteveB	Re: From the Right: "Leftists Continue to Misuse & Undermine American Exceptionalism" (reply to Pam, above)
20120523-08	15:51	SteveB	From the Right: "Keeping Business Honest"
20120524-04	13:19	SteveB	From the Right: "Cocooned Liberals Are Unprepared for Political Debate"
20120525-07	13:09	Pam	Re: From the Right: "Cocooned Liberals Are Unprepared for Political Debate" & Canadian Protests: Silence in the U.S. (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #146)
20120525-12	15:29	Dennis	"My Break with the Extreme Right"
20120525-17	15:47	Pam	Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120525-23	18:26	Art	Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120525-24	18:58	Beth	Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120525-13	15:32	Dennis	Fw: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (from Alan Gayson)
20120525-14	15:35	Pam	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120525-15	15:36	Art	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis, above)
20120525-16	15:41	Dennis	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Art, above)
20120525-18	15:56	Pam	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis & Art, above)
20120525-21	18:10	Art	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to all, above)
20120526-03	08:23	Pam	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to all, above)
20120528-04	16:27	MarthaH	Fw: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana Banner-Graphic (re: Tea Party: "Staying Together Regardless of Political Differences")
20120528-05	16:55	Art	Re: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana <i>Banner-Graphic</i> (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120528-08	18:30	SteveM	Re: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana <i>Banner-Graphic</i>
20120529-02	08:33	Pam	Re: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana Banner-Graphic (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #148)
20120529-03	08:45	Art	Re: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana Banner-Graphic (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #148)
(04) DEMOCRATS			
20120511-04	17:05	SteveG	Fw: Dennis Kucinich: The Power of Now
20120513-02	11:04	SteveB	Re: Dennis Kucinich: The Power of Now (reply to SteveG, above)
20120516-15	17:29	SteveG	Fw: Breaking News from Dennis Kucinich
(05) LIBERAL MIND, THE			
20120509-25	22:23	SteveBA	"Dead Cat Bounce for Socialism"
20120514-12	19:09	Art	"Five Facts That Put America to Shame"
20120514-13	19:35	SteveB	Re: "Five Facts That Put America to Shame" (reply to Art, above)
(06) MISC. POLITICS / CORRESPONDENCE w/ POLITICIANS			
20120525-01	06:24	MarthaH	Fw: This Week on FlackCheck.org
20120525-02	06:47	SteveB	Re: This Week on FlackCheck.org (reply to MarthaH, above)
(07) REPUBLICANS			
20120430-05	16:18	Dennis	"Let's Just Say It: The Republicans Are the Problem."
20120430-06	16:43	Pam	Re: "Let's Just Say It: The Republicans Are the Problem." (reply to Dennis, above)
20120525-09	14:13	Dennis	"Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, Or Corrupt?"
20120525-11	15:18	Art	Re: "Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, Or Corrupt?" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120529-00		SteveB	A Republican Politician Tells a Truth by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Alan Simpson Slams Fellow Republicans for Unwillingness to Compromise")
20120530-00		SteveB	Big Shot Republican War Hero by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Rumsfeld Scrapped Raid — 6 Years Before Calling Osama bin Laden Kill 'Easy Call'")
(08) STATE / LOCAL POLITICS			
20120525-22	18:18	Art	"18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election"
20120526-04	08:31	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)

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20120526-08	17:52	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (to Dale)
20120526-09	18:26	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)
20120526-13	23:54	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Pam & Art, above) & "Employment Debate Requires Closer Look"
20120527-01	09:55	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
20120527-06	14:36	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
20120527-04	12:17	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above) & "Governor Walker: The Facts Are the Facts" & "Education for the 21st Century"
20120527-07	14:41	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
20120527-08	15:42	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above) & Happy Memorial Day
20120527-09	17:10	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to all, above) & Happy Memorial Day
20120527-11	22:50	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above) & Happy Memorial Day
(09) THIRD PARTIES			
(10) CONSTITUTION			
20120501-05	19:41	Dick	Fw: Congressional Reform Act
20120507-11	20:07	SteveG	"4 High-Tech Ways the Federal Government Is Spying on Private Citizens"
20120507-15	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Jon Stewart on Big Government in Your Anus
20120510-05	11:33	Bill	"Bruce's History Lessons: The Long, Lost, Last — the 27th — Amendment"
(11) CORRUPTION			
20120509-00		SteveB	Big Oil Rules by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Petro Putocracy")
20120508-35	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Bill Maher on Freedom & Responsibility
20120509-11	14:22	SteveG	"Making Chemical Giants Happy at Our Expense"
20120515-02	14:00	SteveB	"Colonized by Corporations"
(12) EDUCATION			
20120503-01	07:23	MarthaH	"Common Core Standards' Drive Wedge in Education Circles"
20120514-21	23:58	SteveG	Quote: "Why Is There Always Money for War..."
20120518-03	09:18	MarthaH	"College Graduation: Weighing the Cost...and the Payoff"
20120522-00		SteveB	Your Tax Money for Salvation? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("10 Frightening Things That Happen at Conservative Christian Schools That May Be Funded with Your Tax Dollars")
20120522-03	10:14	Art	"Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises."

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20120522-05	11:51	Pam	Re: "Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises." (reply to Art, above)
20120522-08	16:03	Art	Re: "Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises." (reply to Pam, above)
20120523-01	07:55	SteveB	Re: "Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises." (reply to Art, Fotm Newsletter #144)
20120524-00		Pam	Higher and Higher Education by Pam McRae (Re: "Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises.")
20120523-09	16:43	SteveB	Re: Higher and Higher Education (reply to Pam, above)
(13) ELECTION REFORM			
20120519-01	07:13	MarthaH	"Want to End Partisan Politics? Here's What Won't Work & What Will."
20120519-02	17:07	SteveB	Re: "Want to End Partisan Politics? Here's What Won't Work & What Will." (reply to Martha, above)
20120530-03	12:56	SteveB	"The Price of Democracy"
(14) EXECUTIVE BRANCH			
20120506-02	02:13	SteveM	Fw: The Difference Between Chicken Salad & Chicken Sh*t
20120506-04	07:02	SteveB	Re: The Difference Between Chicken Salad & Chicken Sh*t & "Osama Bin Laden Killed: Barack Obama's Speech in Full" & "[President Bush's] Speech on the Capture of Saddam Hussein" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120524-07	23:44	Dale	"USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad"
20120525-03	09:06	Pam/Dale	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (discussion of Dale post in FotM Newsletter #146)
20120525-04	11:34	Dale	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Pam, above)
20120525-06	12:00	Pam	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Dale, above)
20120525-08	14:12	Dale	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Pam, above)
20120525-19	16:55	Pam	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Dale, above)
20120525-20	18:03	Art	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad"
20120525-05	11:41	SteveB	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Dale, above)
(15) GUNS / INSURRECTION / CRIME			
20120502-07	18:46	SteveG	"Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention"
20120502-09	20:05	SteveB	Re: "Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120506-01	02:12	SteveM	Fw: America's Hunters
20120506-03	06:33	SteveB	Re: America's Hunters (reply to SteveM, above)
20120506-10	12:50	SteveM	Re: America's Hunters (reply to SteveB, above)
20120514-16	20:13	SteveM	"Instant Justice for Sociopaths — Semper Justitia"
20120514-20	21:47	SteveB	Re: "Instant Justice for Sociopaths — Semper Justitia" (reply to SteveM, above)
(16) IMMIGRATION			
20120503-06	15:05	SteveB	"Deport the GOP Establishment"
20120514-15	20:10	SteveM	Fw: This Sounds Racist to Me

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120514-18	21:15	SteveB	Re: This Sounds Racist to Me (reply to SteveM, above)
20120517-08	16:49	Dale	Video: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole"
20120517-11	19:26	Art	Re: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole" (reply to Dale, above)
20120517-13	20:26	SteveG	Re: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole" (reply to Dale & Art, above)
(17) JUDICIAL BRANCH			
(18) LEGISLATIVE BRANCH			
20120501-06	21:54	SteveG	"Inside Edition' Investigates Congressional Cars"
20120502-03	09:23	Pam	Re: "Inside Edition' Investigates Congressional Cars" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #129)
20120503-08	22:54	SteveG	"Lawmakers Push for Vote to Limit Post Office Closures"
20120516-17	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Warren Buffett on the Deficit
20120529-06	17:50	SteveG	Grades for Congressmen
(19) MISC. GOVERNMENT / CORRESPONDENCE w/ OFFICIALS			
(20) REPRODUCTION / WOMEN / LGBT			
20120502-01	06:20	MarthaH	"Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'"
20120502-04	09:28	Pam	Re: "Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120510-00		SteveB	North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage by Steven W. Baker / SteveB
20120509-20	17:00	Dennis	Quotes: Marriage
20120510-06	13:49	Pam	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #135)
20120510-09	14:57	Dennis	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)
20120510-11	15:25	Pam	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Dennis, above)
20120510-18	17:19	SteveG	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)
20120510-20	18:45	Dennis	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)
20120510-24	19:35	Pam	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Dennis, above)
20120510-25	19:39	SteveG	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)
20120510-27	23:57	SteveB	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to all, above)
20120510-13	15:27	Art	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #135)
20120510-15	16:33	SteveB	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Art, above)
20120510-16	16:35	Art	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, above)
20120510-21	19:22	SteveG	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to all, above)
20120510-17	16:53	SteveB	"Obama Comes Out for Same-Sex Marriage"
20120510-07	14:13	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: Tell the DNC You Want Marriage Equality
20120518-07	11:30	SteveB	Fw: From the Right: Human Events Petition: Bypass <i>Roe vs. Wade!</i>
20120520-04	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Mitt R0mney on Stay-at-Home Moms
20120521-06	13:31	Dennis	"Standard Right-Wing Propaganda"
20120521-11	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Men...Who Will <u>Never</u> Be Pregnant
(21) SOCIAL SECURITY / RETIREMENT			
(22) STATE / LOCAL GOVERNMENT			
(23) TAXES			
20120430-07	18:10	Dennis	"Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%"

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120430-08	18:54	Art	Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120430-09	18:56	SteveG	Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120430-10	18:59	Art	Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120430-11	19:16	Pam	Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to Art, above)
20120430-14	19:41	SteveG	Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to Pam, above)
20120430-15	19:50	Pam	Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120507-00		SteveB	Eliminate All Business Income Taxes by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Corporate Tax Conundrum")
20120508-06	10:24	Mary	"Tax Loophole Costs Billions" & "Will Lawmakers Act to Close Tax Loophole for Illegal Immigrants?"
20120508-11	12:23	Art	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Mary, above)
20120508-14	13:14	SteveG	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Mary & Art, above)
20120508-13	13:05	SteveB	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Mary & Art, above)
20120508-15	13:19	SteveG	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120508-21	14:47	Pam	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120508-23	14:59	SteveB	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Pam, above)
20120508-25	15:06	Pam	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120508-19	14:37	Pam	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)
20120508-16	13:28	Pam	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)
20120508-18	14:07	SteveB	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Pam, above)
20120508-22	14:50	Pam	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120508-24	15:02	SteveB	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Pam, above)
20120508-26	15:08	Pam	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120508-27	16:28	Mary	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)
20120508-28	16:45	Mary	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)
20120508-29	17:19	Art	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Mary, above)
20120508-32	18:19	SteveB	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Art, above)
20120508-33	18:23	Art	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120508-30	17:24	Pam	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)
20120509-08	11:55	Art	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" & Illegal Aliens (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #134)
20120518-01	08:50	Pam	Re: Video: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole" (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #141)
20120514-14	19:56	SteveM	"Facebook Billionaire Gives Up Citizenship to Escape Bad American Tax Policy"
20120514-17	21:10	SteveB	Re: "Facebook Billionaire Gives Up Citizenship to Escape Bad American Tax Policy" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120516-10	14:30	SteveB	"Tax Plan Attacked by Big Business"
20120526-02	07:25	MarthaH	"GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes"
20120526-05	08:46	Pam	Re: "GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes" (reply to MarthaH, above)
(24) TRADE / INT'L RELATIONS			
20120504-01	09:05	Cândida	Video: U.S. State Dept. Gives \$3 Million to Ski Capitol Andorra Thinking It's a Poor, African Country
20120506-06	07:25	SteveB	Re: U.S. State Dept. Gives \$3 Million to Ski Capitol Andorra (reply to Cândida, above)
20120521-08	14:42	Art	"Tanks, Jets or Scholarships?"
20120522-02	09:11	Pam	Re: "Tanks, Jets or Scholarships?" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #143)
20120522-07	14:20	SteveB	"Ten Reasons for Europe"
(25) WAR / SECURITY			

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120501-03	16:29	Pam	Common Sense or Political Correctness? (privacy)
20120501-04	17:16	SteveG	Re: Common Sense or Political Correctness? (reply to Pam, above)
20120502-02	09:02	Pam	Re: Common Sense or Political Correctness? (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #129)
20120503-09	23:58	SteveG	America Has Been at War a Lot
20120508-08	11:21	SteveM	Fw: "Former Navy Seal Rebukes [President] Obama"
20120508-09	11:50	SteveB	Re: "Former Navy Seal Rebukes [President] Obama" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120508-17	13:32	SteveB	"Cartagena Beyond the Secret Service Scandal"
20120516-04	12:14	Bill	Fw: Secret Service Scandal
20120508-20	14:44	Pam	Re: The Arab Mind (reply to Art & SteveB)
20120512-05	10:08	SteveG	"Pilots Aren't Guinea Pigs: Ground the F-22..."
20120514-11	18:32	SteveB	"America as a Shining Drone Upon a Hill"
20120521-10	21:47	SteveG	Fw: Dennis Kucinich: "Peace Depends on All of Us"
20120523-02	11:30	Art	Fw: Efficient Airport Security
20120523-03	11:43	Pam	Re: Efficient Airport Security (reply to Art, above)
20120523-06	15:12	Dennis	Fw: Golf with President Obama
20120523-07	15:17	Art	Re: Golf with President Obama (reply to Dennis, above)
20120524-01	11:13	Phil	Fw: Memorial Day Reminders
20120527-02	10:58	Art	Memorial Day
20120527-05	12:53	SteveB	"Memorial Day Thoughts on National Defense"
20120527-10	21:54	SteveG	"Reckoning with Torture: Memos & Testimonies from the 'War on Terror'"
(26) ART / LITERATURE / WRITING / MOVIES / MUSIC			
20120513-05	17:04	SteveB	HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On")
20120513-06	20:16	SteveG	Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveB, above)
20120513-07	21:17	SteveB	Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveG, above)
20120513-08	22:24	SteveG	Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveB, above)
20120514-06	16:21	SteveB	Re: Gomez—"Bring It On" & "Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveG & Art, FotM Newsletter #137)
20120514-08	17:32	SteveG	Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120514-09	17:44	GaryF	Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120514-10	18:05	SteveB	Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to GaryF, above)
20120530-07	18:11	Ben	"Sh*t My Students Write"
(27) BUSINESS / MONEY / ECONOMICS			
20120504-04	17:45	Bob	How the Economy Works
20120508-00		SteveB	The Engine Is Capitalism — For Better or Worse by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Answer Isn't Socialism; It's Capitalism That Better Spreads the Benefits of the Productivity Revolution")
20120510-26	23:01	SteveG	"JPMorgan Chase Discloses \$2-Billion Trading Loss"
20120511-05	20:39	SteveG	Speculation vs. Reality
20120512-01	08:09	Pam	Re: Speculation vs. Reality (reply to SteveG, above)
20120513-03	12:58	SteveB	"How to End This Depression"
20120516-12	15:11	SteveB	From the Right: "JPMorgan Proves We Don't Need More Regulation"
20120516-13	16:40	SteveBA	"Thinking the Unthinkable"
20120519-03	18:47	SteveB	"How to Fix the Deficit"

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120520-01	12:30	SteveB	"The European Stabilization Mechanism, or How the Goldman Vampire Squid Just Captured Europe"
20120524-03	13:14	SteveB	"What Do Corporations Want?"
20120531-00		SteveB	' Bust 'Em Up! ' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Who Needs Wall Street Giants?")
(28) CLASS WAR / POVERTY / RICH & POOR			
20120430-17	23:58	SteveG	Quote: William Jennings Bryan on Trickle Down Economics
20120501-07	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Helen Keller on The Care of All People
20120504-02	10:38	SteveG	Graphic: We Are the 99%
20120504-03	11:05	SteveM	Re: Graphic: We Are the 99% (reply to SteveG, above)
20120507-02	10:39	SteveG	Re: Graphic: We Are the 99% (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #132)
20120507-12	20:53	SteveB	Re: Graphic: We Are the 99% (reply to SteveG, above)
20120507-04	11:35	Beth	Re: Graphic: We Are the 99% (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #132)
20120504-06	19:54	SteveG	"Can Going Without Money Hurt the Economy? One Man's Quest to Be Penniless"
20120513-09	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Howard Zinn on Class Warfare
20120516-05	12:20	Pam	Franz Fanon
20120516-06	13:11	SteveG	Re: Franz Fanon (reply to Pam, above)
20120516-07	13:17	Pam	Re: Franz Fanon (reply to SteveG, above)
20120516-08	13:23	SteveG	Re: Franz Fanon (reply to Pam, above)
20120521-07	13:50	SteveB	"How the Ultra-Rich Betray America"
20120522-11	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Nelson Mandela on Poverty
20120524-08	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Feeding vs. Bombing
20120525-10	14:33	SteveB	"Obama Has to Explain Why Fairness Is Essential to Growth (And Why Some Democrats Have to Stop Believing Otherwise)"
20120526-07	15:23	SteveB	"Fox Mangles Data to Claim 'The Poor' are Getting 'Richer'"
20120526-11	19:15	SteveB	An HONEST Game of 'Life'
20120528-01	08:51	Art	"Typical CEO in U.S. Made \$9.6 Million Last Year"
20120529-05	17:25	Dennis	"How the 'Job Creators' REALLY Spend Their Money"
20120530-01	09:15	Pam	Re: "How the 'Job Creators' REALLY Spend Their Money" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #149)
(29) DAILY PHOTOS / PHOTOGRAPHY			
20120430-18	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Dolly Sods, West Virginia
20120501-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Crystal Cave of Giants, Naica, Mexico
20120502-14	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Chilean Turquoise Puya (puya berteroniana)
20120503-10	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Bald Eagle Fisherman
20120506-12	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Flowering <i>Toborochi</i> Tree, Bolivia
20120507-16	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" Newly Painted
20120508-01	08:21	SteveG	Re: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" Newly Re-Painted (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #133)
20120508-05	10:21	SteveB	Re: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120509-12	14:25	Pam	Re: Photo: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #133)
20120509-26	22:35	SteveB	Re: Photo: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to Pam, above)
20120510-02	09:07	Pam	Re: Re: Photo: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #135)
20120508-37	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Motherhood
20120509-28	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Potosi, Bolivia (13,343 ft. elevation)
20120510-29	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Great Drunken Moments in Indy 500 History

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20120513-10	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Wolfe's Neck State Park, Maine
20120514-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Singapore
20120515-09	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Empty Plate
20120516-18	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Palmasola Prison, Santa Cruz, Bolivia
20120517-16	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Swimming Under a Giant Aussie Wave
20120520-05	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Jane Fonda at 74
20120521-12	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Tropical Island Waterfall
20120522-12	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Man Survives Plunge over Niagara Falls
20120523-12	23:59	SteveB	Painting: "Tranquility" by Ruthie Ashenurst
20120524-09	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Canadian Protests
20120527-12	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Wisconsin Cheese & Cheesehead Hats
20120528-09	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Fruit of the Kalahari Desert
20120529-07	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Blue Morpho
20120530-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Too Much Snow. Happy Summer!
(30) ENERGY / TRANSPORTATION / WATER			
20120503-00		SteveB	Electric Cars: The Best of Both Worlds? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("AEDC Electric Prototype Has Range of 150 Miles, Expected to Achieve 170 MPH")
20120515-05	15:38	SteveB	From the Right: "Fuzzy Math on Energy"
20120516-11	14:38	SteveG	"As Congress Continues Its Witch Hunt, Here Are 5 Things You Should Know About Clean Energy Investments"
20120523-04	13:47	SteveB	"New Study Confirms (Again): Keystone XL Would RAISE Gas Prices"
(31) FOOD / DRINK			
(32) FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE			
20120504-05	17:54	SteveB	The First FotM E-Book: <i>Political Inbox: 2007-2011</i>
20120504-07	19:59	Tom	Re: The First FotM E-Book: <i>Political Inbox: 2007-2011</i> (reply to SteveB, above)
20120507-03	11:06	Pam	Re: The First FotM E-Book: Political Inbox: 2007-2011 (reply to SteveB, FotM newsletter #132)
20120507-06	13:08	SteveB	Re: The First FotM E-Book: Political Inbox: 2007-2011 (reply to Pam, above)
20120518-04	09:58	Dale	Re: FotM Newsletter #141 (to SteveB)
20120518-05	10:09	SteveB	Re: FotM Newsletter #141 (reply to Dale, above)
20120518-06	10:46	SteveB	FotM Newsletters — April, 2012 Edition
(33) FUN / DIVERSION			
20120506-05	07:23	Marci	Photo: Got Him!
20120517-12	20:15	MarthaH	Photos: Michaelangelo's <i>David</i> Returning to Italy
20120522-10	23:42	SteveG	Fw: Common Sense Is Not All That Common
20120530-06	14:10	Art	Fw: Proof That the World Is Nuts
(34) HEALTH CARE / HEALTH / MEDICINE			
20120502-00		SteveB	The Founding Fathers Supported Mandates by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Originalist Sin")

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120504-00		SteveB	Hey, Maybe Somebody Needs to Channel Ayn Rand! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Henry Aaron, Inventor of Paul Ryan's Medicare Reform Concept, Explains Why It's Wrong")
20120527-03	11:39	SteveG	"Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills"
20120528-02	14:59	Pam	Re: "Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #147)
20120528-03	15:59	Art	Re: "Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #147)
20120528-06	17:05	SteveG	Re: "Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills" (reply to Pam & Art, above)
(35) HISTORY			
(36) JOBS / LABOR			
20120430-02	12:08	Pam	Re: Ban on Farm Chores (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #126)
20120430-03	12:33	SteveG	Re: Ban on Farm Chores (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #126)
20120430-04	13:30	Tom	Cartoon: "Man of Steal" (Ban on Farm Chores)
20120518-11	13:47	SteveB	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — Really? (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #126) & "Over 100 Children a Year Die Working on Farms: Why Do Prominent Right-Wingers Fight Safety Regulations?"
20120520-02	15:51	Dale	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — Really? (reply to SteveB, above) & "Latest Word On Child Labor Law Most Encouraging News Yet"
20120520-03	16:30	SteveB	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — Really? (reply to Dale, above)
20120505-07	15:38	SteveB	"The Real Job Creators: Consumers, Not the Wealthy"
20120507-01	10:20	SteveM	"Unemployment Explained: Obama's Disability Scammers"
20120509-27	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Hours at Minimum Wage Needed to Afford Rent
20120521-00		SteveB	The War on Jobs Continues by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Austerity Trap & the Jobs Deficit")
20120521-03	10:42	Art	Video: "Who Are the Job Creators?"
20120521-04	11:25	Pam	Re: "Who Are the Job Creators?" (reply to Art, above)
20120530-05	13:16	SteveB	From the Right: This Intelligent Man Must Be the Stupidest or Most Deluded Person in the World! ("Improving Life for Workers")
(37) LIFE / PHILOSOPHY / SPIRITUALITY			
20120501-01	08:42	Pam	"Why Does Religion Always Get a Free Ride?"
20120502-13	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Mark Twain on Religion
20120509-19	16:39	SteveG	Video: Human to Hero: Gao Fangxie
20120510-28	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Equal Rights
20120522-06	12:56	SteveG	Graphic: Life Is Good!
(38) MEDIA / NEWS MEDIA			
(39) MISC. REALITY			
(40) OCCUPY WALL ST.			
(41) PETITIONS / ACTIONS / CAUSES			
20120502-10	20:08	SteveB	Fw: Urgent — Massive attack on Avaaz! Cyber War vs. People Power
20120503-03	10:18	SteveG	Fw: Ultra Violet Action: Support Rachel Maddow
20120505-04	11:20	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Have an Idea for a petition? Start Your Own!

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20120505-05	11:53	SteveG	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Become a Citizen Co-Sponsor of the EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT!
20120505-06	13:47	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: Help Stop Electro-shocking of Children
20120506-11	15:40	SteveG	Fw: SumOfUs Petition: End Walmart Slavery
20120507-10	16:27	SteveG	Fw: FreePress Petition: Don't Stop the Future of TV
20120508-10	12:05	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Action: Help Stop Mad Cow Disease
20120509-07	11:39	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Unite to Defeat Scott Walker
20120509-18	16:35	SteveB	Fw: USAction Action: Tell the GOP to Stop the War on Women!
20120510-22	19:33	Dennis	Sen. Bernie Sanders Petition: End Polluter Welfare
20120510-23	19:34	SteveG	Re: Sen. Bernie Sanders Petition: End Polluter Welfare
20120511-02	13:19	SteveG	Fw: One.org Action: Send a Message to the G8!
20120512-04	10:07	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell Obama: Stop the Fricking Fracking!
20120513-01	09:19	SteveB	Fw: Mother's Day Card (for next year, now)
20120513-04	15:15	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Stop the Sale of Trayvon Shooting Targets
20120515-01	12:11	SteveG	Fw: Commom Cause Petition: Fix the Filibuster!
20120515-04	14:36	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Contribute to help Tom Barrett Defeat Scott Walker
20120515-07	18:36	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Tell DNC: Help Unseat Gov. Scott Walker
20120516-01	09:18	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Action: Tell Congress to Pass the Medical Device Safety Bill!
20120516-02	10:36	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Reject the 'Bombs Not bread' Budget!
20120516-03	12:12	SteveB	Fw: USAction Action: Donate \$5 to Defeat Bush 2.0!
20120516-14	17:17	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Help Defeat Gov. Walker in Wisconsin!
20120517-01	09:18	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Action: Tell the USDA Not to Play Chicken
20120517-06	15:53	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Join the Fight to Recall Gov. Scott Walker
20120518-10	13:36	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Support a Constitutional Amendment to Reverse <i>Citizens United!</i>
20120523-05	15:03	SteveB	Fw: USAction Action: Stop Outsourcing Our Jobs!
20120524-05	13:28	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Thank the 23 Attorneys General for Standing Against <i>Citizens United!</i>
(42) SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY			
20120430-01	11:03	Art	"Report: World's Climate Progress Too Slow"
20120430-13	19:32	Dale	"The Trust Molecule"
20120430-16	20:25	SteveB	Re: "The Trust Molecule"
20120505-02	06:47	MarthaH	"Researchers Find Time in Wild Boosts Creativity, Insight & Problem Solving"
20120506-08	12:07	SteveB	Re: "Researchers Find Time in Wild Boosts Creativity, Insight & Problem Solving" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120507-07	15:03	Pam	Re: "Researchers Find Time in Wild Boosts Creativity, Insight & Problem Solving" (reply to MarthaH, ForM newsletter #132)
20120507-05	11:59	Ben	"Dinosaurs 'Gassed' Themselves into Extinction, British Scientists Say"
20120509-03	06:30	MarthaH	"12-Month Stretch Ending in April Is Warmest on Record, NOAA Says"
20120512-03	09:48	Art	<i>The End of the Dream</i>
20120514-01	10:10	Pam	The End of the World?
20120514-03	11:17	Bill	Re: The End of the World? (reply to Pam, above)
20120514-05	11:29	Pam	Re: The End of the World? (reply to Bill, above)
20120514-02	10:23	Art	Re: The End of the World? (reply to Pam, 10:10, above)
20120514-04	11:22	Bill	Re: The End of the World? (reply to Art, above)
20120514-19	21:36	SteveB	Re: The End of the World? & "High-Resolution Image from Electro-L Satellite Shows Planet in Single Shot" (reply to all, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120516-00		SteveB	The War on the Planet Continues by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Report: Global Biodiversity Down 30 Percent in 40 Years")
20120526-06	09:51	Dale	"Why We Lie"
20120526-12	19:25	SteveB	Re: "Why We Lie" (reply to Dale, above)
(43) U.S.A., THE			
(44) WORLD, THE			
20120503-05	14:12	Charis	"19 Indigenous Communities Join Protest Against Road Through National Park in Bolivia"
20120508-34	22:31	SteveG	"The Best & Worst Places to Be a Mom" (America Is #25)
20120509-17	15:39	Charis	"University Students Armed with Rocks Defend University in Cochabamba, Bolivia" & "Bolivian Students Damage Potosí State Government Building with Dynamite"
20120510-04	10:35	Charis	"Travel Insurance for Bolivia?"
20120515-06	7:23	Charis	"Bolivia's Main Private Airline AeroSur in Doubt"
20120516-16	18:14	Charis	"American Sits Almost a Year with No Charges in Isolated Bolivian Prison"
20120517-10	17:36	Charis	"Tourist Attractions in Bolivia: Ecotourism in Santa Cruz"
20120518-12	18:59	Charis	"Air Travel Tips: How to Get Cheap Tickets & Best Flights"
20120525-00		SteveB	Canadian Protests: Silence in the U.S. by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Unreported! Media Malfeasance as 400,000 March in Montreal" & "Biggest Act of Civil Disobedience in Canadian History")
20120529-04	08:51	Charis	"Bolivian Wildlife Trivia & Animal Facts"
20120530-02	09:27	Pam	Re: "Bolivian Wildlife Trivia & Animal Facts" (reply to Charis, FotM Newsletter #149)



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #128 — MAY 1, 2012

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

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

Mitt Romney Is a Liar, Part 2

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 1, 2012)

The audacity of this campaign's lies is mind boggling! (see: "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt"—that would be without a bailout—by Mitt Romney, *The New York Times*, Nov. 18, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/opinion/19romney.html?_r=1.)

He sure thinks we're stupid, huh?

"Eric Fehrstrom: Auto Bailout Was Mitt Romney's Idea" by Chris Gentilviso, Huffington Post

Apr. 28, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/28/eric-fehrstrom-auto-bailout-mitt-romney_n_1461805.html?ref=elections-2012)

Top Mitt Romney adviser Eric Fehrstrom claimed that President Obama's auto bailout was the GOP presidential hopeful's idea.

Fehrstrom said Obama followed Romney's course to help the auto industry during an appearance at a Saturday roundtable discussion hosted by the The Washington Post.

"His position on the bailout was exactly what President Obama followed," Fehrstrom said. "He said, 'If you want to save the auto industry, just don't write them a check. That will seal their doom. What they need to do is go through a managed bankruptcy process.'"

"The only economic success that President Obama has had is because he followed Mitt Romney's advice," Fehrstrom added.

Fehrstrom made headlines back in late March for saying that Romney's GOP primary positions were as erasable as a drawing on an Etch a Sketch. Fehrstrom's Saturday comments marked a different drawing on the auto bailout than what Romney penned in a November 2008 New York Times op-ed.

Headlined "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt," the piece closed with these words:

"In a managed bankruptcy, the federal government would propel newly competitive and viable automakers, rather than seal their fate with a bailout check," Romney wrote.

According to The Hill, Fehrstrom pointed to that segment of the op-ed, noting that auto companies are now profitable because of how they cut costs through a "managed bankruptcy."

"It is exactly what Mitt Romney told them to do," Fehrstrom said.

Over the course of the 2012 campaign, President Barack Obama's campaign has highlighted the successes of his administration's 2009 auto bailout, headed by the 1.4 million jobs that were saved in the process. In a March 2012 ad entitled "Made In America," Obama's campaign did not forget Romney's '08 stance.

"When a million jobs were on the line, every Republican candidate turned their back, even said, 'Let Detroit go Bankrupt,'" the ad said.

20120430-01	11:03	Art	"Report: World's Climate Progress Too Slow"
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"Report: World's Climate Progress Too Slow" by Brad Plumer, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 29, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/report-world-progress-too-slow-on-climate-control/2012/04/29/gIQArcAMrT_story.html)

Each year, the International Energy Agency puts out a study of which technological advances are needed to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius. The 2012 report is out and the grades are dismal: Aside from a recent boom in wind and solar power, the world isn't making much progress.

The IEA doesn't just look at recent trends in greenhouse-gas emissions — those can rise and fall with the economy. Instead, it looks at which clean-energy technologies are coming online. If the world wants to avoid a 2C rise in global temperatures, then we'll need a certain amount of low-carbon infrastructure in place by 2020, the IEA says. That means a mix of wind turbines, nuclear reactors, energy-efficient cars and buildings, and so on. And, for most of those things, countries are way behind. Here's a rundown:

Cleaning up coal plants: The IEA has recommended that countries around the world need to have at least 38 coal plants that capture and store carbon up and running by 2020 in order to stay on pace to meet that 2C climate target. There are no such plants operating. Moreover, the report notes, nearly half of the new coal plants built in 2010 aren't even up to the latest efficiency standards.

Nuclear power: The IEA has estimated that the world's nuclear-power capacity needs to nearly double by 2025 to help meet climate targets. Right now, it is shrinking. Countries such as Germany, Japan, Belgium and Switzerland are planning to phase out their reactors in the next decade. While many countries are still building reactors — China has 26 in the works and Russia has 10 — the IEA expects the world to miss its nuclear goals.

Solar, wind and other renewable: Here the IEA is more optimistic, noting that solar-panel prices are plummeting, countries are rapidly building hydropower dams and geothermal plants, and wind turbines are sprouting up everywhere. Countries are making slower progress on advanced renewables such as concentrated solar power plants and offshore wind turbines. But in the past decade, renewable power has been growing at a 27 percent annual rate, and if the pace continues, renewables should meet the IEA's expectations.

Vehicle fuel economy: The IEA estimates that fuel economy needs to improve by an average of 2.7 percent per year by 2030 in order to keep the share of emissions from transportation under control, but cars and trucks are getting more efficient at just a 1.7 percent annual pace. Some countries — such as those in the European Union and the United States — are improving quite steadily. Others such as India are becoming less fuel efficient, though that's largely because more people are able to buy vehicles.

Buildings: The IEA says that improving the energy efficiency of buildings is one of the easiest ways for the world to rein in its carbon emissions, since residential and commercial buildings account for 32 percent of energy use around the world. Although most people know how to insulate better and install efficient lighting, most countries have been slow to adopt stricter building codes, promote solar thermal systems and speed the adoption of energy-efficient appliances.

If the world wanted to make a concerted push to meet the 2C target, the IEA says, all the sectors — from electricity to vehicles to buildings — would have to chip in to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. The track we're on is to a balmy 6C of warming in our future. To get down to 2C, many sectors need to contribute.

The renewables sector is the only one pulling its weight. According to the IEA, most countries don't have stable, reliable policies to promote clean-energy technologies. They recommend the usual solutions: a price on fossil fuels, new standards for energy efficiency, and more money for research and development.

The IEA estimates that meeting the 2C target will require \$5 trillion in energy investments by 2020. That, in turn, would save \$4 trillion in fossil fuel costs. And over the next 40 years, the benefits from energy savings and reduced emissions would keep growing and eventually outweigh the costs. For now, though, the world's nowhere near that point.

20120430-02 12:08 Pam Re: Ban on Farm Chores (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #126)

This is a subject I haven't thought much about. In fact, it probably hasn't crossed my mind in years, but now that my attention has been snagged, I am trying to sort out my feelings on this. Most of you know I grew up in Indiana. My grandparents were farmers, my mother grew up on a farm, and much of my life was spent in farm country, so I am not unfamiliar with the needs and traditions of family farmers. That said, I think I come down on the side of child protection. I don't see much difference between a 12-yr. old working in a textile factory in Victorian England and a 12-yr. old operating heavy machinery on his uncle's farm. Parents sent their kids into those factories too. You could say, it was a tradition. We all remember when, as kids, we didn't ride in safety seats, wear seatbelts or bicycle helmets. Now I cringe when I see a kid riding a bike with an unprotected head, especially since my daughter's bike accident when she was eight. I've always wondered if a helmet would have lessened her injuries. My point is that time's have changed. We have wised up--to a degree. We don't live in the 19th c. anymore; tradition be damned. I am reminded of the kid who lost both arms in a combine (or something similar) a number of years ago. I don't think his help was worth that. Life is tough enough. Let's at least keep kids safe so they can grow up healthy and intact.

20120430-03 12:33 SteveG Re: Ban on Farm Chores (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #126)

CHILD LABOR IS CHILD LABOR NO MATTER WHO THE BOSS IS.

20120430-04 13:30 Tom Cartoon: "Man of Steal" (Ban on Farm Chores)

By Chris Muir (<http://www.daybydaycartoon.com/2012/04/29/>)



[But, Tom, as we saw in FotM Newsletter #127, Paul Ryan is the "Man of Steal". -SteveB]

20120430-05 16:18 Dennis "Let's Just Say It: The Republicans Are the Problem."

This appeared in the Washington Post and is excerpted from a new book by Mann and Ornstein, "It's Even Worse Than It Looks." Although Mann and Ornstein represent both liberal and conservative viewpoints, you can be sure the Republicans will be squealing like stuck pigs over the conclusion here. All I can say is that it is about time the reality that Republicans have moved to the extreme far right was recognized in the media. Total government dysfunction is clearly the aim of the radical Republicans and they have been very successful at achieving it.

"Let's Just Say It: The Republicans Are the Problem." by Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 27, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/lets-just-say-it-the-republicans-are-the-problem/2012/04/27/gIQAxCVUIT_story_2.html)

Rep. Allen West, a Florida Republican, was recently captured on video asserting that there are "78 to 81" Democrats in Congress who are members of the Communist Party. Of course, it's not unusual for some renegade lawmaker from either side of the aisle to say something outrageous. What made West's comment — right out of the McCarthyite playbook of the 1950s — so striking was the almost complete lack of condemnation from Republican congressional leaders or other major party figures, including the remaining presidential candidates.

It's not that the GOP leadership agrees with West; it is that such extreme remarks and views are now taken for granted.

We have been studying Washington politics and Congress for more than 40 years, and never have we seen them this dysfunctional. In our past writings, we have criticized both parties when we believed it was warranted. Today, however, we have no choice but to acknowledge that the core of the problem lies with the Republican Party.

The GOP has become an insurgent outlier in American politics. It is ideologically extreme; scornful of compromise; unmoved by conventional understanding of facts, evidence and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition.

When one party moves this far from the mainstream, it makes it nearly impossible for the political system to deal constructively with the country's challenges.

"Both sides do it" or "There is plenty of blame to go around" are the traditional refuges for an American news media intent on proving its lack of bias, while political scientists prefer generality and neutrality when discussing partisan polarization. Many self-styled bipartisan groups, in their search for common ground, propose solutions that move both sides to the center, a strategy that is simply untenable when one side is so far out of reach.

It is clear that the center of gravity in the Republican Party has shifted sharply to the right. Its once-legendary moderate and center-right legislators in the House and the Senate — think Bob Michel, Mickey Edwards, John Danforth, Chuck Hagel — are virtually extinct.

The post-McGovern Democratic Party, by contrast, while losing the bulk of its conservative Dixiecrat contingent in the decades after the civil rights revolution, has retained a more diverse base. Since the Clinton presidency, it has hewed to the center-left on issues from welfare reform to fiscal policy. While the Democrats may have moved from their 40-yard line to their 25, the Republicans have gone from their 40 to somewhere behind their goal post.

What happened? Of course, there were larger forces at work beyond the realignment of the South. They included the mobilization of social conservatives after the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the anti-tax movement launched in 1978 by California's Proposition 13, the rise of conservative talk radio after a congressional pay raise in 1989, and the emergence of Fox News and right-wing blogs. But the real move to the bedrock right starts with two names: Newt Gingrich and Grover Norquist.

From the day he entered Congress in 1979, Gingrich had a strategy to create a Republican majority in the House: convincing voters that the institution was so corrupt that anyone would be better than the incumbents, especially those in the Democratic majority. It took him 16 years, but by bringing ethics charges against Democratic leaders; provoking them into overreactions that enraged Republicans and united them to vote against Democratic initiatives; exploiting scandals to create even more public disgust with politicians; and then recruiting GOP candidates around the country to run against Washington, Democrats and Congress, Gingrich accomplished his goal.

Ironically, after becoming speaker, Gingrich wanted to enhance Congress's reputation and was content to compromise with President Bill Clinton when it served his interests. But the forces Gingrich unleashed destroyed

whatever comity existed across party lines, activated an extreme and virulently anti-Washington base — most recently represented by tea party activists — and helped drive moderate Republicans out of Congress. (Some of his progeny, elected in the early 1990s, moved to the Senate and polarized its culture in the same way.)

Norquist, meanwhile, founded Americans for Tax Reform in 1985 and rolled out his Taxpayer Protection Pledge the following year. The pledge, which binds its signers to never support a tax increase (that includes closing tax loopholes), had been signed as of last year by 238 of the 242 House Republicans and 41 of the 47 GOP senators, according to ATR. The Norquist tax pledge has led to other pledges, on issues such as climate change, that create additional litmus tests that box in moderates and make cross-party coalitions nearly impossible. For Republicans concerned about a primary challenge from the right, the failure to sign such pledges is simply too risky.

Today, thanks to the GOP, compromise has gone out the window in Washington. In the first two years of the Obama administration, nearly every presidential initiative met with vehement, rancorous and unanimous Republican opposition in the House and the Senate, followed by efforts to delegitimize the results and repeal the policies. The filibuster, once relegated to a handful of major national issues in a given Congress, became a routine weapon of obstruction, applied even to widely supported bills or presidential nominations. And Republicans in the Senate have abused the confirmation process to block any and every nominee to posts such as the head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, solely to keep laws that were legitimately enacted from being implemented.

In the third and now fourth years of the Obama presidency, divided government has produced something closer to complete gridlock than we have ever seen in our time in Washington, with partisan divides even leading last year to America's first credit downgrade.

On financial stabilization and economic recovery, on deficits and debt, on climate change and health-care reform, Republicans have been the force behind the widening ideological gaps and the strategic use of partisanship. In the presidential campaign and in Congress, GOP leaders have embraced fanciful policies on taxes and spending, kowtowing to their party's most strident voices.

Republicans often dismiss nonpartisan analyses of the nature of problems and the impact of policies when those assessments don't fit their ideology. In the face of the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression, the party's leaders and their outside acolytes insisted on obeisance to a supply-side view of economic growth — thus fulfilling Norquist's pledge — while ignoring contrary considerations.

The results can border on the absurd: In early 2009, several of the eight Republican co-sponsors of a bipartisan health-care reform plan dropped their support; by early 2010, the others had turned on their own proposal so that there would be zero GOP backing for any bill that came within a mile of Obama's reform initiative. As one co-sponsor, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), told *The Washington Post's* Ezra Klein: "I liked it because it was bipartisan. I wouldn't have voted for it."

And seven Republican co-sponsors of a Senate resolution to create a debt-reduction panel voted in January 2010 against their own resolution, solely to keep it from getting to the 60-vote threshold Republicans demanded and thus denying the president a seeming victory.

This attitude filters down far deeper than the party leadership. Rank-and-file GOP voters endorse the strategy that the party's elites have adopted, eschewing compromise to solve problems and insisting on principle, even if it leads to gridlock. Democratic voters, by contrast, along with self-identified independents, are more likely to favor deal-making over deadlock.

Democrats are hardly blameless, and they have their own extreme wing and their own predilection for hardball politics. But these tendencies do not routinely veer outside the normal bounds of robust politics. If anything, under the presidencies of Clinton and Obama, the Democrats have become more of a status-quo party. They are centrist protectors of government, reluctantly willing to revamp programs and trim retirement and health benefits to maintain its central commitments in the face of fiscal pressures.

No doubt, Democrats were not exactly warm and fuzzy toward George W. Bush during his presidency. But recall that they worked hand in glove with the Republican president on the No Child Left Behind Act, provided crucial

votes in the Senate for his tax cuts, joined with Republicans for all the steps taken after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and supplied the key votes for the Bush administration's financial bailout at the height of the economic crisis in 2008. The difference is striking.

The GOP's evolution has become too much for some longtime Republicans. Former senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska called his party "irresponsible" in an interview with the *Financial Times* in August, at the height of the debt-ceiling battle. "I think the Republican Party is captive to political movements that are very ideological, that are very narrow," he said. "I've never seen so much intolerance as I see today in American politics."

And Mike Lofgren, a veteran Republican congressional staffer, wrote an anguished diatribe last year about why he was ending his career on the Hill after nearly three decades. "The Republican Party is becoming less and less like a traditional political party in a representative democracy and becoming more like an apocalyptic cult, or one of the intensely ideological authoritarian parties of 20th century Europe," he wrote on the Truthout Web site.

Shortly before Rep. West went off the rails with his accusations of communism in the Democratic Party, political scientists Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, who have long tracked historical trends in political polarization, said their studies of congressional votes found that Republicans are now more conservative than they have been in more than a century. Their data show a dramatic uptick in polarization, mostly caused by the sharp rightward move of the GOP.

If our democracy is to regain its health and vitality, the culture and ideological center of the Republican Party must change. In the short run, without a massive (and unlikely) across-the-board rejection of the GOP at the polls, that will not happen. If anything, Washington's ideological divide will probably grow after the 2012 elections.

In the House, some of the remaining centrist and conservative "Blue Dog" Democrats have been targeted for extinction by redistricting, while even ardent tea party Republicans, such as freshman Rep. Alan Nunnelee (Miss.), have faced primary challenges from the right for being too accommodationist. And Mitt Romney's rhetoric and positions offer no indication that he would govern differently if his party captures the White House and both chambers of Congress.

We understand the values of mainstream journalists, including the effort to report both sides of a story. But a balanced treatment of an unbalanced phenomenon distorts reality. If the political dynamics of Washington are unlikely to change anytime soon, at least we should change the way that reality is portrayed to the public.

Our advice to the press: Don't seek professional safety through the even-handed, unfiltered presentation of opposing views. Which politician is telling the truth? Who is taking hostages, at what risks and to what ends?

Also, stop lending legitimacy to Senate filibusters by treating a 60-vote hurdle as routine. The framers certainly didn't intend it to be. Report individual senators' abusive use of holds and identify every time the minority party uses a filibuster to kill a bill or nomination with majority support.

Look ahead to the likely consequences of voters' choices in the November elections. How would the candidates govern? What could they accomplish? What differences can people expect from a unified Republican or Democratic government, or one divided between the parties?

In the end, while the press can make certain political choices understandable, it is up to voters to decide. If they can punish ideological extremism at the polls and look skeptically upon candidates who profess to reject all dialogue and bargaining with opponents, then an insurgent outlier party will have some impetus to return to the center. Otherwise, our politics will get worse before it gets better.

(Thomas E. Mann is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and Norman J. Ornstein is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. This essay is adapted from their book *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided With the New Politics of Extremism*, which will be available Tuesday.)

20120430-06 16:43 Pam Re: "Let's Just Say It: The Republicans Are the Problem." (reply to Dennis, above)

Terrific. This deserves a wide audience.

20120430-07 18:10 Dennis "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%"

"Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" by Paul Buchheit, Common Dreams/NationofChange

Apr. 30, 2012, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/04/30>) (<http://www.nationofchange.org/five-tax-fallacies-invented-1-1335792996>)

We hear these claims often, even though they're entirely false. An analysis of the facts should make that clear.

1. The Rich Pay Almost All the Taxes

That's simply not true. The percentage of total taxes paid by the very rich (the top 1%) is approximately the same as the percentage paid by middle class Americans (the 4th quintile, average income \$68,700). Here are the details:

Internal Revenue Service figures show that the very rich paid 23% of their incomes in federal income taxes in 2006. The middle class paid about 8% of their incomes in federal income taxes. Based on U.S. Congressional Budget Office figures, the very rich pay just under 2% of their incomes toward social security, while the middle class pays just under 10%. According to a study by The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the very rich pay about 7% of their incomes in state and sales and property and excise taxes, while the middle class pays approximately 10%. Another year of Bush tax cuts will reduce the taxes of the very rich by at least 3% more than the middle class.

So total taxes for the very rich are 29% of their incomes (23% + 2% + 7% - 3%). Total taxes for the middle class are 28% of their incomes (8% + 10% + 10%). These figures agree with CTJ's 2011 estimate of total taxes paid.

2. Tax Rates Are Too High

In 2009, the United States ranked 26th out of 28 OECD countries in total federal, state, and local taxes as a percent of GDP. Only Chile and Mexico had lower tax rates.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "federal taxes on middle-income Americans are near historic lows." For taxpayers in the top 1%, the tax burden has fallen dramatically in recent years.

At very high income levels, beginning at about the million dollar range, federal income tax actually becomes regressive. Effective tax rates level off at about 25%, and then go down from there. This is because all incomes over \$388,000 are subject to the same 35% maximum. The \$4 billion hedge fund manager pays no more, percentagewise, than the \$400,000 doctor. In fact, even less. At the highest levels most of the income comes from capital gains, which are taxed at 15%.

How about corporations? Even worse. They paid only 12.1% in 2011, dramatically lower than the 25% average since 1987. According to U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) figures, they're paying about a THIRD of the inflation-adjusted share of GDP paid by corporations in the 1960s.

Compared to foreign countries, U.S. corporations paid a smaller rate of income taxes than 24 of 25 OECD countries analyzed by the Office of Management and Budget and the Census Bureau.

Most stunning is the shift in taxpaying responsibility from corporations to workers over the years. For every dollar of workers' payroll tax paid in the 1950s, corporations paid three dollars. Now it's 22 cents.

3. Tax Cuts Boost the Economy

In the 1970s, University of Chicago economist Arthur Laffer convinced Dick Cheney and other Republican officials that lowering taxes on the rich would generate more revenue. The delusion has persisted to this day.

Soon after the Reagan tax cuts, in 1984, the U.S. Treasury Department came to the logical conclusion that tax cuts cause a loss of revenue. A 2006 Treasury Department study found that extending the Bush tax cuts would have no beneficial effect on the U.S. economy.

Other sources confirm that economic growth was fastest in years with relatively high top marginal tax rates.

The reality is that supply-side, trickle-down economics simply hasn't worked. Various economic studies have concluded that the revenue-maximizing top income tax rate is anywhere from 50% to 75%.

4. Eliminating Tax Breaks for the Rich Wouldn't Significantly Reduce the Deficit

First of all, just eliminating the Bush tax cuts on the highest-earning 5% of Americans could knock \$150 billion off the deficit. Congressional Budget Office data shows that the tax cuts have been the single largest contributor to the return of substantial budget deficits in recent years.

But there's so much more. The IRS estimates that 17 percent of taxes owed were not paid, leaving an underpayment of \$450 billion.

Most of the annual \$1.3 trillion in "tax expenditures" (tax subsidies from special deductions, exemptions, exclusions, credits, and loopholes) goes to the top quintile of taxpayers. One estimate is \$250 billion a year just to the richest 1%.

Another \$100 billion could be retrieved by collecting taxes from Fortune 500 companies at the 26% rate paid from 1987 to 2008. CTJ puts the figure at over \$200 billion.

Worse yet is the loss from tax havens, which the Tax Justice Network estimates as \$337 billion.

Despite some overlap in these figures, it all adds up to a pretty good chunk of the deficit.

5. A Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) Would Hurt the Economy

This fallacy would have us believe that a tiny tax on financial transactions is going to hurt the economy, even though the underlying reason for our economic collapse was the excessive, reckless, unrestrained, free-for-all trading of trillions of dollars of speculative derivatives.

The inventiveness of this fallacy is impressive, with claims of lost jobs, harm to ordinary investors, and the threat of exchanges moving overseas. *The Wall Street Journal* calls the FTT a "sin tax."

An FTT isn't likely to interrupt the global trading frenzy or cause any sudden defections from financial megacenters. The United Kingdom has had a tax on stock trades for decades, and the London Stock Exchange is humming along as the third largest exchange in the world. The CME Group, made up of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and the Chicago Board of Trade, had a profit margin higher than any of the top 100 companies in the nation from 2008 to 2010.

On the contrary, the FTT has extraordinary revenue-generating potential, on a global scale. The Bank for International Settlements reported in 2008 that annual trading in derivatives had surpassed \$1.14 quadrillion (a thousand trillion dollars!). For the U.S. alone, revenue estimates by the Center for Economic and Policy Research and the Chicago Political Economy Group approach a half-trillion dollars annually.

And at the more basic level of simple fairness, it should be noted that while an American mother pays nearly a 10% sales tax on shoes for her kids, millionaire investors pay .002 percent (2-thousandths of a percent) for a financial instrument. That kind of tax disparity is what really hurts.

(Paul Buchheit is a college teacher, an active member of US Uncut Chicago, founder and developer of social justice and educational websites (UsAgainstGreed.org, PayUpNow.org, RappingHistory.org), and the editor and main author of *American Wars: Illusions and Realities* (Clarity Press). He can be reached at paul@UsAgainstGreed.org.)

[20120430-08](#) 18:54 Art Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to Dennis, above)

Really good! Thanks!

[20120430-09](#) 18:56 SteveG Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to Dennis, above)

And I guess everyone has heard of Apple diverting some of its profits from California to Nevada, 2 locations in Ireland, the Netherlands, and to places in the Caribbean for a US tax paid of 9.8%.

[20120430-10](#) 18:59 Art Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to SteveG, above)

Even Trump (not that I really care what he thinks) says unfair.

[20120430-11](#) 19:16 Pam Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to Art, above)

I'm so horrified by everything I keep reading on FotM, but I know there are people who are just as horrified by what they read on the other side. I sent my best friend the piece on Republican obstructionism that Dennis posted, and she responded that she's read the same thing on the other side. Her solution is to be an Independent. Are we on the verge of forming a third party? Maybe we've outgrown the ones we currently have.

[20120430-14](#) 19:41 SteveG Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to Pam, above)

We were warned in the beginning of the country not to become a 2 party system, but as usual we did not listen as a country. Dem, repub, independent – it is all the same as long as we have the same rules – Corporations are people, voting system, lobbyists, etc.

[20120430-15](#) 19:50 Pam Re: "Five Tax Fallacies Invented by the 1%" (reply to SteveG, above)

I blame the current Supreme Court. Their decisions have been outrageous, and unless Obama is re-elected, there will be more right-wingers appointed. It could take us generations to undo the damage. That thing about Newt was certainly chilling. He really is the devil. What is it with these people? I really want to know why they are so hateful.

[20120430-12](#) 19:30 SteveBA Fw: What Are the Facts? (About Romney's Being Rich)

Saw this and thought of you liberals crying over Romney being rich.

What are the Facts?

It just occurred to me... With all the noise the media is making about Romney's wealth, I don't recall such bluster and hand-wringing over the Kennedy fortune. Or, for that matter, John Kerry. Or the fact that John Kerry gave virtually nothing to charity while Romney gave something on the order of \$4 million...in addition to his entire inheritance from his father.

Oh. Wait. I just remembered. Romney is Republican. Kerry and the Kennedy's are Democrats.

Also, Romney worked for his money. Kennedy inherited his. And Kerry married it.

Never mind. Nothing to see here folks. Move along

"If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're misinformed." —Mark Twain

[The difference is that, now, the rich have gotten richer and the poor have gotten poorer. Or haven't you noticed? And Romney is an empty-headed, empty-hearted, arrogant richy-rich guy we don't like. Sorry. —SteveB]

20120430-13	19:32	Dale	"The Trust Molecule"
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Thought you might enjoy this:

"The Trust Molecule" by Paul J. Zak, *The Wall Street Journal*

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304811304577365782995320366.html>)

(Why are some of us caring and some of us cruel, some generous and some greedy? Paul J. Zak on the new science of morality— and how it could be used to create a more virtuous society.)

(Why are some people trustworthy, while others lie, cheat and steal? Part of the answer may reside in a hormone called oxytocin. Claremont Graduate University's Paul Zak talks with WSJ's Gary Rosen about how a "vampire wedding" helped him understand how this chemical works to control trust, empathy and virtue.)

Could a single molecule—one chemical substance—lie at the very center of our moral lives?

Research that I have done over the past decade suggests that a chemical messenger called oxytocin accounts for why some people give freely of themselves and others are coldhearted louts, why some people cheat and steal and others you can trust with your life, why some husbands are more faithful than others, and why women tend to be nicer and more generous than men. In our blood and in the brain, oxytocin appears to be the chemical elixir that creates bonds of trust not just in our intimate relationships but also in our business dealings, in politics and in society at large.

Known primarily as a female reproductive hormone, oxytocin controls contractions during labor, which is where many women encounter it as Pitocin, the synthetic version that doctors inject in expectant mothers to induce delivery. Oxytocin is also responsible for the calm, focused attention that mothers lavish on their babies while breast-feeding. And it is abundant, too, on wedding nights (we hope) because it helps to create the warm glow that both women and men feel during sex, a massage or even a hug.

Since 2001, my colleagues and I have conducted a number of experiments showing that when someone's level of oxytocin goes up, he or she responds more generously and caringly, even with complete strangers. As a benchmark for measuring behavior, we relied on the willingness of our subjects to share real money with others in real time. To measure the increase in oxytocin, we took their blood and analyzed it. Money comes in conveniently measurable units, which meant that we were able to quantify the increase in generosity by the amount someone was willing to share. We were then able to correlate these numbers with the increase in oxytocin found in the blood.

Later, to be certain that what we were seeing was true cause and effect, we sprayed synthetic oxytocin into our subjects' nasal passages—a way to get it directly into their brains. Our conclusion: We could turn the behavioral response on and off like a garden hose. (Don't try this at home: Oxytocin inhalers aren't available to consumers in the U.S.)

More strikingly, we found that you don't need to shoot a chemical up someone's nose, or have sex with them, or even give them a hug in order to create the surge in oxytocin that leads to more generous behavior. To trigger this "moral molecule," all you have to do is give someone a sign of trust. When one person extends himself to another in a trusting way—by, say, giving money—the person being trusted experiences a surge in oxytocin that makes her less likely to hold back and less likely to cheat. Which is another way of saying that the feeling of being trusted makes a person more...trustworthy. Which, over time, makes other people more inclined to trust, which in turn...

If you detect the makings of an endless loop that can feed back onto itself, creating what might be called a virtuous circle—and ultimately a more virtuous society—you are getting the idea.

Obviously, there is more to it, because no one chemical in the body functions in isolation, and other factors from a person's life experience play a role as well. Things can go awry. In our studies, we found that a small percentage of subjects never shared any money; analysis of their blood indicated that their oxytocin receptors were malfunctioning. But for everyone else, oxytocin orchestrates the kind of generous and caring behavior that every culture endorses as the right way to live—the cooperative, benign, pro-social way of living that every culture on the planet describes as "moral." The Golden Rule is a lesson that the body already knows, and when we get it right, we feel the rewards immediately.

This isn't to say that oxytocin always makes us good or generous or trusting. In our rough-and-tumble world, an unwavering response of openness and loving kindness would be like going around with a "kick me" sign on your back. Instead, the moral molecule works like a gyroscope, helping us to maintain our balance between behavior based on trust and behavior based on wariness and distrust. In this way oxytocin helps us to navigate between the social benefits of openness—which are considerable—and the reasonable caution that we need to avoid being taken for a ride.

Consider a real-life experiment that I conducted with a bride named Linda Geddes. A writer for the British magazine *New Scientist*, Linda had been following my research and thought it would be fun to see if the emotional uplift of her wedding would alter the guests' levels of oxytocin.

I arrived at the venue, a Victorian manor house in the English countryside, with a 150-pound centrifuge and 70 pounds of dry ice. I unpacked my equipment—syringes, 156 prelabeled test tubes, tourniquets, alcohol preps, Band-Aids—and got to work. The plan that I'd worked out with Linda was to take two samples from a cross section of the friends and family in attendance—one draw of blood immediately before the vows and one immediately after.

After all the blood had been drawn, I slipped out with my test tubes nestled in their cushion of dry ice. It took two weeks for the samples to arrive at my California lab via FedEx, but the results showed just what we were hoping for: a simple snapshot of oxytocin's ability to read and reflect the nuances of a social situation.

The changes in individual oxytocin levels at Linda's ceremony could be mapped out like the solar system, with the bride as the sun. Between the first and second draws of blood, which were only an hour apart, Linda's own level shot up by 28%. For the other people tested, the increase in oxytocin was in direct proportion to the likely intensity of their emotional engagement in the event. The mother of the bride? Up 24%. The father of the groom? Up 19%. The groom himself? Up 13%...and on down the line.

But why, you may ask, would the groom's increase be less than his father's? Testosterone is one of several other hormones that can interfere with the release of oxytocin, and the groom's testosterone level, according to our blood test, had surged 100%! As the guests admired Linda in her strapless bridal gown, he was the alpha male.

Our study at the wedding had demonstrated just the kind of graded and contingent sensitivity that allows oxytocin to guide us between trust and wariness, generosity and self-protection. Should I feel safe and warm and cuddly in

this crowd, or do I have to be on guard? Or maybe it is a situation in which the best outcome results from oxytocin dominating in one person and testosterone driving the other.

It is the sensitivity of oxytocin in its interaction with a range of other chemical messengers that helps to account for why human behavior is so infinitely complex—and why the bliss of the wedding day (and night) is often hard to maintain. (Consider the old joke about the guy who couldn't understand why his wife was unhappy. "I told you that I loved you when I asked you to marry me," he said. "I don't see why I need to tell you again.")

But there is a larger payoff from this research: After centuries of speculation about human nature and how we decide what is the right thing to do, we at last have some news we can use—empirical evidence that illuminates the mechanism at the heart of our moral guidance system. So what can we do to shift behavior a bit more toward the expression of oxytocin and thus improve the workings of our entire society?

The experiments I have conducted show that many group activities—singing, dancing, praying—cause the release of oxytocin and promote connection and caring. As social creatures, we have created activities that prompt the expression of oxytocin in order to foster connection to others. In fact, those who release the most oxytocin when they are trusted are happier and healthier because they have richer social lives.

Even the sort of "social snacking" that happens through Twitter or checking out a friend's Facebook page can prompt an oxytocin surge. But the real criterion for success is whether these online activities complement more substantial personal connections. Does this form of communication foster human bonds or does it foster anonymity and abstraction to the point of cutting off empathy?

Another approach to tune oxytocin release is to seek exposure to people outside our own families or cultural and geographic "tribes." There are solid evolutionary reasons why our species developed the tendency to be wary of those whose physical appearances or behavioral patterns are different from our own. For millions of years an individual's social world was limited almost entirely to her village and tribe, and outsiders were, for good reason, considered a threat until proven otherwise. Yet research has shown that this suspicion is malleable, and it fades with exposure.

With worries on the rise about the country's cultural and political divisions, some bottom-up boosts of oxytocin, based on face-to-face interaction, could help. It might take the form of a domestic student-exchange program, allowing kids from the big cities and small-town, rural kids to get to know one another. The revitalization of urban life, with its varied and crosscutting relationships, is a step in the right direction, too. One city going in the opposite direction is Washington, D.C., where fraternizing across party lines—once the norm—is nearly unheard of these days. Acrimony on Capitol Hill reflects, in part, these oxytocin-starved relationships.

A few years ago, I began warning visitors to my lab that before they left, I was going to give them a hug. This scares some people, but I've found that my slightly eccentric announcement changes the depth of the conversation, making it more intimate, more engaging and more valuable to us both. I suspect that by forecasting a hug, I'm also signaling how much I trust the person, so I'm inducing a release of oxytocin in their brains. Those people, in turn, will connect better to others and treat them more generously. Nothing grander is required for a virtuous circle to begin.

(From *The Moral Molecule* by Paul J. Zak, to be published May 10 by Dutton, a member of Penguin Group (USA). Copyright © 2012 by Paul J. Zak.)

20120430-16	20:25	SteveB	Re: "The Trust Molecule"
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I like this. I've often thought about how each of us seems to have unique aspects to our brain chemistry. Thanks, Dale.

There are those who believe that, if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests up on them.

~ William Jennings Bryan, 1896



<http://blueridgetreks.wordpress.com/2009/07/04/forks-of-red-creek-dolly-sods-wv/>

Sunset at Bear Rocks, Dolly Sods Wilderness, Monongahela National Forest



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #129 — MAY 2, 2012

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

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

The Founding Fathers Supported Mandates

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

This guy is undoubtedly a genius whose public morality far exceeds his private, but when you're right, you're right!

There are a lot of valuable insights in the Comments section below the article in the original source.

"Originalist Sin" by Eliot Spitzer, Slate

Apr. 30, 2012, ([link](#))

(A brilliant article shows that the Founding Fathers not only supported mandates, they passed laws imposing them. Take that, Scalia!)

The five conservative justices on the Supreme Court—Thomas, Alito, Scalia, Roberts and Kennedy—cloak themselves in the myth that they are somehow channeling the wisdom and understanding of the Founding Fathers, the original intent that guided the drafting of the Constitution. I believe the premise of their argument is itself suspect: It is not clear to me how much weight should be given to non-textually based intent that is practically impossible to discern more than 200 years later. Most of the issues over which there is constitutional dispute today could not even have been envisioned when the document was drafted.

Even so, it would be an even better response to the conservative wing's claim of perceived understanding of original intent to be able to refute their claims by showing them to be historically and indisputably wrong. So once again let's venture into the world of the health care debate. The consensus view is that existing Commerce Clause doctrine clearly authorizes the type of mandate passed in the act—see in particular the affirmance of the statute by ultraconservative Judge Silberman of the D.C. Circuit Court.

Nonetheless, those opposing the bill insist that an individual mandate has never been done and the framers would simply not permit such an encroachment on liberty and freedom.

Some spectacular historical reporting by Professor Einer Elhauge of Harvard Law School in the *New Republic* thoroughly rebut the argument. He has found three mandate equivalents passed into law by the early Congresses—in which a significant number of founders served—and reports that these bills were signed into law by none other than Presidents George Washington and John Adams. As Founders go, one might consider them pretty senior in the

hierarchy. Their acts can probably be relied upon to give us a reasonable idea what the Founders intended to be the scope of congressional and governmental power.

Amazingly, the examples of individual mandates passed by the founders are so directly applicable that the claim that original intent precludes affirming the health care act should become almost laughable:

- **In 1790, a Congress including 20 Founders passed a law requiring that ship owners buy medical insurance for their seamen. Washington signed it into law.**
- **In 1792, another law signed by Washington required that all able-bodied men buy a firearm. (So much for the argument that Congress can't force us to participate in commerce.)**
- **And in 1798, a Congress with five framers passed a law requiring that all seamen buy hospital insurance for themselves. Adams signed this legislation.**

In aggregate, these laws show that the Founders and the Congress of the time were willing to force all of us to participate in a particular act of commerce and were comfortable requiring both the owner of a business and the individual employee to buy insurance in order to assure that health costs would be covered at a societal level. That is a pretty complete rebuttal to all the claims being made by the originalists as they relate to the health care act.

But what is so powerful about these historical finds is not just that they rebut the specific argument about original intent as applied to the health care act. This history lays bare the ahistorical nature of the justices' claims at another and deeper level. For the types of bill passed in 1790, 1792, and 1798 show the Founders to have been doing exactly what congress did especially well in the era of FDR—experimenting with solutions and approaches to resolving social issues in ways that made government part of creative problem solving.

These examples show the fallacy and the false rigidity that the originalists seek to impose on our government. In their effort to cabin and restrain the government—their ideology of the moment—they seek to have the benefit of the claim that the founders shared such a limited approach to governing. In fact, the approach to governing that these acts demonstrate is more nuanced and thoughtful. As with so many of the claims of the originalists, **a slight understanding of the true history shows that the originalists' view is mere ideology being imposed on a false understanding of history.**

20120501-01	08:42	Pam	"Why Does Religion Always Get a Free Ride?"
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["Why Does Religion Always Get a Free Ride?" by Greta Christina, AlterNet](#)

Apr. 29, 2012, (http://www.alternet.org/story/155158/why_does_religion_always_get_a_free_ride)

Why should religion, alone among all other kinds of ideas, be free from attempts to persuade people out of it?

We try to persuade people out of ideas all the time. We try to persuade people that their ideas about science, politics, philosophy, art, medicine, and more, are wrong: that they're harmful, ridiculous, repulsive, or simply mistaken. But when it comes to religion, trying to persuade people out of their ideas is somehow seen as horribly rude at best, invasive and bigoted and intolerant at worst. Why? Why should religion be the exception?

I've been writing about atheism for about six years now. In those six years, I've asked this question more times and not once have I gotten a satisfying answer. In fact, only once do I recall getting any answer at all. Besides that one exception, what I've gotten in response has been crickets chirping and tumbleweeds blowing by. I've been ignored, I've had the subject changed, I've had people get personally nasty, I've had people abandon the conversation altogether. But only once have I ever gotten any kind of actual answer. And that answer sucked. (I'll get to it in a bit.) I've heard lots of people tell me, at length and with great passion, that trying to persuade people out of their religion is bad and wrong and mean... but I haven't seen a single real argument explaining why this is such a terrible thing to do with religion, and yet is somehow perfectly okay to do with all other ideas.

So I want to get to the heart of this matter. Why should religion be treated differently from all other kinds of ideas? Why shouldn't we criticize it, and make fun of it, and try to persuade people out of it, the way we do with every other kind of idea?

In a free society, in the marketplace of ideas, we try to persuade people out of ideas *all the time*. We criticize ideas we disagree with; we question ideas we find puzzling; we excoriate ideas we find repugnant; we make fun of ideas we think are silly. And we think this is acceptable. In fact, we think it's positively good. We think this is how good ideas rise to the surface, and bad ideas get filtered out. We might have issues with exactly how this persuasion is carried out: is it done politely or rudely, reasonably or hysterically, did you really have to bring it up at Thanksgiving dinner, etc. But the basic idea of trying to convince other people that your ideas are right and theirs are wrong... this is not controversial.

Except when it comes to religion.

Why?

Religion is an idea about the world. Thousands of different ideas, really, but with one basic idea at the core of them all: the idea of the supernatural. Religion is the hypothesis that the world is the way that it is, entirely or in part, because of supernatural beings or forces acting on the natural world. It's an idea about how the world works -- every bit as much as the germ theory of disease, or the theory that matter is made up of atoms, or the wacky notion that the Earth revolves around the Sun.

And religion is a very specific kind of idea about the world. Religion is a truth claim. It's not a subjective matter of personal experience or opinion, like, "I'm a one-woman man," or "*Harry Potter* is better than *Lord of the Rings*." It is a statement about what is and is not literally true in the non-subjective world.

So if we think it's a mistaken idea, why shouldn't we try to convince other people of that?

We do this with every other kind of truth claim. If people think that disease is caused by demonic possession, or that global climate change is a hoax, or that deregulating the financial industry will lead to a robustly healthy economy for all levels of society -- and we think these people are wrong -- we try to change their minds. Why should religion be any different?

Now, of course, religion is more than just an idea. People build communities, personal identities, support systems, coping mechanisms, entire life philosophies, around their religious beliefs.

But people build identities around other ideas, too. People have intense political identities, for instance: people are often deeply attached to their identity as a progressive, a Republican or a libertarian. People build communities around these ideas, and support systems, and coping mechanisms, and life philosophies. And we still think it's entirely valid, and even positively worthwhile, to try to change people's minds about these ideas if we think they're wrong.

Why should religion be any different?

It's also the case that letting go of religious beliefs can be upsetting, even traumatic. In the short term anyway. Most atheists say that they're happy to have let go of their religion... but many do go through a short period of trauma while they're letting go.

But it can be upsetting, and even traumatic, to let go of all kinds of ideas. It can be upsetting and traumatic to learn that the clothes and chocolate and electronics you're buying are made by slave labor; that the food you're feeding your children is bad for them; that you have unconscious racist or sexist attitudes; that driving your car is contributing to global climate change and the possible permanent destruction of the environment.

And yet we still think it's valid, and even positively worthwhile, to try to change people's minds about these ideas if we think they're wrong.

Why should religion be any different?

Yes, there's a tremendous diversity of religious ideas -- a diversity that makes up a large part of our complex cultural tapestry. But we have a tremendous diversity of ideas about politics, too... and about science, and race, and gender, and sexuality, and more. When we look at our history, our complex cultural tapestry has included alchemy, and Jim Crow laws, and preventing women from voting, and curing the "disease" of masturbation, and treating yellow fever epidemics by shooting cannonballs into the air. The world is better off without those ideas. We still have a rich cultural tapestry of diverse lifestyles and worldviews without them. And we still think it was entirely valid, and even positively worthwhile, to try to change people's minds about these ideas when we thought they were wrong.

Why should religion be any different?

It's also true that persuading people out of their religion is often seen as proselytizing or evangelizing. Proselytizing or evangelizing about religion has a bad reputation. And there are good reasons for that. Religious evangelists have an ugly history of fearmongering, deception, outright lying, applying economic pressure, using law or force or even violence, to "persuade" people out of their religious beliefs. Not to mention the little matter of knocking on people's doors at eight o'clock on Saturday morning. It's no wonder people are resistant to it.

But if that's not what atheists are advocating? If we're not advocating any sort of force or coercion, or even any sort of pressure apart from the mild social pressure created by people not wanting to look foolish by hanging onto bad ideas? If what we're advocating is writing blog posts, writing magazine articles, writing books, wearing T-shirts, putting up billboards, getting into conversations with our friends and families, getting into debates on Facebook? If what we're advocating is getting our atheist ideas more widely disseminated and understood, and creating atheist communities so people who share our ideas feel safer expressing them? If what we're advocating is essentially standing up and saying, "The emperor has no clothes" -- and offering the best evidence and arguments we can for the emperor's nakedness?

What is so terrible about that? We do that with every other kind of idea. Why shouldn't we do it with religion?

Why should religion be any different?

And it's certainly true that, throughout history, many attempts to "persuade" people out of their religion have resulted in persecution -- or have provided the rationalization for it. Human beings have an ugly, bloody, terrible history of persecuting each other over religious differences: anti-Catholic hostility in America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, anti-Muslim hostility in much of Europe today, the Crusades, the Holocaust... the list goes on. And religious persecution often goes hand-in-hand with classism, jingoistic nationalism, ethnic hatreds, and racism - rendering it even uglier. A lot of people can only see persuading people out of religion in this context of persecution, and are horrified by it. And while I disagree with their ultimate analysis, I can certainly understand their horror.

But religion isn't the only idea whose adherents have historically been targeted with persecution. Political ideas certainly have been. To take an obvious example: Look at Communism. People who thought Communism was a good idea had their lives utterly destroyed. Even if they weren't actually trying to overthrow the government. Even if all they were doing was writing, or creating art, or gassing on in cafes with their friends. Even if they weren't really Communists. McCarthyism and other Red scares destroyed the lives of countless people who were simply suspected of being Communists. And like religious persecution, anti-Communist fervor has often been closely tied with nationalism, ethnic hostilities, and more. Immigrants from Eastern Europe, for instance, were often feared and despised as "dirty Commies," with the political hostility becoming inextricably tangled with the xenophobic nationalism, and each form of hostility feeding the other.

Does that mean we shouldn't criticize Communism? Does that mean that, if we think Communism isn't a particularly good system for structuring an economy, we should just keep our mouths shut?

When we criticize religion -- just as when we criticize any other kind of idea -- we do need to make sure that criticism of the idea doesn't turn into persecution of its adherents. We need to draw a careful line between criticizing ideas and marginalizing people. We need to remember that people who disagree with us are still people, deserving of basic compassion and respect.

But we need to draw that line with every kind of idea. Political, scientific, artistic ideas -- all of them. And we don't exempt any other kind of idea from criticism, just because that kind of idea has often been targeted with persecution.

Why should religion be any different?

Why should religion be treated any differently from any other kind of idea about the world? Why, alone among all other ideas, should it be protected from criticism, questions, mockery when it's ridiculous, excoriation when it's appalling? Why, alone among all other ideas, should we not try to persuade people out of it if we think it's mistaken?

Why should religion be the exception?

I've asked this question more times than I can remember. And I've only ever gotten one straight answer. In one argument on Facebook (which was ages ago, so unfortunately I can't find it and link to it), the person I was debating argued that religious debates and disagreements have a bad history. All too often, they've led to hostility, hatred, tribalism, bigotry, even violence and wars. Therefore, he argued, it was best to just avoid debates about the topic altogether.

You know what? He's right. When it comes to the divisiveness of religion, he's totally right.

And that's an argument for my side -- not his.

I completely agree with his basic assessment. Religion does tend to be more divisive than other topics. It's a point Daniel Dennet made in his book, *Breaking the Spell*: In a weird but very real psychological paradox, people tend to defend ideas more ferociously when we don't have very good evidence supporting them.

Look at it this way. If people come over the hill and tell us that the sky is orange, we can clearly see that the sky is blue... so we can easily shrug off their ridiculous idea, and we don't feel a powerful need to defend our own perception. But if people come over the hill and tell us that God comes in three parts, one of whom is named Jesus, and this three-in-one god really wants us not to eat meat on Fridays -- and we think there is no god but Allah, and he really wants us to never eat pork or draw pictures of real things -- we don't have any way to settle the disagreement. The only evidence supporting our belief is, "My parents tell me," "My religious leader tells me," "My holy book tells me," or "I feel it in my heart." And if we care about our belief -- if it's not some random trivial opinion, if it's central to our personal and social identity -- we have a powerful tendency to double down, to entrench ourselves more deeply and more passionately in our belief. We can't have a rational, evidence-based debate about the matter. The only way to defend our own belief is with bigotry, tribalism, and violence.

But if religious differences really are more likely to lead to bigotry, tribalism, violence, etc.... doesn't that show what a bad idea it is? If the ideas of religion are so poorly rooted in reality that there's no way to resolve differences other than forming battle lines and screaming or shooting across them... doesn't that strongly suggest that this is a truly crappy idea, and humanity should let go of it? Doesn't that suggest that persuading people out of it is a really good thing to do?

So yeah. This wasn't such a great answer. But at least it was an answer. At least it wasn't a changing of the topic, a moving of the goalposts, a deterioration into personal insult, a complete abandonment of the conversation altogether. Every other time that I've asked, "Why should religion, alone among all other kinds of ideas, be free from attempts to persuade people out of it?" I've been met with what was essentially silence.

I've gotten tremendous hostility over the years for my attempts to persuade people out of religion. I've been called a racist and a cultural imperialist, trying to stamp out the beautiful tapestry of human diversity and make everyone

in the world exactly like me. I've been called a fascist, have been compared to Stalin and Glenn Beck. My atheist activism has been compared to the genocide of the Native Americans. I've even been called "evil in one of its purest forms" -- as have many other atheist writers; I'm hardly the only target of this. All this, for trying to persuade people that their idea is mistaken, and our idea is correct. The atheism itself gets hostile opposition as well, of course: it gets called immoral, amoral, hopeless, meaningless, joyless, and more. But the very idea of presuming to engage in this debate -- the very idea of putting religion on one side of a chessboard and atheism on the other, and seeing which one gets check-mated -- is regularly treated as a bigoted and intolerant violation of the basic principles of human discourse.

And yet when I ask why -- why it's okay to persuade people out of other ideas but not this one, why religion alone should be exempt from the vigorous criticism that every other idea is expected to stand up to, why religion alone should get a free ride in the marketplace of ideas (and a free ride in an armored car at that), why religion should be the sole exception -- I've only ever gotten one crappy answer, one time.

Does anyone have a better answer?

Or any answer at all?

20120501-02	14:01	SteveB	"Welcome to the Asylum"
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"Welcome to the Asylum" by Chris Hedges, TruthDig/NationofChange

May 1, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/welcome-asylum-1335878448>)

("A society that loses the capacity for the sacred, that lacks the power of human imagination, that cannot practice empathy, ultimately ensures its own destruction.")

When civilizations start to die they go insane. Let the ice sheets in the Arctic melt. Let the temperatures rise. Let the air, soil and water be poisoned. Let the forests die. Let the seas be emptied of life. Let one useless war after another be waged. Let the masses be thrust into extreme poverty and left without jobs while the elites, drunk on hedonism, accumulate vast fortunes through exploitation, speculation, fraud and theft. Reality, at the end, gets unplugged. We live in an age when news consists of Snooki's pregnancy, Hulk Hogan's sex tape and Kim Kardashian's denial that she is the naked woman cooking eggs in a photo circulating on the Internet. Politicians, including presidents, appear on late night comedy shows to do gags and they campaign on issues such as creating a moon colony. "At times when the page is turning," Louis-Ferdinand Celine wrote in *Castle to Castle*, "when History brings all the nuts together, opens its Epic Dance Halls! hats and heads in the whirlwind! Panties overboard!"

The quest by a bankrupt elite in the final days of empire to accumulate greater and greater wealth, as Karl Marx observed, is modern society's version of primitive fetishism. This quest, as there is less and less to exploit, leads to mounting repression, increased human suffering, a collapse of infrastructure and, finally, collective death. It is the self-deluded, those on Wall Street or among the political elite, those who entertain and inform us, those who lack the capacity to question the lusts that will ensure our self-annihilation, who are held up as exemplars of intelligence, success and progress. The World Health Organization calculates that one in four people in the United States suffers from chronic anxiety, a mood disorder or depression—which seems to me to be a normal reaction to our march toward collective suicide. Welcome to the asylum.

When the most basic elements that sustain life are reduced to a cash product, life has no intrinsic value. The extinguishing of "primitive" societies, those that were defined by animism and mysticism, those that celebrated ambiguity and mystery, those that respected the centrality of the human imagination, removed the only ideological counterweight to a self-devouring capitalist ideology. Those who held on to pre-modern beliefs, such as Native Americans, who structured themselves around a communal life and self-sacrifice rather than hoarding and wage exploitation, could not be accommodated within the ethic of capitalist exploitation, the cult of the self and the lust for imperial expansion. The prosaic was pitted against the allegorical. And as we race toward the collapse of the planet's ecosystem we must restore this older vision of life if we are to survive.

The war on the Native Americans, like the wars waged by colonialists around the globe, was waged to eradicate not only a people but a competing ethic. The older form of human community was antithetical and hostile to capitalism, the primacy of the technological state and the demands of empire. This struggle between belief systems was not lost on Marx. "The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx" is a series of observations derived from Marx's reading of works by historians and anthropologists. He took notes about the traditions, practices, social structure, economic systems and beliefs of numerous indigenous cultures targeted for destruction. Marx noted arcane details about the formation of Native American society, but also that "lands [were] owned by the tribes in common, while tenement-houses [were] owned jointly by their occupants." He wrote of the Aztecs, "Commune tenure of lands; Life in large households composed of a number of related families." He went on, "... reasons for believing they practiced communism in living in the household." Native Americans, especially the Iroquois, provided the governing model for the union of the American colonies, and also proved vital to Marx and Engel's vision of communism.

Marx, though he placed a naive faith in the power of the state to create his workers' utopia and discounted important social and cultural forces outside of economics, was acutely aware that something essential to human dignity and independence had been lost with the destruction of pre-modern societies. The Iroquois Council of the Gens, where Indians came together to be heard as ancient Athenians did, was, Marx noted, a "democratic assembly where every adult male and female member had a voice upon all questions brought before it." Marx lauded the active participation of women in tribal affairs, writing, "The women [were] allowed to express their wishes and opinions through an orator of their own election. Decision given by the Council. Unanimity was a fundamental law of its action among the Iroquois." European women on the Continent and in the colonies had no equivalent power.

Rebuilding this older vision of community, one based on cooperation rather than exploitation, will be as important to our survival as changing our patterns of consumption, growing food locally and ending our dependence on fossil fuels. The pre-modern societies of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse—although they were not always idyllic and performed acts of cruelty including the mutilation, torture and execution of captives—did not subordinate the sacred to the technical. The deities they worshipped were not outside of or separate from nature.

Seventeenth century European philosophy and the Enlightenment, meanwhile, exalted the separation of human beings from the natural world, a belief also embraced by the Bible. The natural world, along with those pre-modern cultures that lived in harmony with it, was seen by the industrial society of the Enlightenment as worthy only of exploitation. Descartes argued, for example, that the fullest exploitation of matter to *any* use was the duty of humankind. The wilderness became, in the religious language of the Puritans, satanic. It had to be Christianized and subdued. The implantation of the technical order resulted, as Richard Slotkin writes in "Regeneration Through Violence," in the primacy of "the western man-on-the-make, the speculator, and the wildcat banker." Davy Crockett and, later, George Armstrong Custer, Slotkin notes, became "national heroes by defining national aspiration in terms of so many bears destroyed, so much land preempted, so many trees hacked down, so many Indians and Mexicans dead in the dust."

The demented project of endless capitalist expansion, profligate consumption, senseless exploitation and industrial growth is now imploding. Corporate hustlers are as blind to the ramifications of their self-destructive fury as were Custer, the gold speculators and the railroad magnates. They seized Indian land, killed off its inhabitants, slaughtered the buffalo herds and cut down the forests. Their heirs wage war throughout the Middle East, pollute the seas and water systems, foul the air and soil and gamble with commodities as half the globe sinks into abject poverty and misery. The Book of Revelation defines this single-minded drive for profit as handing over authority to the "beast."

The conflation of technological advancement with human progress leads to self-worship. Reason makes possible the calculations, science and technological advances of industrial civilization, but reason does not connect us with the forces of life. A society that loses the capacity for the sacred, that lacks the power of human imagination, that cannot practice empathy, ultimately ensures its own destruction. The Native Americans understood there are powers and forces we can never control and must honor. They knew, as did the ancient Greeks, that hubris is the deadliest curse of the human race. This is a lesson that we will probably have to learn for ourselves at the cost of tremendous suffering.

In William Shakespeare's "The Tempest," Prospero is stranded on an island where he becomes the undisputed lord and master. He enslaves the primitive "monster" Caliban. He employs the magical sources of power embodied in

the spirit Ariel, who is of fire and air. The forces unleashed in the island's wilderness, Shakespeare knew, could prompt us to good if we had the capacity for self-control and reverence. But it also could push us toward monstrous evil since there are few constraints to thwart plunder, rape, murder, greed and power. Later, Joseph Conrad, in his portraits of the outposts of empire, also would expose the same intoxication with barbarity.

The anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, who in 1846 was "adopted" by the Seneca, one of the tribes belonging to the Iroquois confederation, wrote in "Ancient Society" about social evolution among American Indians. Marx noted approvingly, in his "Ethnological Notebooks," Morgan's insistence on the historical and social importance of "imagination, that great faculty so largely contributing to the elevation of mankind." Imagination, as the Shakespearean scholar Harold C. Goddard pointed out, "is neither the language of nature nor the language of man, but both at once, the medium of communion between the two. ... Imagination is the *elemental speech* in all senses, the first and the last, of primitive man and of the poets."

All that concerns itself with beauty and truth, with those forces that have the power to transform us, is being steadily extinguished by our corporate state. Art. Education. Literature. Music. Theater. Dance. Poetry. Philosophy. Religion. Journalism. None of these disciplines are worthy in the corporate state of support or compensation. These are pursuits that, even in our universities, are condemned as impractical. But it is only through the impractical, through that which can empower our imagination, that we will be rescued as a species. The prosaic world of news events, the collection of scientific and factual data, stock market statistics and the sterile recording of deeds as history do not permit us to understand the *elemental speech* of imagination. We will never penetrate the mystery of creation, or the meaning of existence, if we do not recover this older language. Poetry shows a man his soul, Goddard wrote, "as a looking glass does his face." And it is our souls that the culture of imperialism, business and technology seeks to crush.

Walter Benjamin argued that capitalism is not only a formation "conditioned by religion," but is an "essentially religious phenomenon," albeit one that no longer seeks to connect humans with the mysterious forces of life. Capitalism, as Benjamin observed, called on human societies to embark on a ceaseless and futile quest for money and goods. This quest, he warned, perpetuates a culture dominated by guilt, a sense of inadequacy and self-loathing. It enslaves nearly all its adherents through wages, subservience to the commodity culture and debt peonage. The suffering visited on Native Americans, once Western expansion was complete, was soon endured by others, in Cuba, the Philippines, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The final chapter of this sad experiment in human history will see us sacrificed as those on the outer reaches of empire were sacrificed. There is a kind of justice to this. We profited as a nation from this demented vision, we remained passive and silent when we should have denounced the crimes committed in our name, and now that the game is up we all go down together.

20120501-03 16:29 Pam Common Sense or Political Correctness? (privacy)
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I just read a blog entry by Sam Harris--neuroscientist, psychologist, writer, atheist--in which he discusses the absurdities of the way the TSA conducts its searches for suspected terrorists. Patting down little old ladies and disabled children in wheelchairs is a waste of time that could be better spent and an invasion of privacy for no just cause. It is Muslims who have sworn to destroy us, Muslims who brought down the twin towers, Muslims who call us infidels and hate our way of life. Doesn't it make sense to check out Muslim-type people? This isn't unfair, racial profiling; it's common sense. If I saw a man break into my house, I would not go searching for a teenage girl to arrest. Apparently Mr. Harris has been swamped with negative comments, calling him everything from a racist to I-don't-know-what. I say, he's simply speaking the truth. We live in a dangerous world, and we must protect ourselves. If 60-something white women were smuggling contraband aboard planes, I'd gladly go through a body scan. Until that day, keep your grimy hands off me--and everyone else who is obviously no terrorist.

That brings me to my next question. I don't quite have the answer for this one, so I'm asking for opinions. This new bill that's been proposed to allow private internet dealers to share consumer info. with the gov't has me a bit concerned. I understand that the only way we're going to identify and capture terrorists is if we can spy on them, but it does seem a bit Big Brotherish. I feel as if everything about us is out there for anyone to snag, the government included, along with advertisers and, now, people who want me to follow them on Twitter. I just signed up for a Twitter account so I could respond to Sam Harris, and now Rhiannon wants to be my BFF. I have

no cover left, I guess. Is our privacy, our autonomy, being gradually eroded in such subtle ways that we don't even notice it? On TV cop shows, the police are always using GPS to track people and going through suspects' computers. I guess this is legal. It certainly seems commonplace.

[20120501-04](#) 17:16 SteveG Re: Common Sense or Political Correctness? (reply to Pam, above)

It seems to me that anyone may be out to bomb the US – I am not certain what a Muslim looks like versus a Catholic or Christian. Middle Eastern residents may actually be a variety of religions. The Oklahoma City bombing was home grown and that may happen again. I don't like being patted, don't like my bags being searched, don't like my carry on being emptied in front of everyone, and don't like the body scans – but that is what I have gotten and will always get body scanned if the rules stay the way they are – makes me feel violated.

What amazes me is that a few years ago we took a train ride from Crawfordsville, IN to Pasco, WA and back – no searches, no nothing. We did see a couple of police in Chicago with dogs, but that was it.

I think we have given away a lot of civil liberties years ago and we may be tracked through computer usage, black boxes on autos, cell phone GPS/usage, library books checked out, etc.

[20120501-05](#) 19:41 Dick Fw: Congressional Reform Act

THIS IS THE ANSWER...SO SIMPLE!!! YEA!

[Source of original email unknown, but, unfortunately, getting a little dated. –SteveB]

Could this be an idea whose time has come?

Warren Buffett, in a recent interview with CNBC, offers one of the best quotes about the debt ceiling:

"I could end the deficit in 5 minutes," he told CNBC. "You just pass a law that says that anytime there is a deficit of more than 3% of GDP, all sitting members of Congress are ineligible for re-election."

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified! Why? Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971 - before computers, e-mail, cell phones, etc.

Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven (7) took one (1) year or less to become the law of the land - all because of public pressure.

Warren Buffet is asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise.

In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

Congressional Reform Act of 2012

1. No Tenure / No Pension. A Congressman/woman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they're out of office.
2. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security. All funds in the Congressional retirement fund move to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system, and Congress participates with the American people. It may not be used for any other purpose.
3. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan, just as all Americans do.

4. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.
5. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.
6. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.
7. All contracts with past and present Congressmen/women are void effective 1/1/12. The American people did not make this contract with Congressmen/women. Congress made all these contracts for themselves.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

If each person contacts a minimum of twenty people then it will only take three days for most people (in the U.S.) to receive the message. Don't you think it's time?

THIS IS HOW YOU FIX CONGRESS!

If you agree, pass it on. If not, delete. You are one of my 20+ - Please keep it going, and thanks.

20120501-06 21:54 SteveG "Inside Edition' Investigates Congressional Cars"
--

Wonder if "Inside Edition" is right on the above? If so – it stinks!!

"Inside Edition' Investigates Congressional Cars" Original Airdate: May 1, 2012

<http://www.insideedition.com/news/8119/inside-edition-investigates-congressional-cars.aspx>

In these tough times Americans are looking for ways to save. So it may surprise you that many members of congress are driving around in luxury cars that are paid for with your tax dollars and its perfectly legal. Inside Edition's Lisa Guerrero and the I-squad spent two months investigating congressional car leases.

When Congressman Gregory Meeks of Queens, New York makes the rounds in his home district, he does it in style - in a Lexus 450 hybrid. This kind of luxury doesn't come cheap. His Lexus costs a whopping \$1,289 a month to lease. But that's no problem for Congressman Meeks because he's not paying for it. You are.

And his colleague, Congressman Edolphus Towns of Brooklyn, NY also has a taste for an expensive set of wheels. We found him zipping around town in a luxurious Lincoln MKZ hybrid, costing \$957/month - and you paid for that too.

Taxpayers we spoke with were outraged. "I can't afford a luxury vehicle, I don't know why they should have one.," said a New York City woman.

"It just doesn't make sense that taxpayers would be paying for that.," said another.

"I find it outrageous and a misuse of funds," a young woman fumed.

Joe Barton, the fiscally conservative congressman from Texas cruises around in an impressive Chevy Tahoe that costs you \$999 a month. "It drives real well," Barton told Inside Edition.

Barton says he sees nothing wrong with the hefty price tag and even offered to take an Inside Edition reporter for a ride. He says he leased the car because it's manufactured in his district, at the GM assembly plant in Arlington, Texas. "It's an official vehicle paid for by the taxpayers and it's used in my official duties," said Barton.

Inside Edition found at least 82 out of 435 U.S. representatives lease cars for use in their home District.

Some have taste for luxury, like Congressman Bobby Rush, of Illinois, who represents President Obama's home district in Chicago. Rush rides around in a \$1,027/month Lexus hybrid.

Inside Edition's findings are getting a lot of attention, including the O'Reilly Factor.

"C'mon congressmen. I lease a car and pay about \$600 a month and it's a nice car," said O'Reilly on his popular cable news program.

Most of the congressmen we observed riding around in those expensive leases were not eager to talk about their leases, so Inside Edition Chief Investigative Correspondent, Lisa Guerrero went to Washington to get some answers.

Lisa Guerrero asked Rep. Meeks, "Do you realize you lease one of the most expensive cars in congress?"

Meeks responded, "All I know is that I go by the rules, look at the list, it has to be approved, I go by the rules to serve the people of my district."

Congressman Towns of New York didn't want to talk about his \$957 Lincoln hybrid lease. Maybe that's because he's on a committee that's investigating the notorious GSA scandal involving that notorious \$800,000 convention in Las Vegas.

"You are spending almost \$1000 dollars a month on the taxpayer dime, do you think that's appropriate?" asked Guerrero.

"Which car are you talking about?" replied Towns.

"Your most recent car. I know before you were leasing something for more than 1200 a month, right now it's a Lincoln."

"You tell me what car you're talking about," Towns asked

"It's a Lincoln hybrid."

"I have to talk to my staff; they handle all that kind of stuff, that's not something I'm involved in," Towns replied.

While we were looking for Congressman Towns' car, we also noticed his wife driving another luxury vehicle, an Infiniti, with congressional tags. She was observed day after day - driving to the carwash, the dry cleaners and back and forth to work at a local hospital. But Towns doesn't pay for that car either. We found records showing the \$602 lease on the Infiniti is paid for with the congressman's campaign funds. Experts say that is an apparent violation of campaign finance rules.

Guerrero said, "Your wife has been driving a car that's paid for with campaign funds, is that appropriate?"

Towns said, "I have no idea what you are talking about"

All the Congressmen say they are just abiding by the rules and doing nothing wrong

Members of the House who lease tax payer-funded vehicles (Source: Statement of Disbursements – House of Representatives – 4th Quarter 2011)

44 Democrats and 38 Republicans:

<u>Representative</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Monthly Payment</u>	<u>Additional Info</u>
1. Dan Burton – Rep. (two leases)	Indiana	\$600 + \$684.78	2 vehicles
2. Mary Bono Mack – Rep.	California	\$682.94	
3. Rodney Alexander – Rep.	Louisiana	\$167.99	\$20,000 dn.
4. Xavier Becerra – Dem.	California	\$271.80	
5. Adam Schiff – Dem.	California	\$489.24	
6. Adrian Smith – Rep.	Nebraska	\$629.52	
7. Al Green – Dem.	Texas	\$436.89	
8. André Carson – Dem.	Indiana	\$657.99 to \$748.65 per month	
9. Anna Eshoo – Dem.	California	\$389.60	
10. Barbara Lee – Dem.	California	\$898.55	
11. Bill Flores – Rep.	Texas	\$455.55	
12. Bill Johnson – Rep.	Ohio	\$370.13	
13. Bill Shuster – Rep.	Pennsylvania	\$392.00	
14. Bobby Rush – Dem.	Illinois	\$1,027.53	
15. Brad Miller – Dem.	North Carolina	\$431.87	
16. Chip Cravaack – Rep.	Minnesota	\$1,008.22	
17. Cliff Stearns – Rep.	Florida	\$789.25	
18. Collin Peterson – Dem.	Minnesota	\$362 + \$290.00	2 vehicles
19. Cory Gardner – Rep.	Colorado	\$910.82	
20. Dana Rohrabacher – Rep.	California	\$918.63	
21. David Dreier – Rep.	California	\$598.92	
22. David Scott – Dem.	Georgia	\$519.40	
23. Dennis Rehberg – Rep.	Montana	\$499 + \$799.00	2 vehicles
24. Don Young – Rep.	Alaska	\$748.73	
25. Donald Manzullo – Rep.	Illinois	\$619.19	
26. Ed Pastor – Dem.	Arizona	\$294.33	
27. Edolphus Towns – Dem.	New York	\$1,285.06	
28. Edward Royce – Rep.	California	\$509.98	
29. Eleanor Holmes Norton – Dem.	D.C.	\$807.55	
30. Emanuel Cleaver – Dem.	Missouri	\$1,900.00	
31. George Miller – Dem.	California	\$520.10	
32. Gregory Meeks – Dem.	New York	\$1,289.40	
33. Gus Bilirakis – Rep.	Florida	\$899.20 + \$1348.80	2 vehicles
34. Heath Shuler – Dem.	North Carolina	\$485.31	
35. Hank Johnson Jr. – Dem.	Georgia	\$725.79	
36. Henry Cuellar – Dem.	Texas	\$594.28	
37. Howard Berman – Dem.	California	\$382.78	
38. Howard "Buck" McKeon – Rep.	California	\$662.83	
39. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen – Rep.	California	\$479.86	
40. James Clyburn – Dem.	South Carolina	\$1,139.26	
41. Jim McDermott – Dem.	Washington	\$346.46	
42. Joe Baca – Dem.	California	\$732.86	
43. Joe Barton – Rep.	Texas	\$998.89	
44. Joe Donnelly – Dem.	Indiana	\$450.00	
45. John Abney Culberson – Rep.	Texas	\$880.00	
46. John Conyers Jr. – Dem.	Michigan	\$1,251.66	
47. John Garamendi – Dem.	California	\$910.82	
48. John Lewis – Dem.	Georgia	\$578.21	
49. John Carter – Rep.	Texas	\$880.96	
50. John Sullivan – Rep.	Oklahoma	\$258.30	
51. José Serrano – Dem.	New York	\$485.31	
52. Kenny Marchant – Rep.	Texas	\$899.67	

53. Kevin McCarthy – Rep.	California	\$716.25
54. Laura Richardson – Dem.	California	\$852.96
55. Linda Sanchez – Dem.	California	\$861.87
56. Louie Gohmert – Rep.	Texas	\$466.40
57. Lynn Woolsey – Dem.	California	\$647.97
58. Mario Diaz-Balart – Rep.	Florida	\$722.02
59. Melvin Watt – Dem.	North Carolina	\$431.81
60. Michael Simpson – Rep.	Idaho	\$698.13
61. Michael Michaud – Dem.	Maine	\$795.00
62. Mike Coffman – Rep.	Colorado	\$671.51
63. Mike McIntyre – Dem.	North Carolina	\$430.82
64. Mike Pence – Rep.	Indiana	\$282.68
65. Mike Pompeo – Rep.	Kansas	\$486.00
66. Mike Ross – Dem.	Arkansas	\$851.28
67. Nick Rahall – Dem.	West Virginia	\$671.41
68. Pedro Pierluisi – Dem.	Puerto Rico	\$1,400.00
69. Peter Welch – Dem.	Vermont	\$425.68
70. Phil Gingrey – Rep.	Georgia	\$470.88
71. Randy Neugebauer – Rep.	Texas	\$333.33
72. Raul Grijalva – Dem.	Arizona	\$709.28
73. Sam Johnson – Rep.	Texas	\$758.65
74. Sean Duffy – Rep.	Wisconsin	\$1,350.00
75. Sheila Jackson Lee – Dem.	Texas	\$751.99
76. Silvestre Reyes – Dem.	Texas	\$655.46
77. Steve Womack – Rep.	Arkansas	\$565.61
78. Steven LaTourette – Rep.	Ohio	\$502.24
79. Theodore "Ted" Deutch – Dem.	Florida	\$301.17
80. Wally Herger – Rep.	California	\$650.00
81. William "Lacy" Clay Jr. – Dem.	Missouri	\$779.08
82. William Keating – Dem.	Massachusetts	\$968.85

The test of a democracy is not the magnificence of buildings or the speed of automobiles or the efficiency of air transportation, but rather the care given to the welfare of all the people.

**~ Helen Keller
April, 1935**



<http://atlasobscura.com/place/giant-crystals-naica>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #130 — MAY 3, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Electric Cars: The Best of Both Worlds?

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



I know there are others. Tesla is doing some cool stuff. I hope they make it! Otherwise, Europe mainly leads. But this is a pretty one...and fast...from Spain, no less. Please pass me my lithium, Chinaman.

"AEDC Electric Prototype Has Range of 150 Miles, Expected to Achieve 170 MPH" by Paul Ridden, gizmag

May 1, 2012, (http://www.gizmag.com/aedc-electric-drift-car/22368/?utm_source=Gizmag+Subscribers&utm_campaign=42ea8516da-UA-2235360-4&utm_medium=email)

Spain's green racing pioneers Quimera Responsible Racing and the UK's Alex Letteriello and his small team at Evelio Electric Supercars have joined forces to develop an all-electric supercar designed to race in drifting competitions, where cornering is undertaken with a thrilling sideways slide. The quite simply stunning AEDC (All Electric Drift Car), or K1 Evelio to use its given name, is capable of quietly speeding from zero to 60 mph (96.5 km/h) in just 3.2 seconds, has an average range of 150 miles (241.4 km) per charge and is expected to reach speeds of 170 mph (273.5 km/h).

It's the stuff of just about every Hollywood blockbuster car chase and a popular sport in its own right, and now the jaw-dropping oversteering technique known as drifting is about to get a whole lot cleaner thanks to the development of a 100 percent electric Drift Car. As with electric drag racing, the powerful torque of the car's electric drive is perhaps a more important factor to drift competitions than range and may even help deliver the kind of howling tire action demanded by fans of the sport.

As you may have already spotted, the design of the K1 has been heavily influenced by the Slovakian K-1 Attack Roadster sports car, but with a 170kW electric powertrain (which can be scaled up to 250kW) developing 220Nm of torque instead of a roaring V6 engine. It's currently limited to a top speed of 95 mph (153 km/h), which is rather sluggish when compared to the Tesla Roadster, for instance, but its designers are looking towards ramping that up to the 170 mph mark in the future.

The super-charged Lithium Iron Phosphate batteries are said to have been specifically chosen for speed of recharge, and superior thermal and chemical stability. They can be charged to full capacity in just an hour, or 80 percent in 20 minutes via a 30 amp socket.

The vehicle has a tubular steel chassis and fiberglass body and sports a sleek silver white metallic pearl paint job at the moment, but Quimera is running a design competition that asks folks to come up with a suitably eye-catching race design to adorn the bodywork of the electric supercar.

20120502-01	06:20	MarthaH	"Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'"
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"Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'" by Eugene Kiely, FactCheck.org/USA Today

May 1, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-05-01/fact-check-gillespie-obama/54669912/1>)

Mitt Romney's senior adviser Ed Gillespie distorted some economic facts on Meet the Press when he accused President Obama of creating a U.S. economy that is "hostile" to women. Mitt Romney recently appointed Ed Gillespie to serve as a senior adviser.

- Gillespie said the "number of single-mother families living in poverty" is now the highest "in recorded history." But poverty statistics date only to 1959, and the poverty rate for single mothers — which is a better indicator than the total number— is still relatively low, despite a recent rise. It was 31.6% in 2010, the 37th highest rate in 52 years. The highest rate was 42.9% in 1962.
- He also said there has been a 14% increase in the number of single mothers living in poverty under Obama, relying again on the number rather than the poverty rate. The rate has increased 2.9 percentage points under Obama. By comparison, the rate rose 3.3 percentage points under Bush.
- Gillespie said "there are 2.7 million more women without health insurance today than when Barack Obama took office." True, but there are also 2.1 million more women living in the U.S. The percentage of uninsured

women rose from 13.3% in 2008 to 14.8% in 2010. That's lower than the percentage of uninsured men, which was 17.9% in 2010.

Romney, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, recently appointed Gillespie to serve as a senior adviser. Gillespie is a former chairman of the Republican National Committee and once served as an adviser to then-President George W. Bush. Gillespie and Karl Rove, another Bush adviser, helped launch American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS, two political groups that aim to raise \$240 million to help Republicans this fall.

It was Romney who first attacked the president's economic policies as a "war on women," citing specifically the fact that 92% of the jobs lost under Obama were lost by women. As we wrote once before, that's a statement of fact — but not the whole story. That's the case, again, with Gillespie — who on Meet the Press on April 29 trotted out other economic facts that he says prove "the U.S. economy is a hostile workplace for women under President Obama."

Single mothers in poverty

Gillespie, April 29: We have actually now the highest number of single mother families living in poverty than at any time in recorded history. A 14% increase since President Obama took office. ... And we have, like I say, single mother families at the highest level in poverty.

First of all, "recorded history" — which sounds like a long time — goes back only to the Eisenhower presidency. The Census Bureau says it began providing official poverty estimates in 1959.

Second, Gillespie is right that the "number of single mother families living in poverty" in 2010, the most recent number available, is the highest since records have been kept, beginning in 1959. There were an estimated 4.7 million single mothers living in poverty in 2010. But that's misleading because it does not take into account population growth. A better measure would be the poverty rate — the percentage of single mothers living in poverty.

Since 1959, the poverty rates for single mothers have ranged from a high of 42.9% in 1962 to a low of 25.4% in 2000. The rate was 31.6% in 2010 — which is the 37th highest rate in 52 years.

Gillespie again relies on the number of single mothers in poverty rather than the rate of poverty, when he says that there has been "a 14% increase since President Obama took office." The rate has climbed from 28.7% in 2008 (Bush's last year in office) to 31.6% in 2010, an increase of 2.9 percentage points. By comparison, during the eight years under Bush - Gillespie's former boss — the rate rose from a record low of 25.4% in 2000 to 28.7% in 2008, a rise of 3.3 percentage points.

We don't mean to dismiss the fact that poverty among this group is high. But the fact is that the progress that had been made in the late 1990s was reversed in the last decade during two recessions under two presidents — one of each party.

Women and health insurance

In his interview with Meet the Press host David Gregory, Gillespie also cited the growing number of women who are without health insurance — once again without any perspective.

Gillespie, April 29: Actually, David, when you look at the facts there are 2.7 million more women without health insurance today than when Barack Obama took office.

That is true, as far as it goes. It's true that Census figures show that there were about 2.65 million more women without health insurance in 2010 compared with 2008. But there are also nearly 2.1 million more women in the U.S. compared with 2008.

When you consider population growth, the percentage of women without health insurance rose from 13.3% in 2008 to 14.8% in 2010 - which is still lower than the percentage of men who lack insurance. The percentage of uninsured males rose from 16.5% to 17.9%.

So the rates have risen by nearly identical amounts — by 1.5 percentage points for women and 1.4 percentage points for men — and women are still far more likely to have health insurance than men.

Of course, the federal health care law signed by the president in 2010 is designed to reduce the number of uninsured Americans. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that 32 million nonelderly Americans would gain health insurance because of the law by 2019 — if it is not repealed, as proposed by Romney.

'Hostile workplace?'

Gillespie uses the health insurance and poverty statistics — along with the unemployment statistics used previously by Romney — to support his claim that "the U.S. economy is a hostile workplace for women under President Obama." Gillespie also said the White House itself was a hostile workplace for women under the president, citing the remarks of former Communications Director Anita Dunn— who later told the Washington Post that her comments were taken out of context.

Dunn made her remark in a taped interview with journalist Ron Suskind for his book "Confidence Men: Wall Street, Washington, and the Education of a President."

Washington Post, Sept. 20, 2011: One of the most striking quotes in the book came from former White House communications director Anita Dunn, who was quoted as saying that, "this place would be in court for a hostile workplace. .??. Because it actually fit all of the classic legal requirements for a genuinely hostile workplace to women."

Dunn says she was quoted out of context and told The Post on Friday that she told Suskind "point blank" that the White House was not a hostile work environment.

Suskind allowed the Post to listen to his interview with Dunn, who is quoted in full as saying: "I remember once I told Valerie that, I said if it weren't for the president, this place would be in court for a hostile workplace. Because it actually fit all of the classic legal requirements for a genuinely hostile workplace to women."

Dunn — who is now a managing director of SKDKnickerbocker, a strategic communications firm in Washington, D.C.— remains a supporter of the president and frequently appears on Sunday talk shows speaking in support of his policies.

We won't try to settle a dispute between Dunn and Suskind, and we cannot say that the full context of her remarks — including the phrase "if it weren't for the president" — changes the meaning, as some liberal commentators have claimed. Read literally, the "if it weren't for the president" phrase only modifies the statement that the White House would be sued, not the subsequent sentence saying that the White House "actually fit all of the classic legal requirements for a genuinely hostile workplace to women."

But what we can say is that Gillespie — as Romney did before him — is not telling the full story when portraying the economic plight of women under the president.

20120502-04	09:28	Pam	Re: "Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I'm afraid we're in for a lot more of this kind of thing.

20120502-02	09:02	Pam	Re: Common Sense or Political Correctness? (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #129)
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I think you're right about all the tracking, except for libraries. The American Library Assn. pitched a giant fit when the government tried to force libraries to turn over their records. Libraries started shredding them everyday and refused to comply. The govt. backed off.

20120502-03	09:23	Pam	Re: "Inside Edition' Investigates Congressional Cars" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #129)
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Corruption wherever you look. These guys are no better than crooks. I don't begrudge them having a decent car, but they might set a better example.

20120502-05	13:28	SteveB	"Reboot the R0mney-Bot"
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I found this hilarious! I think the author is on to something, probably has inside information from Fox or Rush.

The billionaires got together and built a robot to replace R0mney shortly after his loss to McCain in 2008. It's been a learning/programming experience ever since.

The thing is, it's 2012. You'd think, with all that money, they could have made something a little more life-like, a little more human...

(See article below—Fw: R0mney Saves Manager's Daughter's Life—for further proof Romney is a cyborg of some kind. He's "wired" not "born of woman".)

"Reboot the Romney-Bot" by Gary Kamiya, Salon

May 2, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/05/02/reboot_the_romney_bot/)

(Since clinching the nomination, the candidate's behavior has become even less recognizably human.)

Even before the Republican primaries began, rumors abounded that Mitt Romney was a robot. His zombie-like cheerfulness, his excessively regular features and his strangely perfect-looking family led to widespread suspicion that he had been assembled in Silicon Valley by a team of right-wing nanotechnologists and engineers and shipped secretly to GOP headquarters. The suspicions were far from universal, however. An influential group of skeptics rejoined that cybernetics had not advanced to the point where it could create lifelike humanoids, even ones as unconvincing as Romney, and that the GOP candidate should be considered a human being until it was definitively proven that he was a cyborg.

There the debate rested. Then Romney hit the campaign trail, and the pendulum swung decisively toward those who held that he was constructed out of high-impact plastic. Even the skeptics admitted that Romney's "personality" did not appear to be of organic origin. He seemed uncomfortable in his own skin (which of course would make sense if he did not have actual skin), and did not know how to tell jokes (humor is notoriously difficult to program). Even the words he used to describe himself sounded like they were auto-imported from a slightly archaic database, as when he oddly described himself as "severely conservative."

But the clearest sign that Romney had fiber optic cable coiled in his midriff was the bizarrely smug and clumsy way in which he constantly referred to his plutocratic lifestyle. When asked at the Daytona 500 whether he followed NASCAR closely, Romney completely failed to take advantage of this traditional GOP opportunity to demonstrate the common touch. He replied, "Not as closely as some of the most ardent fans, but I have some great friends who are NASCAR team owners." Two weeks later, in an interview about the NFL, Romney again went out of his way to affirm his membership in a tiny fraternity of disliked multimillionaires, saying, "I've got a lot of good friends – the owner of the Miami Dolphins and the New York Jets – both owners are friends of mine."

The subject of money, in particular, seemed to produce continual script errors, including inappropriate answers, dead-end loops and other rudimentary programming flaws. In Detroit, Romney boasted that his wife “drives a couple of Cadillacs” – the political equivalent of showing up for a photo op at a diner wearing an ascot and a monocle. He casually challenged Rick Perry to a \$10,000 bet during a debate, an unforced error that evoked vote-losing images of Fortune 500 CEOs snapping towels at each other in the sauna. But that weird glitch was dwarfed by a statement Romney made a month later. His hard drive apparently malfunctioning after his tax returns were revealed, Romney referred to the \$370,000 he had earned giving speeches one year — an amount it would take the average American worker 14 years to make — as “not very much.” In short, Romney came across not only as an obscenely rich person, but as an obscenely rich person from another planet.

At this point, some leading technology analysts had begun to openly accuse whoever programmed Romney of gross incompetence. But others defended the unknown scriptwriter, pointing out that the Republican Party’s worship of plutocrats as emblems of “aspirational” capitalism made it impossible for even the best programmer to write a coherent GOP script about wealth.

Romney’s performance in the primary debates also provided strong empirical support for the Mitt-is-a-cyborg thesis. For the entity claiming to be “Mitt Romney” that appeared onstage bore no resemblance to the Romney-like entity Americans had come to know in previous years. The moderate, conciliatory governor of Massachusetts was gone, his place taken by a strange, harsh figure who appeared to have been programmed by a disciple of Torquemada. Romney Version One had strongly supported a healthcare plan identical to Obama’s; Romney Version Two denounced “Obamacare” as opening the door to socialism. Beta Romney, who had defended a woman’s right to choose, had been replaced by an updated model that, like a doll that speaks a few simple phrases when its bottom is squeezed, intoned “abortion is immoral” again and again.

Different observers had different explanations for this strange phenomenon. Some maintained that “Mitt Romney” had been originally programmed in the factory to flip-flop when politically necessary. Others held that the earlier version had been surreptitiously refurbished, or possibly completely replaced.

Since he clinched the GOP nomination, Romney’s behavior has become even less recognizably human. Following his mechanical move to the far right during the primary season, his even more mechanical attempt to move back to the center has made it appear increasingly likely that he was assembled by nano-machines. His victory speech in New Hampshire was a tape loop of Reagan-like platitudes about free enterprise and Reagan-like blasts at the apocalyptic evil posed by Big Government, topped off with a weird, casuistic attempt to claim that his laissez-faire, I’ve-got-mine-Jack ideology was “fairer” than Obama’s attempt to shrink the increasing gap between rich and poor. Instead of the Great Communicator, Romney came off like a Frankenstein monster, cobbled together out of various right-wing bits and pieces, trying simultaneously to appease Tea Party extremists and clank back to the middle, all while smiling a big, artificially-whitened smile.

His inability to impersonate a human being poses severe political problems for Romney. But the worst is yet to come. Republican strategists are now advising Romney to stop attacking Obama and offer a “positive vision.” Most experts believe this simply cannot be done. Romney’s CPU, set up to defend cutthroat capitalism, destroy his opponents, and present the innocuous centrist Barack Obama as the reincarnation of V.I. Lenin, cannot accommodate the impossible demand that he suddenly become “human.” No one knows whether he will literally melt down in public with smoke pouring out of his eye sockets, or will simply begin regurgitating meaningless phrases about an “opportunity society,” like the unplugged super-computer HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. But sooner or later, Romney is doomed to a fatal system error.

Like Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator*, Romney is about to be turned into scrap metal. But there is still time for him to save his campaign. **If Mitt Romney wants to be president, he must appear before the American people on prime-time TV and admit that he is a robot.**

With this one bold stroke, Romney would dispel all questions about his authenticity. After all, unlike human beings, robots are not expected to demonstrate consistency in their beliefs and actions. They do not have “selves,” only circuits that react in programmed ways to new situations. The instant Romney shows the nation the power cable hidden in his posterior, his self-contradictory positions and blatant pandering will cease to be seen as a cynical grab

for power. Instead, they will become the visible manifestations of an advanced Google-like algorithm, inspiring technological interest and respect.

A frank confession that Romney plugs himself into a socket in his garage every night would also end the criticism of his wooden demeanor. *Star Wars*, *Mystery Science 3000*, *The Terminator* and other pop-culture hits have popularized lovable, wisecracking, helpful robots. Romney would be far better served if he was seen as C3PO, rather than a stilted, fake-Tea-Party plutocrat boasting about his friendships with other plutocrats.

Moreover, by forthrightly admitting that his head swivels around on a titanium base, Romney would instantly wipe out Obama's advantage among young voters. Tech-savvy young Americans prefer Facebook, Tumblr, Zynga, smartphones and iPods to reality anyway, and would jump at the chance to make their generational mark by electing a president who is one of them (and can be easily disassembled and shipped back to the factory for repair.)

Finally, if Romney were to stand before the American people, remove his head and forthrightly admit that he is a robot, he would get rid of the biggest albatross around his nonexistent neck: his leadership of the private equity firm Bain Capital. As a human being, Romney cannot justify the rapacious, job-destroying actions engaged in by Bain. When critics – including his GOP rivals – rightfully accused him of practicing “vulture capitalism,” all Romney could say was “In the free economy, in the private sector, sometimes investments don't work and you're not successful.” Coming from a human, this answer is heartless. Coming from a robot, it feels almost cuddly.

Which points to the real reason Romney should admit to being a robot – whether he is one or not. As a human being, Mitt Romney is a flop. But as a robot, he's positively human.

20120502-06	18:32	Dennis	“Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?” — The Alternate Reality Right-Wingers Inhabit Is Terrifying
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“Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?” by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

May 2, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155210/>)

(The alternate reality right-wingers inhabit is terrifying.)

Consider for a moment just how terrifying it must be to live life as a true believer on the right. Reality is scary enough, but the alternative reality inhabited by people who watch Glenn Beck, listen to Rush Limbaugh, or think Michele Bachmann isn't a joke must be nothing less than horrifying.

Research suggests that conservatives are, on average, more susceptible to fear than those who identify themselves as liberals. Looking at MRIs of a large sample of young adults last year, researchers at University College London discovered that “greater conservatism was associated with increased volume of the right amygdala” (\$\$). The amygdala is an ancient brain structure that's activated during states of fear and anxiety. (The researchers also found that “greater liberalism was associated with increased gray matter volume in the anterior cingulate cortex” – a region in the brain that is believed to help people manage complexity.)

That has implications for our political world. In a recent interview, Chris Mooney, author of *The Republican Brain*, explained, “The amygdala plays the same role in every species that has an amygdala. It basically takes over to save your life. It does other things too, but in a situation of threat, you cease to process information rationally and you're moving automatically to protect yourself.”

The finding also fits with other data. Mooney discusses studies conducted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in which self-identified liberals and conservatives were shown images – apolitical images – that were intended to elicit different emotions. Writing at *Huffington Post*, Mooney explains that “there were images that caused fear and disgust -- a spider crawling on a person's face, maggots in an open wound -- but also images that made you feel happy: a smiling child, a bunny rabbit.” The researchers noted two differences between the groups. The

researchers studied their subjects' reactions by tracking their eye movements and monitoring their "skin conductivity" – a measure of one's autonomic nervous system's reaction to stimuli.

Conservatives showed much stronger skin responses to negative images, compared with the positive ones. Liberals showed the opposite. And when the scientists turned to studying eye gaze or "attentional" patterns, they found that conservatives looked much more quickly at negative or threatening images, and [then] spent more time fixating on them.

Mooney concludes that this "new research suggests [that] conservatism is largely a defensive ideology -- and therefore, much more appealing to people who go through life sensitive and highly attuned to aversive or threatening aspects of their environments."

But those cognitive biases are only part of the story of how a political movement in the wealthiest, most secure nation in the world have come to view their surroundings with such dread. The other half of the equation is a conservative media establishment that feeds members of the movement an almost endless stream of truly terrifying scenarios.

The phenomenon of media "silencing" is pretty well understood – in an era when dozens of media sources are a click away, people have a tendency to consume more of those that conform to their respective worldviews. But there is some evidence that this phenomenon is more pronounced on the right – conservative intellectuals have had a long-running debate about the significance of "epistemic closure" within their movement.

So conservatives appear to be more likely to be hard-wired to be highly sensitive to perceived threats, and their chosen media offers them plenty. But that's not the whole story because of one additional factor. Since 9/11, and especially since the election of President Barack Obama, one of the most significant trends in America's political discourse is the "mainstreaming" of what were previously considered to be fringe views on the right. Theories that were once relegated to the militia movement can now be heard on the lips of elected officials and television personalities like Glenn Beck.

Consider, then, what it must be like to be a true-blue Rush Limbaugh fan, or someone who thinks Michele Bachmann is a serious lawmaker with a grasp of the issues – put yourself into that person's shoes for a moment, and consider what a nightmarish landscape the world around them must represent:

The White House has been usurped by a Kenyan socialist named Barry Soetero, who hatched an elaborate plot to pass himself off as a citizen of the United States – a plot the media refuse to even investigate. This president doesn't just claim the right to assassinate suspected terrorists who are beyond the reach of law enforcement – he may be planning on rounding up his ideological opponents and putting them into concentration camps if he is reelected. He may have murdered a blogger who was critical of his administration, but authorities refuse to investigate. At the very least, he is plotting on disarming the American public after the election, in accordance with a secret deal cut with the UN and possibly with the assistance of foreign troops.

Again, these ideas are not relegated to the fringe of forwarded emails. Glenn Beck talked about FEMA camps on Fox News (he later debunked them, which only fueled charges of a media coverup); dozens of Republican elected officials have at least hinted that they are birthers, while an erstwhile front-runner for the GOP nomination has repeatedly claimed that Obama is not eligible to be president. The head of the NRA, and the GOP's presidential nominee have both claimed Obama is plotting to take Americans' guns.

In reality, Americans are safer and more secure today than at any point in human history. But inhabitants of the world of the hard-right are surrounded by danger – from mobs of thugs at home to a variety of powerful and deadly enemies abroad.

For the true believers, Latin American immigration isn't a phenomenon to be managed, but a grave existential threat. A plot to "take back" large swaths of the Southwest is a theory that has aired not only on obscure right-wing blogs, but on Fox and CNN. On CNN, Lou Dobbs claimed immigrants were spreading leprosy; Rick Perry, Rep. Louie Gohmert and other "mainstream" voices on the right (that is, people with platforms) agree that Hezbollah and

Hamas "are using Mexico as a way to penetrate into the southern part of the United States," possibly with the aid of "terror babies" carried in pregnant women's wombs.

In the real world, the rate of violent crime in the US is at the lowest point since 1968 – in fact, it is somewhat of a mystery that the violent crime rate has continued to decline even in the midst of the Great Recession. It's also true that 84 percent of white murder victims are killed by other whites. But if you read the Drudge Report, or check in at Fox, on any given day you will see extensive coverage of any incident in which a black person harms a white person. These fit in with the narrative – advanced by people like Glenn Beck and long-touted by Ron Paul – that we stand on the brink of a race war, led by the New Black Panthers (just consider how frightening it would be if there were more than a dozen New Black Panthers, or if they did more than say stupid things). Marauding "flash-mobs" of black teens – a near-obsession at many conservative outlets these days -- are simply a harbinger of things to come.

Continue, for a moment, to stroll in the shoes of a true believer on the right. Imagine how frightening it would be to believe Frank Gaffney, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan administration and leading neoconservative voice, when he claims the Muslim Brotherhood has infiltrated the highest levels of the US government, or Newt Gingrich, when he says that "sharia law" (there isn't such a thing in the way conservatives portray it – as a discrete canon of laws) poses a grave threat to our way of life.

Imagine believing that the Democrats' business-friendly insurance reforms included panels of bureaucrats who would decide when to let you die, as Sarah Palin infamously suggested. Or that virtually the entire field of climatology is perpetrating a "hoax," as senator James Inhofe claims, in order to undermine capitalism and impose a one-world government. Imagine seeing energy-efficient lightbulbs as part of an international plot to, again, undermine capitalism, as Michele Bachmann believes. Imagine thinking that the public school system "indoctrinates" young children into the "gay lifestyle," as influential members of the religious right – Pat Dobson, Bryan Fischer, Anita Bryant – have claimed for years. Imagine believing our electoral system is tarnished by massive voter fraud or that union thugs are running amok or that the Department of Homeland Security is making a list of people who advocate for "limited government." Imagine if there really were a War on Christmas!

These dark narratives come in addition to more run-of-the-mill fearmongering about the Iranian "threat," or nonsense about how "entitlements" are leading our economy to look like Greece's. Those of us in the "reality-based community" may look at these specters haunting the right with exasperation or amusement, but just consider for a moment how bleak the world looks to those who buy into these ideas.

Perhaps the most frightening part of all of this for the true believers is that even though these things aren't just fringe ideas circulating in forwarded emails – they're discussed by influential politicians and on leading cable news outlets – the bulk of the media and most elected officials refuse to investigate what's happening to this country.

That one ideological camp is so consumed with fear also has a lot to do with why conservatives and liberals share so little common ground. Progressives tend to greet these narratives with facts and reason, but as Chris Mooney notes, when your amygdala is activated, it takes over and utterly dominates the brain structures dedicated to reason. Then the "fight-or-flight" response takes precedence over critical thinking.

(Joshua Holland is an editor and senior writer at AlterNet. He is the author of *The 15 Biggest Lies About the Economy: And Everything else the Right Doesn't Want You to Know About Taxes, Jobs and Corporate America*. Drop him an email or follow him on Twitter.)

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[20120502-08](#)

18:48

SteveG

Re: "Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?" (reply to Dennis, above)

Good article.

Does this make sense?

"Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention" by Amy Bingham, ABC News

May 2, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/05/water-guns-banned-handguns-allowed-at-gop-convention/>)

In the politically-charged and likely protest-filled streets of Tampa, Fla., during the Republican National Convention in August, water guns will be strictly prohibited. Concealed handguns, on the other hand, will be perfectly legal.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott said this week that banning handguns from downtown Tampa during the convention, as the city's Mayor Bob Buckhorn requested, "would surely violate the Second Amendment."

"It is unclear how disarming law-abiding citizens would better protect them from the dangers and threats posed by those who would flout the law," Scott said in a letter to Buckhorn Tuesday, emphasizing the words "law-abiding." "It is at just such times that the constitutional right of self defense is most precious and must be protected from government overreach."

Buckhorn said today that he was "disappointed" by Scott's decision, but that the city will "plan and train accordingly."

Tampa officials are expecting thousands of protesters to descend on the Florida metropolis for the GOP convention. While no handguns will be allowed inside the convention, which is being protected by the Secret Service, concealed carry license-holders will be able to carry their weapons in the streets surrounding the convention.

They will not, however, be able to have "super soaker" water guns, sticks, poles, portable shields or glass bottles.

Buckhorn said last month that the state law, which prohibits the city from temporarily banning handguns, makes the city "look silly" because officials can prohibit water guns but not real ones, The Associated Press reported.

"There is no reason to have a concealed firearm in downtown Tampa that week," Buckhorn said in Wednesday's statement. "And, to be clear, I am far less concerned with those who have concealed weapons permits than the ones who may somehow acquire a weapon and use it to create mayhem."

James Davis, a spokesman for the Republican National Convention, said party officials are not worried that concealed handguns will create security problems.

"We think we are going to have a safe and successful convention," Davis said. "The local police and Secret Service will make sure of that."

The city plans to have 4,000 law enforcement personnel in the downtown area during the party convention, a move Buckhorn said would create "safe environment" where "a firearm should not be necessary for self-defense."

The Republican National Convention will be held at the Tampa Bay Times Arena, Aug. 27-30.

I think this headline should read, "outside" the Convention, not "at" the convention. And, for some dumb reason that proves Republicans don't really believe in the right to carry guns, all guns are banned from the convention floor itself? If guns are no problem, why not allow them inside? If the guns are OK for the people in the streets, why not convention goers?

I swear this Rick Scott is making Florida more like Texas every day. Idiots!

20120502-10 20:08 SteveB Fw: Urgent — Massive attack on Avaaz! Cyber War vs. People Power

from Avaaz:

Right now, the Avaaz website is under massive attack. An expert is telling us that an attack this large is likely coming from a government or large corporation, with massive, simultaneous and sophisticated assaults from across the world to take down our site.

We were expecting this. Our people-powered campaigning has been fearless, and we've taken on the world's worst actors head-on, in ways that genuinely hurt them - from the Syrian and Chinese regimes to Rupert Murdoch, Big Oil and organized crime. The Syrian dictatorship called our campaigner 'the most dangerous man in the world', and a UK inquiry recently revealed emails between Murdoch's news corporation and top levels of government saying the Avaaz campaign against Murdoch was their biggest concern. Sometimes I lie awake at night wondering when these people are going to come after us.

And it's begun. We have urgent campaigns on oceans, forests and Syria we need to run, but the attack has been going on for 36 hours straight, threatening our ability to keep campaigning. Because of top-notch security, our site is still up, but it's not enough. We need to show these actors that when they attack Avaaz, they're messing with people. And people-power can't be intimidated or silenced, it only grows stronger. Click below to donate to an Avaaz defence fund to take our security to the next level, and show our attackers that whatever they throw at us only makes us stronger:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/massive_attack_on_avaaz_a/?vl.

National authorities have been alerted to the attack. But we urgently need the defence fund to help us:

- Rapidly build industrial-scale security so that no attack can stop us campaigning.
- Hire top hackers and technologists to manage our systems, defend us and test our defences.
- Increase the physical security of our most vulnerable staff in places like Lebanon and Russia.
- Take a range of other actions to improve our technology and security.

Avaaz is a lightning rod that channels voices from across the world, from incredibly brave Tibetan, Russian and Syrian demonstrators risking everything for their freedom, to Bolivian indigenous communities saving their forest from being chopped in half. These people face intense danger, and repelling this attack is just another front in their and our struggle for democracy.

Millions of us have campaigned to keep corporations and governments from censoring and controlling the web. Now one of them is trying to censor us. So far, we're still standing, and our amazing member-funded systems mean that we can run this appeal for support safely and securely. But our campaigning is under real threat. We need to act, and show that these tactics only make us stronger.

Avaaz can stand up to governments and corporations only because all of our strength, legitimacy, and funding comes from people, and people alone. We don't accept money - any money - from governments, corporations, foundations, or even large individual donors. It's extremely rare among large civil society organizations today, but 100% of our money comes from small online donations, and we don't accept gifts over 5000 Euros from anyone. That's why we're independent, and that's why we're a threat to those who put power before people. Let's keep being a threat.

With hope and determination, Ricken and the whole Avaaz team.

20120502-11 23:08 SteveM Fw: R0mney Saves Manager's Daughter's Life

[Source of original email unknown, but it's mostly accurate. –SteveB]

NOW EVERY ONE KNOWS OBAMA WOULD'N'T DO THE SAME THING

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/romney/search.asp>

Whether you like Romney or not, this story is very revealing. Sometimes, this facet of Romney's personality isn't so subtle.

In July, 1996, the 14-year-old daughter of Robert Gay, a partner at Bain Capital, had disappeared. She had attended a rave party in New York City and gotten high on ecstasy. Three days later, her distraught father had no idea where she was, and Romney took immediate action.

He closed down the entire firm and asked all 30 partners and employees to fly to New York to help find Gay's daughter. Romney set up a command center at the LaGuardia Marriott and hired a private detective firm to assist with the search. He established a toll-free number for tips, coordinating the effort with the NYPD, and went through his Rolodex and called everyone Bain did business with in New York, and asked them to help find his friend's missing daughter.

Romney's accountants at Price Waterhouse Cooper put up posters on street poles, while cashiers at a pharmacy owned by Bain put fliers in the bag of every shopper.

Romney and the other Bain employees scoured every part of New York and talked with everyone they could... prostitutes, drug addicts, anyone.

That day, their hunt made the evening news, which featured photos of the girl and the Bain employees searching for her. As a result, a teenage boy phoned in, asked if there was a reward, and then hung up abruptly. The NYPD traced the call to a home in New Jersey, where they found the girl in the basement, shivering and experiencing withdrawal symptoms from a massive ecstasy dose. Doctors later said the girl might not have survived another day. Romney's former partner credits Mitt Romney with saving his daughter's life, saying, "It was the most amazing thing, and I'll never forget this to the day I die."

So, here's my epiphany: Mitt Romney simply can't help himself. He sees a problem, and his mind immediately sets to work solving it, sometimes consciously, and sometimes not-so-consciously. He doesn't do it for self-aggrandizement, or for personal gain. **He does it because that's just how he's wired.**

Many people are unaware of the fact that when Romney was asked by his old employer, Bill Bain, to come back to Bain & Company as CEO to rescue the firm from bankruptcy. Romney left Bain Capital to work at Bain & Company for an annual salary of one dollar. When Romney went to the rescue of the 2002 Salt Lake Olympics, he accepted no salary for three years, and wouldn't use an expense account. He also accepted no salary as Governor of Massachusetts.

Character counts!? The media and Obama re-election machine will focus on Romney's wealth and the immorality of it, as they see it, but Romney is a man who uses his wealth to bless and to make this world a better place.?

Let's get this message out because it is not likely that the media will do so!

[20120502-12](#)

23:35

SteveB

Re: R0mney 'Saves' Manager's Daughter's Life & "Mitt's Runaway Tale"
(reply to SteveM, above)

I like this one, SteveM. This one makes sense to me and I'm glad to read it. The story has started to get stretched a little. The girl, apparently, was in no danger, so the part about saving her life is simply not true. There was no kidnapping. There were never any arrests. She was really running away and hiding out with friends in Montville Township, N.J.

Also, the way the article talks about R0mney being “wired” convinces me even more that the “man” is a robot. Actually, closing a business and flying everyone to NYC to look for a runaway girl sounds a lot like a robot invoking Asimov’s Three Laws of Robotics. R0mney simply followed the “Prime Directive” to protect human life.

“He does it because that's just how he's wired.”

But, still and all, it was a good thing that he did and, fortunately, it all ended well. In different circumstances, R0mney’s actions could have saved a life. Instead, I guess he just ended up wasting a lot of his companies money. Is that the way he’s going to run the U.S. If one American is kidnapped in Iran or Russia or China, Mitt’s going to drop everything and attack???

I wonder if R0mney would do the same thing for people who aren’t rich? And, once again, the Right always attacks “the media”. (“Let’s get this message out because it is not likely that the media will do so!”) This is simply a lie, the story seems to be out there everywhere.

I’m sure President Obama has actually saved a bunch of people’s lives, but I won’t do into that now. He sure didn’t save bin Laden’s, did he?

“Mitt’s Runaway Tale” by M.L. Nestel and Mara Gay Monday, The Daily

Apr. 16, 2012 (<http://www.thedaily.com/page/2012/04/16/041612-news-romney-missing-teen-gay-nestel-1-4>)

(Story of how Romney helped find teen has become exaggerated.)

A favorite story among Mitt Romney’s backers for establishing his cred as both a good guy and a man of action concerns the time he helped find a business partner’s missing teenage daughter.

The story is spellbinding and there’s no debate that Romney’s quick and resolute action helped locate the girl — but The Daily has learned that her life was never in danger, as many retellings have suggested.

The 14-year-old disappeared for several days after attending a rave in New York City and was reunited with her family after she was found staying with some new friends in northern New Jersey. But versions of the 1996 incident told by Romney’s campaigns and news reports have often carried the implication that he saved the girl’s life.

The Romney campaign declined to comment for this story.

Earlier this year, an ad called “Saved” featured the girl’s father crediting Romney with helping “save” his daughter. And press coverage of the disappearance during Romney’s run for Massachusetts governor a decade ago described the teen as near death.

But several acquaintances of the teen who knew her well at the time and have not spoken publicly before told The Daily a different story: one of a rebellious adolescent in a moment of high-spirited escapism who hid from her parents in relative safety in an upscale New Jersey town.

And they credited the group of new friends she made during her disappearance, including a boyfriend, as the ones who ultimately encouraged Melissa Gay — daughter of Romney’s colleague at private equity firm Bain Capital — to head home to her panicked family.

“Did Mitt Romney ‘save’ this girl? No,” said Doug Becker, the then-boyfriend and now a 32-year-old pastor in the same town of Rockaway, N.J. “But I do think what spurred her going home was the kind of coverage it was getting, and I think [Romney] was pretty responsible for that.”

Romney was head of Boston-based Bain Capital in July 1996 when he received a frantic call from Robert Gay, a senior partner at the firm. Melissa was missing and had last been seen in New York City. Romney shut down operations at Bain and set up a command center at a New York Marriott to find the teenager.

More than 200 bankers from Boston and New York took to the streets, passing out fliers in some of New York's toughest neighborhoods. Days later, Melissa turned up safe at the home of Becker's parents in suburban New Jersey.

Since 2002, in the early years of Romney's entrance into public life, three of his campaigns — one gubernatorial and two presidential — have floated the story to demonstrate his crisis management skills and, more importantly, his human side. But each time the basic facts have become more blurred.

During his 2002 gubernatorial bid, for example, a Boston Globe profile of Romney described Melissa as near death, found in Montauk, N.Y., where she was "shivering through detox after a massive dose of ecstasy." Robert Gay had been told by doctors, according to the story, that his daughter "might not have lived another day."

Other more recent news stories have even claimed that Melissa was kidnapped. She wasn't.

The source of these details is unclear, but the spirit of these tellings — that Romney's know-how rescued a teen who was just hours away from death — has gone uncorrected and unchallenged.

In 2007, in Romney's first bid for the presidency, his campaign ran a TV ad by the name of "Searched." In the 30-second spot, sirens wail as newspaper clippings dissolve into ominous skyscraper images and Robert Gay tearfully speaks.

"Mitt's done a lot of things that are nearly impossible, but for me the most important thing he's ever done was to help save my daughter," Gay told prospective voters.

Earlier this year, the pro-Romney PAC "Restore Our Future" ran the spot again under the title "Saved."

Kate Flynn, a childhood friend of Melissa's, said Gay asked to come home on her own accord. She said the teenager paged the beeper of a hometown friend in Connecticut and asked for someone to come collect her.

"I saw the ad and that's not what happened," Flynn told The Daily. "Mitt Romney did help with the search. But from everything that Missy told us, she's the one who made the contact to call home."

Flynn said that while the ad was "exaggerated," Melissa's disappearance was legitimately terrifying. "We were all frantic," she said.

Another childhood friend, speaking anonymously, was more blunt. "I think the ad is incredibly misleading. Dishonest is the word for it," the friend said. "She wasn't saved, she ran away to go to a rave, and got lost and wound up in New Jersey. She paged a friend to come get her."

The childhood friend, who said she has not spoken to Gay in years, said the political ad has been the subject of derision among some graduates of their former high school in Danbury, Conn. "Many of us have put the ad up on our Facebook profiles to say, 'Seriously?' That's not how we remember it. Even the headline of 'Saved,' it's a bit much."

Of course, for Romney's business partner and his wife, the ordeal was the stuff of every parent's nightmare: Their young daughter was lost, alone somewhere after disappearing in New York City. The Gays feared the worst. One of the teens who took her to the rave told police he had given her several hits of ecstasy and last saw her partying under the Whitestone Bridge, according to news accounts from the time.

A close relative who asked not to be identified because Melissa Gay requested that the family not speak publicly about the story said Romney made the difference in bringing her home.

"Without Mitt's help, it wouldn't have happened," the family member told The Daily, adding that the incident was traumatic for the Gays, a family with seven children. "It was pretty scary at the time. All of us as teenagers have had our moments, but that one gave everyone the run for their money."

Gay's parents did not respond to requests for comment, though Lynette Gay spoke briefly to The Associated Press last month.

"That was a long time ago and she's gotten on with her life," she said.

Personal stories told in the political arena can often take on a kind of mythical air, said John Geer, an expert in campaign ads.

"The story becomes bigger than life," Geer said in a telephone interview from Nashville, Tenn., where he chairs the political science department at Vanderbilt University. "It can happen on both sides of the aisle."

Romney, according to Geer, will have to become more comfortable speaking about his personal life to connect with voters.

"The real issue is that Romney has this positive aspect to his personality that hasn't been talked about very much because of the way he appears on the trail," Geer said. "The public wants to know more about that, not that they necessarily want to have a beer with Romney, but they want a sense that he's a good person."

Melissa's story began on a Saturday night in July 1996, when the 14-year-old told her parents she was playing tennis at a country club near their home in affluent Ridgefield, Conn.

Instead, Melissa ditched the racquet to meet up with a group of older teens she knew. They headed to the big city to party and attend a rave called Fantasia II on New York's Randalls Island.

Becker said he and his group befriended the Connecticut stray, spent the week with her in Montville Township, N.J., and even helped line up a job for her at a telemarketing call center in nearby Pinebrook, N.J., just in case she wanted to stay. By all accounts, the teen won a large number of friends in Montville in a short time.

A few days later, Becker said he and friend Caroline Mok caught wind of the unusual search party looking for a missing teenage girl.

"We were eating at Subway, and we heard about it and Missy hadn't," Becker said. "Caroline was like, 'You tell her,' and Missy said, 'Tell me what?' and Caroline said, 'You're in the news.'"

Reality set in. "I kind of remember the look on Missy's face and it was almost like, 'This figures.'"

The teens decided Becker would drive Gay home the next morning. "I was elected as the one to do that," he said. "I was closest to her and we wanted to be together one last day."

But later that night, as Gay and 17-year-old Becker sneaked into an upstairs room at his parents' house in Towaco, N.J., to listen to music, the police arrived. A youth from the area had called a tip line inquiring about a reward, then quickly hung up; police had traced the call back to New Jersey.

Becker's mom was stunned as Doug admitted Melissa was there.

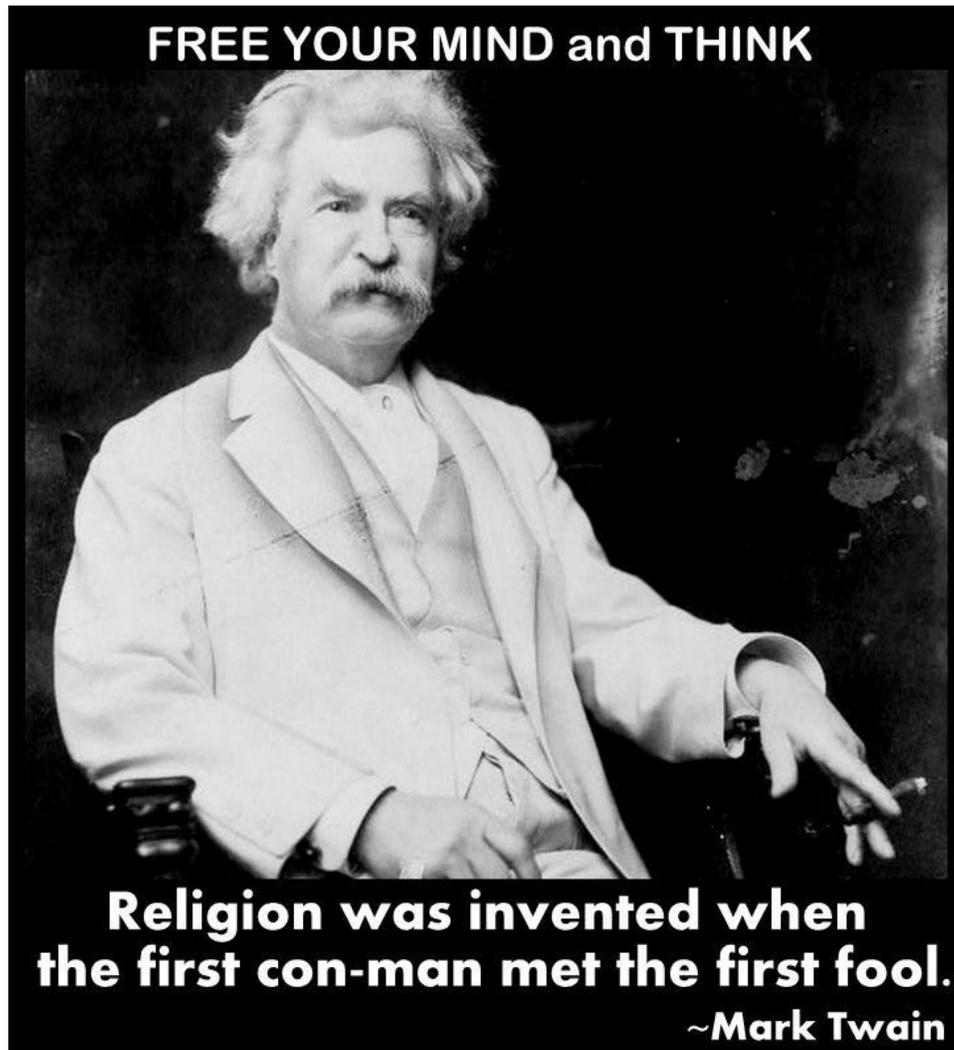
Gay's parents sent her away for a month to be reformed, Becker said. "She was sent to some kind of camp for troubled youth," he said.

Becker said he and Gay maintained a "fairly close relationship for at least a year," but eventually lost touch.

The Daily went to the home of Melissa Gay Lewis in Danbury, Conn., where she is a fourth-grade teacher and lives with her husband and young children just a couple miles from the Ridgefield house she once ran away from. She refused to comment.

In 2008, Lewis and her husband each donated \$2,300 to Romney's presidential run. So far, they haven't donated to Romney's second White House bid.

[20120502-13](#) 23:58 SteveG Quote: Mark Twain on Religion



<http://www.robsrareandgiantseeds.com/5-puya-berteroniana-flower-seeds-striking-1125/>



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

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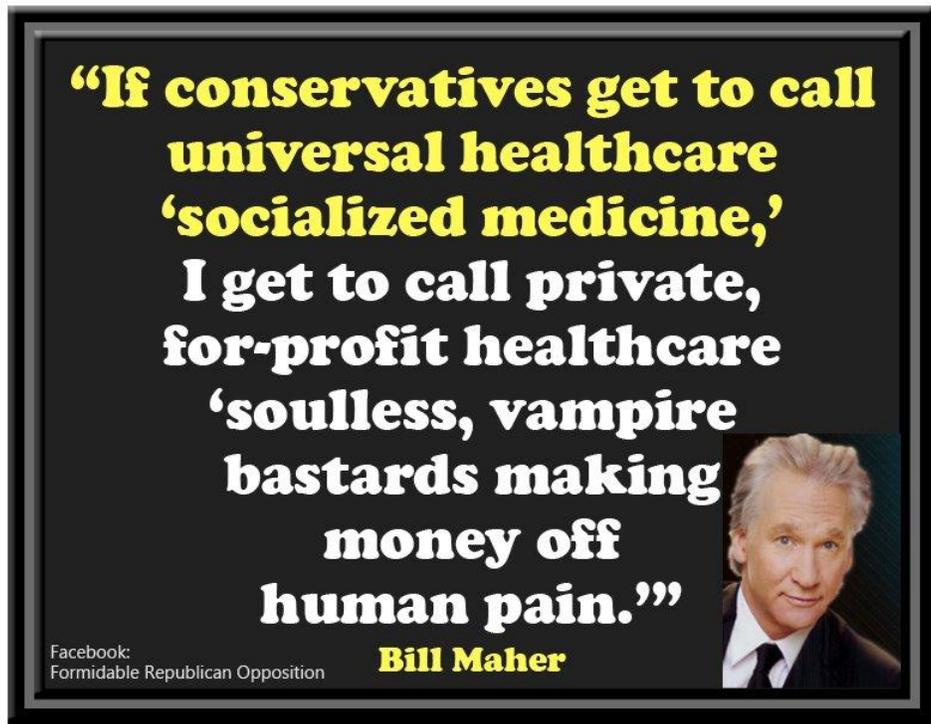
FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #131 — MAY 4, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Hey, Maybe Somebody Needs to Channel Ayn Rand!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 4, 2012)



Oh, I forgot, after talking to the Catholics, Paul Ryan has suddenly decided he's no longer a follower of Ayn Rand (see FotM Newsletter #127, "Paul Ryan Suddenly Does Not Embrace Ayn Rand's Teachings"). It is beginning to become apparent that none of Mr. Ryan's plans are workable, even for reducing the deficit, nor can they be passed into law. Isn't it time to get rid of the radical trash, our Republican friends?

"Henry Aaron, Inventor of Paul Ryan's Medicare Reform Concept, Explains Why It's Wrong" by Michael McAuliff, Huffington Post

May 3, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/03/henry-aaron-paul-ryan-medicare_n_1466826.html)

(WASHINGTON) The co-creator of the concept that Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) is relying upon to reform Medicare no longer thinks it will work. Henry Aaron, now of the Brookings Institution, got the chance to tell Ryan exactly why at a recent Capitol Hill hearing.

Aaron and former Urban Institute president Robert Reischauer came up with the idea of "premium support" in 1995, after the failure of then-First Lady Hillary Clinton's bid to reform the health care system.

The basic idea is simple: let people pick their health insurers in the private market, subsidize the premiums, and competition will drive down costs. That's the theory behind Ryan's plan, recently endorsed by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) in a white paper the two wrote.

It differs from Aaron's original vision -- in part because it has fewer protections for beneficiaries -- but the essential concept is the same. Aaron said this isn't the time to test it out.

"In the years since Bob Reischauer and I put this Idea forward, I've changed my mind," Aaron said at a hearing of the House Ways and Means Committee last week.

The big reason is that Aaron has seen no evidence since the two men came up with the idea that their assumptions have been borne out.

A key assumption was that the insurance industry or government would figure out how better to adjust risk among companies so that if one insurer suddenly was saddled with an unusually expensive population, it would share the costs with other insurers or the government. That would keep costs down because it removes some of the incentive to cherry-pick healthier customers or shun sicker ones.

But in the case of Medicare Advantage, similar to premium support in that Medicare pays a private insurer to cover someone, the attempts at risk adjustment have raised costs by about 8 percent, Aaron noted. On top of that, although there are many Medicare Advantage plans in existence, they are not cheaper than traditional Medicare, and there's little to suggest they will get cheaper.

"The evidence to date is not encouraging," Aaron said, noting a recent study that isolated the effects of competition on Medicare Advantage costs from government-related influences. "After controlling for all those factors, Medicare Advantage plans are more expensive than is traditional Medicare."

Aaron has not abandoned the idea of premium support for Medicare, if it can be figured out. He argued that rather than trying to do it right away, as Ryan and other proponents insist, policymakers should first see how it works for younger people -- as it is beginning to be applied in the health care reform law.

"The passage of the Affordable Care Act means we have put in place a key element of the premium support idea for the rest of the population, namely health insurance exchanges," Aaron said. "The Medicare population is vastly more difficult to deal with than the population under the Affordable Care Act. We should prove that the health insurance exchanges work, get them up and running before we take seriously, in my view, calls to put the Medicare population through a similar system."

Aaron also has a major problem with the way Ryan's plan contains costs -- by mandating that Medicare inflation be capped at no more than the growth of the Gross Domestic Product, plus 0.5 percent or 1 percent. Health care costs have escalated much faster than that, so premium support plans capped at a little more than GDP growth would buy smaller and smaller benefits.

Aaron also argued that there's another problem with trying to ensure a premium support model works -- it requires stringent regulation to make sure companies don't game the system. Aaron said he can't see that happening with a Congress fired by anti-regulatory zeal.

"The regulatory climate has changed," Aaron said. "It is far more hostile to the kinds of regulatory intervention that Bob Reischauer and I thought were essential."

Ryan, chairman of the House Budget Committee, did not engage Aaron in debate at last week's hearing, instead relying on one of Aaron's Brookings Institution colleagues, former White House Office of Management and Budget head Alice Rivlin to argue why premium support can work. (She said she believes strict oversight and risk adjustment can be done.) Ryan's office did not answer a request for comment.

Aaron's full testimony is here: <http://1.usa.gov/IFby6t>.

Video where he can be seen detailing his change of heart:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=IYdwMn1UA0s.

20120503-01	07:23	MarthaH	"Common Core Standards' Drive Wedge in Education Circles"
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"Common Core Standards' Drive Wedge in Education Circles" by Greg Toppo, USA TODAY

Apr. 28, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/story/2012-04-28/common-core-education/54583192/1>)

(WASHINGTON) When did fractions and non-fiction become so controversial?

A high-profile effort by a pair of national education groups to strengthen, simplify and focus the building blocks of elementary and secondary education is finally making its way into schools. But two years ahead of its planned implementation, critics on both the right and left are seizing upon it. A few educators say the new standards, supported by the U.S. Department of Education, are untested, and one Republican governor wants to block the measure, saying it's a federal intrusion into local decisions.

How did something so simple become so fraught?

The story begins in 2009, when the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers announced an effort to create voluntary national standards in math and reading. All but four states — Alaska, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia — quickly signed on to the standards, known as the Common Core, agreeing to help create then implement them by 2014. Their decision was helped partly by President Obama, who has tied "college and career-ready standards" to billions in federal grants. Last September, he all but required adoption of the Common Core or similar standards approved by state higher education officials if states want to receive federal waivers from the 2002 No Child Left Behind law. One of the four states, Virginia, applied for a waiver without adopting Common Core and is in negotiations with the administration over its plan.

That angered conservatives, who point out that even though adopting the Common Core is voluntary, Obama's moves make it all but obligatory. In February, Republican South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said she'd support a state legislative effort to block Common Core implementation — her predecessor had adopted the standards in 2010.

"Just as we should not relinquish control of education to the Federal government," she wrote in a letter to a state lawmaker, "neither should we cede it to the consensus of other states."

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan shot back with unusual candor, saying in a statement that Haley's fear of losing control is "a conspiracy theory in search of a conspiracy."

Also in February, Brookings Institution scholar Tom Loveless issued research calling into question whether the Common Core would have much of an effect. He noted that state standards have done little to equalize academic achievement within states. The reaction, he says, was "like putting my hand in a hornet's nest — people do have a strong reaction to the Common Core."

Last month, New York University education historian Diane Ravitch, a vocal Duncan critic, blasted the standards, writing in The New York Review of Books that they've never been field-tested. "No one knows whether these standards are good or bad, whether they will improve academic achievement or widen the achievement gap," she said.

Neal McCluskey of the libertarian Cato Institute, said concerns of lawmakers like Haley may have seemed far-fetched a few years ago — states voluntarily signed on to the standards, after all — but Obama's insistence on tying the Common Core to No Child waivers and billions in federal grants shows that "it is not the least bit paranoid" to say the federal government wants a national curriculum.

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten called those fears "ridiculous." Guidelines around core subjects don't constitute a national curriculum, she said, but are a simple way to boost skills. "We do our kids a disservice when we do not teach (them) to compete in a global economy," she said.

Weingarten said many teachers approve of the new standards, which "offer students the ability to think and persuade and communicate" rather than just fill in blanks on standardized tests. She and others point to recent surveys that show nearly two-thirds of teachers say it's better for states to have common math and English standards. But she frets that teachers won't get adequate training — and that they'll be judged harshly if their students don't measure up at first. "It has to be implemented with integrity so teachers can get their arms around it," she said.

David Coleman, one of the standards' authors, admits that they'll be "a major shift," requiring more history, arts and science in English and reading classes, for instance, and less fiction. But he says it's needed to correct a decade of watered-down lessons. The biggest problem with No Child's requirement that schools raise test scores each year was that it was "content-free," he said. The law "was merely saying, 'Test whatever you got.'"

Chester Finn, a former Reagan administration education official who now leads the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a Washington education think tank, said Common Core "sets a worthy destination for kids and teachers, which most states have failed to do on their own for many years." He actually thinks it could ease conservatives' fears of federal intrusion, because common goals and tests might prompt Washington to "back off on telling people how to run their schools."

But he said it's "a pity" that Obama insisted upon the Common Core, especially leading up to the 2012 elections. "The best thing the administration, or the Congress, for that matter, could do is to pretend that the Common Core doesn't exist."

Barbara Dzwonek, an elementary school English coach in Daly City, Calif., said the standards are "a step in the right direction because they are state-driven and based on the highest-quality research the field of education has to offer."

David Riesenfeld, a history teacher who has been using the standards since 2010, said they've "pretty significantly pushed me to think about how much I cover" each school year. Because they require more depth in just a few areas, he said, they've forced him to focus more on teaching students to read and write about a handful of "significant topics" in world history.

Riesenfeld, who teaches 10th-grade world history at Robert F. Wagner Jr. Secondary School for Art and Technology in Long Island City, N.Y., said he often relies on shorter passages and pushes students to read more closely and analytically — occasionally a class will spend an entire period breaking down a single paragraph. "In effect, they're learning how to use materials rather than just answer question a, b, c and d," he said.

As a result, Riesenfeld said, his history students often look and sound as if they're in an English class.

"What they're starting to do is begin to think, 'Well, he's really not going to give me the answer, so I've really got to figure out what's going on here.' "

A taste of newfangled word problems

New Common Core standards are due to roll out in 46 states by 2014. They're designed to get students ready for college and careers by requiring them to think, write and explain their reasoning. They also de-emphasize multiple-choice test questions in favor of written responses. Here's an example for New York City fifth-graders:

Old question: Randa ate $\frac{3}{8}$ of a pizza, and Marvin ate $\frac{1}{8}$ of the same pizza. What fraction of the pizza did Randa and Marvin eat?

- a. $\frac{5}{8}$
- b. $\frac{3}{8}$
- c. $\frac{1}{4}$
- d. $\frac{1}{2}$

(Answer: d)

New question: Tito and Luis are stuffed with pizza! Tito ate one-fourth of a cheese pizza. Tito ate three-eighths of a pepperoni pizza. Tito ate one-half of a mushroom pizza. Luis ate five-eighths of a cheese pizza. Luis ate the other half of the mushroom pizza. All the pizzas were the same size. Tito says he ate more pizza than Luis because Luis did not eat any pepperoni pizza. Luis says they each ate the same amount of pizza. Who is correct? Show all your mathematical thinking.

(Answer: Luis is right — both ate $1\frac{1}{8}$ of a pizza).

Source: New York City Department of Education

20120503-02	09:18	Art	Re: "Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #130)
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On the other hand they could just be stupid. Just say'n.

20120503-03	10:18	SteveG	Fw: Ultra Violet Action: Support Rachel Maddow
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from Ultra Violet:

Do you watch Meet the Press? If you do, you probably saw a stunning exchange on Sunday between Rachel Maddow and two Republicans--strategist Alex Castellanos and Rep. McMorris Rodgers (R-WA). Basically, Castellanos and McMorris Rodgers argued that women are not paid less than men--despite numerous studies showing that we are. Then Castellanos even argued that women are paid less because we don't work as hard.¹

It was really sad to see an exchange like this go down on what many people see as the single most revered political news show in history.

MSNBC host, Rachel Maddow, did not let them get away with it. Despite the fact that Castellanos was shouting her down and constantly interrupting her, she presented the facts, called out their hypocrisy on the issue and laid bare their sexist views. It was energizing and inspiring to see her speak out so forcefully about the truth and take on two people who're dangerously misrepresenting the plight of women today.

When women fearlessly speak truth to power, it's important to get their backs. Especially when political shows are dominated by men, and so few women are given an opportunity to appear. If enough of us take action and get her back, we can not only encourage her to keep speaking out--we also can show NBC that viewers everywhere want to see more strong women fighting for fairness and equality on TV. Can you sign this Thank You card to Rachel Maddow? We'll deliver it to her this week:

<http://act.weareultraviolet.org/sign/maddow/>

Encouraging women who speak out is important--more often than not, they are attacked and denigrated for doing so, take for example, Sandra Fluke.

And a new report from Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting shows that political talk shows are a particularly hostile environment for women. FAIR found that in an eight-month period, "men overwhelmingly dominated one-on-one interviews, at 86 percent: 228 male guests compared to 36 women. Meet the Press featured the fewest women, with just six female interviewees--three of whom were Rep. Michele Bachmann (R.-Minn.), the presidential candidate."²

Speaking out to support Maddow is important to show her we support her--but also to send a strong message to the producers of news shows like this.

And here's a great excerpt of Maddow taking on Castellanos from Sunday's Meet the Press:¹

Maddow: "The interruption is important, I think, because now we know, at least from both of your [Castellanos and McMorris Rodgers] perspectives, that women are not faring worse than men in the economy, that women aren't getting paid less for equal work. I think that's a serious difference in factual understanding of the world. But given that, some of us believe that women are getting paid less than men for doing the same work, there's something called the Fair Pay Act. There was a court ruling that said the statute of limitations, if you're getting paid less than a man, if you're subject to discrimination, starts before you know that discrimination is happening, effectively cutting off your recourse to the courts. You didn't know you were being discriminated against, you can't go.

"The first law passed by this administration is the Fair Pay Act to remedy that court ruling. The Mitt Romney campaign put you [McMorris Rodgers] out as a surrogate to talk -- to shore up people's feelings about this issue after they could not say whether or not Mitt Romney would've signed that bill. You're supposed to make us feel better about it. You voted against the Fair Pay Act. It's not about whether or not you have a female surrogate. It's about policy and whether or not you want to fix some of the structural discrimination that women really do face that Republicans don't believe is happening."

Please sign the Thank You card to Maddow today and we'll deliver before the week is over.

Thanks!

--Nita and Shauna, UltraViolet

¹"The Problem of 'Working from Different Facts'" The Maddow Blog, April 30, 2012, <http://maddowblog.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/04/30/11469316-the-problem-of-working-from-different-facts>.

²(Democratic) Women Remain Scarce On Sunday Talk Show Interviews, Media Matters, April 20, 2012, <http://mediamatters.org/blog/201204200004>.

20120503-04	13:14	SteveB	"Why Obama's Bin Laden Ad Drives Republicans Crazy"
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"Why Obama's Bin Laden Ad Drives Republicans Crazy" by Joe Conason, NationofChange

May 3, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-obama-s-bin-laden-ad-drives-republicans-crazy-1336052350>)

("Obama's cool order to kill bin Laden, in a moment of considerable risk to his presidency, finally debunked the decade of smears against Democrats as unpatriotic, wimpish, and unreliable.")



Nothing aggravates Republicans like seeing nasty, effective tactics upon which they have so long relied being turned against one of their candidates. So when Barack Obama's re-election campaign aired an ad celebrating the anniversary of Osama bin Laden's death — and suggesting that Mitt Romney wouldn't have achieved that objective — the right exploded with outraged protests.

Evidently, the feelings of longtime hatchet men like Bush-era party chair Ed Gillespie, ex-Bush flack Ari Fleischer and the editorial writers at The Wall Street Journal, to name a few, were really, really hurt — because the Obama campaign exploited a moment of national unity for partisan advantage.

"This is one of the reasons President Obama has become one of the most divisive presidents in American history," said Gillespie, now a Romney adviser.

To anyone with a functioning memory, however, this whining is implausible. So are the dire predictions that the president will somehow offend voters by claiming credit for whacking bin Laden (or by smacking Romney). During the Bush presidency, Republicans used precisely the same approach and worse, over and over, without fretting whether their words and ads were "divisive."

It began weeks after the 9/11 attacks, amid sincere pledges of patriotic cooperation from congressional Democrats, when Karl Rove told the Republican National Committee that their party would "go to the country on this issue" to win the midterm elections in 2002. They won a historic victory by sliming wounded Vietnam hero Max Cleland and former Air Force intelligence officer Tom Daschle as stooges of al-Qaida.

Bush's 2004 re-election campaign amplified the same themes, with advertising and pageantry at the Republican convention in New York City grossly exploiting 9/11, a series of conveniently timed terror "alerts" leading up to Election Day and repeated warnings by Vice President Dick Cheney that a Democratic victory would signal weakness to America's enemies.

And it persisted into the 2006 midterm, with Rove falsely portraying Democrats as limp-wristed "liberals" trying to "understand" Osama bin Laden.

Until that election, the rough Rovian style succeeded brilliantly — despite the fact that Bush and Cheney had actually allowed bin Laden and Mullah Omar to escape at Tora Bora. Obama's cool order to kill bin Laden, in a moment of considerable risk to his presidency, finally debunked the decade of smears against Democrats as unpatriotic, wimpish and unreliable.

By contrast, the Obama ad's brief rebuke of Romney is at least factual and accurate: Not only did he say what the ad quotes, but he also said that he wouldn't go into Pakistan to get bin Laden, which is what the mission required. Had the president followed Romney's policy recommendation, bin Laden would almost certainly still be at large.

"Even Jimmy Carter would have given that order," scoffed Romney in response. But he shouldn't be so quick to denigrate the former Democratic president, who entered the Navy during World War II and then served as a submarine officer until his honorable discharge in 1953. Somebody may compare Carter's service with Romney's own military record, which doesn't exist — and remind voters that he avoided the Vietnam draft with a pampered stint as a Mormon missionary, in France.

20120503-05	14:12	Charis	"19 Indigenous Communities Join Protest Against Road Through National Park in Bolivia"
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"19 Indigenous Communities Join Protest Against Road Through National Park in Bolivia", <http://www.erbol.com.bo/>

May 3, 2012, (<http://www.boliviabella.com/19-indigenous-communities-join-protest-against-road-through-national-park-in-bolivia.html>)

Natives of the TIPNIS (Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park) have begun a 700+ kilometer march from their communities in the northern state of Beni to the city of La Paz in protest against a road the Bolivian government plans to construct through their land. Today 19 additional communities announced they will join them.

This march is being undertaken by entire families including numerous babies and children. They expect to walk for 60 days or more in order to reach the seat of government. By law, the Bolivian government must consult native communities prior to making decisions regarding infrastructure in their territories. The TIPNIS natives claim they were not consulted prior to construction of this road, which began last year. In response, the government passed a "post-consultation" law (Law No. 222). This is the 9th protest march they have undertaken against the road, which is being funded by Brazil.

The protesters are enduring hardship, lack of food, cold and rainy weather, muddy roads, river crossings, and illness including severe colds and several cases of dengue. Children and babies are affected the most. Last year, 2 children died during the march and many children and adults became ill. Often they sleep in tents along the side of the road. They depend on donations of food, medications, clothing and blankets from nearby communities and supporters in cities such as Trinidad and Santa Cruz. Last year the marchers were violently repressed by government troops.

[A little tougher conditions for our local protesters than most Occupy Wall Streeters, though most are also, perhaps, more used to living outside. —SteveB]

20120503-06	15:05	SteveB	"Deport the GOP Establishment"
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"Deport the GOP Establishment" by Ann Coulter, *Human Events*

May 2, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51255>)

On no issue is the elite/American divide so great as on immigration. For decades, a majority of Americans have wanted to decrease immigration. Not just illegal immigration -- all immigration.

Nearly three times as many Americans support reducing immigration as want it to stay the same, according to Gallup polls. A grand total of 5 percent of the population want to increase legal immigration -- 10 times less than want to decrease it. I myself would like to deport the people responsible for our current immigration policies.

Our official policy is to turn away scientists in order to make room for illiterate Pakistani peasants who will drop out of high school to man coffee carts until deciding to plot a terrorist attack against the United States. That's this week's immigration poster boy, Najibullah Zazi.

Zazi's own step-uncle said of him: "He was a dumb kid, believe me." Our immigration officials said, WELCOME, ZAZI!... Oops, sorry Swedish scientists and nuclear engineers -- no room for you.

In February, Zazi pleaded guilty in a plot to bomb the New York City subway.

One of his co-conspirators, Zarein Ahmedzay, was welcomed from Afghanistan to America because he was willing to do a job no American would: drive a cab. Where are you going to find an American with a driver's license?

This week, a third accomplice, Adis Medunjanin, was convicted in the subway conspiracy. Medunjanin came from Bosnia and became an American citizen -- a priceless gift to *The New York Times*, which was then able to begin its article on his convictions: "An American citizen was convicted of a host of terrorism charges on Tuesday ..."

For this we can thank the late, lamented Teddy Kennedy, who altered our immigration laws in 1965 to ensure massive immigration from the Third World while severely limiting the number of Europeans who could come here.

And that's legal immigration. When it comes to illegal immigration, Americans are in a sputtering rage about politicians' obtuse refusal to address the problem.

Democrats look at immigration as a way to increase their voter rolls, and Republicans look at immigration as a way to get cheap labor for big business. Any Americans who disagree with our all-Third World immigration flow are called "racists."

This is why Democrats and establishment Republicans are desperate to talk Mitt Romney into flip-flopping on his immigration positions. He's with Americans.

In a novel thought, Romney proposes that we grant citizenship to people who would make America a better place, repeatedly saying that he would like to "staple a green card" to the diplomas of foreigners who receive Ph.D.s in math or the hard sciences. He may be the first national politician in two generations who thinks we should use legal immigration to get our average up.

It would be as if the University of North Carolina recruited only the top basketball players in the county, instead of - out of fairness -- taking players of all skill levels, and their relatives. What? They do that? Way to go, Carolina!

Romney is also one of the few politicians who acknowledge the danger of creating magnets for more illegal aliens streaming across the border.

During a primary debate last September, Romney said simply: "Of course we build a fence, and of course we do not give in-state tuition credits to people who come here illegally. That only attracts people to come here and take advantage of America's great beneficence." (These are the positions he took and enforced as governor of one of the most liberal states in the country.)

I would add that the absolute worst thing we could do is grant citizenship to illegal immigrant children brought here by their parents -- as the various DREAM acts do. What stronger magnet could we devise than offering citizenship to a person's children? (The parents will then become citizens, anyway, under our phony "family reunification" policy.)

Instead of drafting bills, such as the DREAM act, to give illegal aliens benefits, can't we all agree that the very first thing we have to do is seal the border? Otherwise, it's like mopping the floor before turning off the bathtub spigot.

First, turn off spigot; second, mop floor.

And surely no one wants any immigrants coming here and immediately going on welfare. (That would be like North Carolina actively recruiting the blind for their basketball team.) Can't we all agree not to give immigrants government handouts?

Starting with those two policies is not only logical, but will force Democrats to admit they have no intention of ever blocking the border. Their dearest desire is for immigrants to arrive, become dependent on government and start voting Democratic.

20120503-07	16:57	Pam	"Why Won't They Listen?"
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I could argue some of his points, but I think this guy is onto something. Emotion IS what rules us, but that doesn't make it infallible. We must educate our emotions, just as we educate our intellects. You might say, this is one of my core beliefs.

"Why Won't They Listen?" by William Saletan, *NYT Sunday Book Review* (review of *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, by Jonathan Haidt)

Mar. 23, 2012, (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/books/review/the-righteous-mind-by-jonathan-haidt.html?_r=1&emc=eta1)

(You're smart. You're liberal. You're well informed. You think conservatives are narrow-minded. You can't understand why working-class Americans vote Republican. You figure they're being duped. You're wrong.)

This isn't an accusation from the right. It's a friendly warning from Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist at the University of Virginia who, until 2009, considered himself a partisan liberal. In *The Righteous Mind*, Haidt seeks to enrich liberalism, and political discourse generally, with a deeper awareness of human nature. Like other psychologists who have ventured into political coaching, such as George Lakoff and Drew Westen, Haidt argues that people are fundamentally intuitive, not rational. If you want to persuade others, you have to appeal to their sentiments. But Haidt is looking for more than victory. He's looking for wisdom. That's what makes *The Righteous Mind* well worth reading. Politics isn't just about manipulating people who disagree with you. It's about learning from them.

Haidt seems to delight in mischief. Drawing on ethnography, evolutionary theory and experimental psychology, he sets out to trash the modern faith in reason. In Haidt's retelling, all the fools, foils and villains of intellectual history are recast as heroes. David Hume, the Scottish philosopher who notoriously said reason was fit only to be "the slave of the passions," was largely correct. E. O. Wilson, the ecologist who was branded a fascist for stressing the biological origins of human behavior, has been vindicated by the study of moral emotions. Even Glaucon, the cynic in Plato's *Republic* who told Socrates that people would behave ethically only if they thought they were being watched, was "the guy who got it right."

To the question many people ask about politics — Why doesn't the other side listen to reason? — Haidt replies: We were never designed to listen to reason. When you ask people moral questions, time their responses and scan their brains, their answers and brain activation patterns indicate that they reach conclusions quickly and produce reasons later only to justify what they've decided. The funniest and most painful illustrations are Haidt's transcripts of interviews about bizarre scenarios. Is it wrong to have sex with a dead chicken? How about with your sister? Is it O.K. to defecate in a urinal? If your dog dies, why not eat it? Under interrogation, most subjects in psychology experiments agree these things are wrong. But none can explain why.

The problem isn't that people don't reason. They do reason. But their arguments aim to support their conclusions, not yours. Reason doesn't work like a judge or teacher, impartially weighing evidence or guiding us to wisdom. It works more like a lawyer or press secretary, justifying our acts and judgments to others. Haidt shows, for example, how subjects relentlessly marshal arguments for the incest taboo, no matter how thoroughly an interrogator demolishes these arguments.

To explain this persistence, Haidt invokes an evolutionary hypothesis: We compete for social status, and the key advantage in this struggle is the ability to influence others. Reason, in this view, evolved to help us spin, not to help us learn. So if you want to change people's minds, Haidt concludes, don't appeal to their reason. Appeal to reason's boss: the underlying moral intuitions whose conclusions reason defends.

Haidt's account of reason is a bit too simple — his whole book, after all, is a deployment of reason to advance learning — and his advice sounds cynical. But set aside those objections for now, and go with him. If you follow Haidt through the tunnel of cynicism, you'll find that what he's really after is enlightenment. He wants to open your mind to the moral intuitions of other people.

In the West, we think morality is all about harm, rights, fairness and consent. Does the guy own the chicken? Is the dog already dead? Is the sister of legal age? But step outside your neighborhood or your country, and you'll discover that your perspective is highly anomalous. Haidt has read ethnographies, traveled the world and surveyed tens of thousands of people online. He and his colleagues have compiled a catalog of six fundamental ideas that commonly undergird moral systems: care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority and sanctity. Alongside these principles, he has found related themes that carry moral weight: divinity, community, hierarchy, tradition, sin and degradation.

The worldviews Haidt discusses may differ from yours. They don't start with the individual. They start with the group or the cosmic order. They exalt families, armies and communities. They assume that people should be treated differently according to social role or status — elders should be honored, subordinates should be protected. They suppress forms of self-expression that might weaken the social fabric. They assume interdependence, not autonomy. They prize order, not equality.

These moral systems aren't ignorant or backward. Haidt argues that they're common in history and across the globe because they fit human nature. He compares them to cuisines. We acquire morality the same way we acquire food preferences: we start with what we're given. If it tastes good, we stick with it. If it doesn't, we reject it. People accept God, authority and karma because these ideas suit their moral taste buds. Haidt points to research showing that people punish cheaters, accept many hierarchies and don't support equal distribution of benefits when contributions are unequal.

You don't have to go abroad to see these ideas. You can find them in the Republican Party. Social conservatives see welfare and feminism as threats to responsibility and family stability. The Tea Party hates redistribution because it interferes with letting people reap what they earn. Faith, patriotism, valor, chastity, law and order — these Republican themes touch all six moral foundations, whereas Democrats, in Haidt's analysis, focus almost entirely on care and fighting oppression. This is Haidt's startling message to the left: When it comes to morality, conservatives are more broad-minded than liberals. They serve a more varied diet.

This is where Haidt diverges from other psychologists who have analyzed the left's electoral failures. The usual argument of these psycho-pundits is that conservative politicians manipulate voters' neural roots — playing on our craving for authority, for example — to trick people into voting against their interests. But Haidt treats electoral success as a kind of evolutionary fitness test. He figures that if voters like Republican messages, there's something in Republican messages worth liking. He chides psychologists who try to "explain away" conservatism, treating it as a pathology. Conservatism thrives because it fits how people think, and that's what validates it. Workers who vote Republican aren't fools. In Haidt's words, they're "voting for their moral interests."

One of these interests is moral capital — norms, practices and institutions, like religion and family values, that facilitate cooperation by constraining individualism. Toward this end, Haidt applauds the left for regulating corporate greed. But he worries that in other ways, liberals dissolve moral capital too recklessly. Welfare programs that substitute public aid for spousal and parental support undermine the ecology of the family. Education policies that let students sue teachers erode classroom authority. Multicultural education weakens the cultural glue of assimilation. Haidt agrees that old ways must sometimes be re-examined and changed. He just wants liberals to proceed with caution and protect the social pillars sustained by tradition.

Another aspect of human nature that conservatives understand better than liberals, according to Haidt, is parochial altruism, the inclination to care more about members of your group — particularly those who have made sacrifices for it — than about outsiders. Saving Darfur, submitting to the United Nations and paying taxes to educate children in another state may be noble, but they aren't natural. What's natural is giving to your church, helping your P.T.A. and rallying together as Americans against a foreign threat.

How far should liberals go toward incorporating these principles? Haidt says the shift has to be more than symbolic, but he doesn't lay out a specific policy agenda. Instead, he highlights broad areas of culture and politics — family and assimilation, for example — on which liberals should consider compromise. He urges conservatives to entertain liberal ideas in the same way. The purpose of such compromises isn't just to win elections. It's to make society and government fit human nature.

The hardest part, Haidt finds, is getting liberals to open their minds. Anecdotally, he reports that when he talks about authority, loyalty and sanctity, many people in the audience spurn these ideas as the seeds of racism, sexism and homophobia. And in a survey of 2,000 Americans, Haidt found that self-described liberals, especially those who called themselves "very liberal," were worse at predicting the moral judgments of moderates and conservatives than moderates and conservatives were at predicting the moral judgments of liberals. Liberals don't understand conservative values. And they can't recognize this failing, because they're so convinced of their rationality, open-mindedness and enlightenment.

Haidt isn't just scolding liberals, however. He sees the left and right as yin and yang, each contributing insights to which the other should listen. In his view, for instance, liberals can teach conservatives to recognize and constrain predation by entrenched interests. Haidt believes in the power of reason, but the reasoning has to be interactive. It has to be other people's reason engaging yours. We're lousy at challenging our own beliefs, but we're good at challenging each other's. Haidt compares us to neurons in a giant brain, capable of "producing good reasoning as an emergent property of the social system."

Our task, then, is to organize society so that reason and intuition interact in healthy ways. Haidt's research suggests several broad guidelines. First, we need to help citizens develop sympathetic relationships so that they seek to understand one another instead of using reason to parry opposing views. Second, we need to create time for contemplation. Research shows that two minutes of reflection on a good argument can change a person's mind. Third, we need to break up our ideological segregation. From 1976 to 2008, the proportion of Americans living in highly partisan counties increased from 27 percent to 48 percent. The Internet exacerbates this problem by helping each user find evidence that supports his views.

How can we achieve these goals? Haidt offers a Web site, civilpolitics.org, on which he and his colleagues have listed steps that might help. One is holding open primaries so that people outside each party's base can vote to nominate moderate candidates. Another is instant runoffs, so that candidates will benefit from broadening their appeal. A third idea is to alter redistricting so that parties are less able to gerrymander partisan congressional districts. Haidt also wants members of Congress to go back to the old practice of moving their families to Washington, so that they socialize with one another and build a friendly basis on which to cooperate.

Many of Haidt's proposals are vague, insufficient or hard to implement. And that's O.K. He just wants to start a conversation about integrating a better understanding of human nature — our sentiments, sociality and morality — into the ways we debate and govern ourselves. At this, he succeeds. It's a landmark contribution to humanity's understanding of itself.

But to whom is Haidt directing his advice? If intuitions are unreflective, and if reason is self-serving, then what part of us does he expect to regulate and orchestrate these faculties? This is the unspoken tension in Haidt's book. As a scientist, he takes a passive, empirical view of human nature. He describes us as we have been, expecting no more. Based on evolution, he argues, universal love is implausible: "Parochial love . . . amplified by similarity" and a "sense of shared fate . . . may be the most we can accomplish." But as an author and advocate, Haidt speaks to us rationally and universally, as though we're capable of something greater. He seems unable to help himself, as though it's in his nature to call on our capacity for reason and our sense of common humanity — and in our nature to understand it.

You don't have to believe in God to see this higher capacity as part of our nature. You just have to believe in evolution. Evolution itself has evolved: as humans became increasingly social, the struggle for survival, mating and progeny depended less on physical abilities and more on social abilities. In this way, a faculty produced by evolution — sociality — became the new engine of evolution. Why can't reason do the same thing? Why can't it emerge from its evolutionary origins as a spin doctor to become the new medium in which humans compete, cooperate and

advance the fitness of their communities? Isn't that what we see all around us? Look at the global spread of media, debate and democracy.

Haidt is part of this process. He thinks he's just articulating evolution. But in effect, he's also trying to fix it. Traits we evolved in a dispersed world, like tribalism and righteousness, have become dangerously maladaptive in an era of rapid globalization. A pure scientist would let us purge these traits from the gene pool by fighting and killing one another. But Haidt wants to spare us this fate. He seeks a world in which "fewer people believe that righteous ends justify violent means." To achieve this goal, he asks us to understand and overcome our instincts. He appeals to a power capable of circumspection, reflection and reform.

If we can harness that power — wisdom — our substantive project will be to reconcile our national and international differences. Is income inequality immoral? Should government favor religion? Can we tolerate cultures of female subjugation? And how far should we trust our instincts? Should people who find homosexuality repugnant overcome that reaction?

Haidt's faith in moral taste receptors may not survive this scrutiny. Our taste for sanctity or authority, like our taste for sugar, could turn out to be a dangerous relic. But Haidt is right that we must learn what we have been, even if our nature is to transcend it.

(William Saletan, Slate's national correspondent, is the author of *Bearing Right: How Conservatives Won the Abortion War*.)

20120503-08	22:54	SteveG	"Lawmakers Push for Vote to Limit Post Office Closures"
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The post office is running in the red, the post office receives no tax money to operate, the post office is trying to get out of the red and the federal government is trying to keep them from cost cutting measures. Did I get something wrong?

[Remember too, that the Postal Service is losing money mainly because of the ridiculous retirement funding mandates Congress has saddled them with—in order to do the same thing Congress does with Social Security money—ROBBERY!. I say, let's get rid of Saturday delivery and let as many people keep their jobs and paying taxes, for now, as we can. —SteveB]

"Lawmakers Push for Vote to Limit Post Office Closures" by Emily Stephenson, Reuters/Yahoo! News

May 3, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/lawmakers-push-vote-limit-post-office-closures-002027964.html>)

(WASHINGTON) A bipartisan group of lawmakers is trying to drum up support in the House of Representatives to vote on a Senate-passed bill that would make it tougher for the Postal Service to close some facilities, in part by targeting representatives who may lose postal facilities and jobs in their districts.

The group hopes representatives who are concerned about the planned closures of post offices or mail processing sites under the Postal Service's own cost-cutting plan will join them in pressing House leadership to hold a vote on the Senate bill.

The new push comes as the Postal Service intends on May 15 to lift its months-long moratorium on postal closings. The closures would eliminate middle-class jobs at a time when the United States is still struggling with high unemployment.

Officials had put that moratorium in place to give Congress more time to pass a restructuring of the Postal Service, which has been losing billions of dollars each year. The postal service does not receive taxpayer dollars but relies on the sale of postage and other products to pay for its operations.

Democratic Representative Peter Welch said he and Republican Michael Grimm will begin when Congress returns from recess next week by talking with House members from states with Republican senators who voted for the Senate bill last week.

"There were 13 Republican senators who voted for this, and we think many of them represent rural areas," Welch said.

"That obviously indicates that the senators from those districts see the importance of rural delivery and the jobs."

The Postal Service lost more than \$3 billion in the last three months of 2011 due to low mail volumes, as consumers send more email, and to high labor and other costs. Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe has said the agency needs to cut \$20 billion in annual costs by 2015.

The Postal Service wants to close thousands of post offices and about 220 mail processing sites, but it has said it also needs congressional relief to get its costs under control.

The Senate last week passed a bipartisan bill that would boost protections for rural post offices, allow USPS to end Saturday mail delivery after two years, and let it use a surplus of about \$11 billion in a retirement account to offer retirement incentives to older workers.

The bill's authors, Independent Joe Lieberman, Democrat Thomas Carper, and Republicans Scott Brown and Susan Collins, wrote a letter this week to House Speaker John Boehner and other leaders urging them to bring a Postal Service bill to the floor.

House leaders have not scheduled a vote on postal legislation, and a bill from Republican Darrell Issa that passed his Oversight Committee more than six months ago is significantly different from the Senate version.

Supporters of the Senate bill hope lawmakers feeling pressure from coming closures will demand a vote on postal legislation.

Welch, a Vermont Democrat, said he is worried about the loss of service for rural residents if post offices close. A spokeswoman for Grimm, a New York Republican, said the potential closure of a mail processing site on Staten Island could cost jobs in his district.

Democrats in the House would likely back the Senate bill, Welch said. Representative Gerry Connolly said Thursday he had joined Welch's and Grimm's effort and had signed onto a letter to Speaker Boehner and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi urging a vote on the bill.

"Our challenge in the House is to get Republican support," Welch said. The letter to Boehner and Pelosi admits the Senate bill is "far from perfect" but says the legislation's changes would help the Postal Service avert layoffs and service cuts.

Issa, whose bill would create oversight groups to cut costs and close post offices, was critical of the Senate bill after it passed. Spokesmen for House Republican leadership have indicated that they do not think the Senate's reforms are sufficient.

"The House, led by Chairman Issa, is committed to passing legislation that offers the Postal Service a pathway to long-term solvency, not simply a bailout," Boehner spokesman Kevin Smith said in an email.

(Reporting by Emily Stephenson; Editing by Lisa Shumaker)

20120503-09	23:58	SteveG	America Has Been at War a Lot
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[But there's something wrong with the math here! –SteveB]

Lets be Honest!

The Revolutionary War - 1775-1783

The War of 1812 -1812-1814

The Mexican American War - 1836-1848

The American Civil War -1861-1865

The Spanish American War - 1897-1898

The Indian American Wars - 1775-1918

World War I -1914-1918

World War II - 1941-1945

Cold War 1945-1992

The Vietnam War - 1962-1973

The Invasion of Grenada - 1983-1984

The Invasion of Panama - 1989

Operation Desert Storm 1991-1992

Operation United Shield 1992-1995

Operation Determined Falcon 1998-1999

Operation Enduring Freedom 2001-2011

Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003-2011

Operation Freedom Falcon 2011-

We have been a country for 235 years.

&

WE HAVE BEEN AT WAR FOR

209 YEARS

FREE YOUR MIND and THINK

<http://www.kingfishermanor.com/Wildlife.html>



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #132 — MAY 7, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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INDEX: Click here.

Eliminate All Business Income Taxes

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 7, 2012)

Here's all the more reason to bite the bullet and do it, raising upper level individual income taxes to one than compensate. At the same time, foreign income and disbursed profits must be taxed. The company would pay the first, individual owners/shareholders would pay the second. These taxes are not a system that works in the best interest of the country, and are simply passed-on to clients and customers, who pay the hidden tax—what little that gets paid! Money that is invested in U.S. jobs should not be taxed, but the rich are going to have to, oh, cr*p, here it comes, pay more!

"The Corporate Tax Conundrum" by Laura Tyson, NationofChange

May 4, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/corporate-tax-conundrum-1336139203>)

The United States now has the highest statutory corporate-income tax rate among developed countries. Even after various deductions, credits, and other tax breaks, the effective marginal rate – the rate that corporations pay on new U.S. investments – remains one of the highest in the world.

In a world of mobile capital, corporate-tax rates matter, and business decisions about how and where to invest are increasingly sensitive to national differences. America's relatively high rate encourages US companies to locate their investment, production, and employment in foreign countries, and discourages foreign companies from locating in the US, which means slower growth, fewer jobs, smaller productivity gains, and lower real wages.

According to conventional wisdom, the corporate-tax burden is borne principally by the owners of capital in the form of lower returns. But, as capital becomes more mobile, relatively *immobile* workers are bearing more of the burden in the form of lower wages and fewer job opportunities. That is why countries around the world have been cutting their corporate-tax rates. The resulting "race to the bottom" reflects intensifying global competition for capital and technological knowhow to support local jobs and wages.

Moreover, a high corporate-tax rate is an ineffective and costly tool for producing revenues, owing to innovative financial transactions and legal tax-avoidance mechanisms. A company's legal residence and geographic sources of income can be and are manipulated for such purposes, and the incentives and scope for such manipulation are especially large in sectors where competitive advantage depends on intangible capital and knowledge – sectors that play a major role in the US economy's competitiveness.

In the absence of close and broad international cooperation, the US must join the race and lower its corporate-tax rate. A lower rate would strengthen incentives for investment and job creation in the US, and weaken incentives for tax avoidance. It would also reduce numerous efficiency-reducing distortions in the US tax code, including substantial tax advantages for debt financing over equity financing and for non-corporate businesses over corporate businesses.

But each percentage-point reduction in the corporate-tax rate would reduce federal revenues by about \$12 billion per year. These revenue losses could be offset by curtailing so-called "corporate-tax expenditures" – deductions, credits, and other special tax provisions that subsidize some economic activities while penalizing others – and broadening the corporate-tax base. Both President Barack Obama's plan for business-tax reform and the Simpson-Bowles deficit-reduction plan propose reducing such expenditures to pay for a reduction in the corporate-tax rate.

Corporate-tax expenditures narrow the base, raise the cost of tax compliance, and distort decisions about investment projects, how to finance them, what form of business organization to adopt, and where to produce. As Michael Greenstone and Adam Looney show in a just-released report, the resulting differences in effective tax rates for different kinds of business activity are substantial.

That said, if the goal of corporate-tax reform is to boost investment and job creation, broadening the tax base to pay for a lower rate could be counterproductive. Eliminating "special interest" loopholes, like tax breaks for oil and gas, or for corporate jets, would not yield enough revenue to pay for a meaningful rate cut. And curtailing accelerated depreciation, the manufacturing production deduction, and the R&D tax credit – which account for about 80% of corporate-tax expenditures – would involve significant tradeoffs.

Indeed, cutting these items to "pay for" a reduction in the corporate-tax rate could end up increasing the tax on corporate economic activity in the US. Eliminating accelerated depreciation for equipment would raise the effective tax rate on new investments; repealing the domestic-production deduction would increase the effective tax rate on US manufacturing; and rescinding the R&D tax credit would reduce investment in innovation.

Instead of cutting proven tax incentives for business investment, the US should offset at least some of the revenue losses from a lower corporate-tax rate by raising tax rates on corporate shareholders. Most countries that reduced their corporate-tax rates have followed this path, while the US has done the opposite.

At 15%, America's tax rates on dividends and capital gains are at historic lows, while the profit share of national income is at an all-time high. Defenders of low rates for capital owners argue that it minimizes "double" taxation of corporate income – first of the corporation and then of its shareholders. A lower corporate-tax rate would weaken this justification. Moreover, pension funds, retirement plans, and non-profit organizations, which receive about 50% of all corporate dividends, do not pay tax on these earnings, and would benefit from a lower corporate-tax rate.

Although individual taxes on corporate income reduce the after-tax return to savings, they have less distorting effects on investment location than corporate taxes do, and they are more likely to fall on owners of capital than on workers. Moreover, it is far easier to collect taxes from individual citizens and resident shareholders than from multinational corporations. Apple can use sophisticated techniques to manipulate the location of its corporate income, but individual US citizens who own Apple stock have to report the dividends and capital gains that they earn from it in their worldwide income.

A recent study found that taxing capital gains and dividends as ordinary income, subject to a maximum 28% rate on long-term capital gains (the pre-1997 rate), could finance a cut in the corporate-tax rate from 35% to 26%. Such a change would reduce corporations' incentives to move investments abroad or shift profits to low-tax jurisdictions, while increasing the progressivity of tax outcomes by shifting more of the burden of corporate taxation from labor to capital owners.

An increase in the corporate-tax rate appeals to many US voters who believe that corporations are not paying their fair share of taxes and are worried about widening income inequality. But, in a world of mobile capital, raising the corporate tax rate – or simply leaving it at its current level – would be a bad way to generate revenue, a bad way to increase the tax system's progressivity, and a bad way to help American workers.

[20120504-01](#) 09:05 Cândida Video: U.S. State Dept. Gives \$3 Million to Ski Capitol Andorra Thinking It's a Poor, African Country

ahahahahahahahahhaahha

Can you believe it?

Abraço.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AP22Ys8_ro

[20120506-06](#) 07:25 SteveB Re: U.S. State Dept. Gives \$3 Million to Ski Capitol Andorra (reply to Cândida, above)

Andorra...er...that's in Africa, right?

OMFG! Why don't they just send you or me a few \$million??? Couldn't we tell the State Department that your town is a country near, say, Afghanistan?

OK, that's the European view, here's the Onion's:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3q_igrvnC_4.

[20120504-02](#) 10:38 SteveG Graphic: We Are the 99%

We are the 99%

- We are not against the rich. We are against using wealth to gain an unfair advantage.
- We are not against corporations. We are against corporations governing us.
 - We are not against capitalism. We are against corruption in capitalism.
- We are not against banks. We are against fraudulent banking practices.
 - We are not against investment markets. We are against legalized fraud in the markets.
- We are not against democracy. We are against the sale of influence by our elected representatives.

The socialist policies of Pelosi, Reed and Obama has done more to enrich their friends and family and suppress the masses. And they are depending on fools like you to direct their anger toward the opposition.

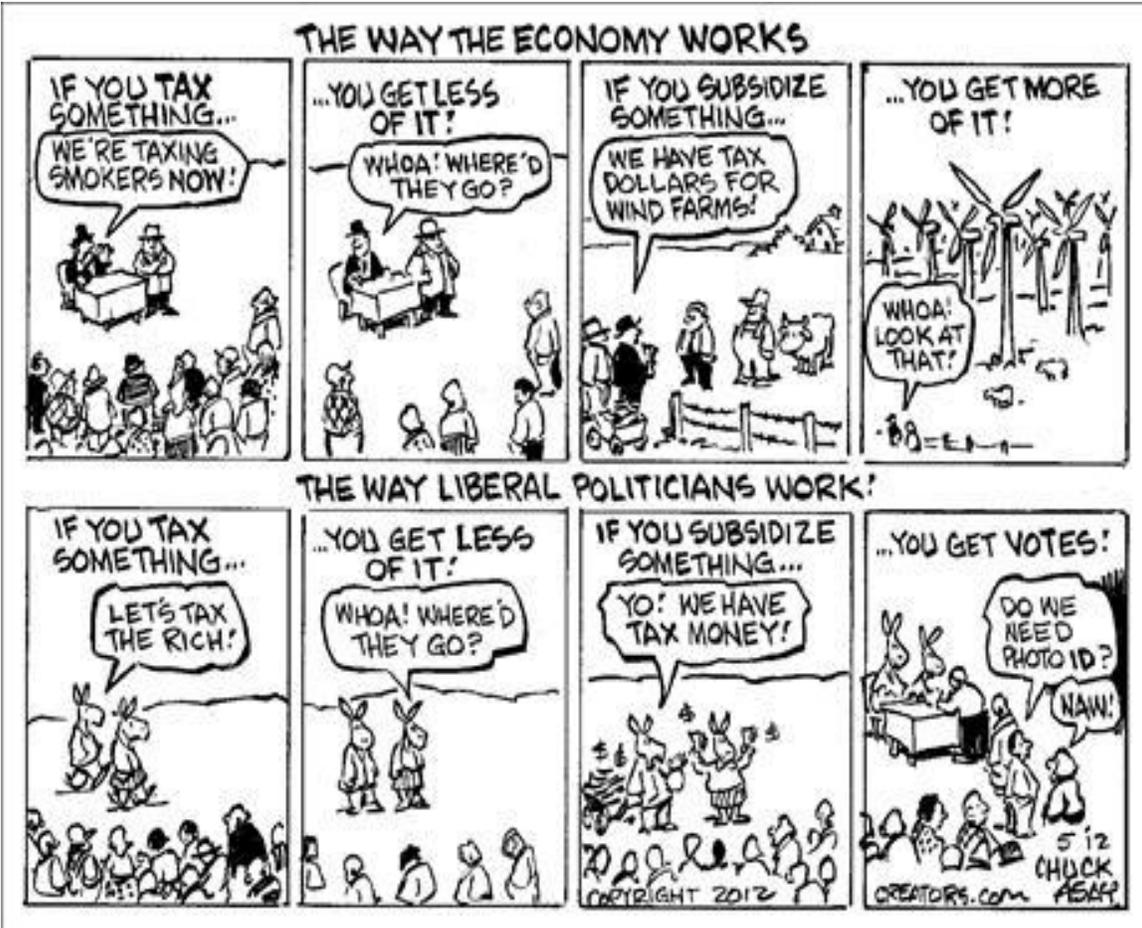
Think about that!

"Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end." —Unknown

That's all folks.

The food stamp program, part of the Department of Agriculture, is pleased to be distributing the greatest amount of food stamps ever.

Meanwhile, the Park Service, also part of the Department of Agriculture, asks us to "please do not feed the animals" because the animals may grow dependent and not learn to take care of themselves.



The FotM Archive is finished and published, thanks to you all! Check it out at the links below. It's a big file and might load slowly, which is why it's better to copy it to your own computer. Occasionally, browsers will load a PDF file, then fault upon trying to open it. If you get an error message, just select "Reload Page" and the file will open immediately.

Have a great weekend! Here's the introduction:

Introduction and Excuses

This is a project I embarked upon six months ago, and that's just the editing part—an average of probably 15-20 hours a week. I wanted to do justice to special writing that comes from the hearts of friends, and I guess I'm just slow sometimes. :-)

The project has certainly been no chore. Instead, it has been fun and interesting, communication usually is. I have learned more than in the original moments of the emails because I've had time to reread and rethink things. I've appreciated that time.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this effort. To my wife, **Marcela**, who has brought me coffee, coca tea, and grilled cheese sandwiches at odd hours, so I could keep working, I offer you the love of our first kiss, which continues and grows, and I thank you for your help in all things.

The most important group of people for me to thank are the members of Friends of the Middle who have contributed their thoughts and feelings and a little part of their lives to this effort. Not that anyone knew, until maybe the very end of these emails, that they were doing anything remotely like contributing to some future e-book project. No, they were engaged in a higher purpose, simply trying to communicate with a friend. These are special people, also smart, knowledgeable, successful people, and that's why this project is so special. This compilation resulted from these people doing something to try to make the world a little better place, a world that might find the answers to its problems if led by people who care as much.

Thank you all, my friends! Thank you **Pam**, who has probably written the most words of any of us and they are thoughtful, well-written words, indeed; **SteveM**, who essentially ended my apolitical years by sending me emails that pi*sed me off, our argument continues, but we can't forget the great times we had traveling coast-to-coast when we were young enough to need to learn everything; **Dennis**, who kept sending me things that almost always made sense, even though I began thinking of him as a conspiracy theorist, but I finally concluded in the end at last that it's way past the conspiracy stage; **SteveG**, who has probably introduced us all to more good sources, information, and causes than anyone; **GaryC**, who wrote more interestingly from a conservative perspective than most of us have seen anywhere, he can make the Right seem almost logical, I swear; **Charis**, who welcomed me as a friend to a new and strange land and loves writing almost as much as I do; **India**, who took me around the world with her.

Thank you all so much for the words you have written and the treasures you have led us all to: **AliceMarie, Art, Ben, Bill, Bob, BobK, BrentR, Charlie, Clark, Dale, DaveY, David, Dick, GaryF, Jim, Larry, Lianne, Marci, Marissa, Mark, Mary, Mike, SteveBA, Pat, PamB, Patti, Paul, Paula, Phil, RickF, Robert, Sandy, Susette, Tom, and Trudy.**

Many more contributors have stepped up to the plate since the time of this compilation and I can assure all these writers that they will appear in future e-books (the FotM Newsletter monthly compilations).

The other group to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude is our F0tM Newsletter subscribers and readers, who now number almost 400 and growing. Everyone, please keep forwarding the FotM Newsletters to everyone in your Contacts List and, now, the link to this free FotM e-book!

Someone might ask: Why would anyone want to read 1856 emails and articles in 44 categories, consisting of about 977,000 words (roughly half from FotM members and half from sources), in a 1550 page, 20 Mb., PDF e-book? Simple! Because, for most of us, this was the first opportunity we had to describe a sort of philosophy of life for ourselves. It's all here. Who we are. What we value. What we want to change. What we fear. What our hopes and

dreams of the future are. What we believe in and do not believe in. For those who know any of us or will, for our grandchildren and the future, I wish I had something like this from my parents...maybe as good as a video. For everyone else, the subject matter is one that will, I believe, prove to be a crucial time in American history, from 2007 through 2011 and into 2012 with the FotM Newsletters. Frankly, many of us hope this will prove to be the beginning of the transition away from the failed policies of both major political parties during most of our lifetimes.

And, as I have often told people as I have worked on this project, the end result is an undergraduate education in the inner workings of the Current Events of this important four year period. Few on the Right or the Left could read it cover-to-cover and not come away with an altered view of what's going on in America this century.

Political Inbox: 2007-2011 contains many valuable little treasures: President Obama's birth certificate and Inaugural Address, "William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech, The Treaty of Tripoli, which answers the question of whether the U.S. was founded as a Christian nation. Articles by famous people like Mitt Romney, Robert Reich, Alan Grayson, Noam Chomsky, Bill Moyers, Oliver North, Christopher Hitchens, and many, many more. The short period covered encompasses a lot of history: two important elections, the election of our first black president, the formation of the Tea Party, the Housing Bubble Crash of 2008, the Bail-Out, the passage of Obamacare, the transfer of power from the Republicans to the Democrats, then back to the Tea Party Republicans in the House, the stalemate, gridlock, and near default of the government, coming out of Recession, and, at last, the beginnings of a slow Recovery.

Lest I continue on and overstate my case, instead, please allow me to apologize for many lost emails, especially from the early period, many that I simply deleted, not having imagined this compilation or FotM. But, even then, if I or a friend wrote very much on any non-personal subject, or sent something very interesting, I tended to keep them. Much of the stuff I deleted was redundant material, most of the rest was personal. I probably received every one of the Obama attack emails from the Right at least a dozen times and tried to reflect a little of that in these pages. In very few cases does anything missing affect that which remains. Where that was the case, I have usually provided a few notes to compensate: **[This is a note. —SteveB]**.

As time passed and the vision became clearer, I started saving just about everything, though most communications of an entirely personal nature do not appear in this compilation and, obviously, except in my own case, User Names protect the identities of FotM Members and Subscribers.

I can't explain the strange lull in email activity about and around the 2010 elections, other than to say we must have all felt a collective sense of dread that suppressed communications in that direction. Maybe we all knew, so nothing needed to be said, maybe I got discouraged and tossed it all, but I can't remember doing any such thing, nor would that be like me.

A Few Technical Things About *Political Inbox: 2001-2011*

1. To read this e-book online: http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org/Political_Inbox_2007-2011.pdf/.
2. To download this e-book: <http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org/>. <right-click> on the picture of the e-book and, depending on which browser you use, select "Save Target as..." or "Save Link as..." Then you can change the name of the file and determine where to store it on your computer. Alternatively, if you open the PDF file in your browser (#1, above) or using the Adobe Acrobat Reader, you can select the picture of a disk to save the file.
3. Email: FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com.
4. There are two hyperlinked indexes. The first contains only the 44 subject matter categories and links to the main index of all emails segregated by category and arranged mainly by date, oldest first, but also by logical thread. All related links go back and forth. After you jump to an email, clicking that date code will take you back to that entry in the index.
5. In the body of the compilation, all emails appear strictly by date and time, oldest through news.

6. To navigate, click on Category Headings (back and forth between the two indexes) and Date Codes (back and forth between the main index and the emails. Red links are internal to this document, blue links connect to the internet.

7. Here is how the date codes work: DATE-ID = YYYYMMDD-##.

8. Training Link: [20120504-01](#). Try it, then jump back here. (If you're computer savvy, please excuse.)

9. See? It's very easy to get around and not get lost. Alternately, it can be enjoyable to skip the index and simply read the emails and articles in any order you like.

10. Many of the SUBJECT lines of the original emails have been changed to unify and better represent the contents of the particular THREADS of conversation.

11. Organizing the Categories and their emails is as much a work of art as a science. The largest categories ended-up being, basically, Economics and Taxes. I left these Categories broad because it's too often a toss-up, since many related subjects can be touched upon in any one email or article. Some Categories are very small, but they have very distinctive subject matter, so I tried to accommodate. I hope you will find the index easy to use. These same categories, approximately, will be used when the daily FotM Newsletter indexes are combined and organized into the monthly compilations.

12. As usual, please try to inform me of errors, inconsistencies, confusions, or any other problems that you find.

Salud! And, as Alan Grayson says, Courage!

--Steven W. Baker (SteveB)

FotM Editor/Moderator

FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>

Conviction's Lies

To enter the realm of truth
Certainty must be left behind
With all the other forgotten
And lost things of this world
Neither hope nor love among them
Though bright beyond all imagining
Remember conviction's lies.

©1997,2012 Steven W. Baker

20120504-07	19:59	Tom	Re: The First FotM E-Book: <i>Political Inbox: 2007-2011</i> (reply to SteveB, above)
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Steve, really.... You have too much time on your hands! ;-) thanks!

20120504-06	19:54	SteveG	"Can Going Without Money Hurt the Economy? One Man's Quest to Be Penniless"
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Worth a read for all of us.

"Can Going Without Money Hurt the Economy? One Man's Quest to Be Penniless" by Abby Ellin, ABC News/Good Morning America/Yahoo! News

May 3, 2012, (<http://gma.yahoo.com/going-without-money-hurt-economy-one-mans-quest-211049892--abc-news-topstories.html>)

(Daniel Suelo is 51 years old and broke. Happily broke. Consciously, deliberately, blessedly broke.)

Not only does he not have debt, a mortgage or rent, he does not earn a salary. Nor does he buy food or clothes, or own any product with a lower case "i" before it. Home is a cave on public land outside Moab, Utah. He scavenges for food from the garbage or off the land (fried grasshoppers, anyone?). He has been known to carve up and boil fresh road kill. He bathes, without soap, in the creek.

In the fall of 2000, Suelo (who changed his name from Shellabarger), decided to stop using money altogether. That meant no "conscious barter," food stamps or other government handouts. His mission was to "use only what is freely given or discarded and what is already present and already running," he wrote on his web site, Zero Currency.

The question many people wonder: Is he insane, or a mooch, or simply dedicated to leading a simple, honest, dare we say, Christ-like existence?

They're good questions. And depending whom you ask, the answers vary.

Suelo wasn't always a modern-day caveman. He went to the University of Colorado and studied anthropology, at one point considering medical school. He lived in a real house, with four walls, a window and a door, and shopped in stores, not their dumpsters.

But over time he says he grew depressed, clinically depressed, mainly with the focus on acquisition. "Every time I made a resume for a job, signed my name to a document, opened a bank account, or even bought a banana at the supermarket, I felt a tinge of dishonesty," he said.

He was born into an Evangelical Christian home in Grand Junction, Colo., and took his religion seriously. Eventually, he started wondering why "professed Christians rarely followed the teachings of Jesus--namely the Sermon on the Mount, namely giving up possessions, living beyond credit and debt--freely giving and freely taking--giving, expecting nothing in return, forgiving all debts, owing nobody a thing, living beyond payback of either evil-for-evil or good-for-good, living and walking without guilt (debt), without grudge (debt), without judgment (credit & debt), living by Grace, by Gratis, not by our own works but by the works of the true Nature flowing through," he said.

Although he considered himself a Christian, he discovered that the same principles applied to Taoism, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, Mormonism, Shamanism, and Paganism.

One year he went to Alaska and worked on the docks. But that, too, he says, felt dishonest. Instead, he and a buddy decided to live off the land—spearing fish, foraging for mushrooms and berries. (Think *Castaway*, but with snow). Suelo (which means soil in Spanish) eventually hitch-hiked back to Moab with \$50 in his pocket. By the time he arrived, his stash had dwindled to \$25. He realized that he only needed money for things he really didn't need, like snacks and booze.

He began toying with the idea of living full-time without money. He traveled to India, and became fascinated by Hindu Sadhus, who wandered without lucre and possessions. He considered joining them, but then he realized that "A true test of faith would be to return to one of the most materialistic, money-worshipping nations on earth, to return to the authenticity profound principles of spirituality hidden beneath our own religion of hypocrisy, and be a Sadhu there," he said. "To be a vagabond, a bum, and make an art of it - this idea enchanted me."

And soon, that's exactly what he did. He says he left his life savings—a whopping \$30—in a phone booth, and walked away.

But he didn't do it in a vacuum; he maintained his blog for free from the Moab public library. Rather than just sitting on a mountain and gazing at his navel, he wanted to have an impact on others, to spread his gospel.

In 2009, Mark Sundeen, an old acquaintance he'd worked with at a Moab restaurant, heard about Suelo through mutual friends. At first, "I thought he must have lost his mind," Sundeen, 42, said in a telephone conversation. But then he began reading his blog, and grew intrigued. Sundeen divides his time between Missoula, Mont., and Moab, where he was once a river guide, and he paid a visit to Suelo's cave.

Gradually, he said he realized that much of what Suelo was saying made a whole lot of sense. This was right around the time the economy crashed, and "It felt like a lot of what he was saying was prophetic," said Sundeen. "That money is an illusion, an addiction. That resonated with me after the collapse for the economy."

Sundeen was so intrigued that he decided to write a book about Suelo, *The Man Who Quit Money*, which was published in March.

While the book reviews have been generally positive, Suelo has come under fire by some who say he's a derelict, sponging off society without contributing. They are valid criticisms: This is a guy, after all, who has gotten a citation for train hopping (what would Jesus say about that?). And he's not opposed to house sitting in winter—not exactly living off the land.

And besides: How is he actually helping others by going without? It's not like he's solving world hunger, or curing cancer.

Sundeen disputes these arguments. "He doesn't accept any government programs—welfare, food stamps, Medicare," he said. "The only ways in which he actually uses taxpayer funded derivatives is walking on roads and using the public library. So in that regard he's a mooch—he's using the roads and not paying taxes. But if you try to quantify the amount of money he's taking from the system—it's a couple of dollars a year, less than anyone's ever used."

Instead, he is actively promoting "his idea that money is an illusion," Sundeen said. "The Fed just prints it up, it doesn't mean anything and it's going to lead us down the road to serfdom." Suelo simply doesn't want to contribute to that, and so he lives life on his own terms.

That said, Sundeen wouldn't live the way Suelo does. "The appeal to me is the living outdoors part, but I feel like I got my feel of that working as an Outward Bound guide," he said. "At this point I have other priorities."

Suelo, for his part, has no plans to bring money back into his life. "I know it's possible to live without money," he said. "Abundantly."

20120505-01	05:58	MarthaH	"Lugar Says He Needs Help – Fast"
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"Lugar Says He Needs Help – Fast" by Mary Beth Schneider and Chris Sikich, *Lafayette Journal-Courier*

May 5, 2012, (<http://www.jconline.com/article/20120505/NEWS/305040018/Lugar-says-he-needs-help-fast>)

Sen. Richard Lugar's campaign came down to one word Friday: "help."

In the political equivalent of an SOS, the Navy veteran urged Hoosiers of any political persuasion who like what he's done in his 36-year career in the Senate to help him stay there.

"Every person in Indiana who wants me to continue, every person wherever they might be at this point, I encourage them to come out," he said. "Come out immediately, as fast as you can."

The reason for the urgency: The primary election is Tuesday, and a new poll shows state Treasurer Richard Mourdock defeating Lugar, 48 percent to 38 percent.

That's a dramatic slide for Lugar, who won in 2006 with more than 80 percent of the vote after Democrats didn't field a candidate against him. Only a month ago, another Howey/DePauw Indiana Battleground poll showed Lugar leading Mourdock, 42 percent to 35 percent.

Robert Dion, a University of Evansville political science professor, summed it up simply: "devastating."

Mourdock's campaign spokesman, Chris Conner, said the poll -- taken Monday and Tuesday of 700 likely GOP primary voters statewide, with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points -- confirms what that campaign has believed:

"Hoosiers are tired of Senator Lugar's willingness to support liberal causes in Washington, they feel he is out of touch with the values they hold dear and they firmly believe it is time for a change."

The usually staid Lugar was animated as he made his last-ditch appeal at his Broad Ripple headquarters while volunteers called voters to urge their support.

As a bell rang each time a volunteer won a commitment from a voter, Lugar pleaded with groups that he has helped over the years to now help him salvage his political career.

They needed, he said, to "come forward and visibly give their support." He cited farmers he had boosted with agriculture legislation and fights against regulations. He called on "working men and women," saying his ties with business and labor are needed to create jobs.

He appealed to veterans, Jewish voters who cared about his work to help Russian Jews, women who might have benefited from his program to build political networks and minority students who were helped by his scholarship program.

In Indiana, voters do not register by party. Anyone voting in the primary election can ask for a Republican or Democratic ballot. While they can be challenged if they are known to be a member of the other party, it's difficult to prove that someone hasn't had an election day conversion.

"I believe that right now, if a majority of Hoosiers were to vote in an election -- that is, all Hoosiers regardless of party, Republicans, Democrats, independents -- I would win," Lugar said. "I'm not asking anybody to cross over. I'm just saying positively, 'Register your vote, because if you do not, I may not be able to continue serving you. At this point, help.'"

And he pulled out one final weapon: Mourdock, he argued, is not qualified.

"I'm just saying as positively as I can: Do not elect an unqualified person to serve in the Senate," he said.

Citing his work on national security, jobs, farm issues and budget cutting, Lugar said: "If you're a Hoosier and you're genuinely interested in these problems, please vote for somebody who is actually on the job doing it and will continue doing it effectively."

He blamed the hole he is in on millions of dollars in attacks against him made by outside groups whose support has helped Mourdock erase what otherwise would have been a substantial cash advantage for Lugar.

Defending his own negative ads against Mourdock, Lugar said that "after you take millions of dollars of hits, day in and day out, at least somebody ought to say Mr. Mourdock simply is unqualified to handle the complex situations in our world today."

Lugar, though, got no help from Gov. Mitch Daniels on this issue. Daniels, who got his start in politics working for Lugar and is backing Lugar in TV ads, said Friday that Mourdock is "a thoroughly credible person who is a friend and ally of mine."

Lugar's charge that Mourdock cannot be effective if he isn't willing to work across party lines crystallizes the differences between them, Mourdock said.

"I want Republicans to be the majority so that we don't have to be working with the other side, hoping to pick one off now and then," Mourdock said. "I want to build the Republican Party, and he wants to try to count on winning a few votes when he needs them from the other side."

Democrats, though, said that attitude is one reason they think their candidate, U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly, can win in November if Republicans nominate Mourdock.

Indiana Democratic Party Chairman Dan Parker pointed to the poll's finding that 60 percent of the likely GOP primary voters polled want a senator to focus on trying to solve the nation's problems, "even if that means working with elected officials across the aisle to do it."

Only 30 percent of those polled preferred their senator to focus first on standing up for conservative principles, even if that meant rejecting bipartisanship to solve problems.

That, Parker said, is "the one number in this primary poll that tells me the matchup for Joe Donnelly against Mourdock is going to be a good one."

"He is a tea party fringe candidate, whether they want to rebrand him or not," Parker said. "He has a strident ideology that's not going to fit well with the general election."

A trio of academics -- Dion, at the University of Evansville; Andy Downs, at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne; and Leslie Lenkowsky, at IU -- all said Lugar still can win. Primary elections, they noted, are notoriously difficult to gauge because the outcome is heavily dependent on voter turnout.

"It's a long shot, but I certainly wouldn't rule it out," Downs said.

Lenkowsky, who only a couple of weeks ago predicted a Lugar win, said the appeal to independent voters may make a difference despite the clear deficit Lugar faces. And the poll, Dion said, could have an impact, galvanizing people who otherwise might not have voted.

"Man, the million-dollar question is: Who gets energized by this?" he said. "The tea party people are already whipped into a lather, so you can't get more excited than they are now. The kind of slow, sober-minded traditional Republican may decide that it's time to go the polls and bring a friend."

20120505-03	08:21	Art	Re: "Lugar Says He Needs Help – Fast" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Congratulations, Indiana has now reached the level of South Carolina.

20120505-02	06:47	MarthaH	"Researchers Find Time in Wild Boosts Creativity, Insight & Problem Solving"
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What I already knew!

"Researchers Find Time in Wild Boosts Creativity, Insight, and Problem Solving" Brendan Lynch, University of Kansas (KU) News Service

Apr. 23, 2012 (<http://www.news.ku.edu/2012/april/23/outdoors.shtml>)

(LAWRENCE, Ks.) There's new evidence that our minds thrive away from it all.

Research conducted at the University of Kansas concludes that people from all walks of life show startling cognitive improvement — for instance, a 50 percent boost in creativity — after living for a few days steeped in nature.

Ruth Ann Atchley, whose research is featured in this month's Backpacker magazine, said the "soft fascination" of the natural world appears to refresh the human mind, offering refuge from the cacophony of modern life.

"We've got information coming at us from social media, electronics and cell phones," said Atchley, associate professor and chair of psychology at KU. "We constantly shift attention from one source to another, getting all of this information that simulates alarms, warnings and emergencies. Those threats are bad for us. They sap our resources to do the fun thinking and cognition humans are capable of — things like creativity, or being kind and generous, along with our ability to feel good and be in a positive mood."

The researcher said that nature could stimulate the human mind without the often-menacing distractions of workaday life in the 21st-century.

"Nature is a place where our mind can rest, relax and let down those threat responses," said Atchley. "Therefore, we have resources left over — to be creative, to be imaginative, to problem solve — that allow us to be better, happier people who engage in a more productive way with others."

Atchley led a team that conducted initial research on a backpacking trip in Utah with the Remote Associates Test, a word-association exercise used for decades by psychologists to gauge creative intelligence. Her fellow researchers included Paul Atchley, associate professor of psychology at KU, and David Strayer, professor of cognition and neural science at the University of Utah.

Intrigued by positive results, the researchers partnered with Outward Bound, the Golden, Colo.-based nonprofit that leads educational expeditions into nature for people of many backgrounds. About 120 participants on outings in places like Alaska, Colorado and California completed the "RAT" test.

"We worked with a number of backpacking groups that were going out last summer," Ruth Ann Atchley said. "Four backpacker groups took the test before they hit the trail, and then four different groups did it on the fourth day just like we had done before. The data across age groups — regular folks from age 18 into their 60s — showed an almost 50 percent increase in creativity. It really worked in the sense that it was a well-used measure and we could see such a big difference in these two environments."

Best of all, she said that the benefits of nature belong to anyone who delves completely into wilderness for an amount of time equivalent to a long weekend.

"There's growing advantage over time to being in nature," said Ruth Ann Atchley. "We think that it peaks after about three days of really getting away, turning off the cell phone, not hauling the iPad and not looking for internet coverage. It's when you have an extended period of time surrounded by that softly fascinating environment that you start seeing all kinds of positive effects in how your mind works."

[20120506-08](#)

12:07

SteveB

Re: "Researchers Find Time in Wild Boosts Creativity, Insight & Problem Solving (reply to MarthaH, above)

I agree! It sure always seems to help my frame of mind...

It's ne of the reason I live here...though Montana had plenty of wilderness within walking distance of my house! And, as a kid in Indiana, I would seek out the deserted, empty places that remained and that still remain, just to

see what they were like...and maybe to see if my courage would hold... (Though my favorite is gone—between Blackstock and the old stone quarry near the Big Walnut.)

[20120505-04](#) 11:20 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Action: Have an Idea for a petition? Start Your Own!

from MoveOn:

Have you ever heard the story of how MoveOn started? In 1998, when Newt Gingrich and the Republicans in Congress were focusing all of their efforts on impeaching President Clinton over a sex scandal, we started a simple online petition: "Censure President Clinton and Move On to Pressing Issues Facing the Nation."

We had no past political experience, but we felt passionately about our message and shared the petition with as many of our friends as we could think of. Within days, the petition went viral, and we had hundreds of thousands of signatures. And from the list of people who signed that original petition grew MoveOn.org—an organization of 7.5 million members and a powerful progressive force in American politics.

Because we've seen firsthand how regular people can make a difference, we're thrilled that MoveOn has launched a new website called SignOn.org where anyone can start their own online petitions. MoveOn will even email out the most popular petitions to help build support for your cause—and as always we'll never ever sell your personal information to anyone.

Click here to start your own petition on SignOn.org right now:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=263094&id=40732-20195165-bzw9Utx&t=1>.

As always, thanks for all you do.

—Wes Boyd & Joan Blades, Founders of MoveOn.org

[20120505-05](#) 11:53 SteveG Fw: Daily Kos Action: Become a Citizen Co-Sponsor of the EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT!

from Daily Kos:

it's time to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment and enshrine gender equality in the Constitution once and for all. Please, click here to become a citizen co-sponsor for the ERA.

The ERA has been in the queue for decades. With the recent escalation of the Republicans' War on Women—trying to defund women's health care, refusing to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, voting against the Paycheck Fairness Act, and holding men-only congressional hearings on birth control—women not only deserve, but need, their equality guaranteed in the Constitution.

According to recent polling, 91% of Americans believe the Constitution should guarantee equal rights for women. It's time—long past time—to pass the ERA.

Please click here to become a citizen co-sponsor of the Equal Right Amendment:

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=112

Keep fighting, Kaili Joy Gray, Daily Kos

[20120505-06](#) 13:47 SteveG Fw: Change.org Petition: Help Stop Electro-shocking of Children

from Change.org:

In 2002, a special needs student named Andre McCollins was allegedly strapped down and electrocuted for hours, leaving him with permanent brain damage, all because he refused to take off his jacket. The people torturing Andre were officials at his school. You can watch what happened on video.

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAj9W0ntUMI&feature=player_embedded.

The video was shot at a Massachusetts school for special needs kids called the Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC). Gregory Miller used to be a teacher there, and he says electrocuting kids as punishment is extremely common -- even for minor offenses like raising your hand to go to the bathroom.

"A non-verbal, nearly blind girl with cerebral palsy was shocked for attempts to hold a staff member's hand -- her attempts to communicate and to be loved," Gregory says.

Gregory desperately wants to help the kids at the JRC --that's why he started a petition on Change.org demanding that the JRC stop using electroshock to punish kids.

Click here to add your name:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/judge-rotenberg-educational-center-please-stop-painful-electric-shocks-on-your-students>.

Gregory says the JRC's founder created electroshock devices which are even stronger than police stun guns to punish students for bad behavior. An official at the United Nations said that using these devices on children is considered torture.

According to the Boston Globe, the JRC's founder resigned after being charged with misleading a grand jury by destroying video footage of other students being shocked.

Gregory believes that if thousands of people sign his petition, his former bosses will capitulate in the intense pressure generated by a national spotlight.

Sign Gregory's petition demanding that the JRC immediately cease its practice of punishing special needs kids with electroshock devices.

Thanks for being a change-maker, Jon and the Change.org team

20120505-07 15:38 SteveB "The Real Job Creators: Consumers, Not the Wealthy"
--

"The Real Job Creators" by Joan Walsh, Salon

May 4, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/05/04/the_real_job_creators/)

(Consumers, not the wealthy, are the key to an economic rebound, and GOP austerity is shackling them.)

Republicans have made it official: "The wealthy" must be called "the job creators" in any debate about tax policy. Democrats are playing their own word games: Centrists insist the 2012 campaign shouldn't focus on "income inequality," or whether the worst concentration of riches since the Great Depression might have to do with what Paul Krugman has taken to calling the Lesser Depression. "Income inequality" is a downer, the centrists say; better to talk about "growth" and "prosperity."

But it's becoming increasingly clear that growth and prosperity are threatened by the declining share of income going to the non-wealthy over the last 35 years.

Friday's disappointing jobs report confirms that "the job creators" should be fired, since they only created 115,000 new jobs in April, which isn't even enough to employ new entrants to the workforce. And while the unemployment rate ticked down from 8.2 to 8.1 percent, that's only because more unemployed people gave up and left the labor market entirely. Romney advisor Eric Fehrstrom (Mr. Etch-A-Sketch) blames President Obama, and he even pretends his candidate cares that "people are so discouraged they are dropping out of the workforce all together."

Let's get one thing straight: Even with this anemic recovery, the economy under Obama has replaced all of the jobs lost under the Bush administration. NBC's Chuck Todd deserves kudos for noting to Fehrstrom Friday that British austerity policies have sent that nation into a double-dip recession – and that Mitt Romney supports the same policies. Fehrstrom performed the standard Romney pivot – whatever you're asked, insist on talking about the U.S. economy *only* – brushing off Todd's question about how Romney would improve the economy more than Obama has, with his "cut, cap and balance" austerity policies that have failed elsewhere.

But the stalling economy is not good news for Obama-Biden 2012. I've said before that I think the debate over whether the Democrats' campaign message should highlight income inequality vs. growth, opportunity and prosperity presents a false choice: The president is a skilled enough communicator to explain how they're linked. But he's really got to find a way to turn around the debate and make clear that consumers, not the wealthy, are the real "job creators." Until we figure out a way to get people employed and almost as important, get incomes rising again (for more than just the folks at the top) our economic troubles will stay with us.

Paul Krugman is making the rounds talking about his new book "End This Depression Now!" which puts in one place the arguments he's been making since at least 2009: The Lesser Depression is more a political problem, at this point, than an economic problem, since the GOP is implacably opposed to the government spending that has traditionally goosed the economy out of its doldrums. Right on time, McCain economic advisor Doug Holtz-Eakin is out with a piece that doesn't challenge Krugman by name but argues that all the stimulus of the last decade – from Bush tax cuts through the 2009 Recovery Act and mini-stims like the payroll tax cut – haven't helped the economy, because this hasn't been a "demand recession" but a structural "asset-driven recession," due to the bursting of first the dot-com bubble and then the much more serious housing sector and banking collapse.

I'm not qualified to get into the weeds with either of these two economists, but we should remember two things about the '80s recovery that Holtz-Eakin says was a strong one. First, few Republicans ever acknowledge that Ronald Reagan became a stealth military Keynesian mid-term, letting Paul Volcker loosen up the money supply while presiding over a defense buildup that was also a stimulus package. The Reagan years also saw the beginning of household debt beginning to balloon, while household savings declined – a result of the flattening of wages taking place especially for the working class. Holtz-Eakin ignores the extent to which the banking collapse itself took demand out of the economy, and money out of consumers' hands – money they'd been taking out of their homes or their credit cards, at least partly because they weren't getting it in their paychecks.

And the Recovery Act that the former McCain advisor terms a failure was hailed as a success by another McCain economic advisor, Moody's Mark Zandi, who is on record saying it stemmed job losses and probably kept us out of a real depression. Its problem was that it didn't pump enough money into the economy, not that it pumped it wastefully. All we really know is that stimulus via tax cuts, the great Bush experiment, didn't work at all; they helped wreck the economy.

What does Holtz-Eakin recommend instead? "Pro-growth tax reform" – he doesn't say what that involves – and "fundamental entitlement reform that eliminates the debt threat." Of course, fundamental entitlement reform, which normally involves proposals to raise the eligibility age for Social Security and Medicare and/or cut benefits, would take money out of the hands of senior citizens who need it, to eliminate the supposed "debt threat" that's only a threat when a Democrat is in the White House, by the way. "Reagan proved deficits didn't matter," Dick Cheney told Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill in 2002, a month before he fired him. The GOP really needs to get its story straight on this one.

But so do Democrats. I'm anxious about reports that Democrats are willing to vote for the Simpson-Bowles deficit reduction package, even if they oppose its program cuts, because they know Republicans will oppose its tax increases and they'll get to proclaim themselves the party of deficit reduction. They need to become the party of jobs, not deficit reduction.

The White House reportedly considers Krugman a bit of a scold and tunes him out; the same with Robert Reich, who makes similar points on his blog today. But let's hope they find time to read Krugman's essay in the New York Review of Books, which goes into the weeds on the way government spending boosts employment and deficit reduction does not. President Obama's approval ratings have climbed since he began touting job creation, and as Krugman observes:

The experience of Obama's first term suggests that not talking about jobs simply because you don't think you can pass job-creation legislation doesn't work even as a political strategy. On the other hand, hammering on the need for job creation can be good politics, and it can put enough pressure on the other side to bring about better policy too.

Or to put it more simply, there is no reason not to tell the truth about this depression.

Put even more simply, Democrats need to make the case that consumers are the real job creators. Unless we can get them employed and with higher wages, this Lesser Depression will persist.

20120506-01 02:12 SteveM Fw: America's Hunters

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

AMERICA'S HUNTERS --- Pretty Amazing!

The world's largest army... America's hunters!

I had never thought about this...

A blogger added up the deer license sales in just a handful of states and arrived at a striking conclusion: There were over 600,000 hunters this season in the state of Wisconsin.

Allow me to restate that number: Over the last several months, Wisconsin's hunters became the eighth largest army in the world. More men under arms than in Iran. More than France and Germany combined.

These men deployed to the woods of a single American state, Wisconsin, to hunt with firearms, and no one was killed. That number pales in comparison to the 750,000 who hunted the woods of Pennsylvania and Michigan's 700,000 hunters, all of whom have now returned home safely.

Toss in a quarter million hunters in West Virginia and it literally establishes the fact that the hunters of those four states alone would comprise the largest army in the world. And then add in the total number of hunters in the other 46 states. It's millions more.

The point? America will forever be safe from foreign invasion with that kind of home-grown firepower.

Hunting...it's not just a way to fill the freezer. It's a matter of national security.

That's why all enemies, foreign and domestic, want to see us disarmed.

Food for thought, when next we consider gun control. Have A Great Day!

Overall it's true, so if we disregard some assumptions that hunters don't possess the same skills as soldiers, the question would still remain...what army of 2 million would want to face 30, 40, 50 million armed citizens?

(IF YOU AGREE, AS I DO, PASS IT ON, I FEEL GOOD THAT I HAVE AN ARMY OF MILLIONS WHO WOULD PROTECT OUR LAND AND I SURE DON'T WANT THE GOVERNMENT TAKING CONTROL OF THE POSSESSION OF FIREARMS)

For the sake of our freedom, don't ever allow gun control or confiscation of guns.

20120506-03 06:33 SteveB Re: America's Hunters (reply to SteveM, above)

EXACTLY!

This is why we don't need to bankrupt the country, eliminate Medicare, Social Security, and education and deprive the poor of Big Macs when it's true:

NO COUNTRY WILL ATTACK THE HILLBILLY ARMY OF WISCONSIN! (especially not Canada, Mexico, Cuba, or China)

I'M DEAD SERIOUS! Think how much more effective than the Syrian people. I'm with Ron Paul on this one and have been for a long time.

It's way past time: **BRING THE TROOPS HOME, NOW!**

But, while I gotcha on the line...one lie...it ain't that safe! Nor would anyone expect it to be with all those stupid, drunk, cheese-head hillbillies shooting at anything that moves.

But, hey, as long as the childish yet sometimes necessary game continues, more power to the hunters of the world! Maybe hand grenades, bazookas, and mortars would be a cool addition to assault rifles?

See this for a contrary view:

<http://animalrights.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=animalrights&cdn=newsissues&tm=11&f=00&tt=12&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A/www.all-creatures.org/cash/accident-center.html>

As I've always said, and as we saw in the Arab Spring and OWS, sometimes the people have to take matters into their own hands.

Here's my prediction and bet: If Americans ever have to take-up arms against their government, it will be a right-wing, not a left-wing government that they will struggle against. I sure hope they win!

For a stirring patriotic video presentation see: <http://thestoryoflibertyblog.com/2012/02/29/the-worlds-largest-army-americas-hunters/>.

20120506-10 12:50 SteveM Re: America's Hunters (reply to SteveB, above)

You have a better chance of being harassed buy Obama's health care Gestapo than being injured by a hunter

But nice try to diminish another segment of the population with no facts. You could be writing the Democratic talking points.

Do you even read what you write, dummy?

Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end.

20120506-02 02:13 SteveM Fw: The Difference Between Chicken Salad & Chicken Sh*t

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

LOOK AT THE YELLOW HIGHLIGHTING ON THE "I".

This is the difference between chicken salad and chicken sh*t:

President George W. Bush's speech after the capture of Saddam Hussein:

The success of yesterday's mission is a tribute to our men and women now serving in Iraq. The operation was based on the superb work of intelligence analysts who found the dictator's footprints in a vast country. The operation was carried out with skill and precision by a brave fighting force. Our servicemen and women and our coalition allies have faced many dangers in the hunt for members of the fallen regime, and in their effort to bring hope and freedom to the Iraqi people. Their work continues, and so do the risks. Today, on behalf of the nation, I thank the members of our Armed Forces and I congratulate them!

And chicken sh*t:

[President] Obama's speech after the killing of bin Laden:

And so shortly after taking office, **I** directed Leon Panetta, the Director of the CIA, to make the killing or capture of bin Laden the top priority of our war against al Qaeda, even as we continued our broader efforts to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat his network. Then, last August, **I** was briefed on a possible lead to bin Laden. It was far from certain, and it took many months to run this thread to ground. **I** met repeatedly with **my** national security team as we developed more information about the possibility that **we** had located bin Laden hiding within a compound deep inside of Pakistan . And finally, last week, **I** determined that we had enough intelligence to take action, and **I** authorized an operation to get Osama bin Laden and bring him to justice. **Today, at my direction, the United States launched a targeted operation against that compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.**

Obama did not once acknowledge our brave men and women who fight for our country.

20120506-04	07:02	SteveB	Re: The Difference Between Chicken Salad & Chicken Sh*t & "Osama Bin Laden Killed: Barack Obama's Speech in Full" & "[President Bush's] Speech on the Capture of Saddam Hussein" (reply to SteveM, above)
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It doesn't sound very likely, does it? And it turns out, it's not. Like that doctored photo of the POTUS and FLOTUS saying the Pledge of Allegiance with their left hands over their hearts, simultaneously! Ya, right! I believe the CIC always treats and refers to the troop, as he should, with the utmost respect and gratitude. This is simply a very false, malicious charge.

(Steve, the pictures? didn't come through.)

Bush's "Mission Accomplished" speech has gone down in history as a moment of great Presidential stupidity. Are you sure you want to bring it up again?

This email is just another little lie, as the full text (below) of the two speeches clearly shows. President Obama praised the troops more than Bush did in Bush's extremely short presentation. I believe there are more personal references (I, me, my, we, us, our, ours, mine, the President, this Office) per word in Bush's speech than President Obama's and I believe Barry heaped more praise on the military than did Bush. It helps to have the whole story, instead of the very selective editing in the forwarded email.

If an email's author is anonymous, it's probably lies.

"The truth will out."

So the guy who got bin Laden when Bush and Cheney couldn't, the guy who took-out Gaddafi, who ended our stupid presence in Iraq, is chicken sh*t? I doubt it! Notice it's Bush, now, who's afraid (ashamed, more likely) to even open his mouth, while the other ex-Presidents talk openly about anything. Bush demonstrably did as much to destroy America as any one person ever has.

"Osama Bin Laden Killed: Barack Obama's Speech in Full", *The Telegraph*

May 2, 2011, (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/8487354/Osama-bin-Laden-killed-Barack-Obamas-speech-in-full.html>)

Good evening. Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, and a terrorist who's responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent men, women, and children.

It was nearly 10 years ago that a bright September day was darkened by the worst attack on the American people in our history. The images of 9/11 are seared into our national memory - hijacked planes cutting through a cloudless September sky; the Twin Towers collapsing to the ground; black smoke billowing up from the Pentagon; the wreckage of Flight 93 in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where the actions of heroic citizens saved even more heartbreak and destruction.

And yet we know that the worst images are those that were unseen to the world. The empty seat at the dinner table. Children who were forced to grow up without their mother or their father. Parents who would never know the feeling of their child's embrace. Nearly 3,000 citizens taken from us, leaving a gaping hole in our hearts.

On September 11, 2001, in our time of grief, the American people came together. We offered our neighbours a hand, and we offered the wounded our blood. We reaffirmed our ties to each other, and our love of community and country. On that day, no matter where we came from, what God we prayed to, or what race or ethnicity we were, we were united as one American family.

We were also united in our resolve to protect our nation and to bring those who committed this vicious attack to justice. We quickly learned that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by Al-Qaeda - an organisation headed by Osama bin Laden, which had openly declared war on the United States and was committed to killing innocents in our country and around the globe. And so we went to war against Al-Qaeda to protect our citizens, our friends, and our allies.

Over the last 10 years, thanks to the tireless and heroic work of our military and our counterterrorism professionals, we've made great strides in that effort. We've disrupted terrorist attacks and strengthened our homeland defence. In Afghanistan, we removed the Taliban government, which had given bin Laden and Al-Qaeda safe haven and support. And around the globe, we worked with our friends and allies to capture or kill scores of Al-Qaeda terrorists, including several who were a part of the 9/11 plot.

Yet Osama bin Laden avoided capture and escaped across the Afghan border into Pakistan. Meanwhile, Al-Qaeda continued to operate from along that border and operate through its affiliates across the world.

And so shortly after taking office, I directed Leon Panetta, the director of the CIA, to make the killing or capture of bin Laden the top priority of our war against Al-Qaeda, even as we continued our broader efforts to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat his network.

Then, last August, after years of painstaking work by our intelligence community, I was briefed on a possible lead to bin Laden. It was far from certain, and it took many months to run this thread to ground. I met repeatedly with my national security team as we developed more information about the possibility that we had located bin Laden hiding within a compound deep inside of Pakistan. And finally, last week, I determined that we had enough intelligence to take action, and authorized an operation to get Osama bin Laden and bring him to justice.

Today, at my direction, the United States launched a targeted operation against that compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. A small team of Americans carried out the operation with extraordinary courage and capability. No Americans were harmed. They took care to avoid civilian casualties. After a firefight, they killed Osama bin Laden and took custody of his body.

For over two decades, bin Laden has been Al-Qaeda's leader and symbol, and has continued to plot attacks against our country and our friends and allies. The death of bin Laden marks the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat Al-Qaeda.

"Yet his death does not mark the end of our effort. There's no doubt that Al-Qaeda will continue to pursue attacks against us. We must - and we will - remain vigilant at home and abroad.

As we do, we must also reaffirm that the United States is not - and never will be - at war with Islam. I've made clear, just as President Bush did shortly after 9/11, that our war is not against Islam. Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader; he was a mass murderer of Muslims. Indeed, Al-Qaeda has slaughtered scores of Muslims in many countries, including our own. So his demise should be welcomed by all who believe in peace and human dignity.

Over the years, I've repeatedly made clear that we would take action within Pakistan if we knew where bin Laden was. That is what we've done. But it's important to note that our counterterrorism cooperation with Pakistan helped lead us to bin Laden and the compound where he was hiding. Indeed, bin Laden had declared war against Pakistan as well, and ordered attacks against the Pakistani people.

Tonight, I called President Zardari, and my team has also spoken with their Pakistani counterparts. They agree that this is a good and historic day for both of our nations. And going forward, it is essential that Pakistan continue to join us in the fight against al Qaeda and its affiliates.

The American people did not choose this fight. It came to our shores, and started with the senseless slaughter of our citizens. After nearly 10 years of service, struggle, and sacrifice, we know well the costs of war. These efforts weigh on me every time I, as Commander-in-Chief, have to sign a letter to a family that has lost a loved one, or look into the eyes of a service member who's been gravely wounded.

So Americans understand the costs of war. Yet as a country, we will never tolerate our security being threatened, nor stand idly by when our people have been killed. We will be relentless in defence of our citizens and our friends and allies. We will be true to the values that make us who we are. And on nights like this one, we can say to those families who have lost loved ones to Al-Qaeda's terror: Justice has been done.

Tonight, we give thanks to the countless intelligence and counterterrorism professionals who've worked tirelessly to achieve this outcome. The American people do not see their work, nor know their names. But tonight, they feel the satisfaction of their work and the result of their pursuit of justice.

We give thanks for the men who carried out this operation, for they exemplify the professionalism, patriotism, and unparalleled courage of those who serve our country. And they are part of a generation that has borne the heaviest share of the burden since that September day.

Finally, let me say to the families who lost loved ones on 9/11 that we have never forgotten your loss, nor wavered in our commitment to see that we do whatever it takes to prevent another attack on our shores.

And tonight, let us think back to the sense of unity that prevailed on 9/11. I know that it has, at times, frayed. Yet today's achievement is a testament to the greatness of our country and the determination of the American people.

The cause of securing our country is not complete. But tonight, we are once again reminded that America can do whatever we set our mind to. That is the story of our history, whether it's the pursuit of prosperity

for our people, or the struggle for equality for all our citizens; our commitment to stand up for our values abroad, and our sacrifices to make the world a safer place.

"Let us remember that we can do these things not just because of wealth or power, but because of who we are: one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Thank you. May God bless you. And may God bless the United States of America.

"[President Bush's] Speech on the Capture of Saddam Hussein" by George W. Bush

Dec. 14, 2003 (<http://www.famous-speeches-and-speech-topics.info/famous-speeches/george-w-bush-speech-capture-of-saddam-hussein.htm>)

Good afternoon. Yesterday, December the 13th, at around 8:30 p.m. Baghdad time, United States military forces captured Saddam Hussein alive. He was found near a farmhouse outside the city of Tikrit, in a swift raid conducted without casualties. And now the former dictator of Iraq will face the justice he denied to millions.

The capture of this man was crucial to the rise of a free Iraq. It marks the end of the road for him, and for all who bullied and killed in his name. For the Baathist holdouts largely responsible for the current violence, there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held. For the vast majority of Iraqi citizens who wish to live as free men and women, this event brings further assurance that the torture chambers and the secret police are gone forever.

And this afternoon, I have a message for the Iraqi people: You will not have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein ever again. All Iraqis who take the side of freedom have taken the winning side. The goals of our coalition are the same as your goals -- sovereignty for your country, dignity for your great culture, and for every Iraqi citizen, the opportunity for a better life.

In the history of Iraq, a dark and painful era is over. A hopeful day has arrived. All Iraqis can now come together and reject violence and build a new Iraq.

The success of yesterday's mission is a tribute to our men and women now serving in Iraq. The operation was based on the superb work of intelligence analysts who found the dictator's footprints in a vast country. The operation was carried out with skill and precision by a brave fighting force. Our servicemen and women and our coalition allies have faced many dangers in the hunt for members of the fallen regime, and in their effort to bring hope and freedom to the Iraqi people. Their work continues, and so do the risks. Today, on behalf of the nation, I thank the members of our Armed Forces and I congratulate 'em.

I also have a message for all Americans: The capture of Saddam Hussein does not mean the end of violence in Iraq. We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the heart of the Middle East. Such men are a direct threat to the American people, and they will be defeated.

We've come to this moment through patience and resolve and focused action. And that is our strategy moving forward. The war on terror is a different kind of war, waged capture by capture, cell by cell, and victory by victory. Our security is assured by our perseverance and by our sure belief in the success of liberty. And the United States of America will not relent until this war is won.

May God bless the people of Iraq, and may God bless America.

Thank you.



Think this says it best:

"Taking Out Dick Lugar" by Dana Milbank, *The Washington Post*

May 4, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ads-of-mass-destruction/2012/05/04/gIQARLNT1T_story.html)

When Indiana Republicans go to the polls on Tuesday, they will do more than choose a candidate for the Senate. They will choose between party and country.

That's a stark assessment but true. On one side is a man who has made it his life's work to build a cross-aisle consensus for keeping nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorists and rogue states. On the other side is a man who mocks his opponent for such efforts and who talks more about fighting Democrats than fighting America's enemies.

For years Dick Lugar has been the leading Senate Republican on foreign policy, shaping post-Cold War strategy, securing sanctions to end South African apartheid and bringing democracy to the Philippines, among other things.

His signature achievement, drafted with Democrat Sam Nunn, was the 1992 Nunn-Lugar Act, which has disarmed thousands of Soviet nuclear warheads once aimed at the United States.

Enter Richard Mourdock, a tea party hothead attempting to defeat Lugar in the GOP primary. A cornerstone of his effort to oust Lugar is the six-term senator's bad habit of bipartisanship — never mind that Lugar's bipartisanship was in the service of protecting millions of Americans from nuclear, chemical and biological terrorism.

In one typical ad, Mourdock's campaign plays a clip of Barack Obama saying, "I've worked with Republican Senator Dick Lugar to pass a law." And then a clip of Obama saying, "What I did was reach out to Senator Dick Lugar."

Deviously, Mourdock's ad cuts off the clip before the viewer can learn what the law was about. In the first instance, Obama said: "I've worked with Republican Senator Dick Lugar to pass a law that will secure and destroy some of the world's deadliest, unguarded weapons." In the second instance, Obama said: "What I did was reach out to Senator Dick Lugar, a Republican, to help lock down loose nuclear weapons."

Those details omitted, this ad — and variations of it posted by the Mourdock campaign over the past year — goes on to show a cartoon Lugar dancing and giggling with a cartoon Obama, pink valentines between them and a rainbow (symbol of the gay pride movement) above them. "Some say he has even earned the title of President Obama's favorite Republican senator," Mourdock says in the ad. "My friends, I can tell you that is a title I will never hold!"

Indeed, Mourdock, Indiana's state treasurer, boasts about his refusal to work with Democrats. "The time for being collegial is past," he told the *New York Times* recently. "It's time for confrontation."

There is a great deal to dislike in Mourdock's message, but the most egregious part is his underlying contention that Lugar should be punished for cooperating with the other party — even though such cooperation protects the country against unimaginable destruction. That's not just wrong; it's unpatriotic.

The legislation Obama and Lugar drafted in 2006 expanded the original Nunn-Lugar Act to cover conventional weapons stockpiles. It was wrapped into a House bill and proved so uncontroversial that it passed by a voice vote there and by unanimous consent in the Senate.

The Mourdock campaign attributes Mourdock's claim that Lugar is "President Obama's favorite Republican" to MSNBC, apparently referring to an online report before Obama won the presidency that was headlined "Barack Obama's favorite Republican?" The report noted that Lugar "is a loyal Republican and McCain supporter."

The deeper implication — that Lugar isn't a conservative — is at odds with Lugar's 77 percent lifetime rating by the American Conservative Union (75 percent last year). That hardly makes him a moderate (the ratings of Maine's Republican senators hover around 50 percent), but among the sans-culottes in the modern Republican Party, anything less than purity merits purging.

Murdock hits Lugar for voting in favor of Obama's two Supreme Court nominees; never mind that Lugar also voted for all five conservative justices. Mourdock condemns Lugar for supporting the START Treaty, the assault weapons ban and the Dream Act. Lugar also voted against Obama's stimulus, health-care plan and financial reforms. "His bipartisanship, his willingness to push the Obama agenda, has caused him to be labeled President Obama's favorite Republican senator," Mourdock falsely alleges in one ad.

As Mourdock piles up support from the likes of Sarah Palin, Michele Bachmann and Grover Norquist, Lugar is still clinging to the notion that substance matters; this week, his office issued a news release titled "Lugar Announces Elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction through Nunn-Lugar."

Some Democrats hope that Mourdock beats Lugar because it would increase the likelihood that Democrat Joe Donnelly will win the seat in November. But that's not why Hoosier Republicans should reject Mourdock. They should reject him because they still believe that national security trumps partisanship.

"Rove Misfires, Pitting Obama Celebrity vs. Romney Void" by Robert S. Becker, NationofChange

May 6, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/rove-misfires-pitting-obama-celebrity-vs-romney-void-1336312222>)

(Is Romney not opposite this ex-Food Stamp, poor minority kid with single-mother, whose student loan debt followed him for decades -- all without a sugar daddy?)

I take it back, conceding Karl Rove (a.k.a. Turd Blossom) must be smart. Perhaps W.'s nickname is telling, as in laying "an egg." Didn't this PR con artist mastermind the re-election of our most illiterate, incurious, wastrel president -- whose habitual "deer faces reality" gaze let slip his opacity? Notwithstanding that this twice-elected regime unleashed our most virulent, Constitution-bashing V.P -- still haunting us, the undead from a bad horror movie.

Yes, the old man's Supreme Court iced the flunkey's first appointment, but that's nothing compared to ripping John Kerry with this abysmal "compassionate conservative" turned botched "war president." All the more impressive considering Bush-Cheney's serial albatrosses: caught defenseless by triple sneak attacks, storm-trooping us into non-9/11 wars, the Plame-Libby scandals, and incessant class warfare -- altogether a walking-talking gaffe of a presidency.

But today Rove appears over the hill and losing his golden touch. Item, his cross-eyed Crossroads America's "personality ad war" to boost Romney against Obama. As if Rove now cares for truth (well, Obama is the world's greatest celebrity), here's the old sleazy fringe ploy: undermine your opponent's greatest strength. High risk, as Obama's personal story and likeability remain his two splashy virtues. By what logic does Rove's Romney, the privileged offspring of a rich auto executive turned governor, enriched further by unapologetic corporate raiding, stand against Obama's remarkable, self-made ascent? Is Romney not opposite this ex-Food Stamp, poor minority kid with single-mother, whose student loan debt followed him for decades -- all without a sugar daddy?

Rove must figure if he can't win on policy or sound bites, drag out the failed '08 McCain ploy: Obama the ambitious "celebrity." As if that's a bad thing in a culture obsessed with celebrity, equating fame with moral virtue, however facts defy this linkage. What was Rove thinking, since in any personality sweepstakes Romney measures a -10 (on a scale of 10)? "The least interesting person in the world," quips Bill Maher, so boring he's what "Ambien takes when it can't sleep." If ambushing Obama's celebrity is the best shot from today's rightwing smear machine, think 2016.

A Boring Vulture Capitalist?

Not only does Romney crow about triumphant exploits as "vulture capitalist" (thanks, Rick Perry), neither his vast treasure trove, nor advisers can uplift his lackluster image. He escaped his primary siege as the scaliest, phoniest, most fabricated non-entity in memory. Thus, his incredibly low 34% national approval rating, with only 62% GOP favorability. Unlike the entertaining Gingrich or Santorum, Romney's congenital, off-key mendacity doesn't make him engaging, a double loss for lying exacts a price. How incredible all the king's men can't transmute this Humpty Dumpty into a more plausible phony. Romney is the Tin Man without a heart yet whose insides are stuffed with only cardboard flip-flops. Nature may abhor a vacuum, but better politicians leave none.

Say what you will about W.'s pathetic bottom feeding, the primitive selling "the only thing to fear is fear itself," yet he had an identifiable, if coarse personality. Think prodigal ferret on the way home, crashing the family car, forever ambushed by believing his own B.S. Though both fronted for a dreadfully cynical regime, Rove sustained W.'s image as just plain folks, making him, like moronic Joe the Plumber, a guy Tea Party morons fancy.

So, is not Rove's PR implication that Romney's impossible-to-read, whiter and "weirder-than-thou" personality can outshine Obama's popularity? Even Republicans don't buy that his ever-complaint, poll-driven robot mask shows leadership or character, only prefer him to the WH devil. Further, aside from losing badly to both Ted Kennedy and that fraudulent maverick John McCain, what makes this thinly resumed, one-term governor anything more than a "celebrity Republican" cartoon? Unemployed since 2007, excepting failed presidential runs, Romney boasts no

federal or Washington experience, making him less qualified than the inaugurated Obama. Obama's resume, after all, boasted years as a political mediocrity.

What further strikes me is how Rove here makes Obama hipper than in real life, when he stumbles over words or dumps more fudged reversals. Hardly "cool" to the left, yet Rove magically portrays this evasive compromiser as stylish man about town worth having a beer with (as pictured). If "mere politician" is the crowning career put-down, then elevation to the world's greatest celebrity is stirring endorsement. Maybe secretly Rove wants Romney blasted, prepping 2016 for the next Bush. Okay, he's not dumb.

Romney's V.P. Problem

Because Romney the 90 lb. political weakling lacks charisma, experience, and ideas, his V.P. pick is especially daunting: finding someone respectable who's strong enough to help yet won't make Mitt look even duller, richer, more out of touch, or less savvy. What decent V.P.'s resume wouldn't shrink Mitt's veneer of a bio? We're talking Herman Cain, though with less personality as circus hawker. Forget the other GOP primary numbskulls: all show more experience and/or are far more ideologically consistent. That leaves guys with no more magnetism than Mitch Daniels, Rob Portman, or Paul Ryan. Scratch vile Joe the Plumber or any top female -- too lively.

So I don't get it, setting Mr. Presidential Smiley Face against Mr. Rich-Remote Capitalist whose scary emptiness would double down W.'s reign, a hollowed-out hustler pitted against the world's most famous, celebrated hustler (pace Bill Clinton, now BO ally). Clearly, Romney's forte is unscrupulous business know-how, amplified by peerless flip-floppery that surpasses Obama's own "pragmatism." We begin to appreciate Rove's quandary.

All in all, Romney works as political vampire, the bloodless fiend who gets vitality by preying on the life force from less affluent victims. List one identifiable idea he didn't steal, or posit a core that would sustain a big idea? Right, his own embarrassing state health reform? Just as vulture capitalism feeds off hemorrhaging companies, Romney campaigns like a spider, ready to pounce, anesthetize, then suck the life out of foes. So why would Rove promote this sound-bite bloodsucker against a youthful and energetic street fighter whose decent footwork drives his effective rope-a-dope, so far.

Is Romney Any Body?

The "anybody but Romney" zinger now expands to a more damaging puzzle, "is Romney any body"? Is anyone truly at home, zipped or not? A personality void only magnifies his other flaws: narrow experience, none in Washington, and now cynical alignment with the most reactionary New Rethugs. But Romney faces a campaigner expert at knocking off famous, well-funded rivals. Yes, the country wouldn't mind changing horses, but not from a popular high-stepper to a mulish, out of touch tycoon with both a dog and an anger problem. Really, elect a guy whose smug advice to impoverished college students is "borrow money from your parents"? That locks up the youth and parent vote, for sure.

Finally, there remains the nagging question, exactly how weird is Romney, indeed with articles entitled, "Why is Mitt Romney so Incredibly Weird?" What if, as one physicist depicted the mysterious universe, Romney is not only stranger than we now imagine but stranger than we can imagine. Someone off-the-wall nutty, say, a much wealthier, deluded oddball like Tricky Dick Nixon. Of course, the best thing about Romney is that his incessant gaffes guarantee he can't hide his dim light under a bushel. What, and who he is, especially if he stays desperate underdog, will soon enough emerge into the light. Rove better up his game or he's kaput as political genius.

20120506-11	15:40	SteveG	Fw: SumOfUs Petition: End Walmart Slavery
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from SumOfUs:

Last month, in a factory in Thailand that processes shrimp for a major supplier to Walmart -- the world's largest corporation that runs over 8,500 stores in 155 countries, including ASDA Stores in the UK, Seiyu in Japan, and Walmex in Mexico -- there was a revolt. 2,000 guest workers from Cambodia and Myanmar angrily protested the seizure of their passports by factory owners in Thailand. Police were called. Shots were fired.

But it wasn't just the passport seizure that incited their anger -- it was management slashing wages again. Their wages already didn't cover the most basic needs, and this action put workers deeper into the factory's debt -- it's called debt bondage. At this moment, many of them are still legally and financially trapped at the factory, victims of human trafficking.

Sign our petition to Walmart's VP of Ethical Sourcing -- and former Head of Technical at ASDA, Walmart's subsidiary in the UK -- Rajan Kamalanathan to demand these factory owners end human trafficking immediately and allow independent monitors to audit all of their factories.

http://sumofus.org/campaigns/shrimp/?akid=442.97777.HD_DKI&rd=1&sub=fwd&t=2

This is not an isolated incident. Also in Thailand, a pineapple factory had similar protests over wage reductions. There are now reports of human trafficking and that children under 15 have been bought and sold to work there. 73% of the company's US exports go to Walmart, and they are likely a large supplier to Walmart's subsidiaries globally.

Walmart's own internal system claims to protect against these abuses, some of which the Bangkok Post Editorial staff have described as "the equivalent of actual slavery". But these two cases highlight a chronic problem -- human trafficking, identity document seizure, child labor, forced unpaid overtime, and debt-bondage are found across Walmart's supply chain.

Its internal system that audits factories to prevent these kind of abuses is broken at its core.

We only know about these worker abuses because the workers' revolt spilled out onto the streets. The problem is almost certainly far worse -- and extends beyond the borders of Thailand. But we don't know for sure and neither does Walmart.

Tell Walmart's VP of Ethical Sourcing to demand these factory owners end human trafficking immediately and allow independent monitors to audit all of their factories.

We know that Walmart's internal auditors schedule visits to factories -- a deeply flawed practice that allows owners to coach workers and hide the most egregious abuses as is evident today. On the other hand, independent monitors show up unannounced, don't aim to please factory owners, and provide a real check against some of the worst abuses -- that is why they are so desperately needed.

Walmart customers around the world may be buying shrimp, pineapple, and who knows what else and unwittingly supporting near-slavery, debt bondage and child labor. We as consumers shouldn't have to worry about supporting those kinds of horrendous abuses.

Walmart is already feeling the heat after a New York Times investigation exposed a top-level cover up of a bribery scandal in the company's Mexican subsidiary. With mainstream media drawing attention to Walmart's broken internal auditing, they are desperately trying to regain public trust. If we press this issue now, while Walmart and the media are listening, we can help bring an end to these practices and can protect some of the most vulnerable workers around the world.

That's why we set up a petition to Walmart's VP of Ethical Sourcing, calling for him to demand these factory owners end human trafficking immediately and allow independent monitors to audit all of their factories. Will you add your name?

Thanks for fighting for workers' rights and corporate accountability, Kaytee, Becky, Emma and the rest of us

This is the time of the year that the magical *toboro*chis show-off their gaudy pink blossoms no photograph can do justice to. These trees attain gigantic sizes here in and around Santa Cruz, and usually form trunks with pot bellies in middle age. I love `em and worry about them, because they have bloomed early at least two years in a row... They are so precious and their wood is amazing...more dense and harder than oak, impervious to all insects known to the Amazon...one of the problems...

<http://www.boliviabella.com/rainforest.html>



This is what their trunks look like when the *toborochois* are a little younger (the trunks become smooth when the trees have become impregnable):

<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/2071569>

Chorisia speciosa, also known as silk floss tree, kapok, *ceiba del brasil*, *toborochoi*, *yuchán*, *algodonero*, *palo botella*, *palo barrigudo*, *samohú*, or *painero* — on the way to El Encanto Falls, Noel Kemff Mercado NP, Santa Cruz, Bolivia.



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #133 — MAY 8, 2012

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

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

The Engine Is Capitalism — For Better or Worse

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 8, 2012)

Robert Reich always makes sense to me. I wonder why he's not in the Administration? Maybe he wanted to be able to keep speaking freely...

"The Answer Isn't Socialism; It's Capitalism That Better Spreads the Benefits of the Productivity Revolution" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

May 7, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/answer-isn-t-socialism-it-s-capitalism-better-spreads-benefits-productivity-revolution-1336396195>)

Francois Hollande's victory doesn't and shouldn't mean a movement toward socialism in Europe or elsewhere. Socialism isn't the answer to the basic problem haunting all rich nations.

The answer is to reform capitalism. The world's productivity revolution is outpacing the political will of rich societies to fairly distribute its benefits. The result is widening inequality coupled with slow growth and stubbornly high unemployment.

In the United States, almost all the gains from productivity growth have been going to the top 1 percent, and the percent of the working-age population with jobs is now lower than it's been in more than thirty years (before the vast majority of women moved into paid work).

Inequality is also growing in Europe, along with chronic joblessness. Europe is finding it can no longer afford generous safety nets to catch everyone who has fallen out of the working economy.

Consumers in China are gaining ground but consumption continues to shrink as a share of China's increasingly productive economy, while inequality in China is soaring. China's wealthy elites are emulating the most conspicuous consumption of the rich in the West.

At the heart of the productivity revolution are the computers, software, and the Internet that have found their way into the production of almost everything a modern economy creates. Factory workers are being replaced by computerized machine tools and robotics; office workers, by software applications; professionals, by ever more specialized apps; communications and transportation workers, by the Internet.

Some work continues to be outsourced abroad to very low-wage workers in developing nations but this is not the major cause of the present trend. This work now comprises such a tiny fraction of the costs of production that it's becoming cheaper for companies to do more of it at home with computers and software, and even bring back some of it ("in-source") from abroad.

Consumers in rich nations are reaping some of the benefits of the productivity revolution in the form of lower prices or more value for the money – consider the cost of color TVs, international phone calls, or cross-country flights compared to what they were before.

But most of the gains are going to the shareholders who own the companies, and to the relatively small number of very talented (or very lucky and well-connected) managers, engineers, designers, and legal or financial specialists on whom the companies depend for strategic decisions about what to produce and how.

Increasingly, via stock options and bonuses, the owners and the "talent" are one and the same. While many other people indirectly own shares of stock through their pensions and 401-K plans, 90 percent of the value of all financial assets in the U.S. belongs to the richest 10 percent of the American population.

Meanwhile, a large number of low-paid service workers sell personalized comfort and attention – something software can't do — in the retail, restaurant, hotel, and hospital sectors (most U.S. job growth since 2009 has occurred here.) Others – temps, contract workers, the under- and partially-employed, fill in where they can. A growing number are not working.

The problem is not that the productivity revolution has caused unemployment or under-employment. The problem is its fruits haven't been widely shared. Less work isn't a bad thing. Most people prefer leisure. A productivity revolution such as we are experiencing should enable people to spend less time at work and have more time to do whatever they'd rather do.

The problem comes in the distribution of the benefits of the productivity revolution. A large portion of the population no longer earns the money it needs to live nearly as well as the productivity revolution would otherwise allow. It can't afford the "leisure" it's now experiencing involuntarily.

Not only is this a problem for them; it's also a problem for the overall economy. It means that a growing portion of the population lacks the purchasing power to keep the economy going. In the United States, consumers account for 70 percent of economic activity. If they as a whole cannot afford to buy all the goods and services the productivity revolution is generating, the economy becomes stymied. Growth is anemic; unemployment remains high.

That's why "supply-side" tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy are perverse. Corporations and the rich don't need more tax cuts; they're swimming in money as it is. The reason they don't invest in additional productive capacity and hire more people is they don't see a sufficient market for the added goods and services, which means an inadequate return on such investment.

But more Keynesian stimulus won't help solve the more fundamental problem. Although added government spending has gone some way toward filling the gap in demand caused by consumers whose jobs and incomes are disappearing, it can't be a permanent solution. Even if the wealthy paid their fair share of taxes, deficits would soon get out of control. Additional public investments in infrastructure and basic research and development can make the economy more productive – but more productivity doesn't necessarily help if a growing portion of the population can't absorb it.

What to do? Learn from our own history.

The last great surge in productivity occurred between 1870 and 1928, when the technologies of the first industrial revolution were combined with steam power and electricity, mass produced in giant companies enjoying vast economies of scale, and supplied and distributed over a widening system of rails. That ended abruptly in the Great Crash of 1929, when income and wealth had become so concentrated at the top (the owners and financiers of these vast combines) that most people couldn't pay for all these new products and services without going deeply and hopelessly into debt – resulting in a bubble that loudly and inevitably popped.

If that sounds familiar, it should. A similar thing happened between 1980 and 2007, when productivity revolution of computers, software, and, eventually, the Internet spawned a new economy along with great fortunes. (It's not coincidental that 1928 and 2007 mark the two peaks of income concentration in America over the last hundred years, in which the top 1 percent raked in over 23 percent of total income.)

But here's the big difference. During the Depression decade of the 1930s, the nation reorganized itself so that the gains from growth were far more broadly distributed. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 recognized unions' rights to collectively bargain, and imposed a duty on employers to bargain in good faith. By the 1950s, a third of all workers in the United States were unionized, giving them the power to demand some of the gains from growth.

Meanwhile, Social Security, unemployment insurance, and worker's compensation spread a broad safety net. The forty-hour workweek with time-and-a-half for overtime also helped share the work and spread the gains, as did a minimum wage. In 1965, Medicare and Medicaid broadened access to health care. And a progressive income tax, reaching well over 70 percent on the highest incomes, also helped ensure that the gains were spread fairly.

This time, though, the nation has taken no similar steps. Quite the contrary: A resurgent right insists on even more tax breaks for corporations and the rich, massive cuts in public spending that will destroy what's left of our safety nets, including Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid, fewer rights for organized labor, more deregulation of labor markets, and a lower (or no) minimum wage.

This is, quite simply, nuts.

And this is why a second Obama administration, should there be one, must focus its attention on more broadly distributing the gains from growth. This doesn't mean "redistributing" from rich to poor, as in a zero-sum game. It doesn't mean socialism. The rich will do far better with a smaller share of a robust, growing economy than they're doing with a large share of an economy that's barely moving forward.

This will require real tax reform – not just a "Buffet" minimal tax but substantially higher marginal rates and more brackets at the top, with a capital gains rate matching the income-tax rate. It also means a larger Earned Income Tax Credit, whose benefits extend high into the middle class. That will enable many Americans to move to a 35-hour workweek without losing ground – thereby making room for more jobs.

It means Medicare for all rather than an absurdly-costly system that relies on private for-profit insurers and providers.

It will require limiting executive salaries and empowering workers to get a larger share of corporate profits. The Employee Free Choice Act should be an explicit part of the second-term agenda.

It will require strict limits on the voracious, irresponsible behavior of Wall Street, from which we've all suffered. The Glass-Steagall Act must be resurrected (the so-called Volcker Rule is more ridden with holes than cheese), and the big banks broken up.

And it will necessitate a public educational system – including early child education – second to none, and available to all our young people.

We don't need socialism. We need a capitalism that works for the vast majority. The productivity revolution should be making our lives better — not poorer and more insecure. And it will do that when we have the political will to spread its benefits.

[20120507-01](#) 10:20 SteveM "Unemployment Explained: Obama's Disability Scammers"

Not to mention the 138 new agencies created by the massive health care bill. Who's going to generate the money for those salaries?

"Unemployment Explained: Obama's Disability Scammers" by John Ransom, Townhall.com

May 7, 2012,

(http://finance.townhall.com/columnists/johnransom/2012/05/07/unemployment_explained_obamas_disability_scammers/page/full/)

I have to credit our own Mike Shedlock for writing about how Obama's been able to drive down the topline unemployment number even though unemployment remains as big problem today as it has ever been.

I'm often reluctant to piggy back on a contributor's work, but when something is really newsworthy, I think it's justified.

Yesterday Mish pointed out that:

In the last year, the civilian population rose by 3,638,000. Yet the labor force only rose by 945,000. Those not in the labor force rose by 2,693,000.

In the last month, *actual employment fell by 169,000, but the unemployment rate dropped by .1%.*

That is an amazing "achievement" to say the least.

How did Obama do this magic trick of moving unemployment from a high of 10 percent to 8.1 percent without adding, you know, jobs?

Well according to Shedlock, economists at JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Morgan Stanley say that those on Social Security Disability (SSDI) checks have risen by about 2.2 million.

People who qualify for SSDI are automatically excluded from the workforce, meaning that you can actually have an economy losing jobs while technically the unemployment rate will go down as more people received disability benefits and are subtracted from the workforce.

Social Security Disability is a picture perfect program scam for the Obama administration. It allows Obama to say that unemployment is going down, while adding to the rolls of people who are dependent on some sort of Democrat-Party enabled government assistance.

Prior to these revelations, I had thought that the country's workforce was shrinking because persistent joblessness was causing people to stop looking for work. In other words, I thought it was just another example of Obama's economic incompetence.

I'm not ruling out incompetence completely, but when the administration has a vested interest in allowing fraud to happen by turning a blind eye, they act like caravan stuck in a sand storm, especially if it adds more potential voters to the dole.

And what's worse, the damage done to the economy by this type of fraud - and to the legitimately disabled who need the benefits- will take generation to fix.

Because, while joblessness can be reversed with some sensible economic policies, adding to the disability rolls creates permanent damage to the economy from which the country will not recover in generations.

Writes Bloomberg.com:

Based on current trends, 7 percent of the nonelderly adult population could be receiving disability benefits by 2018, Richard Burkhauser and Mary Daly wrote in the spring issue of the Journal of Policy Analysis and

Management. That's two years after the SSDI program will run through its trust fund, according to an April report by the Social Security trustees.

So the Obama administration is using a program that is already insolvent for a kind of off-the-books loan.

And economists say that 99 percent of people who get disability payments remain on the dole for the rest of their life. Or until the country is broke. See Greece.

Even worse, the Bloomberg article makes it clear that disability is serving as a backstop to unemployment insurance. That is, when unemployment insurance runs out, the unemployed are using disability insurance by claiming "difficult-to-verify disorders," including muscle pain and mental illness."

Last week our own Charles Payne wrote about this phenomenon, calling disability fraud, which he named "crazy checks," "the biggest scam since the welfare queens of the 1980s."

Writes Payne:

It's an epidemic nobody talks about because it could bleed into the sensitivity associated with legitimate recipients of social security disability insurance payments. The program provides money to people too young to get social security and unable to work.

Last year Dan Mitchell wrote about a *Washington Times* expose that uncovered a 30 year old man and his roommate who were collecting disability payments under a disability known as adult baby syndrome. The male subject "has been living at least a partial adult baby lifestyle since his teenage years, though he does wear adult clothes when he goes out, fearing embarrassment otherwise," writes the *Times*.

Thank God for embarrassment.

Of course embarrassment didn't stop the guy from doing a reality TV episode where he sported his diapers for viewers.

Nor did embarrassment stop him from threatening suicide when the government started making inquiries into the legitimacy of his "disability."

We have six months people to turn this around.

We went from a government that was broken and venial to a government that is broke, broken and more venial still.

I'd hate to see what another four years could bring.

[20120507-02](#) 10:39 SteveG Re: Graphic: We Are the 99% (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #132)

Thank you for calling me a fool.

Yes, SteveM, I feel that if I am being called a fool for my beliefs, then I must be on the right track and upsetting someone who is not firm in their beliefs.

[20120507-12](#) 20:53 SteveB Re: Graphic: We Are the 99% (reply to SteveG, above)

Oh...he called me a "dummy". I wonder which is worse, a dummy or a fool? Jeez, I can't decide. They both sound equally bad to me. At least that shows what we always knew, that you and I are equals, my friend.

[20120507-04](#) 11:35 Beth Re: Graphic: We Are the 99% (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #132)

Sorry, SteveM. I, for one, do not think you bring very much knowledge or insight to this conversation.

[20120507-03](#) 11:06 Pam Re: The First FotM E-Book: Political Inbox: 2007-2011 (reply to SteveB, FotM newsletter #132)

To say that I am impressed by what you've done is an understatement. This is absolutely amazing, and I am more grateful than I can say to be a part of it. (I was going to say "have been" but that would sound like it's finished, and I certainly hope it is not.) You have done heroic labor. That you have enjoyed it does not lessen the effort or the commitment. This forum has been an important part of my on-going education, and it comes at the perfect time for me. It has given me time to think at a time in my life when I have the time to reflect and re-examine my beliefs, feelings, ideas, and opinions. I have learned a lot! I have been challenged in unique ways by folks in faraway places, with different points of view. That is not trivial; it is essential--to me anyway. You have provided a place for smart people to kick ideas around, and you have created a real community that I am proud to be part of. Perhaps best of all, you have been a good, new friend, when I thought I was at the stage when new friendships were rare. Through FotM I have connected with others that I have gotten to know better than I ever did when we lived in the same town: Steve G., Bill B., Art H., Clark N. I've been pulled out of the limited world of academia and brought in contact with folks who do and have done things I could never have conceived of--like moving to Bolivia.

[20120507-06](#) 13:08 SteveB Re: The First FotM E-Book: Political Inbox: 2007-2011 (reply to Pam, above)

Ya, whew it's been kind of a fun ride and now that I have a little more time, I have some ideas for things. You will see...there some truly interesting people both here and on the fringes nibbling...and I want to spend more time on the important subjects other than politics...at least until we get to the conventions.

I'm thinking more of life and love and death now that I'm working more on poetry. There are a couple of "projects" I come back to with renewed vigor, drooling, and licking my lips, but it comes from a whole different part of me than the FotM Newsletter does.

I really appreciate your appreciation and I treasure our communications. Lately, unfortunately, I've been too busy to give as much personal attention to that as I'd like. And I have some important artistic questions for you. You can be my critic, if you're willing. You have written so much really great stuff, and I know it has drawn you out. Writing always helps those it does not destroy. I am very proud of you, and it has been mainly the additional benefit of preserving your words and the words of the other serious communicators, as well as my own, that pushed me along. You have interested and challenged (in a good way) anyone who would bother to listen...some folks just have trouble doing that..

FotM: The rest will be pretty easy. The indexing actually helps! I should have stopped everything and implanted them as soon as you brought it up, but I didn't see the forest for the trees for a while, then I was lazy and procrastinating. But they make everything so much better and increase the possibilities. Now, I have concocted templates that actually make the indexed FotM Newsletters a little easier to produce than the old ones without index. For the monthlies, I'll combine all the daily indexes into something that will look like the Archive. I'm working on April now.

Thinking out loud, scribbling, after a couple of beers while waiting for a pizza last night... What do you think?

What religious people call faith, I call hope. And belief (what I would call "true belief", not "hope" or "faith") can only, properly, occur when there are "verifiable facts" involved. Otherwise, we are still talking about faith or hope. Science and the law are based on belief. Knowing? Well...all we can ever really know for sure is that we are, in the Cartesian manner. All else is faith, hope, or belief. If that gives people enough certainty, fine. These three properties of our lives as sentient beings in this existence cover all the possibilities. All combined in any one person, they are our attitude toward the world we are given and the engine that drives us.

All other emotions, or words we use as if they describe emotions, feed off of one or more of these three basic power plants or their anti-matter-like opposites: love, hate, envy, greed, fear, despair, joy... Maybe all the rest...?

20120507-05	11:59	Ben	"Dinosaurs 'Gassed' Themselves into Extinction, British Scientists Say"
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That's a deep, big, basso "proot!"

"Dinosaurs 'Gassed' Themselves into Extinction, British Scientists Say" NewsCore/Fox News

May 7, 2012, (<http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2012/05/07/dinosaurs-farted-their-way-to-extinction-british-scientists-say/>)

Mighty steps forward in computational power and computer-rendering ability allowed Discovery's artists to depict dinosaurs as never before, letting viewers see realistic skin and views deep inside their bodies, for the series "Clash of the Dinosaurs." (Discovery Channel)

(LONDON) Dinosaurs may have farted themselves to extinction, according to a new study from British scientists.

The researchers calculated that the prehistoric beasts pumped out more than 520 million tons (472 million tonnes) of methane a year -- enough to warm the planet and hasten their own eventual demise.

Until now, an asteroid strike and volcanic activity around 65 million years ago had seemed the most likely cause of their extinction.

'These dinosaurs may have produced more methane than all the modern sources put together.'

Giant plant-eating sauropods were fingered as the key culprits in the study, which appears in the latest edition of the journal Current Biology. An average argentinosauros, weighing around 90 tons (82 tonnes) and measuring 140 feet (42m), chomped its way through half a ton (half a tonne) of ferns a day, producing clouds of methane as the food broke down in its gut.

Professor Graeme Ruxton from St. Andrews University in Scotland and co-researcher David Wilkinson, from Liverpool John Moores University, worked out just how much of the greenhouse gas the billions of dinosaurs would have generated during the Mesozoic era, starting 250 million years ago.

"A simple mathematical model suggests that the microbes living in sauropod dinosaurs may have produced enough methane to have an important effect on the Mesozoic climate," Wilkinson said. "In fact, our calculations suggest these dinosaurs may have produced more methane than all the modern sources, natural and human, put together."

The dinosaur output of 520 million tons (472 million tonnes) is comparable to current natural and man-made emissions of the greenhouse gas, which scientists say is around 21 times more powerful than CO2 at trapping heat on Earth and causing climate change. Cows and other farm animals globally contribute up to 100 million tons (90 million tonnes) a year of methane.

20120507-07	15:03	Pam	Re: "Researchers Find Time in Wild Boosts Creativity, Insight & Problem Solving" (reply to MarthaH, ForM Newsletter #132)
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This makes perfect sense. Now I know why I love sitting in my backyard so much. :-)

20120507-08	15:04	Pam	Re: "Lugar Says He Needs Help – Fast" (reply to MarthaH, ForM Newsletter #132)
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I was in Indianapolis and Greencastle over the weekend. More later.....

[20120507-09](#) 15:12 Pam Re: "Taking Out Dick Lugar" (reply to Art, ForM Newsletter #132)

Tomorrow in N.C. we vote for or against Amendment One. If you're for it, you want to add a clause to the state constitution banning gay marriage (there's already a law against it). If you're against, as I am, you want all people and families to be treated equally with equal respect. I have a feeling we're going to lose, and that makes me very sad. Not as sad as allowing loose nuclear bombs to float around the world, but sad nonetheless.

[20120507-10](#) 16:27 SteveG Fw: FreePress Petition: Don't Stop the Future of TV

Great internet site, would hate to lose the opportunity to use for viewing shows.

from FreePress:

This is how we watch TV in the 21st century: We fire up our laptops, our Roku boxes or our mobile devices. We open Hulu. We search for Parks and Recreation. Done.

But Hulu's owners — Disney, News Corp. and Comcast, which respectively own ABC, Fox and NBC — are trying to ruin this experience.¹ If they have their way, you'll need a cable subscription to watch any TV show on the Internet. Tell the Top Three Executives of the Companies Behind Hulu: You Can't Stop the Future of TV:

<http://act2.freepress.net/sign/hulu/?akid=3504.9942095.CudIFH&rd=1&t=1>.

Back in the days before cable, people paid nothing to access network TV over the air. But cable programmers introduced a new model: You pay a lot of money to subscribe to a bundle of channels and then you get all the TV shows you want — and many more that you don't want.

It turns out people don't want to pay exorbitant fees for hundreds of channels they'll never watch (Bruce Springsteen wrote "57 Channels and Nothin' On" even before the advent of DogTV).

Enter Hulu. The Internet TV site makes it easy for you to watch the shows you want to watch, when you want to watch them, for free. If you want to view them on your mobile device or with an Internet-connected TV, you pay a small monthly fee. That fee, along with traditional commercials, generates revenue.

Hulu now boasts 31 million subscribers who like it that way. It's how many of us watch TV, and an innovative model for the future of online entertainment.

But Hulu's owners, including Brian Roberts, Bob Iger and Rupert Murdoch, are chucking all of that out the window. These gatekeepers at Comcast, Disney and News Corp are moving to an "authentication" system that would allow only cable TV subscribers to access Hulu.

Tell Hulu's Owners: Don't Destroy the Future of TV.

These guys are trying to put the Internet genie back in the bottle while destroying the concept of free television that dates back to the earliest days of the medium. It's up to us to tell them to stop.

Thanks, Josh, Tim, Candace and the rest of the Free Press team

¹"TV in Real Dime," the *New York Post*, April 30, 2012:

<http://act2.freepress.net/go/10025?akid=3504.9942095.CudIFH&t=7>.

"4 High-Tech Ways the Federal Government Is Spying on Private Citizens" by Tecca, Yahoo! News

May 7, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/technology-blog/4-high-tech-ways-federal-government-spying-private-153556125.html>)

(Does a new Utah facility really monitor your emails? Like it or not, the government is becoming increasingly watchful of everyone... even you.)

One of the running jokes in the 1980s was how the former Soviet Union spied on its private citizens. As comedian Yakov Smirnoff used to joke: "In Soviet Russia, TV watches you!" But here in America, we were all safe from the prying eyes of the government.

Fast forward to 2012, when the U.S. government actually has the tools and capabilities to spy on all its citizens. These eyes go well beyond red light cameras. Right now, the government is tracking the movements of private citizens by GPS, reading private citizens' emails, and possibly even reading what you're saying on Facebook. It does so all in the name of law enforcement and Homeland Security, of course — but whether or not that makes you feel safer is up to you.

1. The NSA is building a massive data center in Utah to read every email you'll ever send.

Many of us are aware that little of what we say on social networks is really private. But you'd think your emails would be safe from prying eyes — especially those of your government. Not so, once the government completes work on a top-secret Utah data center reportedly built to spy on civilian communications.

The \$2 billion facility, slated to be complete by September 2013, is allegedly designed to be able to filter through yottabytes (10^{24} bytes) of data. Put into perspective, that's greater than the estimated total of all human knowledge since the dawn of mankind. If leaked information about the complex is correct, nothing will be safe from the facility's reach, from cell phone communications to emails to what you just bought with your credit card. And encryption won't protect you — one of the facility's priorities is breaking even the most complex of codes.

The good news (if there is any) is that the sheer volume of internet traffic and emails sent in a single day is far too much to be read by human eyes. Instead, the government will likely need to rely on complicated algorithms to assess each transmission and decide if they represent a security threat. So you're probably out of the government's earshot here... as long as you watch what you say.

2. The FBI maintains detailed files on numerous public, semi-public, and private figures.

Have you ever thought of taking a job with the government? If you value your privacy, think twice — the government runs incredibly extensive background searches on its high-profile applicants.

What kind of information does the government want from its applicants? Well, when former Apple CEO Steve Jobs was under consideration for a job with George H.W. Bush's administration in 1991, the FBI compiled a massive file on him. Included in that file: the fact that Jobs had a 2.65 GPA, his history of marijuana and LSD usage, and his tendencies to "distort reality" and to "twist the truth" in order to achieve his goals.

Of course, Jobs is far from the only figure with an FBI file. Other public personalities profiled by the FBI include John Lennon, Marilyn Monroe, Jimi Hendrix, and even Anna Nicole Smith. If you're curious about what goods the FBI has on you, you can always submit a request to view your own personal file. It is worth noting, of course, that the government doesn't profile everyone — just certain people of interest.

Is your data out there for the taking?3. Homeland Security is reading your tweets and Facebook status messages.

Unless you play around with your Twitter and Facebook privacy settings, just about anything you say is public. So it might not come as a surprise that the Department of Homeland Security is seeking contractors to build software and hardware capable of reading through what it calls "publicly available social media." Essentially, the government wants to read through your tweets and status messages to see if there's any information that might help in detecting threats.

There are some ground rules to the project. The government won't pose as a Twitter follower and won't accept or send any Facebook friend requests. Still, even with those restrictions, there's a lot of information floating out there for the feds to read, even if most of it is nonsense about Justin Bieber.

4. Your ISP may soon be required to keep files on what sites you visit.

The idea sounds pretty far out there — a law that would require your internet service provider to keep constant tabs on you, along with detailed records of what websites you visited and when. But that's exactly what the Hawaii state legislature proposed this January with H.B. 2288 and companion bill S.B. 2530. The bill, sponsored by State Rep. John Mizuno (D), "requires internet service providers... keep consumer records for no less than two years." The bill then goes on to specify that these records must include "each subscriber's information and internet destination history information."

Thankfully, the bills' sponsors withdrew the offending legislation from debate. But the reason wasn't just public outcry. Also a factor was the fact that the U.S. House of Representatives is considering a similar bill titled "Protecting Children From Internet Pornographers Act". That bill, sponsored and written by Texas Republican Representative Lamar Smith, would mandate that commercial ISPs create logs of customers' names, bank information, and IP addresses. That information could later be used by attorneys seeking to prosecute in a criminal trial or even in civil cases and divorce trials.

Not much is private anymore

Between private companies violating your privacy and now the government, is there any way to avoid prying eyes? Not really, unless you make significant changes in the way you use the web. So before you send that next tweet or post that next Facebook status message, think about whether or not you'd be okay with a complete stranger looking at it — because that's very well what may happen.

[20120507-13](#) 21:15 SteveB Why Is the Right So Pi*sed?

OK, I don't get it. Why is everyone on the Right always so pi*sed-off?

It is those on the Left who should be angry, we're the ones who had the heritage of us all stolen by these liars. Conservatives killed the American dream and run the country into the ground, not liberals!

I'll tell you, I'm starting to believe that the ugly, screaming, doom-and-gloom right-wing media may have a lot to do with the problem. Now the whole Right sounds the same and says the same things in the same angry, name-calling way?

What the hell gives if not media brainwashing, folks?

[20120507-14](#) 22:00 SteveG Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to SteveB, above) & "Life-Saving Cancer Drugs for Children Stuck in Federal Legislative Limbo"

I agree – If you use "Forward" in a statement about your re-election campaign, Glen the Beck can use his chalk board and trace you back to communism. The Right seem to smile as they express their anger or at the minimum have the Bush smirk.

Both parties are terrible. Watch the attached and tell me who shows compassion or passion for helping the stabilizing the availability of cancer drugs. Don't you just love Bonehead? Reid isn't much better.

"Life-Saving Cancer Drugs for Children Stuck in Federal Legislative Limbo" by Jonathan LaPook, CBS News

May 7, 2012, (http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57429527/life-saving-cancer-drugs-for-children-stuck-in-federal-legislative-limbo/?tag=cbsnewsTwoColUpperPromoArea)

There's been a nationwide shortage in life-saving cancer drugs for children. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tells CBS News that 14 drugs are in short supply.

Fifteen months ago today, Republicans and Democrats introduced bills to solve to problem. The "Preserving Access to Life-saving Medications Act" would require drug companies to notify the FDA if a shortage is coming. Both parties and the President support the bills, yet they haven't passed.

28 cancer medications are in dangerously short supply.

CBS News medical correspondent Dr. Jon LaPook found out more about the shortage and then traveled to a place he'd never worked before -- the U.S. capitol.

A good day may not look great when you're ten months old and fighting leukemia like Elena Schoneveld. But 80 percent of children with her kind of cancer can be cured with the right medications.

Two months ago, her dad Mark Schoneveld was told her chemotherapy drug, methotrexate, was running out.

"You just pray that stuff is handled by the professionals, and people do their jobs and get it done," he said to CBS News.

But, it's not getting done. Dozens of cancer drugs are running out. The reasons include manufacturing problems and reduced production due to lower profits with generic drugs.

"The industry has to not be afraid to let the FDA know if they have a problem so that we can get in there and work with them and fix it before it results in a shortage," FDA commissioner Dr. Margaret Hamburg said to CBS News.

The FDA said that the two bills that are languishing in Congress would help fix the problem by requiring drug companies to give the agency early warnings.

The bill's sponsors -- Republican Senator Susan Collins, Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar, Democratic Representative Diana Degette and Republican Representative Tom Rooney -- have watched it go nowhere. LaPook asked them why, despite the fact they have live-saving legislation that both parties agree on, they can't bring the bills to a vote.

"I don't know what has to happen for people to recognize that this has to happen," Rooney said to CBS News.

"Why would we turn our backs on these patients and on the medical community who needs this help when we know something helps?" Klobuchar said to CBS News.

LaPook asked why it was taking months and why it couldn't be voted on today.

"I've been in Congress for 16 years," Degette said to CBS News. "I have never seen a Congress more difficult to pass legislation. I think you should call the leadership and ask them why they haven't brought this bill up for vote!"

So LaPook did. He showed up at Speaker of the House John Boehner's weekly press briefing and asked why legislation that everybody agrees is desperately needed is taking so long to pass.

"Well, the Congress is working on this," Boehner told CBS News. "The Senate is getting ready to move a bill. The Energy and Commerce Committee is getting ready to mark up a bill in early May. But I would also ask: Where's the administration been? Where's the president of the United States been?"

LaPook responded that the legislators told him to talk directly to Boehner.

"I respect the committee process, and the committees have their work to do to investigate this," Boehner responded.

Remember, that committee process began over a year ago. During that year, another of Elena's drugs has hit the shortage list. She needs it to soften chemo's toxic effects.

"I can't imagine what it would be like without it. When you have diaper rash which is literally an open wound over your whole bum, it's like screaming pain. It's horrible," Mark said.

Legislation has cleared a committee but still needs a vote by the full Senate. LaPook asked Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to explain why it has taken 14 months before has even begun to look like something is going to happen.

"You know, as I said, things take a long time. When someone's been a governor in a state and comes to Congress and goes, 'Wow, what's going on here?' That's the way we've always been," Reid told CBS News.

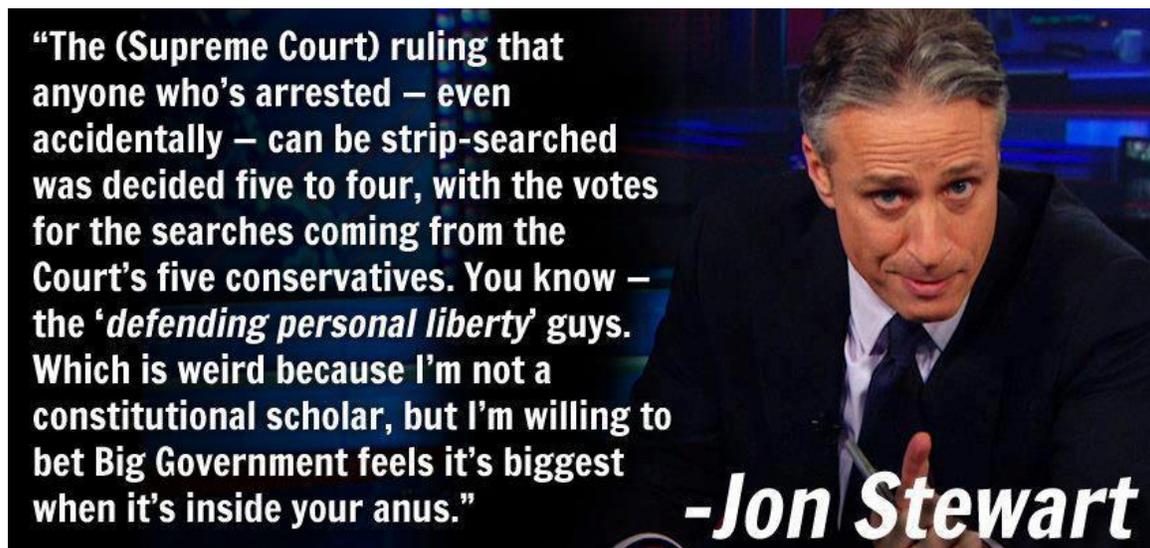
LaPook asked Reid if he had any power as a one of the leaders to move the legislation along faster.

"I would say this. First of all, things have happened. We'll have it on the floor soon. There's a step in the right direction, but there's no way I or anyone else can explain how slowly things move here in the Senate. It's been that way for 230 years," Reid said.

Reid told CBS News the full Senate is expected to vote on drug shortage legislation by July 4th, and that he expects it to be approved.

Fortunately, Elena has not missed any medication, but others have. This legislation, while not a solution, is at least a step in the right direction.

20120507-15 23:58 SteveG Quote: Jon Stewart on Big Government in Your Anus



<http://lightsinthetexassky.blogspot.com/2011/10/greencastle-indiana-witness-observed.html>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #134 — MAY 9, 2012

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

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

Big Oil Rules!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 9, 2012)

Jeez, I hate conspiracy theories! Unfortunately, there is at least one conspiracy that is not a theory. The "Robber Barons" have us by the nads again!

(http://econ161.berkeley.edu/econ_articles/carnegie/delong_moscow_paper2.html)

"Petro Putocracy" by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., OpEdNews

May 8, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Petro-Plutocracy-by-Robert-F-Kennedy-120508-134.html>)

Last week, the world got a preview of America's new post *Citizens United* petro plutocracy with the oil lords flexing their political muscles like oil soaked body builders pumped up on a steroid drip of campaign dollars. It was all about fracking. The petro tycoons first orchestrated the forced resignation of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) top frack patch enforcer, then adeptly forced the same cowed agency to stall its release of a damaging scientific study on fracking and finally strong armed the Interior Department to open America's public lands to gas companies without prior disclosure of their frack chemicals.

On Monday, the oil industry showcased its political muscle by forcing the resignation of EPA's popular environmental enforcement chief for the Gulf region, Dr. Al Armendariz. Dr. Al was beloved by environmentalists, civic leaders, and poor and minority communities across five states for his willingness to strictly enforce environmental rules regardless of the lawbreakers' political clout. But Armendariz's courage won him powerful enemies as well. He was steadfastly undeterred by relentless pressure from polluters and their allies including political intrigue, hamstringing budget cuts, and even death threats directed at him and his family. But this week, the world's most powerful cartel -- an international syndicate feared even by the Obama Administration -- finally brought Dr. Armendariz down. Armendariz's mistake was promising to enforce the law against Big Oil in the shale gas fields.

Several weeks ago, a two-year-old videotape surfaced showing Dr. Armendariz addressing a group of frightened and skeptical businessmen, civil leaders and property owners in Dish, Texas, a gas-patch town familiar with government's anemic enforcement record against the oil barons. Dish's citizenry were terrified that reckless, dangerous and illegal practices by shale-gas fracking companies might jeopardize their community's property values, water supplies, jobs, local businesses and human health. Dish's Mayor, Calvin Tillman, who attended the meeting, had already moved his home away from the frack fields due to the daily nosebleeds afflicting his children ever since fracking operations commenced. Armendariz assured Dish's shaken citizens that the EPA would enforce the law strictly in order to quickly bring industry outlaws into line.

This was too much for Congress' "law and order" Republicans who apparently believe that oil companies, and shale fracking in particular, should be above the law. Led by U.S. Senator, James Inhofe (R-Okla.), Big Petroleum's sock-puppet-in-chief, Congressional Republicans forced Armenderiz's dismissal. (As a private citizen, Dr. Al is no longer entitled to FBI protection and has had to appeal to the Dallas police for protection against continuing assassination threats.) Instead of the deterrence, for which Dr. Al had hoped, the episode sent an altogether different public message; government enforcers can lose their jobs by suggesting that the oil companies ought to obey America's laws.

The Republicans complained that Armenderiz, by way of reassuring Dish's frightened and skeptical townsfolk, referenced, as a metaphor, the ancient Roman practices of roadside crucifixion and burning villages to deter violators. Attorneys are familiar with such historical touchstones which are routinely invoked by law professors and "tough on crime" prosecutors to illustrate the concept of deterrence. If Armendariz had been speaking about any other crime than pollution from fracking, and any type of alleged criminal other than certain oil frackers, the same republican lawmakers would have applauded his muscular commitment to merciless rigor.

From its inception, hydro-fracking has been an outlaw enterprise. The industry was born in a provision drafted in secret by oilman Dick Cheney's clandestine energy task force specifically exempting it from the Safe Drinking Water Act, a shale fracking method devised and patented by Cheney's former company Halliburton. The Vice President's henchmen then rammed the exemption through a suppliant post 9/11 Congress. Rough and tumble competition among fracking companies have turned the frack fields from North Dakota to Pennsylvania into modern Dodge Cities. Regulatory capture has given some of the industry's worst actors de facto immunity from their criminal behavior.

In states like Pennsylvania and West Virginia, the fracking industry has flourished through habitual law breaking, including illegal dumping of horrendous toxins into public sewage treatment plants utterly unequipped to treat those poisons, using substandard casing protocols that regularly contaminate people's groundwater with carcinogenic benzene and explosive methane, and illegally filling streams to build roads, pipelines and drill pads. These species of habitual lawbreakers require the protection of crooked politicians and captive agencies to insulate criminal companies from the consequences of their illegal behavior. Oil companies are experts at using campaign contributions to purchase this class of government cooperation.

In another demonstration of its impressive power, two days after Dr. Al's resignation, the frack industry won another political battle -- forcing cowed Interior Department officials to allow gas companies to frack on our federal public lands without first disclosing the constituents of the lethal fracking fluid, they intend to inject into our purple mountains' majesty and amber waves of grain.

Later that week, AP reporters documented how the frack industry was using its clout to escape, not just the laws of government, but of science. On Thursday, AP's investigators forced the U.S. EPA to admit that it had withheld -- for nearly a month -- a devastating study showing groundwater contamination linked to fracking from oil and gas wells in Pavillion, Wyoming. At the command of Wyoming's republican Governor Matt Mead -- an indentured servant to the fracking industry -- the EPA delayed issuing the report. Mead then ordered state officials to "take a hard line" on the industry's behalf. A team of tobacco scientists and biostatisticians at Wyoming's Department of Environmental Quality next dutifully used the delay to gin up critical questions meant to debunk EPA's science to help soften the blow from the federal study that sent shock waves through the oil and gas industry.

Law-abiding gas patch residents like the citizens of Dish, Texas understand something that Congressional Republicans apparently don't -- environmental crime is real crime with real victims. Pollution doesn't just attack water and wildlife and put fishermen out of work. It harms human health, private property and often takes human life. Oil pollution damages the brains of little children and kills both young people and adults. Emissions from burning oil and coal kills tens of thousands Americans annually from cancer and respiratory illnesses, and impose half a trillion dollars in health-care damage.

Oil and coal's other costs include global warming, acid rain, mercury contamination and ocean acidification. The carbon cronies have demonstrated an uncanny talent for writing loopholes and exemptions into health, safety and environmental laws to escape the consequences of damaging private property, public health, the shared commons and the welfare of the American people. When their lobbying and drafting tricks fail to give oil titans full protection,

compliant enforcement and regulatory officials dull the sting of noncompliance. It's no wonder that frightened gas field communities seek assurance that government regulators will enforce the anemic laws that still exist to protect them. In the southern gulf states, Armendariz was respected by coastal communities as one of the few public officials who had not been corrupted by Big Oil. In that sense, Armendariz is an American hero in the mold of Elliott Ness, Pat Garrett, Wyatt Earp and Thomas Dewey.

Unfortunately, most of our political leaders lack Dr. Al's courage and integrity. Instead of protecting America's citizenry from oil industry atrocities, Senator Inhofe and the republicans see their job as protecting oil company brigands from the law and its enforcers. Inhofe's reasoning is not obscure, the oil and gas industry pumps hundreds of millions of dollars annually into elections and lobbying to purchase friends like Senator Inhofe. Big Oil is now the richest industry in history. Last year, Exxon contributed \$54 million to the political process. The gravities of this lucre are irresistible to politicians of a certain stripe. Exxon's record quarterly profits of \$104 million per day will allow that company to dramatically increase its political investments. More importantly, the Supreme Court's Citizens United case removes all the past restrictions that once deterred Big Oil from employing these enormous profits to completely dominate America's political system. As a result of that court ruling, the oil barons will pick the winners and losers in America's upcoming elections at every level -- in secret if they desire.

The industry is already poised to flood America's political landscapes with hundreds of millions of dollars in newly legalized bribery. In addition to their generous contribution to the Tea Party, CATO Institute and other oil industry front groups, and oil tycoons Charles and David Koch, on Feb. 3 pledged an extra \$60 million of their private money for direct campaign donations to ensure that their oil friendly candidate wins the presidential election in November.

Chevron, Exxon, the American Petroleum Institute and other oil moguls will match the Koch brothers' largesse many times over. The oil barons must find great comfort in historic data assembled by the Center for Responsive Politics demonstrating that, in 94% of American elections, the candidate with the most money wins. It was the underlying idealism of our successful experiment with self-government that made America an exemplary nation and the template for the world's democracies. If American democracy is to survive, we clearly need to restore integrity and representative democracy to our electoral process and get control of an industry that is using its enormous financial power to enrich itself, destroy the planet and undermine everything we value. Last week's events are merely a foreshadowing of the devolution that is inexorably propelling us toward a corrupt venal and petro kleptocracy.

(Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. is an environmental lawyer and activist in New York. He is one of the few who has also covered election fraud and voter suppression.)

20120508-01	08:21	SteveG	Re: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" Newly Re-Painted (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #133)
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On a lazy Sunday afternoon Dick C and I used to sit on the base of the Buzz Bomb and drink beer from B&K root beer containers and wave to the city police and smell the hog trucks as they passed. Ah, fond memories.

20120508-05	10:21	SteveB	Re: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Ummm...I guess that's a fond memory if you say so...ya, I know what you mean.

I always liked the Buzz Bomb, but don't know why. Maybe other people are different, but the way it's suspended up there, I could never, as a kid, look at it without thinking a little video game in my head where it would be buzzing overhead and then crash into something and explode...KABOOM! Scattering brains and blood and body parts all over that part of town.

Well...at least I imagined it up to the Kaboom! Never wanted to imagine what came next and video games hadn't been invented yet. I guess I got my ideas from movies and my uncles' many WWII stories, but none of that was really very gory back then. A good thing, I think. I preferred cowboys, Indians, and Superman.

But I could not think of that Buzz Bomb without bombing something with it. :-)

[20120508-02](#) 08:33 Pam Re: "Life-Saving Cancer Drugs for Children Stuck in Federal Legislative Limbo" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #133)

I'm glad you posted this. Does the word "outrage" come to mind? I was disgusted by both Bonehead and Reid, but Bonehead is the worst. The way he tried to turn Congress' failure back on Obama was so obvious as to be almost embarrassing. I wish I could comprehend what motivates such doofuses. Are they lying to themselves as well as to us? WTF is wrong with pushing legislation through re. cancer drugs? Other, less important, matters have been handled much more quickly.

[20120508-03](#) 09:54 Art Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #133)

Well, back to Steve's original question, I think the right (read white middle age to older men and in some case women) is pissed because they see their assumed position on the top of the pile slowly slipping away. The "American Dream" is for real Americans, white Americans! They are not sure why, or what exactly is happening, but they have always believed deep in their hearts that being white and American means you are better than everybody else, and that includes Europeans, Asians and especially minorities in America. They have watched that erode away over the years, now we have to go to school with them, see them in positions of some power and so forth. And now we have a nig... in the White House. What is worse in their dark little hearts is that they also suspect he may be smarter, more capable, a better family man and probably even a better Christian. They hate him viciously for that. Nig...s in their minds are supposed to be stupid and mostly dig ditches. Cain and West fit that image perfectly, so they're OK.

There's your hate.

[20120508-04](#) 10:13 Pam Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to SteveB & Art, above)

I was in Indianapolis last weekend, staying with my niece and her husband, who is, as he candidly admits, "prejudiced." He's anti-union and not thrilled about minorities, who in fact cause a lot of the crime in Indy. He's probably as far right as I am left, but he's a nice guy, and we didn't get into politics. They live right next door to a black defense lawyer, who is in the final stages (six years long) of building one of the most humongous houses I've ever seen--in what is otherwise an older, middle-class neighborhood that is mostly white. My niece has a nice, big house, but the edifice next door could be an embassy for a mid-sized country. This lawyer person is a terrible neighbor. He has his clients work on the house at all hours of the day and night, has violated the building codes all over the place, and holds noisy parties on his patio, where the word "m-----f-----" is thrown about liberally. My niece has a 3-yr old grandson, and his parents have had to take him home to get him away from the cursing. He also plays loud music, and I mean LOUD. Apparently, there is no noise ordinance in Indy, so he can do whatever he wants. The police have been called many times, but nothing changes. At one point this guy shouted at my niece's husband, "You're a racist! You just can't stand to see a black man being more successful than you!" You can imagine how that went down. I think you're right, Art. I see intransigence on all sides.

[20120508-07](#) 10:48 SteveB Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to Art & Pam, above)

Worthless, lazy people who don't want to work, but just want to do four things: (1) take from the government; (2) take drugs; (3) commit crimes against white people (no matter the color of the criminal); and (4) wear their pants too low.

Like they've been saying, it's not the rich! It's the poor who are dragging the country down! They are completely responsible for this entire mess because they're too lazy to consume enough foreign slave-produced goods to keep the whole international free trade bubble inflated.

Those bad, bad, poor, lazy, good-for-nothing thieves! They really tick me off! They especially tick me off at liberals! Now, please pass me that caviar and go back to licking my boots until they shine like that bald guest's head did last week after you got through with it.

20120508-12 12:39 Art Re: Why Is the Right So Pi*sed? (reply to SteveB, above)

Well jerks are jerks, women, men black or white. Had a similar thing happen to a friend in McLean, VA. In this area, people are buying up lots and tearing down the old houses to build new McMansions. My friend and his wife has just completed a very nice overhaul of their home when this monstrosity goes up next door. It was so dramatic, it made the Washington Post. The picture in the paper reminded you of a battleship parked next to a rowboat. Still the neighbor in your story sounds like a jerk to me, I mean he's a lawyer for gosh sakes, although I also suspect there is also more to the story.

As for patio or deck talk, I remember a military acquaintance sitting on my back deck in my old home in Burke telling some story about living in Arkansas and saying very loudly "and there I was sweating like a nigger".

My next door neighbor was black. My wife never has forgiven the guy.

20120508-06 10:24 Mary "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" & "Will Lawmakers Act to Close Tax Loophole for Illegal Immigrants?"

Just another example of how gov't screws us. \$4 BILLION every year. IRS says they can't do anything about it without Congress approval, so WHY don't they?

We are so screwed. uhhh. This is incredible. Child tax credits on "tax returns" for "undocumented workers" (who don't even have a Social Security #) and the kids live in Mexico. A complete fraud.

"Tax Loophole Costs Billions" by Bob Segall, WTHR-TV

Apr. 26, 2012, (<http://www.wthr.com/story/17798210/tax-loophole-costs-billions>)

Millions of illegal immigrants are getting a bigger tax refund than you. Eyewitness News shows a massive tax loophole that provides billions of dollars in tax credits to undocumented workers and, in many cases, people who have never stepped foot in the United States. And you are paying for it!

(INDIANAPOLIS) Inside his central Indiana office, a longtime tax consultant sits at his desk, shaking his head in disbelief.

"There is not a doubt in my mind there's huge fraud taking place here," he said, slowly flipping through the pages of a tax return.

The tax preparer does not want you to know his name for fear of reprisal, but he does want you to know about a nationwide problem with a huge price tag.

He came to "13 Investigates" to blow the whistle.

"We're talking about a multi-billion dollar fraud scheme here that's taking place and no one is talking about it," he said.

The scheme involves illegal immigrants -- illegal immigrants who are filing tax returns.

How it works

The Internal Revenue Service says everyone who is employed in the United States – even those who are working here illegally – must report income and pay taxes. Of course, undocumented workers are not supposed to have a social security number. So for them to pay taxes, the IRS created what's called an ITIN, an individual taxpayer identification number. A 9-digit ITIN number issued by the IRS provides both resident and nonresident aliens with a unique identification number that allows them to file tax returns.

While that may have seemed like a good idea, it's now backfiring in a big way.

Each spring, at tax preparation offices all across the nation, many illegal immigrants are now eagerly filing tax returns to take advantage of a tax loophole, using their ITIN numbers to get huge refunds from the IRS.

The loophole is called the Additional Child Tax Credit. It's a fully-refundable credit of up to \$1000 per child, and it's meant to help working families who have children living at home.

But "13 Investigates" has found many undocumented workers are claiming the tax credit for kids who live in Mexico – lots of kids in Mexico.

"We've seen sometimes 10 or 12 dependents, most times nieces and nephews, on these tax forms," the whistleblower told Eyewitness News. "The more you put on there, the more you get back."

The whistleblower has thousands of examples, and he brought some of them to "13 Investigates". While identifying information such as names and addresses on the tax returns was redacted, it was still clear that the tax filers had received large tax refunds after claiming additional child tax credits for many dependents.

"Here's a return right here: we've got a \$10,3000 refund for nine nieces and nephews," he said, pointing to the words "niece" and "nephew" listed on the tax forms nine separate times.

"We're getting an \$11,000 refund on this tax return. There's seven nieces and nephews," he said, pointing to another set of documents. "I can bring out stacks and stacks. It's just so easy it's ridiculous."

20 kids = \$30,000

WTHR spoke to several undocumented workers who confirmed it is easy.

They all agreed to talk with WTHR investigative reporter Bob Segall and a translator as long as WTHR agreed not to reveal their identity.

One of the workers, who was interviewed at his home in southern Indiana, admitted his address was used this year to file tax returns by four other undocumented workers who don't even live there. Those four workers claimed 20 children live inside the one residence and, as a result, the IRS sent the illegal immigrants tax refunds totaling \$29,608.

"13 Investigates" saw only one little girl who lives at that address (a small mobile home). We wondered about the 20 kids claimed as tax deductions?

"They don't live here," said the undocumented worker. "The other kids are in their country of origin, which is Mexico."

He later explained none of the 20 children have ever visited the United States – let alone lived here.

So why should undocumented workers receive tax credits for children living in a foreign country, which is a violation of IRS tax rules?

"If the opportunity is there and they can give it to me, why not take advantage of it?" the worker said.

Other undocumented workers in Indiana told 13 Investigates the same thing. Their families are collecting tax refunds for children who do not live in this country. Several of the workers told WTHR they were told it was legal for them to claim the tax credit for a child who does not live in the United States.

IRS was repeatedly warned

"The magnitude of the problem has grown exponentially," said Russell George, the United States Department of Treasury's Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA).

And he says the IRS has known about the problem for years.

George has repeatedly warned the IRS that additional child tax credits are being abused by undocumented workers. In 2009, his office released an audit report that showed ITIN tax filers received about \$1 billion in additional child tax credits. Last year, the inspector general released a new report showing the problem now costs American tax payers more than \$4.2 billion.

"Keep in mind, we're talking \$4 billion per year," he said. "It's very troubling."

What George finds even more troubling is the IRS has not taken action despite multiple warnings from the inspector general.

"Millions of people are seeking this tax credit who, we believe, are not entitled to it," said the inspector general. "We have made recommendations to [IRS] as to how they could address this, and they have not taken sufficient action in our view to solve the problem."

Other information obtained from the TIGTA audits include:

- Claims for additional child tax credits by ITIN filers have skyrocketed during the past decade, from \$161 million in 2001 to \$4.2 billion in tax year 2010.
- Undocumented workers filed 3.02 million tax returns in 2010. 72% of those returns (2.18 million) claimed the additional child tax credit.
- In 2010, the IRS owed undocumented workers more in claimed additional child tax credits than it collected from those workers in taxes.

Agency responds – sort of

What does the IRS have to say about all this?

The agency sent WTHR a statement, defending its policy of paying tax credits to illegal immigrants.

"The law has been clear for over a decade that eligibility for these credits does not depend on work authorization status or the type of taxpayer identification number used. Any suggestion that the IRS shouldn't be paying out these credits under current law to ITIN holders is simply incorrect. The IRS administers the law impartially and applies it as it is written," the statement said.

George disagrees with that position and believes the IRS should be doing more to prevent undocumented workers from getting billions in US tax dollars.

"The IRS is not doing something as simple as requesting sufficient documentation from people seeking this credit," he said. "Once the money goes out the door, it's nearly impossible for the IRS to get it back."

Over the past month, WTHR has tried to ask the IRS more questions about its efforts to prevent abuse involving additional child tax credits.

Despite repeated phone calls, e-mails and a visit to IRS headquarters in Washington, the agency said none of its 100,000 employees had time to meet with "13 Investigates" for an interview. An IRS spokeswoman said all staff were too busy because of the tax filing deadline in mid-April.

Apparently, the IRS doesn't have time to respond to some tax preparers, either.

Last year, our whistleblower noticed dozens of undocumented workers had used phony documents and false income to claim tax credits. He reported all of it to the IRS.

"These were fraudulent, 100% fraudulent tax returns, but I got no response; absolutely none. We never heard a thing," he said. "To me, it's clear the IRS is letting this happen."

The IRS tells WTHR it can do nothing to change the current system unless it gets permission from Congress. In other words, according to the IRS, closing the loophole would require lawmakers to pass a new law specifically excluding illegal immigrants from claiming additional child tax credits.

The big questions now: Is Congress willing to do that?

What's next

Tomorrow night, "13 Investigates" will show you how lawmakers are reacting to WTHR's investigation and what they plan to do about. You'll also hear why some undocumented workers say the credits are essential and should be left intact. Our investigation continues Friday night at 11:00.

Full statement to WTHR from the Internal Revenue Service:

The law has been clear for over a decade that eligibility for these credits does not depend on work authorization status or the type of taxpayer identification number used. Any suggestion that the IRS shouldn't be paying out these credits under current law to ITIN holders is simply incorrect. The IRS administers the law impartially and applies it as it is written. If the law were changed, the IRS would change its programs accordingly. The IRS disagrees with TIGTA's recommendation on requiring additional documentation to verify child credit claims. As TIGTA acknowledges in this report, the IRS does not currently have the legal authority to verify and disallow the Child Tax Credit and the Additional Child Tax Credit during return processing simply because of the lack of documentation. The IRS has procedures in place specifically for the evaluation of questionable credit claims early in the processing stream and prior to issuance of a refund. The IRS continues to work to refine and improve our processes.

Part II: "Will Lawmakers Act to Close Tax Loophole for Illegal Immigrants?" by Bob Segall, WTHR-TV

Apr. 27, 2012, (<http://www.wthr.com/story/17861738/will-lawmakers-act-to-close-tax-loophole-for-illegal-immigrants>)

(INDIANAPOLIS) Congressman Dan Burton (R – Ind) is frustrated – very frustrated – after learning the details of an Eyewitness News investigation.

"Why in the world are we doing this?" he asked. "Are you kidding me? The cost to the American tax payer is huge!"

The veteran lawmaker is responding to what "13 Investigates" discovered all across Indiana: illegal immigrants getting big tax refunds from the Internal Revenue Service thanks to a loophole in federal law.

MORE: Tax loophole costs billions

The loophole allows undocumented workers to collect what's called an additional child tax credit. The credit – up to \$1,000 per child – can be claimed even by families who pay nothing in taxes, in many cases resulting in a cash payment from the IRS. It is intended for working families with children who live in the same home.

But a local tax preparer came to Eyewitness News to blow the whistle on millions of people who, he believes, are taking advantage of the system. He says many illegal immigrants are claiming the tax credit for children who've never lived in this country, and he showed "13 Investigates" dozens of redacted tax returns to prove his point.

"There is not a doubt in my mind there is huge fraud taking place here," said the whistleblower, who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisal. "I can bring out stacks and stacks. It's just so easy it's ridiculous."

Exposing the loophole

An undocumented worker in southern Indiana told "13 Investigates" just how easy it truly is.

He said four other illegal immigrants file tax returns using his address, even though none of them actually lives there. And he said this year, those four workers filed tax returns claiming 20 children live inside his small trailer home. As a result, the IRS sent the illegal immigrants tax refunds totaling more than \$29,000.

But none of the 20 children listed as dependents on the tax returns lives in Indiana – or even in the United States.

"No, they don't live here," admitted the undocumented worker, who lives with his young daughter. "The other kids are in their country of origin, which is Mexico."

The IRS granted tax credits for the 20 children anyway, even though the agency's own policy states they are not eligible. (Children are eligible for additional child tax credits only if they are US citizens or minor resident aliens who live in the US with a tax filer for more than half of a calendar year.)

According to WTHR's whistleblower, cases like this one are commonplace because the IRS does little to verify the eligibility of both the undocumented workers filing for additional child tax credits and the dependents listed on their tax returns.

"13 Investigates" has confirmed it's a growing problem. It's nationwide. And it's out of control.

Billions already paid

Eyewitness News obtained US Treasury Department audit reports that show illegal immigrants now get additional child tax credits totaling \$4.2 billion dollars each year. The department's Inspector General for Tax Administration has repeatedly warned the IRS that undocumented workers are abusing the additional child tax credit.

"Millions of people are seeking this credit who, we believe, are not entitled to it," said inspector general Russell George. "We have made recommendations to [IRS] as to how they could address this and they have not taken sufficient action in our view to solve the problem. It's very troubling."

Why has the IRS done nothing?

Despite phone calls, emails, even a visit to IRS headquarters in Washington to get answers, no one at the IRS would meet with WTHR.

The agency instead sent "13 Investigates" a short statement (see below) saying it is following the law, and current tax law does not prevent undocumented workers from getting additional child tax credits. The IRS claims it can't change that without a new law.

Rep. Burton and other lawmakers are now ready to act.

Lawmakers looking for a fix

"We've got to deal with it," he said. "I knew this was a problem, but until hearing what you found, I didn't know it was this severe."

Rep. Burton and dozens of other House Republicans have co-sponsored a bill that would essentially authorize additional child tax credits only for US citizens. House Resolution 1956 would require tax filers to provide a valid social security number to receive an additional child tax credit.

The IRS provides illegal immigrants with an ITIN (individual taxpayer identification number) so they can file tax returns, but most undocumented workers are not eligible to receive a social security number.

HR 1956 has sat idle in the House Ways and Means Committee for almost a year.

However, language from the bill is now included in a package of proposed budget savings measures that House lawmakers are expected to consider in May. While the budget package may have enough support to pass the House, it is expected to die a quick death in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

"This should not be a partisan issue because we're all concerned about saving taxpayer dollars and not wasting them on fraudulent things like this," said Rep. Burton. "But I don't think Democrats want to deal with this with right now."

Not all Democrats are opposed to limiting additional child tax credits to US citizens.

Last fall, Senator Claire McCaskill (D – Mo) sent a letter to IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman asking him to stop the agency's payments of additional child tax credits to undocumented workers. "This is deeply problematic and must be remedied," the senator wrote.

But few other Democratic lawmakers have voiced support for eliminating the child tax credits for undocumented workers.

Republicans plan to keep pushing the issue forward.

"This rampant abuse of hardworking taxpayer dollars is just wrong," said Rep. Sam Johnson (R – Tex), who authored HR 1956. "It's time we close this tax loophole and put a stop to the child tax credit sham."

Rep. Burton agrees.

"I'm a taxpayer, and the thought of me paying for 24 people who are living in one trailer boggles my mind, especially when you tell me most of them are still living in Mexico. That's unconscionable." he said.

"Who's going to help?"

Many undocumented workers see the issue very differently.

"It's not taking advantage. I'm very thankful to this country for the help it gives me," said an illegal immigrant in central Indiana, who decided to talk with "13 Investigates" as long as we agreed not to reveal his identity.

The worker has lived in the United States for 14 years. He owns a home in Indiana, pays taxes and is raising three children who are all honor roll students. This year, he received a \$9,000 tax refund that includes additional child tax credits – not only for his children who live in Indiana, but also for four nieces and nephews in Mexico.

The tax credits help him care for his young family members south of the border, and he says attempts by Congress to revoke the credits could have dire consequences.

"Who's going to help them if they're not eligible ... to avoid them ending up in the drug mafia, begging in the street, being raped? What happens when they get sick?" he asked. "There's a lot of things that could happen to them if you don't help ... When you come here [to the United States], to your family down there, you are their hope."

Taking additional child tax credits away from undocumented workers would also have an impact on millions of children legally living in this country. Children of illegal immigrants who are born in the US are legal US citizens and, in many cases, those children would no longer be eligible to receive the tax credits under proposals like HR 1956.

But the inspector general insists refundable tax credits were never intended for illegal immigrants – let alone people who've never stepped foot in the United States.

"It's being abused by people who are not entitled to use it, and that's problematic," George told Eyewitness News.

"It's cheating the American taxpayer," agreed Burton. "We all believe in humanity and humanitarianism, but we've got a \$15 trillion national debt. We can't subsidize the whole world."

What can you do?

Congress may be voting on a budget measure in the coming weeks, and a budget reconciliation package now being considered in the House of Representatives contains language that would limit additional child tax credits to US citizens with a valid social security number. If you feel strongly about this issue – one way or another – now is a good time to let your lawmakers know.

[20120508-11](#) 12:23 Art Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Mary, above)

If you read the article carefully, it never mentions the fact that these people had paid the taxes initially, so they are now just gaming the system to get some of their money back. It is a "refund" as I read it.

Cheaters are cheaters and should be punished but wonder how this stacks up against the fact that companies like GE paid no income tax last year. Suspect this is small potatoes in the greater scheme of things. Also argues for a simpler tax code that get's rid of all these exemptions.

[20120508-14](#) 13:14 SteveG Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Mary & Art, above)

Huge tax holes all over the place. Here there are a lot of migrant farm workers – Pilipino, Mexican, oriental decent – plus 10,000 or so Native Americans – poor people, poor living conditions, poor working conditions, poor educational systems, just plain poor. Lady at the tamale shop was born here, her father wasn't – he is undocumented – does what he can, where he can, when he can, Rather focus on GE, Exxon, BP, Bank of America, etc. – bigger fish to fry.

[20120508-13](#) 13:05 SteveB Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Mary & Art, above)

Compared to military spending and military waste, it's a tiny drop in the bucket. Welfare fraud and waste are negligible in the real world. And the Post Office makes the news again. Much ado about nothing. Oh, and all the long-settled-in-most-people's-minds women's issues have been in the news. Now we have Biden's Gay-gate...

But the ***something***...

...the big, tough issues of military cuts, tax increases, jobs, health care, energy, trade, and immigration, etc. are things that make Republicans turn and run. Witness: the American Congress. And don't bring any "Global Warming" cr*p near any of those guys.

Yet, dealing with these problems is inevitable, is it not? Talking about them first would be good. Getting started right now might not be too late. Oh, darn, too many political games to be played, right?

[20120508-15](#) 13:19 SteveG Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)

Let's see the French elected a socialist to raise taxes, increase spending by the government, decrease movement toward austerity. - all to grow the economy. The Greeks are in the process of doing the same thing. Sounds like a European backlash to the republicans plan in this country. Did you hear that the gentleman that helped Paul Ryan develop his plan for Medicare finally say – IT WON'T WORK?

[20120508-21](#) 14:47 Pam Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveG, above)

I'm all about obeying the law, but having been an undocumented immigrant myself (in Canada, after my husband's work visa expired), I know how it feels to be desperate to stay in a place. If I were a poor Mexican and could get to the U.S. for a better chance, I'd take it, legal or no. I wonder what would happen if everyone in the whole world could move to wherever he wanted. Would repressive governments try to do things to keep their people at home, rather than locking them up?

[20120508-23](#) 14:59 SteveB Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Pam, above)

It's an interesting idea, Pam. Except...maybe 2 billion would come to the U.S., wouldn't they?

[20120508-25](#) 15:06 Pam Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)

I know it's an impossible dream that would in reality mean chaos, but in a state of nature people would move to wherever things were better. Animals don't know national boundaries, and I don't think primitive man did either. Maybe part of our trouble is artificially keeping people in places where life is hard.

[20120508-19](#) 14:37 Pam Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)

They may have paid taxes, but getting returns on children who live in Mexico is inexcusable, small potatoes or not. I always thought one thing that distinguished America from many other countries was our efficiency. Our electricity stays on, and our phones work all the time. I'm always taken aback when I see an example of such gross inefficiency as this. I really do believe it's the people, not the institution itself. I heard a nuclear scientist on NPR say today that the best 4th-generation nuclear plant, with all the bells and whistles, is still dangerous if an incompetent is in charge of it, while a 2nd-generation is very safe if it's run by someone who knows what he is doing.

[20120508-16](#) 13:28 Pam Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)

This is fraud, pure and simple. But it's not an example of the government screwing us. Well, Congress undoubtedly is, but, hey, "we" elected those bozos. It's not the institutions of govt., it's the people running them. Congress is letting the IRS get away with murder, and the only reason these abuses aren't being addressed--by both parties and both Houses of Congress--is because no Republican wants to do ANYTHING before the next election, certainly nothing that could possibly help Obama. You want to know who's screwing us? Our crappy politics, led by the redoubtable Republicans. I can't imagine anyone on either side of the aisle defending this practice of fraudulent tax returns to illegal immigrants, so where do you suppose the hold-up is?

[20120508-18](#) 14:07 SteveB Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Pam, above)

Isn't that the "other side of the isle"?

I want all the illegal aliens to have to swim across one of the larger American football stadiums, full of fans up to at least the level of the upper bleachers. The really good looking women and the ones who make the swim can stay,

the others...well...it's their fault. They should have learned how to swim in flan better. Outside the stadium would be one hellofa Latino tailgate party with free flan for all!

[20120508-22](#) 14:50 Pam Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)

Not unless you mean isle, as in island. ;-)

[20120508-24](#) 15:02 SteveB Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Pam, above)

No, isle as in permanent Congressional tropical vacation. And that's the way SteveM writes it...

[20120508-26](#) 15:08 Pam Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)

So right!

[20120508-27](#) 16:28 Mary Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)

No, it is not a "refund", Art! And I figured you'd subtly try to minimize it by citing more "cheaters", even tho GE is an apple and this fraud is an orange. So what would you call the tax cheaters in gov't? Oh, small potatoes, huh?

Spare us all a response.....you must be dizzy from spinning.

[20120508-28](#) 16:45 Mary Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)

Glad you see this for what it is, but you did a little "hair splitting" on semantics. The gov't...the people running it: to mah to, to ma to.

At any rate, you're too intelligent and fair, Pam, to lay ALL the blame on republicans like the others do. You know there is cunning, deceit, and BS on both sides of the aisle.

As much fun as this is, I must sign off for a few days. Steve gets back from NYC tonight....maybe he'll join in! (:

[20120508-29](#) 17:19 Art Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Mary, above)

You're right. Missed this was a real newspaper. Number 10 particularly egregious.

[From the IRS, I take it. -SteveB]

1. Amount - With the Child Tax Credit, you may be able to reduce your federal income tax by up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under the age of 17.
2. Qualification - A qualifying child for this credit is someone who meets the qualifying criteria of six tests: age, relationship, support, dependent, citizenship, and residence.
3. Age Test - To qualify, a child must have been under age 17 – age 16 or younger – at the end of 2010.
4. Relationship Test - To claim a child for purposes of the Child Tax Credit, they must either be your son, daughter, stepchild, foster child, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister or a descendant of any of these

individuals, which includes your grandchild, niece or nephew. An adopted child is always treated as your own child. An adopted child includes a child lawfully placed with you for legal adoption.

5. Support Test - In order to claim a child for this credit, the child must not have provided more than half of their own support.

6. Dependent Test - You must claim the child as a dependent on your federal tax return.

7. Citizenship Test - To meet the citizenship test, the child must be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or U.S. resident alien.

8. Residence Test - The child must have lived with you for more than half of 2010. There are some exceptions to the residence test, which can be found in IRS Publication 972, Child Tax Credit.

9. Limitations - The credit is limited if your modified adjusted gross income is above a certain amount. The amount at which this phase-out begins varies depending on your filing status. For married taxpayers filing a joint return, the phase-out begins at \$110,000. For married taxpayers filing a separate return, it begins at \$55,000. For all other taxpayers, the phase-out begins at \$75,000. In addition, the Child Tax Credit is generally limited by the amount of the income tax you owe as well as any alternative minimum tax you owe.

10. Additional Child Tax Credit - If the amount of your Child Tax Credit is greater than the amount of income tax you owe, you may be able to claim the Additional Child Tax Credit.

[20120508-32](#) 18:19 SteveB Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to Art, above)

This sounds like a good low-cost way for the government to let people with lower incomes and children keep more of their tax money. So what if the Right-wing media made it out to be a bad socialist give-away. I'm all for the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Credit. Both are good programs that do valuable work almost for free.

But I'm not in favor of illegal aliens receiving anything from the government, but something that benefits a citizen or legal alien child with taxpaying parents? Yes!

This is no huge tax loophole and the author of the original article slanted the story terribly.

[20120508-33](#) 18:23 Art Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to SteveB, above)

Still, ugly. You're right of course, hardly the whole picture.

[20120508-30](#) 17:24 Pam Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" (reply to all, above)

When I was in graduate school, I got this earned income credit. It was a godsend, but people shouldn't cheat to get it.

[20120508-08](#) 11:21 SteveM Fw: "Former Navy Seal Rebukes [President] Obama"

["Navy SEAL Hands Obama His Arse" by Andrea Shea King, NoisyRoom.net](#)

May 6, 2012, (<http://noisyroom.net/blog/2012/05/06/navy-seal-hands-obama-his-arse/>)

Former Navy SEAL, Benjamin Smith took an oath to defend our Constitution from enemies both foreign and domestic.

That oath has no expiration date. As an author, speaker, political strategist and ardent Constitutionalist, Benjamin Smith continues to battle tyranny and defend the freedoms that enabled American exceptionalism. Benjamin is a regular contributor to multiple news outlets including Breitbart and Fox News.

Benjamin Smith will appear on Fox News Sunday night at 10 pm EST to further discuss this subject.

FORMER NAVY SEAL REBUKES OBAMA, by Benjamin Smith

President Barack Hussein Obama – STOP using the Navy SEALS as a campaign ploy. Because with all due respect, (what little I have for you), you do NOT speak for me.

You have a movie about SEALS within the past year trying to identify with me, with the navy SEALS, and with anything that might improve your polling numbers...and yet it is all a sham to hide a weak un-American man desperate to claim the victories of others for his own.

You Sir are trying to take the credit for what the American People have achieved in killing Bin Laden. Your use of the SEALs accomplishment as a campaign slogan is nothing less than despicable. I, as a former Navy SEAL do not accept your taking credit for Osama Bin Laden's death. The American Military accomplished that feat.

Yet now that it is useful, you Mr. President, continue to refer to the event as if it were YOU and you alone which accomplished the worthy task of slaying one of America's greatest enemies. You say "I directed", "I Continued", "My Intelligence Community", "My national security team", "I determined that I had enough....", "My direction..."

Yet reliable sources continue to report that not only did you attempt to stop or delay Bin Laden's demise, you did not even leave the golf course for the situation room until 20 minutes before SEAL Team 6 took out Osama Bin Laden. Even the clothes you wore in the situation room betray this fact. This is a Commander in Chief? A man who takes credit for actions largely taken while he was out golfing?

We men who have taken the oath, say ENOUGH. You do not speak for me, a former Navy SEAL, or any one of the league of men whom I have earned the right to be among. You are simply a man running for an office. Yet you behave as a glory-hoarding ruler. You campaign to be our leader, yet in reality you wish to be our Master.

The American people are the ones who got Bin Laden... You did Not! We have fought wars and slugged it with Vast Terror Organizations to get to the man you say YOU killed. The United States of America has won you a title sir and you have spent the last three years trying to beg, borrow and bow as you GIVE IT ALL AWAY. You just happened to be president of the USA when WE THE PEOPLE got Osama Bin Laden. We do not see you as heroic or stoic, we see you as the guy who let America Go. We got fat and weak and you gave it all away. That is your credit – you bow to foreign leaders and pander to the press. You do not represent me as a Military Man. You do not represent me as a SEAL. You do not represent me as an AMERICAN!

You do not speak for me or any American military man because though you may now be Commander in Chief, you are not the man to whom we can point our sons and say "This is the American dream, this is American exceptionalism, this is what I wish for your future", because you Sir are NONE of these things. You Sir, are the antithesis of American Exceptionalism. Your idols are Saul Alinksy and Karl Marx and your revolutionary dreams and anti-American ideals poison your every policy. Your every action betrays the fact that in your soul you do not understand what it is to be an American, not what America truly is. Your agenda from the beginning has been to get rid of and kill everything that is and ever was American. You who so easily dismisses America's greatness and bows to foreigners... YOU DO NOT SPEAK FOR ME. YOU DO NOT SPEAK FOR THE NAVY SEALS. YOU DO NOT SPEAK FOR THE MILITARY MAN AND you SHALL NOT claim as your prize that which you have not earned. The Navy SEALS are NOT a campaign slogan to be bantered about for play. Nor are our accomplishments, including the demise of Osama Bin Laden, yours to claim.

So you DO NOT speak for me. And I will not stand for your use and abuse of my brethren the SEALS.

For Liberty, Benjamin Smith

[20120508-09](#) 11:50 SteveB Re: "Former Navy Seal Rebukes [President] Obama" (reply to SteveM, above)

If he were on active duty, this dude would be a traitor to his country, pure and simple. The president is the CIC, that's all there is to it. I find this racist and insulting to the max (Is that why you like it?), and to the institution of the presidency, so it insults even me.

A really dumb jerk wrote this drivel, and I'm pretty sure the retired Special Forces and other military people in the group will find this pretty offensive too.

So, what do you think? Is R0mney a robot or humanoid?

[20120508-10](#) 12:05 SteveG Fw: Consumers Union Action: Help Stop Mad Cow Disease

from Consumers Union:

You've likely heard about the Mad Cow case found in California, and how government officials describe it as not much to worry about. We disagree.

Mad Cow disease is transmitted through animal feed, and the United States allows cows to be fed chicken coop waste – chicken feces, feathers and spilled feed that may include ground-up cattle parts that could carry the disease.

Compounding the risk, only one in every 900 cattle in the U.S. is tested for Mad Cow, a tiny fraction of the beef that makes it onto our tables. More surprising, our government actually prevents beef processors from testing their own stock!

If you don't like these odds, tell the FDA and USDA to change their outdated rules!

Consumers Union's lead scientist describes this latest case as a 'warning flag' since it's a type of Mad Cow studies suggest can be transmitted to humans, possibly even more easily than the kind that led to more than 100 human deaths in the United Kingdom.

The European Union now tests every cow over the age of 6, when they're most likely to contract the disease. But testing here has actually decreased 90 percent since 2005. Now, we test only 40,000 of the 35 million cows slaughtered each year.

And many large-scale cattle operators are turning cows, which are natural vegetarians, into cannibals. Cow meat and bone meal that can carry the disease are in chicken feed, and chicken coop waste is then fed to cows at a rate of 2 billion pounds a year.

Tell the FDA and USDA to get serious about stopping Mad Cow:

<https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=2661&JServSessionIdr004=zvz1076751.app245a>

If you know others who might like to know a bit more about the beef on their tables, please forward this email to them. Consumers can change the marketplace if we speak out together!

Jean Halloran, BuySafeEatWell.org

[20120508-17](#) 13:32 SteveB "Cartagena Beyond the Secret Service Scandal"

I bring this up mainly because it's interesting to note that almost all news out of Cartagena was essentially "suppressed" by the Secret Service scandal.

Fascinating to think that maybe sometimes it could be worth taking a PR hit to accomplish such a thing purposefully...

Wonder how many times that's been done and when some of them were? Wonder if this could have been one?

"Cartagena Beyond the Secret Service Scandal" by Noam Chomsky, *NY Times*/NationofChange

May 8, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/cartagena-beyond-secret-service-scandal-1336492487>)

Though sidelined by the Secret Service scandal, last month's Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia, was an event of considerable significance. There are three major reasons: Cuba, the drug war, and the isolation of the United States.

A headline in the *Jamaica Observer* read, "Summit shows how much Yanqui influence had waned." The story reports that "the big items on the agenda were the lucrative and destructive drug trade and how the countries of the entire region could meet while excluding one country – Cuba."

The meetings ended with no agreement because of U.S. opposition on those items – a drug-decriminalization policy and the Cuba ban. Continued U.S. obstructionism may well lead to the displacement of the Organization of American States by the newly-formed Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, from which the United States and Canada are excluded.

Cuba had agreed not to attend the summit because otherwise Washington would have boycotted it. But the meetings made clear that U.S. intransigence would not be long tolerated. The U.S. and Canada were alone in barring Cuban participation, on grounds of Cuba's violations of democratic principles and human rights.

Latin Americans can evaluate these charges from ample experience. They are familiar with the U.S. record on human rights. Cuba especially has suffered from U.S. terrorist attacks and economic strangulation as punishment for its independence – its "successful defiance" of U.S. policies tracing back to the Monroe Doctrine.

Latin Americans don't have to read U.S. scholarship to recognize that Washington supports democracy if, and only if, it conforms to strategic and economic objectives, and even when it does, favors "limited, top-down forms of democratic change that do not risk upsetting the traditional structures of power with which the United States has long been allied..." as neo-Reaganite scholar Thomas Carothers points out.

At the Cartagena summit, the drug war became a key issue at the initiative of newly-elected Guatemalan President Gen. Perez Molina, whom no one would mistake for a soft-hearted liberal. He was joined by the summit host, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, and by others.

The concern is nothing new. Three years ago the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy published a report on the drug war by ex-Presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico, and Cesar Gaviria of Colombia calling for decriminalizing marijuana and treating drug use as a public-health problem.

Much research, including a widely quoted Rand Corporation study of 1994, has shown that prevention and treatment are considerably more cost-effective than the coercive measures that receive the bulk of funding. Such nonpunitive measures are also of course far more humane.

Experience conforms to these conclusions. By far the most lethal substance is tobacco, which also kills nonusers at a high rate (passive smoking). Usage has sharply declined among more educated sectors, not by criminalization but as a result of lifestyle changes.

One country, Portugal, decriminalized all drugs in 2001 – meaning that they remain technically illegal but are considered administrative violations, removed from the criminal domain. A Cato Institute study by Glenn Greenwald found the results to be “a resounding success. Within this success lie self-evident lessons that should guide drug policy debates around the world.”

In dramatic contrast, the coercive procedures of the 40-year U.S. drug war have had virtually no effect on use or price of drugs in the United States, while creating havoc through the continent. The problem is primarily in the United States: both demand (for drugs) and supply (of arms). Latin Americans are the immediate victims, suffering appalling levels of violence and corruption, with addiction spreading through the transit routes.

When policies are pursued for many years with unremitting dedication though they are known to fail in terms of proclaimed objectives, and alternatives that are likely to be far more effective are systematically ignored, questions naturally arise about motives. One rational procedure is to explore predictable consequences. These have never been obscure.

In Colombia, the drug war has been a thin cover for counterinsurgency. Fumigation – a form of chemical warfare – has destroyed crops and rich biodiversity, and contributes to driving millions of poor peasants into urban slums, opening vast territories for mining, agribusiness, ranches and other benefits to the powerful.

Other drug-war beneficiaries are banks laundering massive amounts of money. In Mexico, the major drug cartels are involved in 80 percent of the productive sectors of the economy, according to academic researchers. Similar developments are occurring elsewhere.

In the U.S., the primary victims have been African-American males, increasingly also women and Hispanics – in short, those rendered superfluous by the economic changes instituted in the 1970s, shifting the economy toward financialization and offshoring of production.

Thanks largely to the highly selective drug war, minorities are dispatched to prison – the major factor in the radical rise of incarceration since the 1980s that has become an international scandal. The process resembles “social cleansing” in U.S. client states in Latin America, which gets rid of “undesirables.”

The isolation of the U.S. at Cartagena carries forward other turning-point developments of the past decade, as Latin America has at last begun to extricate itself from the control of the great powers, and even to address its shocking internal problems.

Latin America has long had a tradition of liberal jurisprudence and rebellion against imposed authority. The New Deal drew from that tradition. Latin Americans may yet again inspire progress in human rights in the United States.

[20120508-20](#) 14:44 Pam Re: The Arab Mind (reply to Art & SteveB)

There's a very basic difference between cultures that are based on the extended family or clan and those that are more individualistic, like ours. I'd never put up with a mother-in-law who treated me badly, but no Indian bride would ever complain. Culture runs deep.

[20120508-31](#) 17:27 MarthaH “First Thoughts: Five Reasons Lugar Likely Loses”

“First Thoughts: Five Reasons Lugar Likely Loses” by Chuck Todd, Domenico Montanaro, Natalie Cucchiara, Carrie Dann, and Brooke Brower, NBC

Bob Bennett's loss in 2010 should have been a wake-up call for every longtime senator. And it was for several -- Orrin Hatch saw the Tea Party freight train coming, but fought back early and often and looks likely to win another term. But the message didn't apparently get to the man who came into office the same year as Hatch -- Richard Lugar (R-IN), who's expected to see his career come to an end today with a loss a GOP primary today to state Treasurer Richard Mourdock.

There are five reasons we point to:

1. Residency and outreach: Lugar hasn't lived in Indiana for years and wasn't able to say what address was on his driver's license. Mourdock exploited it. And Lugar didn't do enough outreach with local GOP establishment or Tea Party leaders. Lugar disputes that, telling NBC's Kelly O'Donnell: "I've been perfectly connected all the way along. It's a ridiculous charge. How can anybody be more Hoosier? I've got a farm out here that I continue to work with my sons. I manage it on behalf of our family. I'm in touch every week with everybody in the state, usually on the ground with visits but with our staffs, trying to meet almost every challenge of individual Hoosiers or groups."
2. Ignoring the recent past: Last year, Republicans walked Lugar through what went wrong with Bennett, Lisa Murkowski, and Mike Castle. And what went right with John McCain -- no favorite of the Tea Party -- who went after opponent J.D. Hayworth early on and never let up. Unfortunately for Lugar, strategists say, the advice was ignored. If you don't want to change your own stances, then make the alternative unacceptable. McCain made his alternative unacceptable.
3. Campaign: he didn't have the kind of campaign in place that was necessary to win this kind of race. Hatch and even Olympia Snowe got it, and hired top operatives. Mourdock hired people who'd been there before.
4. Message: "Lugar as statesman" just wasn't going to get the job done. Movements have short-term memories. Mourdock's message was simple and effective-- "Dick Lugar is a fine man, but 36 years in Washington is long enough, and he's lost touch with Indiana."
5. Candidate: So much of what happens in campaigns, comes from the top. As revered as Lugar is in Washington, he wasn't able to adapt -- and failed to fully appreciate -- a changing dynamic within his party. Yesterday, for example, he continued to defend earmarks.

The most overwritten story will be the effect of the Tea Party: Mourdock tells NBC's Kelly O'Donnell that it's fair to credit the Tea Party with the win, if he pulls it off: "Certainly, it's fair, because the Tea Party has been very active and without question, they've provided the bulk of the volunteers to this huge grassroots game that we have." Ideological supporters, like the Club for Growth and Tea Party Express, spent money and organized rallies. But, the fact remains, if Lugar loses, it will be for all the reasons incumbents have lost for a century. There will be a lot written about the Tea Party this and ideology that, but Lugar would have lost, because he made it easy to lose. He made it easy for Mourdock to sell this simple message -- one challengers dream of -- that he's gone Washington, and he's out of touch. Mourdock and the Tea Party made Lugar actually run a campaign. And Lugar, who hasn't had a political fight in 30 years, wasn't able to run a modern campaign.

Real World Impact: Indiana will be a Senate seat that's in play for at least a little while. The question is going to be, can Mourdock become Ron Johnson, not Ken Buck? Marco Rubio, not Sharron Angle? Ideologically, Indiana isn't Delaware, but it's also not Kentucky. The downside for Mourdock is he's still not that well known and still more easily definable. The real challenge will be -- does he define himself on his own terms or do Democrats take this seriously and try to do it for him? Do Democrats define their own candidate Rep. Joe Donnelly for swing voters before Republicans do it for them? Republicans should be able to hold on here, but it'll take some work and money early on, and they know it; they learned their own lessons from NV and CO in 2010.

[20120508-36](#)

23:58 Bill

Senator Richard Lugar Concedes

Disappointment in Indiana

Tuesday was primary day in Indiana, along with two other states. Among Republican contests for nominations was the marquee senatorial race: Incumbent Sen. Richard Lugar vs. Richard Mourdock, who happens currently to be state treasurer. Lugar, you may know, has been a moderate--and somewhat more moderate in his later and lengthy incumbency of thirty-six years. He even voted in the latter years of the Bush administration for ending the

interminable Iraq war, a vote that carried weight—and harvested a snarl from Bush and Cheney—given Bush’s post on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Mourdock, whose stewardship of state government funds was shaky, had, during the depths of the financial system meltdown, railed against federal bailout of GM and Chrysler. Apparently that pronouncement and many others following the Tea Party script appealed to the majority, who decided to retire the 80-year-old incumbent, a Rhodes scholar, who had, among other efforts, worked effectively to cause disarmament, especially for the purpose of gathering up and controlling fissile materials and nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union.

The tally Tuesday was 61-39.

The unopposed Democrat, Joe Donnelly, now representing a northern Indiana congressional district, probably has a chance to displace Mourdock in the general election.

20120508-34 22:31 SteveG “The Best & Worst Places to Be a Mom” (America Is #25)

PBS report ranking 165 countries from best to worst for being a mother: Norway was ranked number 1 and Niger ranked number 165 – Afghanistan is 164.

For people that are interested: The us ranks number 25 up from number 31 last year. Why the US is not in the top 10 or top 20: POVERTY!! The disparity of income and insurance available – any other reason not to have single payer and universal coverage?

[Wow! So President Obama single-handedly moved the U.S. up to 25 from 31, a 20% increase? I thought he was supposed to be doing such a bad job, destroying the country and all? Mmmmm... Still, we suck! –SteveB]

“The Best and Worst Places to Be a Mom” by Gwen Ifill, PBS News Hour

May 8, 2012 (http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/globalhealth/jan-june12/globalmoms_05-08.html)

(Norway is the healthiest country in the world to be a mother, according to a new report released by the international non-profit Save the Children. The worst: West Africa's Niger. Gwen Ifill and Save the Children President Carolyn Miles discuss what countries are best and worth at creating healthy children and mothers.)

GWEN IFILL: We turn now to a new report which ranks the countries where mothers and their children are at the most and the least risk. The international nonprofit Save the Children finds Norway the healthiest for the third year in a row, the worst, the West African nation of Niger. It replaced Afghanistan, which moved up one spot from last year. The United States ranked 25th. For more on the report, we're joined by Save the Children president and CEO Carolyn Miles. Welcome, Ms. Miles.

CAROLYN MILES: Thank you, Gwen.

GWEN IFILL: Give us a sense of what measures you're using to come up with these rankings.

CAROLYN MILES: Well, we looked at a wide variety of measures, really looking at things like child mortality, maternal mortality, the education of women and girls, economic empowerment of women, even the political involvement of women, because all of those give us a good indicator of the status of women in those countries, which really impacts what it's like to be a mom there.

GWEN IFILL: So, what. . .

CAROLYN MILES: We also looked at things like maternity leave, so all sorts of factors.

GWEN IFILL: So what's the difference in the end in the rankings between the top 10 and the bottom 10?

CAROLYN MILES: Well, it's interesting.

They're really kind of almost a mirror of each other. So all those indicators I talked with -- about are great for the top 10, and they're all quite poor for the bottom 10. So an example would be if we compare Norway and Niger, as you said, number one and number 165.

So, in Niger, only one in three births are attended by any kind of skilled attendant. And some of these births are actually women giving birth all by themselves, whereas, in Norway, virtually every birth is attended by a skilled birth attendant.

Things like education rates for girls, so about four years on average in Niger, 18 years in Norway. Probably, for me, as a mom, the most shocking statistic actually from this year's report is that, in Niger, virtually every mother will lose a child before the age of 5, will lose one of her children. So that to me, as a mom, is a pretty shocking statistic, so really across the board.

GWEN IFILL: It's a pretty shocking -- it's pretty shocking statistics. And I wonder how much of this is also driven by malnutrition not only involving the mothers, but also the children.

CAROLYN MILES: Yeah, we really looked at malnutrition this year as a huge factor and looked at hunger; 170 million kids across the world are malnourished. That's about one in four children.

And that has a big, big impact on child health. So of the seven-and-a-half million kids that die under the age of 5, about a third of them are malnourished. So when a child gets sick, they die from very common illnesses if they're malnourished.

GWEN IFILL: I was also interested in something in the report about educational attainment for girls. That's -- you wouldn't think about that as having to do with health, necessarily.

CAROLYN MILES: Well, the reason it's a key indicator in this report is that we have actually done a lot of work on this issue. The longer you keep girls in school, the longer they delay having their first child. And that child will be much healthier.

A girl who has a baby at 14 is a much higher-risk pregnancy and a much higher risk for that baby than if the girl waits until she's 17 or 18. And if she stays in school, it's much more likely she is going to wait until she's older. So that's why girls' education is actually so important.

GWEN IFILL: I was also interested in the -- in the status of Afghanistan which was dead last, last time you took this report, and now has moved up. What happened in Afghanistan?

CAROLYN MILES: Well, there actually are some good bright spots in this report, and Afghanistan is one of those.

Afghanistan did move up. It doesn't sound like a lot, but moving up from last to not being last anymore is big. And a lot of that was driven by education rates, actually. So the years and years that people have been working on getting girls into school is really starting to show up in terms of the health of mothers and of babies there. So that was a big change.

GWEN IFILL: And also the -- and also the proliferation of community health centers from -- I think from 2,500 in 2008 to 22,000 now, that's a lot.

CAROLYN MILES: That's right.

And a lot of these health centers are in the places where moms and babies do die, kind of at the end of the health system, if you will, at the end of the road, really remote areas where these moms are oftentimes giving birth at home. So, having a health clinic close at hand really saves lives.

GWEN IFILL: And, finally, I have to ask you, why is it that the U.S. ranks 25th? You would assume, if it wasn't number one, it would at least be in the top 10 or the top 20.

CAROLYN MILES: Yes. I think the number 25 for the U.S. is really surprising. Actually, the U.S. moved up six spots this year, so we were 30 -- the U.S. was 31 last year.

But we still have very high rates, relatively, of maternal mortality in the country. One in 2,100 births result in the death of the mother. And we still have some very high rates of child mortality as well. So it's because of poverty in the United States, the big gap between health care that's available for well-off women vs. very poor women, and that's really a huge gap still in the United States.

GWEN IFILL: Carolyn Miles of Save the Children, thank you so much.

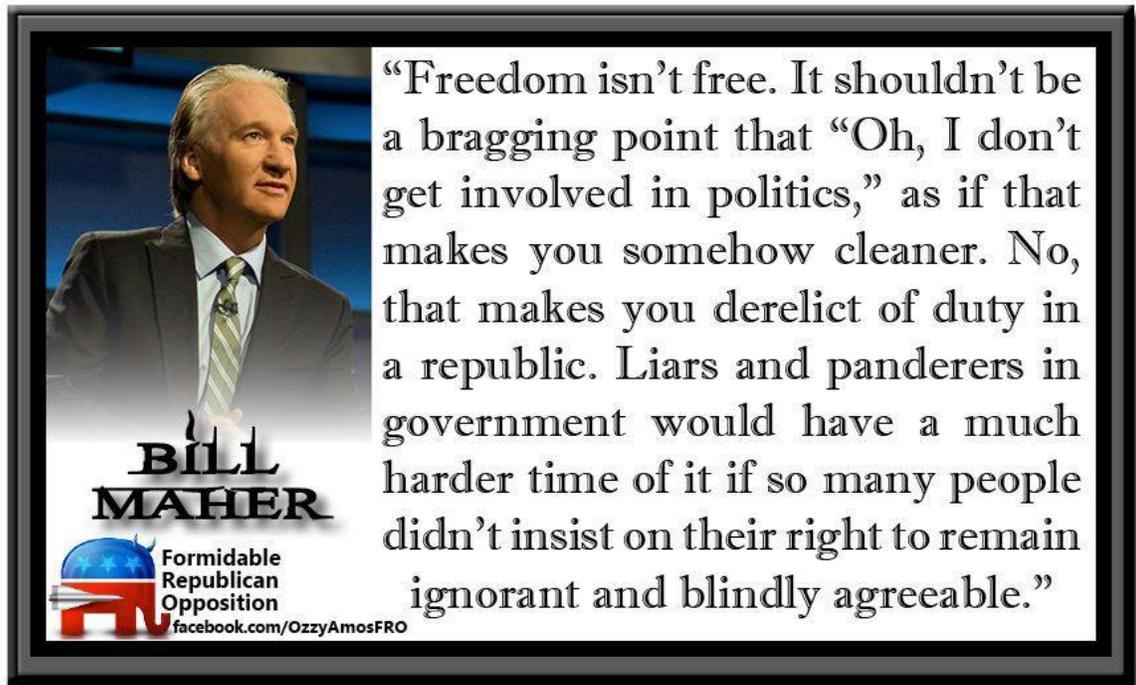
CAROLYN MILES: Thank you, Gwen.

GWEN IFILL: You can find a slide show of the best and worst places for maternal and child health on our website.

20120508-35

23:58 SteveG

Quote: Bill Maher on Freedom & Responsibility



<http://aknittysociety.com/2011/12/21/motherhood-and-parenting-natural-to-women/>

"Motherhood" by Nora Heysen



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

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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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #135 — MAY 10, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage

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

Gee, I hope I can be gay too when I grow up! I mean, let's just do whatever it takes to get these people back their anonymity. Personally, I'm tired of being forced to think way too much about what they do after they're married (the guys). Of course, good Christians, especially gay ones, wouldn't do anything before marriage, especially not stuff that nasty! At least black people don't force me to think about picking cotton most of the time. Now, if I were a woman, I'd be completely gay in about two seconds. OK, that's all I got on the gay subject today.

"North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage" by The Onion

May 9, 2012, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/north-carolina-bans-gay-marriage,28148/>)

By a margin of 58 to 42 percent, North Carolina voters approved an amendment to the state constitution that bans same-sex marriage. What do you think, typical South Carolinians?



"I have a policy of not saying anything negative about the South. Otherwise my Alabama friend will hammer me with his Faulkner-Welty-O'Connor tirade again." —Marla Wint (left), Systems Analyst

"Once again, I strongly suspect the underhanded machinations of one Professor Donald Dawes, a con man who travels the country selling state legislatures on phony constitutional amendments." —Bryan Hewlett (middle), Arrowsmith

"Damn right it's banned. The Wright Brothers didn't put a plane in the air to see two dudes kissing under it." — Peter DeBoer (right), Transfer-Car Operator

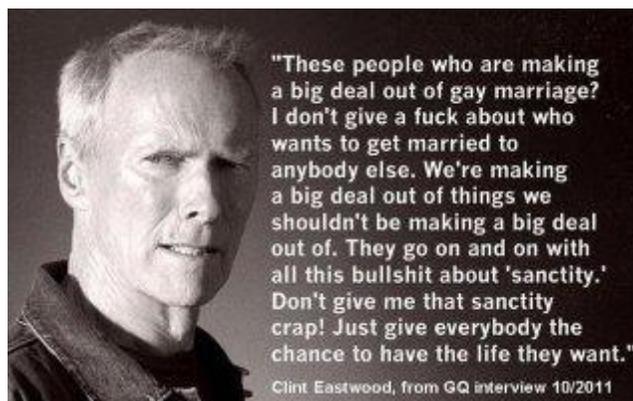
20120509-20 17:00 Dennis Quotes: Marriage

First, here's the argument against gay marriage:

Ten Reasons Against Gay Marriage

1. Being gay is not natural. Real Americans always reject *unnatural* things like eyeglasses, polyester, and air conditioning.
2. Gay marriage will encourage people to be gay, in the same way that hanging around tall people will make you tall.
3. Legalizing gay marriage will open the door to all kinds of crazy behaviour. People may even wish to marry their pets because *a dog has legal standing and can sign a marriage contract*.
4. Straight marriage has been around a long time and hasn't changed at all; women are still property, blacks still can't marry whites, and divorce is still illegal.
5. Straight marriage will be less meaningful if gay marriage were allowed; the sanctity of Brittany Spears' 55-hour just-for-fun marriage would be *destroyed*.
6. Straight marriages are valid because they produce children. Gay couples, infertile couples, and old people shouldn't be allowed to marry because our orphanages aren't full yet, and the world needs more children.
7. Obviously gay parents will raise gay children, since straight parents only raise straight children.
8. Gay marriage is not supported by religion. In a *theocracy* like ours, the values of one religion are imposed on the entire country. That's why we have only one religion in America.
9. Children can never succeed without a male and a female role model at home. That's why *we as a society expressly forbid single parents to raise children*.
10. Gay marriage will change the foundation of society; we could never adapt to new social norms. Just like we haven't adapted to cars, the service-sector economy, or longer life spans.

Now the argument from this gay guy in favor of it:



What they see is not what they get...

"Conservative Author Jonah Goldberg Drops Claim of Two Pulitzer Nominations" by Bill Dedman, MSNBC

May 9, 2012, (<http://openchannel.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/05/09/11608553-conservative-author-jonah-goldberg-drops-claim-of-two-pulitzer-nominations?lite>)

On the dust jacket of his new book, *The Tyranny of Clichés: How Liberals Cheat in the War of Ideas*, best-selling conservative author and commentator Jonah Goldberg is described as having "twice been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize."

In fact, as Goldberg acknowledged on Tuesday, he has never been a Pulitzer nominee, but is merely one of thousands of entrants.

When this bit of résumé inflation was pointed out by a reporter for msnbc.com, Goldberg said he hadn't meant to mislead anyone and removed the Pulitzer claim from his bio at National Review Online. And he added, "I never put it in the bio in the first place."

His publisher, Penguin Group (USA), said the error was unintentional and it would remove the Pulitzer word from his book jacket when it's time for the first reprint, "just like any other innocent mistake brought to our attention." (Update: On Wednesday morning, the publisher removed the claim from its own website.)

What's surprising in Goldberg's case is that he has been called out for the same résumé padding before, when his previous book was published.

Goldberg's *The Tyranny of Clichés* was published May 1 and is ranked in the top 100 in sales on Amazon. A fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Goldberg is the founding editor of National Review Online. He is a Fox News contributor, and has appeared as a guest on MSNBC and NBC. (Msnbc.com is a joint venture of NBCUniversal and Microsoft.)

An entry form and \$50

It's not uncommon for Pulitzer entrants to claim to be nominees. Here's how it works: Though there are only three nominees, known as nominated finalists, in each Pulitzer category each year, there are more than 2,000 entrants. One could say that all of them were "nominated" by someone. If all Pulitzer entrants could be called nominees, any publisher could give all its authors that honorific by submitting an entry form and a check for \$50.

The Pulitzer rules make clear that the only people to be known as nominees are those finalists chosen by the Pulitzer juries. From those nominated finalists, the Pulitzer board chooses the winners. Everyone else is just an entrant. As the Pulitzer board's online list of frequently asked questions explains politely, "Work that has been submitted for Prize consideration but not chosen as either a nominated finalist or a winner is termed an entry or submission. ... We discourage someone saying he or she was 'nominated' for a Pulitzer simply because an entry was sent to us."

Besides violating the official rules, such claims mislead the public. Tell readers that you're an Academy Awards nominee, and they'll understand that you're one of the few finalists, not one of the many entrants submitted by movie studios. It's exactly the same with the Pulitzers.

And in addition to misleading the public, such false claims rob honor from the actual nominees. This year's non-winning nominees include journalists and authors revealing failure to enforce safety standards at aging nuclear power plants, exploring the heartache of dealing with a sick spouse, and capturing in photographs the chaos and exuberance of the Arab Spring.

Being a "two-time Pulitzer Prize entrant" won't sell many books. Claims to Pulitzer nominations have showed up in the bios of well-known sportswriters Bill Plaschke and Buster Olney, NPR host Michele Norris and others not listed on the Pulitzer site among the nominees, including a good number of university professors.

'I don't recall'

When Goldberg's "Liberal Fascism" came out in January 2008, his employer National Review Online announced that Tribune Media Services, which carries Goldberg's opinion columns, had "nominated" Goldberg for a Pulitzer in commentary.

The liberal blog Daily Kos then pointed out that the Tribune doesn't choose Pulitzer nominees, writing about "Goldberg's faux Pulitzer."

Commenters on Amazon took up the baton, attaching to Goldberg's Amazon profile several lengthy notes pointing out the puffery. The book sold well, reaching No. 1 on the *New York Times* hardcover list in March 2008.

A cartoon circulated mocking Goldberg for the claim. The punch line has Goldberg saying, as he opens a sweepstakes envelope, "I was just informed I might be winning ten million dollars."

After the hubbub, Goldberg's speaker's bureau removed the Pulitzer claim from his online bio, as documented by Daily Kos.

Goldberg told msnbc.com on Tuesday that he didn't recall any of this. "In all honesty, I don't recall ever being 'called' on this."

When contacted on Tuesday by email, Goldberg replied at first, "Nominated by the Tribune syndicate. Never said I was a finalist. There's a distinction."

When told that he's not a nominee either, and isn't listed among the nominees on the Pulitzer website, Goldberg replied, "I'll check it out and have 'em remove it if you're right. Happily. If it's not kosher, I shouldn't have it in there. Period."

Two hours later, after appearing on a radio show about the Tuesday primary voting, Goldberg sent a longer answer in email, but insisted that it be off the record. He was asked to provide a comment on the record, but declined.

'Just like any other innocent mistake'

Then, later Tuesday, his publisher issued a strong defense of Goldberg's integrity. Adrian Zackheim, president and publisher of Sentinel, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA), sent over this statement:

There's no conspiracy here, just an innocent mistake at worst. In casual conversation, whenever a news organization submits one of their writers for a prize, people say that person was nominated. By that standard Jonah Goldberg 'has twice been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.' You've brought it to our attention that the Pulitzer authorities don't approve of that usage, and that technically Jonah was 'entered' but not 'nominated.'

We appreciate the notice, and we will treat it just like any other innocent mistake brought to our attention, such as a misspelled name or factual error. Specifically, Sentinel will correct the reference on future printings of *The Tyranny of Clichés*, and we will submit the correction to online retailers like Amazon and Barnesandnoble.com, which use our flap copy for their descriptive copy. Jonah is also correcting any other bios that have the error.

However, it would be completely inaccurate for you to conclude that there was any intent to inflate Jonah's credentials or deceive anyone. His credentials are extremely impressive already and don't require any extra hype.

Attached to the publisher's statement was an internal note from the Penguin publicist, cautioning author Goldberg not to say another word.

And there was a note from Goldberg himself to the publisher, an internal email forwarded by mistake: "I think it's great," Goldberg said, apparently referring to Zackheim's statement. "It's a bull@!\$%# story and I think this walks the line between acting in good faith and making that clear."

Goldberg, 43, is a son of literary agent Lucianne Goldberg, who became known after she advised Linda Tripp to secretly tape record Monica Lewinsky's conversations about sex with President Bill Clinton. She now has her own website, Lucianne.com. Jonah Goldberg got his start as an aide to commentator Ben J. Wattenberg at the American Enterprise Institute. Goldberg's columns are syndicated to newspapers nationally. For \$2,000 to \$7,500 per person, one can accompany the "Pulitzer-nominated columnist" and others from the National Review on a cruise to the Bahamas and Grand Cayman. His many liberal targets have included former Vice President Al Gore, whom he derided as a "serial exaggerator."

Find your own non-nominee nominees

Readers, here's a link to people whose Wikipedia biographies contain the word "Pulitzer" and "nominee" or "nominated."

http://www.google.com/search?num=100&hl=en&safe=off&rlz=1T4GGHP_enUS473US473&q=site%3Aen.wikipedia.org+%28%22nominated+OR+%22nominee%22%29+AND+%22pulitzer%22&oq=site%3Aen.wikipedia.org+%28%22nominated+OR+%22nominee%22%29+AND+%22pulitzer%22&aq=f&aql=&aql=&gs_l=serp.3...2225.13456.0.14133.49.45.4.0.0.0.114.2239.42j3.45.0...0.0.htfbPvSNpoA.

Which ones aren't real nominees?

Here's a search form for actual winners and nominated finalists at the Pulitzer Prizes site:

http://www.pulitzer.org/faceted_search.

It can be tricky to tell who's fibbing. A group of newspaper reporters, even an entire staff of a newspaper, could be nominated finalists in a category, without being named individually on the Pulitzer site. And nominees have been announced only since 1980.

The key questions to be put to a claimant are these: In what year were you a Pulitzer Prize nominee, and in what category?

N.B. A couple of readers asked how this story got started, whether I was tipped off by some political opponent of Goldberg's. No, I was looking at the Amazon list of top-selling books, and wasn't sure if I recognized Goldberg's name. I clicked through, and saw his bio. As soon as I saw in the bio that he was a two-time Pulitzer nominee, I doubted it. -- Bill Dedman

20120509-05	09:53 Art	Re: "Conservative Author Jonah Goldberg Drops Claim of Two Pulitzer Nominations" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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There's a pattern here. Seems like many, if not most, of the so called right wing intellectuals have false credentials or none at all.

20120509-09	12:42 Pam	Re: "Conservative Author Jonah Goldberg Drops Claim of Two Pulitzer Nominations" (reply to Art, above)
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Interesting point.

[20120509-02](#) 06:27 MarthaH "Sen. Richard Lugar Loses Primary to Richard Mourdock"

"Sen. Richard Lugar Loses Primary to Richard Mourdock" by Aaron Blake, *The Washington Post*

May 8, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/sen-richard-lugar-loses-primary-to-richard-mourdock/2012/05/08/gIQA0cHXBU_blog.html)

He [Richard Mourdock] earned the backing of several conservative groups, most notably the National Rifle Association and the fiscally conservative Club for Growth, which spent nearly \$2 million to defeat Lugar and helped Mourdock close the gap financially.

"Sen. Richard Lugar Defeated in Indiana's GOP Primary" by Susan Davis, USA TODAY

May 9, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-05-08/lugar-indiana-senate-mourdock/54844834/1>)

Lugar was ousted by state Treasurer Richard Mourdock, whose campaign against the veteran lawmaker was backed by conservative groups including the Tea Party Express, the anti-tax Club for Growth, the National Rifle Association, the Tea Party-aligned Freedom Works, and former Republican Alaska governor Sarah Palin.

(SOME list! –MarthaH)

[20120509-04](#) 09:37 SteveB Dark Lord Defeats Genial Old Codger — Re: "Sen. Richard Lugar Loses Primary to Richard Mourdock"

It is really the end of an era, heh? And, unless the Democrat can defeat this Dark Lord Mourdock and his army of rich orcs...I'm gonna miss the old era even more.

I guess Lugar lost so badly that any attempt as a third party Independent would be impossible???

80-years-old? He probably should have retired gracefully at the end of this term. To think that he ran unopposed—even by Democrats—six short years ago.

[20120509-06](#) 11:03 MarthaH "Lugar's Goodbye"

The Rhodes Scholar speaks, WOW!

"Lugar's Goodbye" by Domenico Montanaro, NBC

May 9, 2012, (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/05/08/11605668-lugars-goodbye?lite>)

An epic good-bye letter, passed along by NBC's Libby Leist, from Sen. Richard Lugar, dissecting everything he sees that's wrong with Washington and both parties:

Prepared Statement of Senator Richard G. Lugar on the Concluded Indiana Senate Primary (May 8, 2012)

I would like to comment on the Senate race just concluded and the direction of American politics and the Republican Party. I would reiterate from my earlier statement that I have no regrets about choosing to run for office. My health is excellent, I believe that I have been a very effective Senator for Hoosiers and for the country,

and I know that the next six years would have been a time of great achievement. Further, I believed that vital national priorities, including job creation, deficit reduction, energy security, agriculture reform, and the Nunn-Lugar program, would benefit from my continued service as a Senator. These goals were worth the risk of an electoral defeat and the costs of a hard campaign.

Analysts will speculate about whether our campaign strategies were wise. Much of this will be based on conjecture by pundits who don't fully appreciate the choices we had to make based on resource limits, polling data, and other factors. They also will speculate whether we were guilty of overconfidence.

The truth is that the headwinds in this race were abundantly apparent long before Richard Mourdock announced his candidacy. One does not highlight such headwinds publically when one is waging a campaign. But I knew that I would face an extremely strong anti-incumbent mood following a recession. I knew that my work with then-Senator Barack Obama would be used against me, even if our relationship were overhyped. I also knew from the races in 2010 that I was a likely target of Club for Growth, FreedomWorks and other Super PACs dedicated to defeating at least one Republican as a purification exercise to enhance their influence over other Republican legislators.

We undertook this campaign soberly and we worked very hard in 2010, 2011, and 2012 to overcome these challenges. There never was a moment when my campaign took anything for granted. This is why we put so much effort into our get out the vote operations.

Ultimately, the re-election of an incumbent to Congress usually comes down to whether voters agree with the positions the incumbent has taken. I knew that I had cast recent votes that would be unpopular with some Republicans and that would be targeted by outside groups.

These included my votes for the TARP program, for government support of the auto industry, for the START Treaty, and for the confirmations of Justices Sotomayor and Kagan. I also advanced several propositions that were considered heretical by some, including the thought that Congressional earmarks saved no money and turned spending power over to unelected bureaucrats and that the country should explore options for immigration reform.

It was apparent that these positions would be attacked in a Republican primary. But I believe that they were the right votes for the country, and I stand by them without regrets, as I have throughout the campaign.

From time to time during the last two years I heard from well-meaning individuals who suggested that I ought to consider running as an independent. My response was always the same: I am a Republican now and always have been. I have no desire to run as anything else. All my life, I have believed in the Republican principles of small government, low taxes, a strong national defense, free enterprise, and trade expansion. According to *Congressional Quarterly* vote studies, I supported President Reagan more often than any other Senator. I want to see a Republican elected President, and I want to see a Republican majority in the Congress. I hope my opponent wins in November to help give my friend Mitch McConnell a majority.

If Mr. Mourdock is elected, I want him to be a good Senator. But that will require him to revise his stated goal of bringing more partisanship to Washington. He and I share many positions, but **his embrace of an unrelenting partisan mindset is irreconcilable with my philosophy of governance and my experience of what brings results for Hoosiers in the Senate. In effect, what he has promised in this campaign is reflexive votes for a rejectionist orthodoxy and rigid opposition to the actions and proposals of the other party.** His answer to the inevitable roadblocks he will encounter in Congress is merely to campaign for more Republicans who embrace the same partisan outlook. He has pledged his support to groups whose prime mission is to cleanse the Republican party of those who stray from orthodoxy as they see it.

This is not conducive to problem solving and governance. And he will find that unless he modifies his approach, he will achieve little as a legislator. Worse, he will help delay solutions that are totally beyond the capacity of partisan majorities to achieve. The most consequential of these is stabilizing and reversing the Federal debt in an era when millions of baby boomers are retiring. There is little likelihood that either party will be able to impose their favored budget solutions on the other without some degree of compromise.

Unfortunately, we have an increasing number of legislators in both parties who have adopted an unrelenting partisan viewpoint. This shows up in countless vote studies that find diminishing intersections between Democrat and Republican positions. Partisans at both ends of the political spectrum are dominating the political debate in our country. And partisan groups, including outside groups that spent millions against me in this race, are determined to see that this continues. They have worked to make it as difficult as possible for a legislator of either party to hold independent views or engage in constructive compromise. If that attitude prevails in American politics, our government will remain mired in the dysfunction we have witnessed during the last several years. And I believe that if this attitude expands in the Republican Party, we will be relegated to minority status. Parties don't succeed for long if they stop appealing to voters who may disagree with them on some issues.

Legislators should have an ideological grounding and strong beliefs identifiable to their constituents. I believe I have offered that throughout my career. But ideology cannot be a substitute for a determination to think for yourself, for a willingness to study an issue objectively, and for the fortitude to sometimes disagree with your party or even your constituents. Like Edmund Burke, I believe leaders owe the people they represent their best judgment.

Too often bipartisanship is equated with centrism or deal cutting. Bipartisanship is not the opposite of principle. One can be very conservative or very liberal and still have a bipartisan mindset. Such a mindset acknowledges that the other party is also patriotic and may have some good ideas. It acknowledges that national unity is important, and that aggressive partisanship deepens cynicism, sharpens political vendettas, and depletes the national reserve of good will that is critical to our survival in hard times. Certainly this was understood by President Reagan, who worked with Democrats frequently and showed flexibility that would be ridiculed today - from assenting to tax increases in the 1983 Social Security fix, to compromising on landmark tax reform legislation in 1986, to advancing arms control agreements in his second term.

I don't remember a time when so many topics have become politically unmentionable in one party or the other. Republicans cannot admit to any nuance in policy on climate change. Republican members are now expected to take pledges against any tax increases. For two consecutive Presidential nomination cycles, GOP candidates competed with one another to express the most strident anti-immigration view, even at the risk of alienating a huge voting bloc. Similarly, most Democrats are constrained when talking about such issues as entitlement cuts, tort reform, and trade agreements. Our political system is losing its ability to even explore alternatives. If fealty to these pledges continues to expand, legislators may pledge their way into irrelevance. Voters will be electing a slate of inflexible positions rather than a leader.

I hope that as a nation we aspire to more than that. I hope we will demand judgment from our leaders. I continue to believe that Hoosiers value constructive leadership. I would not have run for office if I did not believe that.

As someone who has seen much in the politics of our country and our state, I am able to take the long view. I have not lost my enthusiasm for the role played by the United States Senate. Nor has my belief in conservative principles been diminished. I expect great things from my party and my country. I hope all who participated in this election share in this optimism.

20120509-13	15:16	MarthaH	"Mourdock: Compromise Is About Dems Siding with GOP"
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Sooooo "special" or full of it?

"Mourdock: Compromise Is About Dems Siding with GOP" by Catalina Camia, USA TODAY

May 9, 2012, (<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/onpolitics/post/2012/05/richard-mourdock-richard-lugar-senate-compromise-/1#.T6u-4OtSSRQ>)

Republican Richard Mourdock said today he believes compromise in the U.S. Senate will only happen if Democrats join with the GOP.

The Indiana state treasurer defeated veteran Sen. Richard Lugar in yesterday's GOP primary, ending the 36-year-career of a Republican who crossed the aisle many times to work with Democrats on issues such as foreign policy.

"I don't think there's going to be a lot of successful compromise," Mourdock said this morning on CNN's 'Starting Point' program. "I hope to build a conservative majority in the U.S. Senate so bipartisanship becomes Democrats joining Republicans to roll back the size of government."

Defeating Lugar in the GOP primary is only Mourdock's first step. He faces Democratic Rep. Joe Donnelly in November.

Murdock said he would model himself after Sen. Jim DeMint, a Tea Party Republican, and intends to be "confrontational" on key issues. He said there was "frustration" with Lugar's brand of collegiality, which was praised last night from Democrats such as President Obama and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry

20120509-16	15:33 Pam	Re: "Murdock: Compromise Is About Dems Siding with GOP" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Very interesting. I must ponder this.

20120509-21	17:46 Art	Re: "Murdock: Compromise Is About Dems Siding with GOP" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Told you Indiana had reached the level of South Carolina.

20120509-14	15:19 MarthaH	"Joe Donnelly & Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem"
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Gloom and doom...

"Joe Donnelly and Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem" by Jennifer Rubin, *The Washington Post*

May 9, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/post/joe-donnely-and-lot-of-democrats-have-the-same-problem/2012/05/09/gIQAh55LDU_blog.html)

Rep. Joe Donnelly is Indiana's Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate. But his problems have just begun. His biggest challenge is not Richard Mourdock but President Obama, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.)

The day after Mourdock's victory, the conservative Club for Growth is out blasting Donnelly for claiming that he never voted for Pelosi as speaker of the House. He voted for her twice.

But that's only the beginning of Club for Growth's complaints. Its spokesman has released this statement: "It's shocking but not surprising that Joe Donnelly's first act as the Democrat Party's candidate for Senate is to pretend he never voted for Nancy Pelosi for Speaker. Next thing you know he'll claim he doesn't recall his vote for ObamaCare or Obama's stimulus. Joe Donnelly is an economic liberal who votes in lock-step with Nancy Pelosi and Barack Obama on nearly every issue, and that's why Hoosiers will elect Richard Mourdock this November."

In Vermont or California, Donnelly's record would not be a handicap. But in Indiana it's hard to argue he is in sync with the electorate.

Moreover, the additional question Donnelly may face, aside from his votes for parts of the Obama agenda, is whether he'll support Reid as leader in the Senate. It's Reid and the Democratic majority that won't pass a budget, or allow a straight up-or-down vote on the Keystone XL Pipeline. Donnelly can swear until the cows come home that

he's going to support domestic energy development or a balanced budget, but so long as Reid is in charge those are empty promises.

This is not only a problem for Donnelly. In fact, it's a bigger problem for incumbent Democrats. In an interview with Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) today (I'll have more on that this afternoon), he put it bluntly: "I don't know [Sen.] Claire McCaskill — she's probably a nice lady — or [Sen.] Jon Tester." But, without having passed a budget in three years he asks: "How do you say to the voters, 'Send me back to do more of the same'?"

That record of Democratic senators rubber-stamping the Obama agenda and failing to do the basic parts of their job (e.g. passing a budget) will be a weight around the neck of each and every incumbent up for reelection and for those candidates who have carried Obama's water (e.g. former DNC chief Tim Kaine). As Ryan remarked to me, Senate Democrats "made a calculated decision on that is it better to do nothing and get blamed for that than show the country what you want to do." That may have been a poor bet.

And that's really what the Indiana race and the other Senate contests boil down to: Will voters reward Democrats for supporting Obama and, in many cases, neglecting their fundamental obligations as lawmakers?

20120509-15	15:26 Pam	Re: "Joe Donnelly & Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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This gives me a hopeless feeling in the pit of my stomach. There are a lot of really awful things going on, and I don't see any of them stopping anytime soon. One of the very worst is Citizens United, which enables all the bad actors to have free reign. It's clear now that Obama's efforts to compromise were doomed from the start. If I were he, I'd go down fighting and telling the truth, even if it meant losing, which it undoubtedly would. He may win the election--I certainly hope so--but I wish he'd throw a little caution to the winds. It couldn't make things any worse.

20120509-22	17:49 Art	Re: "Joe Donnelly & Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Perhaps just a wee bit slanted???

20120509-24	20:32 MarthaH	Re: "Joe Donnelly & Lot of Democrats Have the Same Problem" (reply to Art, above)
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Rubin bias...

Jennifer Rubin
Opinion Blogger

Jennifer Rubin writes the Right Turn blog for *The Post*, offering reported opinion from a conservative perspective. She covers a range of domestic and foreign policy issues and provides insight into the conservative movement and the Republican Party. Rubin came to The Post after three years with *Commentary* magazine. Her work has appeared in a number of print and online publications, including The Weekly Standard, where she has been a frequent contributor. Prior to her career in journalism, Rubin practiced labor law for two decades. She lives in Northern Virginia with her husband and two sons.

Commentary magazine:

Commentary is America's premier monthly magazine of opinion and a pivotal voice in American intellectual life. Since its inception in 1945, and increasingly after it emerged as the flagship of neoconservatism in the 1970s, the magazine has been consistently engaged with several large, interrelated questions: the fate of democracy and of democratic ideas in a world threatened by totalitarian ideologies; the state of American and Western security; the future of the Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture in Israel, the United States, and around the world; and the preservation of high culture in an age of political correctness and the collapse of critical standards.

Many of *Commentary's* articles have been controversial, and more than a few have been hugely influential, touchstones for debate and discussion in universities, among policy analysts in and out of government, within the ranks of professionals and community activists of all kinds, and in circles of serious thought worldwide. A large number of articles can be counted as landmarks of American letters and intellectual life. Agree with it or disagree with it, *Commentary* cannot be ignored. To read it is to take part in the great American discussion.

Commentary was founded in 1945 by the American Jewish Committee. To learn more about AJC, which has worked since 1906 to safeguard and strengthen Jews and Jewish life worldwide by promoting democratic and pluralistic societies that respect the dignity of all peoples: <http://www.ajc.org/>.

20120509-23 18:03 Art Fw: Another Take: 'Anti-Gun Republican Loses'

Heck, they don't even try to hide it.

from the NAGR (Subj: Anti-gun Republican loses):



Last night, gun owners nationwide won a major victory for gun rights with the defeat of anti-gun Indiana Senator Dick Lugar by pro-gun champion Richard Mourdock.

For nearly a year, the National Association for Gun Rights has been contacting hundreds of thousands of Indiana Republican voters detailing U.S. Senator Dick Lugar's decades-long anti-gun record.

At the same time, voters were also informed of the pro-gun record of Richard Mourdock.

Using the mail, email and state-wide radio ads, NAGR showed hundreds of thousands of Indiana voters the stark difference between the two candidates on the gun rights issue.

These financially-costly mobilization efforts would not have been possible without the generous support of NAGR members and supporters nationwide.

Richard Mourdock had this to say about NAGR:

I appreciate the support of the National Association for Gun Rights. I absolutely support Hoosiers having the fundamental right to protect themselves and their loved ones from harm.

Now that Dick Lugar has been defeated in his bid to run for re-election in the fall, there is serious business to take care of.

Richard Mourdock still has to win a seat to the U.S. Senate in November.

And you can bet the gun-grabbers like Barack Obama, the anti-gun Brady Campaign and billionaire New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg will be funneling hundreds of thousands of dollars into the pockets of Mourdock's Democrat opponent.

So in the coming weeks and months leading up to the 2012 November Election NAGR is going to have to once again blanket the Indiana wit information showing a clear difference on gun rights between Richard Mourdock and his Democrat opponent.

These efforts certainly won't be cheap.

And with Election Day 2012 fast approaching, my staff and I will have to look at the electoral map and make some tough decisions about which federal races to put resources into.

Last night was a great victory for gun rights supporters like you . . . but there is much hard work ahead of us.

Thank you for your passionate commitment to the defense of our Second Amendment rights.

For Freedom, Dudley Brown, Executive Vice President

P.S. If you want to help NAGR inform and mobilize gun rights voters in federal races across the country, please consider chipping in \$10 or \$20 right now. The National Association for Gun Rights is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, single-purpose citizens' organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the Constitutionally protected right-to-keep-and-bear-arms through an aggressive program designed to mobilize public opposition to anti-gun legislation. The National Association for Gun Rights' mailing address is P.O 7002, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. They can be contacted toll-free at 1-877-405-4570. Its web address is www.NationalGunRights.org/. Not produced or e-mailed at taxpayer expense. To help the National Association for Gun Rights grow, please forward this to a friend.

[20120509-03](#) 06:30 MarthaH "12-Month Stretch Ending in April Is Warmest on Record, NOAA Says"

"12-Month Stretch Ending in April Is Warmest on Record, NOAA Says" by Miguel Llanos, MSNBC

May 8, 2012 (<http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/05/08/11600220-12-month-stretch-ending-in-april-is-warmest-on-record-noaa-says?lite>)

The previous 12 months were the warmest in the U.S. since record keeping began in 1895, government scientists reported Tuesday, with the period averaging 55.7 degrees Fahrenheit — nearly three degrees warmer than the average May-April.

"We were expecting the 12-month period to be warm, but I was somewhat surprised to see it record warm," lead researcher Jake Crouch of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration told msnbc.com. What's more, that 12-month record could be broken soon if this month posts above average warmth. That's because May 2011 was abnormally cool, so it actually weighed down the earlier 12-month average, Crouch said. Advertise | AdChoices

"Depending on how May 2012 turns out, the June 2011-May 2012 period will likely surpass the 12-month record that we just broke," added Crouch, who authored the monthly State of the Climate Report for NOAA.

"The big story moving forward," he said, could be "lack of precipitation and the development of drought going into summer and the agricultural growing season. Some of the regions we are keeping an eye on: the Southeast, the Southern Rockies and Southern Plains, and the Northeast."

Folks took to the beach in Belmar, N.J., on April 17. Area merchants said the warmth had boosted their sales by up to 30 percent more than what they normally would be at this time of year.

Highlights from the report:

- 12-month temps: Between May 2011 and April 2012 temperatures were 2.8 degrees above average, topping the earlier record of 2.7 degrees warmer set in November 1999 to October 2000. All 10 warmest consecutive 12 months have been since 1999.

- Cities with record warmth in January-April include: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, New York City, Philadelphia, Tampa and Washington.
- April temps: Last month was the third warmest April on record at 55 degrees — 3.6 degrees above average.

The monthly report follows one issued for March that found 15,000 records were broken in what became the warmest March on record.

NOAA does not attribute the warmer temperatures solely to manmade global warming since other, natural factors influence weather as well. Instead, it notes that that the warmth is indicative of what one would expect with climate change.

20120509-07	11:39	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Unite to Defeat Scott Walker
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from Daily Kos:

Last night in Wisconsin, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett won the Democratic nomination to take on Governor Scott Walker in the June 5 recall. Now our opportunity to defeat the Walker-Koch agenda is in sight.

Please contribute \$3 to help Tom Barrett defeat Scott Walker:

https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/dailykoswisconsin?refcode=5_09_feingold5

Mayor Barrett is a strong standard-bearer for progressives in the recall. While representing Wisconsin in Congress, Mayor Barrett stood with me in voting against the deregulation that led to the Wall Street crash, opposing the PATRIOT Act, and reforming our system of campaign finance. His executive experience makes him qualified to begin rolling back Walker’s devastating program on day one.

Scott Walker relies on corporate bosses from coast to coast who have armed him with tens of millions of dollars. But if grassroots progressives unite around Tom Barrett, we can put an end to Walker’s harmful policies and slam the brakes on the national corporate agenda.

Please contribute \$3 to Tom Barrett and unite to defeat Scott Walker.

Thank you for uniting as a progressive, Russ Feingold

20120509-08	11:55	Art	Re: "Tax Loophole Costs Billions" & Illegal Aliens (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #134)
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from SteveB (20120508-18):

I want all the illegal aliens to have to swim across one of the larger American football stadiums, full of fans up to at least the level of the upper bleachers. The really good looking women and the ones who make the swim can stay, the others...well...it's their fault. They should have learned how to swim in fans better. Outside the stadium would be one hell of a Latino tailgate party with free fans for all!

I think you may have something here!

20120509-10	13:03	SteveM	Fw: CraigsList Ad
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Craig's List Ad

YOU ARE PROBABLY NOT VERY INTERESTED IN ANY USED FARM EQUIPMENT BUT THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO SEE THIS AD TAKEN FROM CRAIGS LIST THIS MORNING. FIFTY YEAR OLD MANURE SPREADER - \$1 (WASHINGTON , D.C.)

Fifty-year old manure spreader. Not sure of brand. Said to have been produced in Kenya.

Used for a few years in Indonesia before being smuggled into the US via Hawaii. Of questionable pedigree.

Does not appear to have ever been worked very hard. Apparently it was pampered by various owners over the years. It doesn't work very often, but when it does it can really spread the manure and sling it for amazing distances. I am hoping to retire this manure spreader next November. But I really don't want it hanging around getting in the way. I would prefer a foreign buyer that is willing to relocate this manure spreader out of the country. I would be willing to trade this manure spreader for a nicely framed copy of the United States Constitution.

Location: Washington, D.C.

[I didn't know DC was such big farming country. Go figure! -SteveB]

20120509-11	14:22	SteveG	"Making Chemical Giants Happy at Our Expense"
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Agent orange Corn? Dow and feds say: "Bon appetit!"

"Making Chemical Giants Happy at Our Expense" by Jim Hightower, NationofChange

May 9, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/making-chemical-giants-happy-our-expense-1336570016>)

("The corporation and the feds claim that 2,4-D was not the deadliest ingredient of the killer defoliant and has not yet been proven to cause cancer in humans, so they're pressing ahead to let this corporate-constructed seed be planted across America")

Thanks to the blessings of nature and good farmers, you and I can enjoy such scrumptious delights as fresh corn-on-the-cob, popcorn and many other variations of this truly great grain. And now, thanks to Dow Chemical and federal regulators, we can look forward to "Agent Orange Corn." The chemical giant is in line to gain approval for putting a genetically altered corn seed on the market that will produce corn plants that won't die when doused with high levels of 2,4-D.

This potent pesticide was an ingredient in Dow's notorious Agent Orange defoliant, which did such extensive and horrific damage to soldiers and civilians in the Vietnam War. However, the corporation and the feds claim that 2,4-D was not the deadliest ingredient of the killer defoliant and has not yet been proven to cause cancer in humans, so they're pressing ahead to let this corporate-constructed seed be planted across America.

Dow now sells 2,4-D to help kill various weeds, but the herbicide is so strong that it also kills nature's own version of corn plants. Thus, Dow's genetic engineers went into the corporate lab and manufactured a new corn that's immune to the weed-killer. This would let the chemical maker profit from selling the patented seed, plus enjoying a huge increase in sales of its 2,4-D herbicide. How happy for Dow! Not so happy, though, for consumers worried about the untested long-term health consequences of the altered corn and the carcinogenic possibilities of ingesting more 2,4-D. Also, when sprayed, this herbicide can vaporize and spread for miles, killing crops that are not immune, poisoning the surrounding environment, and endangering the health of farmers and townspeople throughout the area.

Dow is hardly alone in pursuing its happiness at the expense of others. Indeed, rather than finding ways to cooperate with the natural world, America's agribusiness giants generally reach for the quick, high-tech fix in a futile effort to overpower nature.

Their attitude is that if brute force isn't working, they're probably not using enough of it.

Monsanto, for example, has banked a fortune by selling a corn seed that it genetically manipulated to produce corn plants that won't die when sprayed with a toxic weed-killer called "Roundup." Not coincidentally, Monsanto also happens to be the maker of Roundup, so it has profited from the seed and from the surge in Roundup sales that the seed generated.

But Mother Nature, damn her, has rebelled. So much of Monsanto's poison was spread across America in the past decade that weeds naturally and rather rapidly developed a resistance to it. As a Dow Chemical agronomist put it, "The real need here is to diversify our weed management systems." Exactly right! We need non-chemical, non-GMO, sustainable systems that work with nature

But, no, the Dow man didn't mean that at all. He was calling for more brute force in the form of his corporation's altered corn seed — the one that can withstand being doused with Dow's super-potent 2,4-D weed killer. Use this, he promises, and this time nature will surely be defeated.

Wrong. Nature doesn't quit. The weeds will keep evolving and will adapt to Dow's high-tech fix, too. By pushing the same old thing relentlessly, says an independent crop scientist, agribusiness interests "ratchet up (America's) dependence on the use of herbicides, which is very much a treadmill." So much unhappiness for so many just to make one corporation happy by getting much richer at our expense.

It's time to start listening to the weeds — and cooperating with Mother Nature. To advance this common sense approach, a national coalition is backing a California "Right to Know" initiative requiring GMO-altered foods to be labeled. To help, go to Organic Consumers Association at www.OrganicConsumers.org, and get involved in the coalition's Money Bomb Monsanto Campaign.

20120509-12	14:25	Pam	Re: Photo: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #133)
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The buzz bomb is still in place. Did you know it's been painted two shades of green? It also has a tiny orange propeller attached to its nose.

20120509-26	22:35	SteveB	Re: Photo: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to Pam, above)
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The new paint job shows in the picture. I think I like it...better than racing stripes. Maybe you can barely see a tiny propeller...

I notice that you made sure you made the pilgrimage to visit the famous buzz bomb. It's still the only one I've ever seen.

Hope you had a good time in Greendingle.

20120509-17	15:39	Charis	"University Students Armed with Rocks Defend University in Cochabamba, Bolivia" & "Bolivian Students Damage Potosí State Government Building with Dynamite"
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[I swear I had absolutely nothing to do with either of these stories...only passing them along to give you a view from down here where "human rights" have "progressed" a little further. The first story was a little more hopeful, and the second shows how far things can quickly go. Hopefully, things can equalize in the U.S. before it comes to this kind of street fighting. These stories and their translations, thanks to our friend, Charis. -SteveB]

"University Students Armed with Rocks Defend University in Cochabamba, Bolivia" opinion.com.bo

May 9, 2012, (<http://www.boliviabella.com/university-students-armed-with-rocks-defend-university-in-cochabamba-bolivia.html>)



(COCHABAMBA) Leaders of the FUL (Local University Federation) and various faculties, have surrounded the UMSS (Universidad Mayor de San Simón) in Cochabamba and have armed themselves with rocks and sticks to repel possible provocation by coca growers and sectors that support the Bolivian government.

FUL leader Alejandro Mostajo stated that the university assembly had approved a vigil around UMSS facilities, especially the Faculty of Medicine, after government supporters had warned they would take revenge for damage done yesterday to the parliament and a building belonging to coca producers.

Hundreds of university students have blocked Oquendo Avenue, at the corner of Jordán Street since early Wednesday morning, and the main access gates to the university have been closed to avoid possible confrontations with thousands of coca producers who marched into the city of Cochabamba from surrounding tropical areas.

"All of the leaders of the FUL, faculties and schools of the university are present at this vigil to safeguard our university and tell the Government we aren't afraid because they no longer represent the Bolivian people. Today we are holding this vigil, but on Thursday we will return to the street in defense of the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB labor unions), doctors, healthcare workers, and the indigenous protest," he added.

Mostajo admitted that in order to safeguard the university campus and defend themselves, the university students are armed with sticks, rocks, and other hard objects to respond to any offense by the coca producers.

"Despite all of this, we exhort our fellow university students to not give in to any provocation by the government supporters while we continue to prepare mass mobilizations along with healthcare workers, medical students and doctors who are demanding Decree 1126 be annulled," he said.

(Source: opinion.com.bo. Date: 09 May 2012. This is a translation.)

"Bolivian Students Damage Potosí State Government Building with Dynamite" eju.tv

May 9, 2012, (<http://www.boliviabella.com/bolivian-students-damage-potos-state-government-building-with-dynamite.html>)

(POTOSI) With university authorities patiently watching, a group of students threw rocks and dynamite at the Potosí State Government building. This morning students and authorities of the Tomás Frías University in Potosí set out on a march, but a group of medical students caused serious damage to the building. They set off sticks of dynamite at the main door and building balconies, seriously damaging the infrastructure and windows.

Hugo Cazón, university vice-rector, stated that "these are public resources and our own resources. We will not allow this to happen. I just found out about this and we will investigate who is responsible."

The protest was headed by several of the university's top authorities.

The Police Command was present at the government building, but did nothing. The police sub-commander, Eduardo Veramendi, watched the university students but did nothing other than prevent young children from approaching.

A portion of the population does not agree with these actions; however, others state that the Government is now "being given its own medicine".

The State Government building was also painted and stained with red and black paint.

(Source: eju.tv. Date: 09 May 2012. This is a translation.)

20120509-18	16:35	SteveB	Fw: USAction Action: Tell the GOP to Stop the War on Women!
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from USAction:

Recently the Senate voted to renew the Violence Against Women Act, a previously bipartisan law that gives law enforcement agencies the tools they need to stop domestic violence.

This is great news but the fight is far from over as the House is debating H.R. 4970, a Republican version of VAWA today that strips the additional provisions to include immigrant, Native American and LGBT domestic violence victims from its full protections. We need to tell them to protect ALL women and pass the real VAWA, H.R. 4271.

Republicans' efforts to exclude certain types of victims from protections are absolutely appalling.

Will you send a message to your Representative in Congress and tell them to support the real VAWA bill that was passed by the Senate — not the homophobic, racist, anti-victim Republican version in the House?

http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=385&track=email_2960&Email=friends_ofthemiddle@hotmail.com

Every woman in America deserves protection from domestic abuse, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. We can't put some women in danger just because they aren't the right type of victim.

The Violence Against Women Act has been enormously successful. Since its passage in 1994, the number of women killed by an intimate partner has fallen 34%. And victims are now reporting incidents instead of hiding in fear, with reports of abuse up 51%.¹

But the Republican version would have real consequences, endangering much of the population it was designed to protect. Because not only would their version exclude Native Americans and LGBT domestic violence victims, but it would roll back decades of protections for undocumented victim's confidentiality by alerting the abuser that their victims sought help.² This provision is unnecessary and incredibly unsafe — putting real women's lives in danger just to score political points.

A vote in the House is imminent. Tell your Representative in Congress to vote for the real VAWA bill that seeks to protect all women — not the homophobic, racist, anti-victim Republican version in the House.

Sincerely, Brittany Larson, USAction / TrueMajority

¹<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/fvv.pdf>

²<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0512/75959.html>

20120509-19	16:39	SteveG	Video: Human to Hero: Gao Fangxie
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What do you think?

http://www.cnn.com/video/?hpt=hp_c3#/video/us/2012/05/09/ac-mattingly-sean-harris-church.cnn

[See...I told you there was hope. :-) –SteveB]

20120509-25	22:23	SteveBA	“Dead Cat Bounce for Socialism”
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An economist’s view of European socialism beloved by many here.

“Dead Cat Bounce for Socialism” by Brian S. Wesbury and Bob Stein, First Trust

May 7, 2012, (<http://www.ftportfolios.com/Commentary/EconomicResearch/2012/5/7/dead-cat-bounce-for-socialism>)

The Social Welfare State is dying. Like the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain, the cradle-to-grave social welfare experiment must eventually collapse. A system of taxing work and profits, while subsidizing leisure, sloth, and retirement, must eventually fail.

The end of the Social Welfare State is painful for many, and it will not end quickly or quietly as the elections of this past weekend prove. Francois Hollande, a Socialist, was elected president of France, while Greece saw a surge in votes for “anti-bailout” political parties in parliament.

These elections are described as blows against “austerity.” They are also seen as anti-German. Germany resisted bailouts and pushed spending cuts.

In theory, a rejection of austerity could be a good thing. Some people include tax hikes in the concept of austerity and avoiding tax hikes would be a good thing for Europe. France has a top income tax rate of 45%, a wealth tax of 0.5% and a Value Added Tax (VAT) of 21.2%. Greece has a top income tax rate of 45% and a VAT of 23%. These burdensome tax rates hinder growth, investment and work effort and still don’t cover all the spending.

To solve the deficit problem, Francois Hollande wants to raise France’s top income tax rate to 75%. Greece’s “anti-bailout” parties, mostly on the left, also want higher taxes on the upscale, plus defense cuts. The Greek military helps break up domestic riots, so this is a self-serving demand.

So, in reality, French and Greek rejection of austerity does not mean policies that would enhance long term economic growth. Instead, it means they want to temporarily pull the wool over their own eyes, resist the obvious need to reduce government spending, and just hope for the best.

This chapter of the French story will not end well. The country has already gone much further along the road to socialism than the US, with general government spending equal to about 56% of GDP, very near the highest of any advanced or emerging market in the world. Greece, at 49%, is not far behind. Yet, voters are doubling down.

Markets already sense the problems this will cause. The Euro is weaker and stock prices are down around the globe. Many fear that pressure on the European Central Bank to buy more Euro debt and help avoid austerity will

create inflation. This is happening despite the fact that Hollande was a huge favorite to win and this should have been built into the market already. It was the ease of victory, combined with the vote in Greece that made the day feel even more anti-market.

But even easy money would ultimately be a dead end, leading to higher interest rates and less capital investment. Anyway, the Germans would never go along with a euro as weak and inflationary as many in Greece and France want. And Germany has huge leverage: if the ECB gets too loose, only Germany could leave the euro, go back to its old currency, and not get hammered by financial markets.

In the end, this is a battle the socialists are simply not going to win. Greece is too small to be convincing; France is about to show the world what doesn't work.

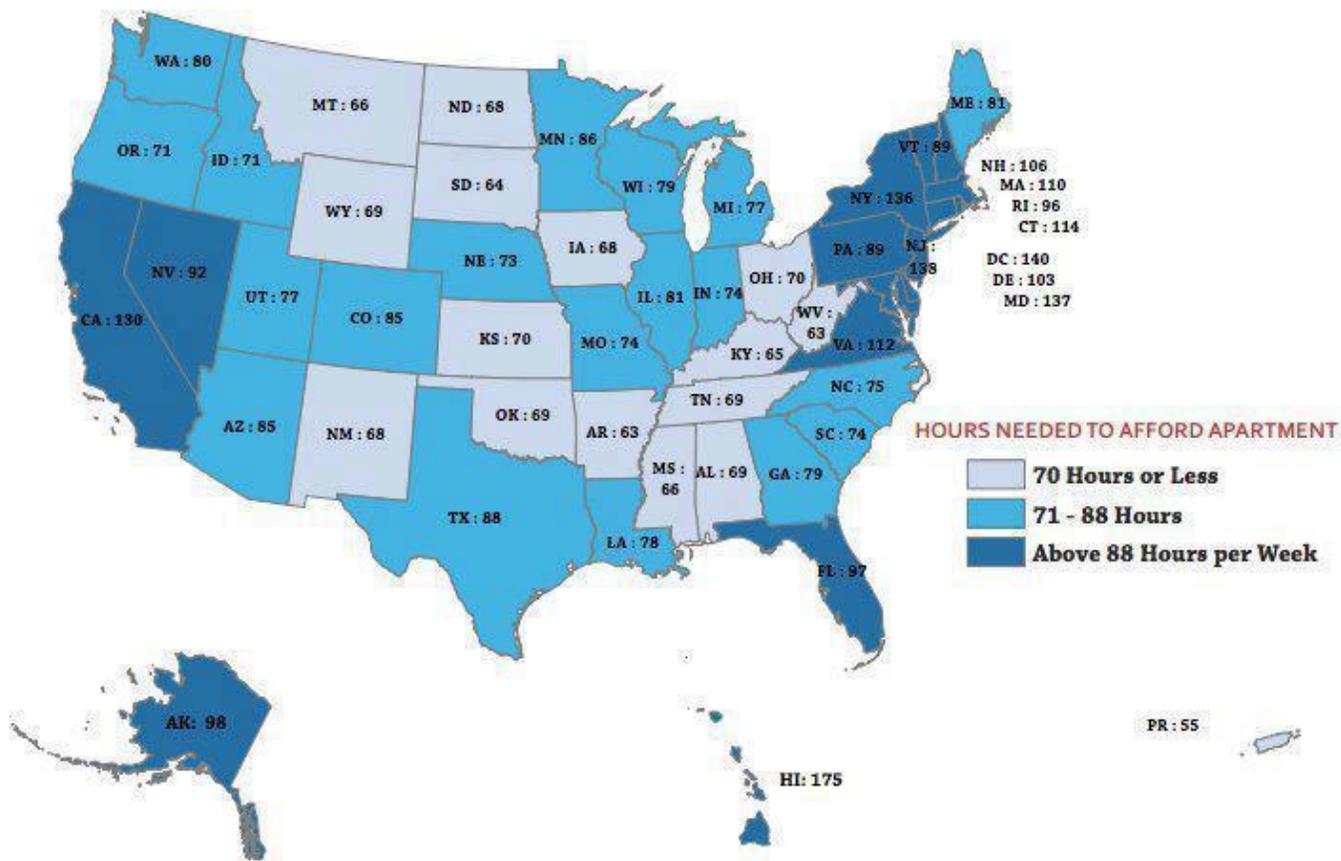
With any luck, after dabbling in folly, France will reverse course quickly. Maybe Hollande himself, not an unintelligent man, will realize the mistake of fighting the end of the social welfare state. The citizens of Europe who think austerity is unnecessary are about to get a lesson in reality. In the end the only way out is more capitalism.

And this brings us to our most important point. Financial markets in the US moved abruptly to a "risk off" trade as these election results were finalized. Stocks sold off and bonds rallied. But those who think these elections will hurt the US are wrong. The end of the social welfare state in Europe is a precursor for the US. It's a Dead Cat Bounce for Socialism.

[Yes, but voting for the Left is clearing a rejection of the Right. Maybe they'll find a path we can follow. I wish our French brothers well, and good luck. -SteveB]

HOURS AT MINIMUM WAGE NEEDED TO AFFORD RENT

In no state can a minimum wage worker afford a two-bedroom unit at Fair Market Rent, working a standard 40-hour work week.



<http://www.boliviafacts.net/potosi.html>

Potosi, Bolivia @ 13,343 ft. with the silver-rich *Cerro Rico* towering above.



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #136 — MAY 11, 2012

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

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

Once Upon a Time...

(posted by MarthaH, May 11, 2012)

...[Mr. Mourdock's] embrace of an unrelenting partisan mindset is irreconcilable with my philosophy of governance and my experience of what brings results for Hoosiers in the Senate. In effect, what he has promised in this campaign is reflexive votes for a rejectionist orthodoxy and rigid opposition to the actions and proposals of the other party. —Sen. Richard Lugar

To say I have been reflecting about politics is to say the obvious, but the Lugar defeat has added to the muse. Here are some thoughts on my time with his name.

To say I was smitten during my college years by the man who dared to combine city and county government is putting it mildly. My favorite political science professor took us to his office, and I was looking for mental dust bunnies to absorb while we visited! It was a time when the Goldwater people were at one end of the spectrum, including Indiana, of course! I see now that his daring to step up and LEAD was something unique in the spectrum of Hoosier politics even more as time passes. For many class sessions for my students when I crammed in local government for them, I raved at his foresightedness. He was a liberal Hoosier Republican to dare to try it, cleverly--in Rhodes Scholar form--omitting the politics of school or police/fire consolidation which still fires fierce debate and retains its issues...When Nixon chose Agnew, I wrote the mayor asking why. He wrote back about my "perceptive" letter, but he rode the fence as a loyalist.

Some place along the years, he went Right and I went left...at least by my observations and standards, he did. I admit it! Whether it was conviction or politics on his part, I will never truly know. A big part of it was, I am convinced, his rigid, Rhodes brain that had the focus of what was right forever...not a changing world. And sadly, I think that fits with the Right, don't you? In teaching I learned through devil's advocacy that my thoughts evolved on many issues. Probably the race catalyst was the Little Rock news followed by southern race riots and vivid images that burned my soul on the evening news. It was Wrong... and having not observed the discrimination in my life first-hand, I began my shift. I now, of course, know it was there, but I didn't feel it at GHS.

Lugar, however, became a senator and served his constituents in his fashion. I was proud that he became a leader, and he was well-spoken, if not formal and stiff. His stand on nuke proliferation and Soviet compliance with various warhead, etc., issues made me proud. I could contact his office about various things and receive answers or help. Then came Zippergate where I broke with him completely. "IF you vote to impeach a president about lying about sex, I won't vote for you again." He did, I didn't. When I retired and the insurance premiums skyrocketed, I wrote YEARLY to all the relevant politicians in DC, receiving THE SAME, meaningless, form letter from one of his aides...one that answered none of my questions or acknowledged my facts, blah, blah, blah. I know how that

works--from being an intern in the legislature! I even called him/them out by name the next year. (But others never sent at least a form letter!)

Tuesday, to say my piece about the Teabagger stupidity, I broke my promise not to vote for him ever again and crossed over, a last vote for Indiana's favorite mayor. He finally made an impassioned Friday plea when announced at -10% in the polls! Now we have reality anyway, 60% of 20% who even voted voted NO on the issue of his next term! Too little acknowledgement of changing tides was his problem, although I know he wasn't going to embrace Teabagger ideas ever! The information and statistics on all that are readily available...this is personal.

I attended his announcement and speech back in the day. I told my professor to tell him he had to speak like a common man to appeal to the voters. He kept pleading this time that he "did what senators do--help constituents." He never got into the Good Old Boy campaigner...now tottering along when he used to jog and join in some fun...age catching up, demeanor not altered to appeal to "modern" politics. That he stood his ground, even when it was not mine, meant he was given the 77% conservative badge so that he was "Obama's favorite Republican" was a philosophical lie of sorts...(I begged for his common sense with our side of the aisle), he voted the opposite. Only the Far Right said that he was in cahoots with the President!

The President's management style was as consensus builder from his community leader years; that meant reaching across the aisle with Lugar on some issues and also learning about foreign affairs from a respected and knowledgeable senior senator, natural and...one smart guy teaching another. To the radicals, that was a kiss of political death. All you have to do to see who was ticked off is see the list of contributors to his successful opponent, \$4.5 million to win a primary...and surely that didn't include all the negative ads inflicted upon us...

Maybe Senator Lugar should have retired at 80 rather than run for 6 more years, but he didn't. It wasn't about age, it was about a perverted sense of governance by Teabaggers that we will all have to live with. Now the Hoosier Republican Party is "uniting" behind him, but Lugar did not call to concede to him. Good for Lugar. It was brutal and hurtful. He ended up replying in kind, nothing I ever thought he'd do! Lugar's parting letter was obviously prepared in advance, and I will close my book on him with his observations. I agree on some comments, but the writing on the wall was his to see. And he didn't. They said he was told, but he chose to do it his way. Don't we all!

[20120510-01](#) 09:00 Pam Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)

Thank you for sending this, Martha. It is so thoughtful and well-written. Unlike most Americans, you understand the complexity of politics and of human nature. I'm sure you made a huge difference in your students' lives, and I'm glad we're back in touch.

[20120510-03](#) 09:56 Art Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)

Let's all vote for Martha. This is what we need in politics.

[20120510-10](#) 15:07 SteveB Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)

I love this, Martha. Please let me put it on the front page tomorrow? If not, that's perfectly OK, but that's where it belongs, so let me know, OK? Your writing is exactly what we try to do here when we are at our best...to try to explain why.

[20120510-12](#) 15:26 Pam Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to all, above)

I second that.

20120510-02

09:07 Pam

Re: Re: Photo: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #135)

Moore's bar is still there, though we didn't go. We did go out to the Double Decker, but it wasn't the day for fried chicken livers, my all-time fave. I went with my brother and niece, and we drove through our old neighborhood, up and down Seminary and Anderson Streets, and around the square before heading out to the cemetery for a visit to our family graves. Everything looks much the same as it did the last time I was there 15 years ago. Now that I am reconnected with my nieces, maybe I'll make it back to Indiana more often. There's a long story there, but I won't bore you with it. Suffice it to say, my sister-in-law is the bitch of the world.

My brother hates that buzz bomb, always has, always will, I guess. I don't think about it much one way or the other. Greencastle was a great place to grow up, but I'm so glad I don't live there now. I was eager to get away, and when I had to move back TWICE because of employment and financial difficulties (my ex- was a piece of work), I felt it as a failure. A quick visit is quite enough for me.

20120510-04

10:35 Charis

"Travel Insurance for Bolivia?"

"Travel Insurance for Bolivia?" by BoliviaBella

May 10, 2012, (<http://networkedblogs.com/xu1qV>)

It's sad, but true. Travel insurance is the last thing any of us think we'll ever need. But during recent years, Bolivia has been in the news for all the wrong reasons, and some of them have just become too serious to ignore.

This is not a scare tactic. BoliviaBella highlights the beautiful and positive aspects of traveling or living in Bolivia. But there are things you need to be aware of for your own safety when you travel Bolivia and it would be irresponsible not to mention them. We partnered with World Nomads as it is recommended by Lonely Planet, Footprint Travel Guides, National Geographic Adventure, and other highly respected travel sites, to offer you a trusted travel insurance option. Here's why:

5 deplorable safety concerns

1. Bolivian roads are awful and not well-maintained and Bolivian drivers often don't have licenses, drive drunk, or drive too fast. Nearly 200 people died in bus and biking accidents just in 2010 on various Bolivian roads, and a similar number in 2011. Tourists have at times been involved. Tour vehicles are also often not safe. This horrifying story more than any other, compelled us to take travel insurance more seriously. Click here to view more Bolivia travel tips.
2. Bolivia thrives on offering adventure tourism. Tours like the Death Road bicycle tour and Uyuni tours have resulted in several tourist deaths. Never underestimate how remote and distant some tourist attractions in Bolivia are (medical centers can be hours away) and may be poorly equipped. Tour operators often do not offer safety features or emergency plans. Learn to demand your tour operator provide safety guarantees.
3. Crime is on the rise. Bolivia has always had a problem with pickpockets and the theft of cameras, backpacks and other items. But during the past 3 years these and drug-related crimes have skyrocketed. In addition, crimes directed at foreigners, such as express kidnappings, "pildoritas" (a woman drugs your drink, her accomplice kidnaps you, robs you, then abandons you) and fake police officers demanding your documents, are becoming more frequent in some areas, especially La Paz.
4. Civil unrest is on the rise. The country has been very politically unstable during the past seven years and has seen a serious spike in the number of protests, road blocks, and strikes. For travelers, this means your trip itinerary may change, flights could be cancelled or missed, or your entire trip could be ruined. In 2010 over 100 tourists were stranded for 18 days in the Potosí/Uyuni area behind road blocks and protests. Their embassies could not get food to them or extract them. Be sure to view our Bolivia news page to inform yourself before you travel.

5. Other things that can occur. You could get sick, the airlines could lose your luggage, your trip could get canceled due to weather, natural disasters, etc. In 2012, Bolivia's largest airline fell into financial trouble and its future is uncertain, as are the travel plans of thousands of travelers.

In researching travel insurance options, World Nomads stood out for its flexibility. You can read about it below. However! We only recommend products on this site that we truly believe might add value to your trip. You'll find more international insurance options here. World Nomads is recommended by many of the globally known travel companies like Lonely Planet, National Geographic, Hostelbookers, and others. Read some incredible true claims stories here. See if this is right for you.

Special note for travels in areas affected by war, terrorism, civil unrest and weather

PLEASE NOTE: Be aware, travel insurance policies may have restrictions on cover relating to regions affected by war, terrorism, civil unrest and weather.

Make sure you check the travel advice provided by your government's department of foreign affairs and stay abreast of current events within the mass media while travelling. You must observe any advice provided, as your policy may only cover you if an area is deemed safe to travel by a government's department of foreign affairs. You may not be covered by your travel insurance if advice is given as "do not travel" or restricted to "all but essential travel" in the region you intend to visit. You may also not be covered if you place yourself at risk or if specific advice was issued prior to purchasing your policy.

Please refer to your specific policy wording for more details on any limitations or exclusions to your cover. Should you have any further concerns, please contact WorldNomads.com.

20120510-05	11:33	Bill	"Bruce's History Lessons: The Long, Lost, Last — the 27th —Amendment"
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"Bruce's History Lessons: The Long, Lost, Last — the 27th —Amendment" by Bruce Kauffman, *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*

May 10, 2012, (<http://tribstar.com/schools/x1710449229/BRUCE-S-HISTORY-LESSONS-The-long-lost-last-the-27th-Amendment>)

(TERRE HAUTE, IN) Our very last constitutional amendment — the 27th Amendment — was ratified this week (May 7) in 1992 when Michigan became the 38th state to approve it.

Call it the long, lost, last amendment because it was originally proposed 203 years earlier, in 1789, when it was among the original 12 amendments Congress sent to the states for ratification. The states subsequently approved 10 amendments, which became our Bill of Rights.

The two amendments that the states failed to approve were actually the first two proposed by Congress. The proposed First Amendment dealt with how to determine the size of the House of Representatives.

The proposed Second Amendment — now our 27th — prohibited Congress from voting itself a pay raise without an intervening election.

How an amendment that had been forgotten for 200 years finally became the law of the land is a fascinating story that begins with Gregory Watson, a student at the University of Texas, who was looking for a topic to write a paper on and stumbled across the un-ratified congressional compensation amendment.

He found that of the 11 states needed for ratification in 1789, six had already done so, and in 1873 Ohio had joined them, angered by Congress's huge retroactive pay increase of that year.

Intrigued, Watson wrote a paper on the amendment's history that included an analysis of how to get this long-dead amendment ratified. His teacher, Sharon Waite, was unimpressed and gave him a "C" on the paper, but Watson still believed his cause had merit and so he began writing petitions to state legislatures, arguing his case. Astonishingly, the state of Maine bought his argument in 1983 and Colorado followed suit in 1984.

That caught the attention of state officials in Wyoming, who announced that their state too had previously ratified this amendment — in 1977 — also as a protest against a previous congressional pay raise.

Suddenly, Watson's campaign began picking up national attention and prominent supporters, including Ralph Nader, and by 1989 Watson had 34 of the 38 states needed for ratification. He got two more in 1990, one more in 1991, and finally Michigan beat out New Jersey to become the state that made it official.

Alas, the story of the 27th Amendment has, so far, not had a totally happy ending because Congress has gotten around the amendment by giving itself several pay raises in the guise of cost-of-living adjustments.

As for Sharon Waite, she was later asked if she regretted the "C" she gave Gregory Watson. She responded that she did not remember him, nor could she be expected to since her lecture classes each included some 300 students and she had been lecturing for quite a number of years.

20120510-06	13:49	Pam	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #135)
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Tuesday was not a stellar day for North Carolina. As the whole world knows, North Carolinians, in their wisdom, voted to add a redundant, unnecessary, ill-conceived amendment to the state constitution. I really thought we had a chance with this one; everyone I know supports gay marriage and made an extra effort to be sure to vote. My son-in-law, who is the next thing to an anarchist, voted in this election because he felt it was a truly democratic opportunity to register his opinion in a way that could matter. The realist in me should have known Amendment One would be approved: it prohibits same-sex marriage AND civil partnerships. Religious folks are entitled to their opinion, and they can eschew gay marriage all they want, but marriage is not just a religious sacrament, it is also a civil contract, and as such it should be available to everyone. Discrimination against the LGBT community is as wrong as segregation and separate-but-equal. In fifty years, hopefully sooner, today's opposition to gay marriage will seem as archaic as the dodo. I'm finding it harder and harder to put up with what America has become, and I fear it's only going to get worse. That Indiana electee Mourdock is a prime example of our political decline. I always caution against name-calling, but that guy is a real jerk. One of my former students, a philosophy PhD, posted a good statement on FB that said essentially that we should respect everyone who deserves it, no matter what their opinions are, but that does not obligate us to respect all opinions. Love the sinner, hate the sin. Isn't it ironic that the folks who proclaim their Christianity the loudest are often the worst Christians.

I read an article today that talks about a political theory that wants to do what eliminates the most suffering, not what promotes the greatest happiness. I like that.

20120510-09	14:57	Dennis	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)
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from Pam:

Religious folks are entitled to their opinion, and they can eschew gay marriage all they want, but marriage is not just a religious sacrament, it is also a civil contract, and as such it should be available to everyone.

While I personally made a mistake in going to Reverend Love's Wedding Chapel at Lake Tahoe in Nevada for my second marriage ceremony, I would point out that there is only a civil contract required by government to be legally married in the U.S.A. Any religious component is purely an additional option. You can definitely get married in

America without being in any way religious about it, despite what the delusional Bible-thumpers may believe (by the way, divorce rates are highest among evangelicals).

I might add about my wedding experience above that I nearly gagged when Rev. Love, who strongly resembled Mr. Rogers, commenced with an unexpected religious ceremony. If it hadn't been for a friend who set up the appointment at the chapel, I could have had the deed done by a judge at the Douglas County courthouse where we obtained our license. But Rev. Love and his chapel, filled with Lake Tahoe scenes on velvet, our lesbian friend witness, and the surprise to my Chinese wife of the mention by the reverend of the holy ghost ("what was that part about the ghost?"), does make a good wedding story.

[20120510-11](#) 15:25 Pam Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Dennis, above)

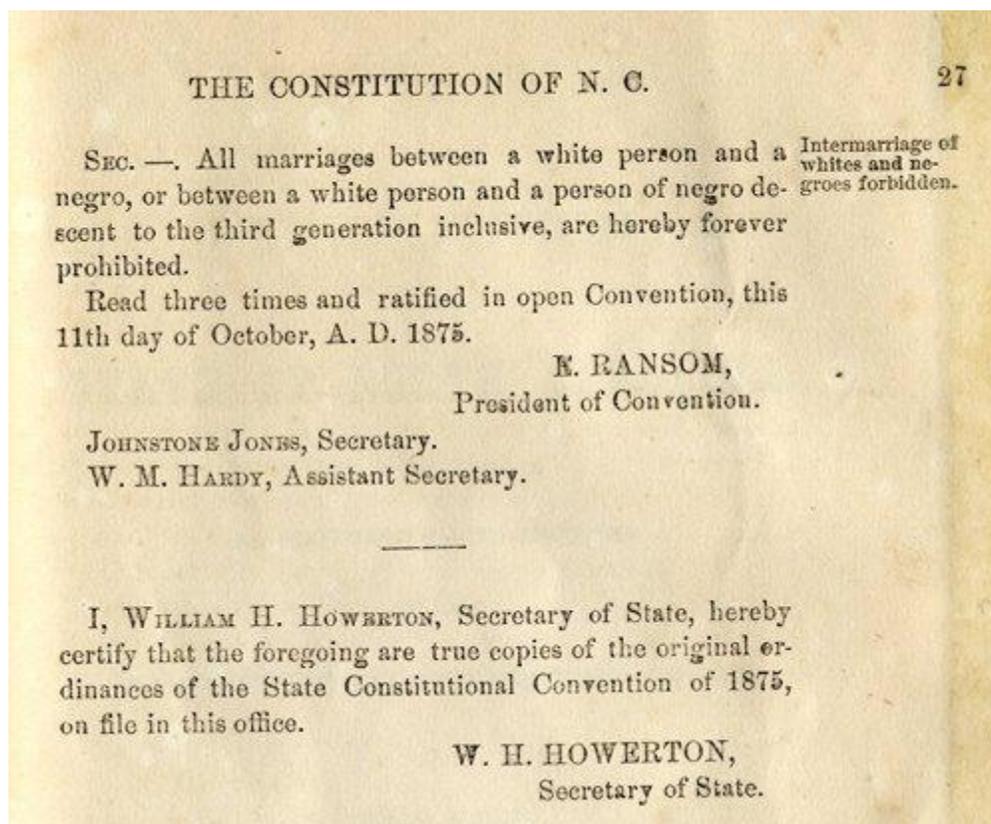
I especially like the ghost part. I've had three weddings, ceremonies, I should say. One with a judge, one with a magistrate, and finally one with a very liberal Methodist chaplain from UNCG. That was the best one, for lots of reasons, one being that there wasn't any religion in it, per our choice.

[20120510-18](#) 17:19 SteveG Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)

I know several people who became married in civil ceremonies – judges, justice of the peace, etc. Just as married as anyone else and for a whole lot less money.

20120510-20 18:45 Dennis Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)

Pam: Now that the above constitutional provision is no longer enforced in North Carolina (despite it being "forever"), how long will it take for the antigay marriage law to be overturned? And is it still legal to marry your cousin there?



20120510-24 19:35 Pam Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Dennis, above)

I don't know about cousin-marriage, but this relic of the past is very interesting. I have an adopted African American-Vietnamese son and my newly-found biological son is engaged to an African-American woman. I couldn't be prouder.

20120510-25 19:39 SteveG Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)

You and your family are cool.

20120510-27 23:57 SteveB Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to all, above)

And I couldn't be prouder of all of you!

20120510-13 15:27 Art Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #135)

You sexist pig, and I haven't gotten beyond the first paragraph :-)

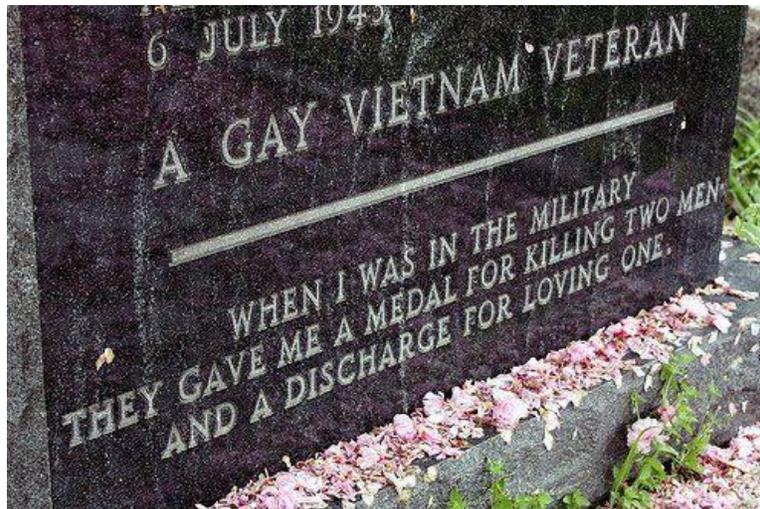
[20120510-15](#) 16:33 SteveB Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Art, above)

Art, I am NOT a sexist p... Well, OK, maybe a tiny bit sometimes...

[20120510-16](#) 16:35 Art Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, above)

Just say'n.

[20120510-21](#) 19:22 SteveG Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to all, above)



GHANDI'S 7 DANGERS TO HUMAN VIRTUE

- ① WEALTH WITHOUT WORK
- ② PLEASURE WITHOUT CONSCIENCE
- ③ KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT CHARACTER
- ④ BUSINESS WITHOUT ETHICS
- ⑤ SCIENCE WITHOUT HUMANITY
- ⑥ RELIGION WITHOUT SACRIFICE
- ⑦ POLITICS WITHOUT PRINCIPLE

[20120510-17](#) 16:53 SteveB "Obama Comes Out for Same-Sex Marriage"

"Obama Comes Out for Same-Sex Marriage" by Jim Lobe, NationofChange

May 10, 2012 (<http://www.nationofchange.org/obama-comes-out-same-sex-marriage-1336656033>)

("I've always been adamant that gay and lesbian Americans should be treated fairly and equally." —Barack Obama)

U.S. President Barack Obama Wednesday declared his support for same-sex marriage, becoming the first sitting president to do so and thrusting the issue into the center of his campaign for re-election.

Analysts here described Obama's new position as politically risky, a point that was underlined by Tuesday's approval by 60 percent of voters in North Carolina of an amendment to the state constitution affirming that only marriage between a man and a woman is legally recognizable.

North Carolina, a critical swing state in Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential elections, joined 29 other states, including other key battleground states in November, such as Virginia, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Colorado, with constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriages.

At the same time, however, the move could help mobilize Obama's Democratic base, and the polling during the period of his presidency has shown growing support for gay marriage. A Gallup poll released Tuesday found that 50 percent of respondent's favored legalizing same-sex marriage and 48 percent opposed.

"Many political handicappers won't be able to resist criticizing Obama for picking a fight in the culture-war terrain that evangelical-strumming, Karl Rove-types have been trying to tease out for years," wrote Steve Clemons on his widely read *Atlantic* blog.

"But President Obama is not prone to emotional leaps of faith and knee jerk shifts in policy. Their polls must show that the nation is ready to have this fight - that most independents and Democrats think same-sex marriage should be a civil right," he added.

Asked about Obama's stance, his all-but-certain Republican challenger, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, reaffirmed his opposition to the idea.

"My position is the same on gay marriage as it's been ...from the beginning, and that is that marriage is a relation between a man and a woman," he told a radio interviewer in Denver. "That's the posture that I had as governor and I have that today."

But gay and human rights groups praised Obama for speaking out.

"Today, President Obama made history by boldly stating that gay and lesbian Americans should be fully and equally part of the fabric of American society and that our families deserve nothing less than the equal respect and recognition that comes through marriage," said Joe Solomonese, the president of the Human Rights Campaign, the most prominent U.S. lobby group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans- gender (GLBT) issues.

"Following in the footsteps of predecessors who brought the nation forward on racial equality, this is a signature example of a president leading the people in a direction that is right and inevitable, even though some may not feel ready for it," said Suzanne Nossel, the executive director of the U.S. chapter of Amnesty International (AIUSA).

Obama, who has long supported equal rights for gays and lesbians and who abolished the Bill Clinton-era "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy that required homosexual U.S. servicemen and women to hide their sexual preferences in order to remain in uniform, announced his position during an interview with ABC's 'Good Morning America' to be aired Thursday. He said that his views about same-sex marriage and LGBT rights in general have evolved over time.

"I've always been adamant that gay and lesbian Americans should be treated fairly and equally," Obama said in the video that was released Wednesday:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM-e_qEjGXI.

"I have to tell you that over the course of several years as I have talked to friends and family and neighbors, when I think about members of my own staff who are in incredibly committed monogamous relationships, same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together, when I think about those soldiers or airmen or marines or sailors who are out there fighting on my behalf and yet feel constrained, even now that Don't Ask Don't Tell is gone, because they are not able to commit themselves in a marriage, at a certain point I've just concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same sex couples should be able to get married," he said.

Obama was put on the spot on the issue on Sunday, when his vice president, Joe Biden, told the widely watched "Meet the Press" public affairs television program that he was "absolutely comfortable" with same-sex marriage, a position that was immediately endorsed by Obama's education secretary, Arne Duncan.

Same-sex marriages are recognized in six states - including New York and, ironically, Romney's Massachusetts, which became the first state to grant marriage licenses to LGBT couples in 2004 - and the District of Columbia. The legislatures of both Washington state and Maryland have also approved laws granting same-sex marriage licenses, but they may be challenged by proposed referendums in November.

California legalized same-sex marriages in 2008, but voters in a referendum in November that year overturned the law.

Historically, state governments have determined who may legally marry, although the U.S. Supreme Court in 1967 declared state miscegenation laws – laws prohibiting inter-racial marriages – unconstitutional.

In 1996, conservatives in Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act which, for the first time, defined marriage under federal law as a union between a man and a woman.

The upshot of that law has been the denial by the federal government of a variety of benefits, such as Social Security, health insurance, and even hospital visitation rights, to LGBT couples who, if legally married, would be eligible to receive them. Same-sex "civil unions", a status short of legal marriage, are recognized by a contract.

In 2010, a federal court in Massachusetts held that the denial of such rights and benefits to same-sex married couples in that state was unconstitutional, a ruling that is currently under appeal and may yet reach the Supreme Court.

In 2008, Obama expressed support for "civil unions" that have been passed by a number of states to provide individuals in longstanding same-sex relationships with the same state benefits and rights that are accorded legally married couples. But federal rights and benefits were still denied them.

In explaining his evolution, Obama stressed the religious roots of his thinking, noting that he had talked with his wife, Michelle, about this "over the years. ... (I)n the end, the values that I care most deeply about and she cares most deeply about is how we treat other people, and, you know, we are both practicing Christians, and obviously this position may be considered to put us at odds with the views of others, but ...when we think about faith, ...what we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing himself on our behalf, but it's also the Golden Rule – you know, treat others the way you would want to be treated."

20120510-07 14:13 SteveG Fw: Change.org Petition: Tell the DNC You Want Marriage Equality

from Change.org:

I was devastated on Tuesday night when word came down that voters in my state of North Carolina passed Amendment 1, which bans same-sex couples from getting married. But on Wednesday, my sadness turned to joy when President Obama told the nation that he supports the rights of all couples to get married.

I'm a brand new mom, and I want my baby to grow up in a world where everyone is treated equally. I was born, raised, and married in North Carolina, and I want the same opportunities for my son -- no matter who he falls in love with someday. That's why I think it's important that the Democratic Party make marriage equality part of its 2012 Platform.

President Obama will be nominated for a second term this September in my home state of North Carolina -- and while I'm ashamed that my state has banned marriage equality, I'm hopeful for the opportunity to make history: this could be the first time a major political party endorses marriage equality.

That's why I started a petition on Change.org asking the Democratic Party leadership to include marriage equality as part of the 2012 party platform. Click here to add your name to my petition:

http://www.change.org/petitions/democratic-national-committee-include-marriage-equality-in-the-2012-party-platform?utm_campaign=cghZLfZEPk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert

Party platforms have long served as a symbol about the direction of our country -- back in the 1950s and 60s, historians say that the inclusion of Civil Rights as part of the Democratic platform was a key precursor to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

This year, a fight was already underway to include marriage equality in the Democratic Party Platform, and the idea has support from dozens of senators, party chairs, and other Democratic Party leaders. The biggest obstacle to the party endorsing marriage equality was that President Obama still didn't support it -- and that's no longer a problem. I know that if thousands of people sign my petition, the leaders of the Democratic Party will see that both leaders like President Obama and the American people value the importance of this issue.

Click here to sign my petition asking the leaders of the Democratic Party to follow President Obama's lead and include marriage equality in the 2012 Democratic Party Platform.

Thanks, Shannon Ritchie

20120510-08 14:18 MarthaH "Election 2012: The End of the Middle of Everything"
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"Other than that, things are going fine."...

"Election 2012: The End of the Middle of Everything" by Howard Fineman, Huffington Post

May 9, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/howard-fineman/election-2012-lost-middle-consensus-internet_b_1502845.html)

(WASHINGTON) Dick Lugar was a nice guy who stayed too long. But his crushing loss is also a valid data point in a profound and troubling trend, obvious not only in politics but in every other aspect of American life.

We are losing the mediating middle of everything, and the result is a country paralyzed by social and economic as well as political division.

The remorseless logic of global capital (think: big banks and super PACs) and the middleman-crushing power of the Internet (think: Amazon and the Tea Party) are combining to end not only the "small r" republican vision of the Founders but also many essential, intermediating business and social structures.

The Founders feared both the Monarch and the Mob. Now the salving, balancing middle is being ground to dust between the two.

Like an engine without oil or a knee without cartilage, we are in danger of seizing up. We are losing many of our lesser but essential sources of authority, credit, guidance, service and judgment. Face-to-face dealings, accidental acquaintances, the happenstances of geography and commerce are being replaced by a net-based cacophony of political flash mobs, stovepiped thinking and mail-order trade for virtually every product and service.

A partial list of who is under pressure: families with time to be a family, independent-minded elected representatives, small farmers not beholden to Monsanto or Cargill, county chairmen, "big tent" politics, independent business and sales agents, weekly newspapers, local radio and TV stations, teachers with freedom to teach, principals with latitude to run their schools, local religious leaders respected for their character and judgment.

In politics, the national parties have ceased to be mechanisms of consensus or even mechanisms at all. The power resides entirely with ideological, commercial, or personal money.

Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, two cool, aloof, effective assemblers of the new machinery, rely entirely on their own purpose-built campaigns, which have allegiance to no one but them.

Congress is now a home for the politically incapacitated. Senators who once had a year or two to attempt statesmanship and independent thought begin running for reelection even before they are sworn in.

As for the media, the days are long gone when a news anchor like Walter Cronkite could end his broadcast by saying, "And that's the way it is," and most people in the country would nod in agreement. There are no such truly unifying figures today, and most of the money in televised news is spent on ideologically discrete presentations of it.

The Internet makes possible the assembly of new intermediating institutions, but those are still in their infancy for the most part. In the meantime, mighty and basically unaccountable companies such as Google, Facebook, Amazon and others conduct, facilitate and dominate monarch-to-mob-and-back commerce.

To fend off both the monarchy and the mob, the Founders resurrected the Roman ideal of republican government, updated with a Newtonian clockwork of countervailing powers. They saw further protection against political tyranny in an economy of widely dispersed private property -- the ideal for them was the English yeomanry -- and in a rich social soil of education, family and homage to faith that would produce solid citizens.

Today, the Monarchy isn't a Hanoverian in a dusty wig, but rather a silent alliance between an all-knowing, all-benefit-dispensing Washington and billionaires (real people or corporate "people") given new freedom to exert their power by spending at will.

Today, the Mob isn't a witch hunt in Salem, but rather an Internet increasingly ruled by the worship of the viral and made profitable largely by companies that specialize in the Schumpeterian work of wiping out social supply lines of local human interaction with generations or even millennia of tradition.

The risk is that in the name of democracy, we are going to destroy it; that in the name of freedom, we are going to lose it; and that in the name of bringing the budget under control and saving the middle class, we are going to lose both to the Monarchy and the Mob.

Other than that, things are going fine.

20120510-14	15:34 Pam	"Mitt Romney Apologizes for the 'Dumb Things' He Did in Prep School"
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This sounds like the behavior of a spoiled, rich kid, who thinks he's entitled to--well, everything. Do jerks really grow up to be Presidential, or do they just become bigger jerks? I've heard some interesting things about GW and his high school years as well.

"Mitt Romney Apologizes for the 'Dumb Things' He Did in Prep School" by Dylan Stableford, The Ticket/Yahoo! News

May 10, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/mitt-romney-apologizes-dumb-things-did-prep-school-152935856.html>)

Mitt Romney has apologized for incidents described in a *Washington Post* story about his prep school years in Michigan. Some of the events include forcibly cutting a boy's bleached-blond hair and hassling a closeted gay student in English class.

"Back in high school, I did some dumb things," Romney said in an interview on the "Kilmeade and Friends" talk show on Fox News radio Thursday. "And if anybody was hurt by that or offended by that, I apologize." He added: "There is no question I became a very different person since then."

Romney emphasized that he had no idea the boy was gay. "I certainly don't believe that I thought the fellow was homosexual," said Romney in the radio interview. "That was the furthest thing from our minds back in the 1960s."

According to the Washington Post, which conducted interviews with the presidential candidate's former classmates at the Cranbrook School in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., Romney forcibly cut the "bleached-blond hair that draped over one eye" of a "soft-spoken" new kid because he felt the boy didn't belong. The story is a 5,400-word profile of Romney's formative years; the incident occurred in 1965.

"He can't look like that," an "incensed" Romney told one of his friends upon seeing John Lauber's hair, according to the friend's account. "That's wrong. Just look at him!"

A few days later in a dorm room, several other students pinned down Lauber—who was "perpetually teased for his nonconformity and presumed homosexuality"—while the presumptive Republican nominee "clipped his hair with a pair of scissors." A "terrified" Lauber was crying and screaming, according to the paper.

"It was a hack job," Phillip Maxwell, a student who witnessed the incident, told the Post. "It was vicious." Lauber died in 2004.

Romney also chided another student presumed to be gay, wrote the *Post*:

In an English class, Gary Hummel, who was a closeted gay student at the time, recalled that his efforts to speak out in class were punctuated with Romney shouting, "Atta girl!" In the culture of that time and place, that was not entirely out of the norm. Hummel recalled some teachers using similar language.

According to his campaign, Romney doesn't recall the incidents.

"Anyone who knows Mitt Romney knows that he doesn't have a mean-spirited bone in his body," Romney spokeswoman Andrea Saul said in a statement to the Post. "The stories of fifty years ago seem exaggerated and off base and Governor Romney has no memory of participating in these incidents."

It's worth noting that the Romney campaign, itself, is notorious for its pranks.

On April 1, Romney's campaign staff scheduled a speech for the former Massachusetts governor in a completely empty room.

"I think they're much funnier when I do them on other people than when they do them on me," Romney later said of the prank, captured by a campaign staffer on video. "But this was very good. This was classic."

Eric Fehrstrom, a senior adviser to the Romney campaign, recently told the Hill that Romney is a "closet prankster." When Romney was governor, a state trooper on his security detail "short-sheeted" the bed in his hotel room, Fehrstrom said. Romney retaliated by composing a fake letter from the hotel that said the maid staff had been fired.

20120510-19	17:24 SteveG	"Mitt Romney's Prep School Classmates Recall Pranks, But Also Troubling Incidents"
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"Mitt Romney's Prep School Classmates Recall Pranks, But Also Troubling Incidents" by Jason Horowitz, *The Washington Post*

May 10, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/mitt-romneys-prep-school-classmates-recall-pranks-but-also-troubling-incidents/2012/05/10/gIQA3WOKFU_story.html)

(Mitt Romney's prep school classmates recall pranks, but also troubling incidents.)



(BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich.) Mitt Romney returned from a three-week spring break in 1965 to resume his studies as a high school senior at the prestigious Cranbrook School. Back on the handsome campus, studded with Tudor brick buildings and manicured fields, he spotted something he thought did not belong at a school where the boys wore ties and carried briefcases. John Lauber, a soft-spoken new student one year behind Romney, was perpetually teased for his nonconformity and presumed homosexuality. Now he was walking around the all-boys school with bleached-blond hair that draped over one eye, and Romney wasn't having it.

"He can't look like that. That's wrong. Just look at him!" an incensed Romney told Matthew Friedemann, his close friend in the Stevens Hall dorm, according to Friedemann's recollection. Mitt, the teenage son of Michigan Gov. George Romney, kept complaining about Lauber's look, Friedemann recalled.

A few days later, Friedemann entered Stevens Hall off the school's collegiate quad to find Romney marching out of his own room ahead of a prep school posse shouting about their plan to cut Lauber's hair. Friedemann followed them to a nearby room where they came upon Lauber, tackled him and pinned him to the ground. As Lauber, his eyes filling with tears, screamed for help, Romney repeatedly clipped his hair with a pair of scissors.

The incident was recalled similarly by five students, who gave their accounts independently of one another. Four of them — Friedemann, now a dentist; Phillip Maxwell, a lawyer; Thomas Buford, a retired prosecutor; and David Seed, a retired principal — spoke on the record. Another former student who witnessed the incident asked not to be identified. The men have differing political affiliations, although they mostly lean Democratic. Buford volunteered for Barack Obama's campaign in 2008. Seed, a registered independent, has served as a Republican county chairman in Michigan. All of them said that politics in no way colored their recollections.

"It happened very quickly, and to this day it troubles me," said Buford, the school's wrestling champion, who said he joined Romney in restraining Lauber. Buford subsequently apologized to Lauber, who was "terrified," he said. "What a senseless, stupid, idiotic thing to do."

"It was a hack job," recalled Maxwell, a childhood friend of Romney who was in the dorm room when the incident occurred. "It was vicious."

"He was just easy pickin's," said Friedemann, then the student prefect, or student authority leader of Stevens Hall, expressing remorse about his failure to stop it.

The incident transpired in a flash, and Friedemann said Romney then led his cheering schoolmates back to his bay-windowed room in Stevens Hall.

Friedemann, guilt ridden, made a point of not talking about it with his friend and waited to see what form of discipline would befall Romney at the famously strict institution. Nothing happened.

Romney is now the presumed Republican presidential nominee. His campaign spokeswoman, Andrea Saul, said in a statement that "anyone who knows Mitt Romney knows that he doesn't have a mean-spirited bone in his body. The stories of fifty years ago seem exaggerated and off base and Governor Romney has no memory of participating in these incidents."

Campaign officials denied a request for an interview with Romney. They also declined to comment further about his years at Cranbrook.

In a subsequent interview Thursday morning with Fox News Channel, Romney said he didn't remember the incident but apologized for pranks he helped orchestrate that he said "might have gone too far."

After the incident, Lauber seemed to disappear. He returned days later with his shortened hair back to its natural brown. He finished the year but ultimately left the school before graduation — thrown out for smoking a cigarette.

Sometime in the mid-1990s, David Seed noticed a familiar face at the end of a bar at Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

"Hey, you're John Lauber," Seed recalled saying at the start of a brief conversation. Seed, also among those who witnessed the Romney-led incident, had gone on to a career as a teacher and principal. Now he had something to get off his chest.

"I'm sorry that I didn't do more to help in the situation," he said.

Lauber paused, then responded, "It was horrible." He went on to explain how frightened he was during the incident, and acknowledged to Seed, "It's something I have thought about a lot since then."

Lauber died in 2004, according to his three sisters.

Romney came of age during his six years at Cranbrook. First as a day student and later as a full-time boarder, he embraced and became emblematic of the Cranbrook way — a strict disciplinary code and academic rigor that governed the school by day and a free-wheeling unofficial boys code of "Crannies" at night. Wherever the action was, so was Romney. He wrote the most letters to the girls at the sister school across the lake and successfully petitioned to get placed in the top classes. He was not a natural athlete but found his place among the jocks by managing the hockey team and leading megaphone cheers for the football team. Although a devout Mormon, one of the few at the school, he was less defined by his faith than at any other time in his life. He was a member of 11 school organizations, including the Spectators' Club and the homecoming committee, and started the school's booster outfit, the Blue Key Club.

It was at Cranbrook where he first lived on his own, found his future wife and made his own decisions. One can see the institution's influence on his demeanor and actions during those years, but also how it helped form the

clubbiness and earnestness, the sense of leadership and enthusiasm, apparent in his careers as a businessman and a politician. "He strongly bought in to community service," said Richard Moon, a schoolmate at the time. "That hard work was its own reward." What is less visible today is what was most apparent to his prep-school peers: his jocularly.

Now, nearly half a century later, Romney's presidential campaign has turned to the candidate's youthful antics as evidence of his capacity for harmless, humanizing pranks and as an indication of his looser, less wooden self.

"There's a wild and crazy man inside of there just waiting to come out," Romney's wife, Ann — a graduate of Cranbrook's sister school, Kingswood — attested in a television interview this month, evoking what she saw as his endearing and fun-loving prep-school persona. Many of Romney's peers from his high school days echo that version of the candidate, describing him as the humble son of an automobile executive-turned-governor who volunteered at the nearby mental hospital. They recall an infectious laugh, a characterization first documented in his senior yearbook.

"If you should ever by chance be walking down the [Stevens Hall] corridor at 2:00 a.m. and hear rising tones of boisterous, exuberant laughter, you are almost sure to find its source is Mitt Romney," the yearbook reported. "A quiet joke, a panicky laughter and another of the Friedemann-Romney all-night marathon contests has begun."

But Friedemann and several people closest to Romney in those formative years say there was a sharp edge to him. In an English class, Gary Hummel, who was a closeted gay student at the time, recalled that his efforts to speak out in class were punctuated with Romney shouting, "Atta girl!" In the culture of that time and place, that was not entirely out of the norm. Hummel recalled some teachers using similar language.

Saul, Romney's campaign spokeswoman, said the candidate has no recollection of the incident.

Teachers were also the butt of Romney's brand of humor.

One venerable English teacher, Carl G. Wonnberger, nicknamed "the Bat" for his diminished eyesight, was known to walk into the trophy case and apologize, step into wastepaper baskets and stare blindly as students slipped out the back of the room to smoke by the open windows. Once, several students remembered the time pranksters propped up the back axle of Wonnberger's Volkswagen Beetle with two-by-fours and watched, laughing from the windows, as the unwitting teacher slammed the gas pedal with his wheels spinning in the air.

As an underclassman, Romney accompanied Wonnberger and Pierce Getsinger, another student, from the second floor of the main academic building to the library to retrieve a book the two boys needed. According to Getsinger, Romney opened a first set of doors for Wonnberger, but then at the next set, with other students around, he swept his hand forward, bidding the teacher into a closed door. Wonnberger walked right into it and Getsinger said Romney giggled hysterically as the teacher shrugged it off as another of life's indignities.

"I always enjoyed his pranks," said Stu White, a popular friend of Romney's who went on to a career as a public school teacher and said he has been "disturbed" by the Lauber incident since hearing about it several weeks ago, before being contacted by *The Washington Post*. "But I was not the brunt of any of his pranks."

In later years, after Romney went on a Mormon mission, married and raised five sons, he seemed a different person to some old classmates. "Mitt began to change as a person when he met Ann Davies. He gradually became a more serious person. She was part of the process of him maturing and becoming more of the person he is today," said Jim Bailey, who was a classmate of Romney's at Cranbrook and later at Harvard.

By the 1950s, George and Lenore Romney had cracked the Motor City firmament and made their home in the exclusive enclave of Bloomfield Hills. When it came to educating their children, the clear choice was Cranbrook.

Built in 1927 by George Booth, publisher of the Detroit News, and named after his father's alma mater in Kent, England, Cranbrook stood out as an architectural gem in the Michigan woods. Modeled on British boarding schools with "forms" instead of grades, "prefects" instead of RAs, "masters" instead of teachers, it also boasted the work of

famed Finnish architect Eiel Saarinen. Cranbrook had all the trappings of an elite school where kids walked around like junior executives and, as Tom Elliott, Class of 1966, recalled, learned mantras such as, "Remember who you are, and what you represent."

"If you went to Cranbrook," said a classmate, Peter "the Bird" Werbel. "You were creme de la creme."

The Romney children walked under arches reading *A Life Without Beauty Is Only Half Lived*, past a field overlooked by Greek-style sculptures where the Detroit Lions practiced; and then a statuette of the school's symbol, the archer from Book V of Virgil's *Aeneid*, who "aimed an arrow high." (In the mug honoring Romney's Class of 1965, a naked woman replaced the aiming archer.) They looked out of leaded-glass windows in the academic buildings, crossed the spruce-spotted quad lined with modernist fountains and sleek statues of coursing hounds. They studied in reading rooms featuring frescoes and marble friezes. In the chandeliered dining room, students waited on fellow students and sat on straight-backed spindle chairs bearing the school's insignia of a proud crane. After dinner, they wiped their mouths with cloth napkins.

In 1959, Mitt Romney enrolled at Cranbrook as a 12-year-old seventh-grader.

For the most part, the school broke down along the usual lines of jocks and brains, popular kids and introverts, all trained with the expectation of joining the next generation's elite. The students gave one another chummy nicknames. There was Moonie and Butch, the Kraut and Flip. Romney, his name short to begin with, was playfully teased with chants of Wiillard, Wiillard by his friends.

Ron Sill, a Romney classmate especially attuned to the counterculture of the 1960s, rolled his eyes at the dance instruction and lessons on how to hold a teacup and properly shake a man's hand. He preferred to listen to folk music in the coffee shops of neighboring Birmingham. Taro Yamasaki, the son of the architect of the World Trade Center and several Bloomfield Hills houses, then went by the name Michael and encountered what he called a "veiled racism." "I was a linebacker in football," said Yamasaki, who went on to become a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer. "And the coaches would call me Kamikaze." Sidney Barthwell, the son of a prominent Detroit pharmacist, was the only African American student in Romney's class from the seventh through 12th grades. Now a Detroit magistrate, he said he tried to introduce some west Detroit swagger to the school, but it was, he said, "pretty Republican and pretty WASP-y."

There was a significant Jewish contingent, and several of those students said they never sensed any obvious prejudice. During Romney's tenure, there were also Middle Eastern exchange students, usually from Kuwait.

Abdulhadi M. al-Awadi, a Kuwaiti student, had fond memories of the school and the respect and special attention he received from teachers. He recalled Romney as the "son of Governor Romney" who was "very sociable." When some students put up pictures of Israeli statesman David Ben-Gurion in the hallway near his room, he did not believe it was meant intentionally to offend him, but he was bothered by it. "It's human nature. But they did it. That's their right."

Faisal F. al-Abduljadir, a Kuwaiti student spending his senior year at Cranbrook in part to improve his English, said the teachers and students went out of their way to treat him with respect, showing consideration for his celebration of Ramadan and bathing requirements. But he acknowledged being "angry" about a caption under his picture in the senior yearbook that read, "Take a left at the next Synagogue."

Religion was not much of an issue for the students. There was mandatory chapel time on Tuesdays and Thursdays when they sang Episcopalian hymns and the school song, "Forty Years On," but it was studiously nondenominational. The campus's elegant Christ Church had a Star of David, an Islamic crescent, and yin-and-yang sign above its wooden door. The Mormon Romney joined Jews and Protestants on Cranbrook's Church Cabinet, which focused on community service.

Some students admired Romney for what they saw as his lack of airs, saying he did not trade on his father's status as an auto executive and governor. Romney even came in for teasing because American Motors, the company his father ran, was considered at the bottom rung of the big-auto hierarchy, below General Motors, Ford and Chrysler.

"Boys in a boys' school can tease and make fun of almost anything," said Bailey, a scholarship student and head prefect of the school who described Romney at the time as an awkward adolescent with a penchant for practical jokes. The children of other auto executives would taunt Romney for the Ramblers he and his father drove. "That's not a car, that's a bicycle with a dishwasher for an engine," Bailey recalled them saying.

Others noticed a distance between themselves and Romney. "I was a scholarship student, and he was the son of the governor," said Lance Leithauser, now a doctor, who attended the school with his brother, Brad, now a noted poet. "There was a bit of a gulf." Even a close pal like Friedemann felt that distance; their friendship was confined to the dorms. When Romney left the campus on weekends, he never invited him. "I didn't quite fit into the social circle. I didn't have a car when I was 16," Friedemann said. "I couldn't go skiing or whatever they did."

Lou Vierling, a scholarship student who boarded at Cranbrook for the 1960 and 1961 academic years, was struck by a question Romney asked them when they first met. "He wanted to know what my father did for a living," Vierling recalled. "He wanted to know if my mother worked. He wanted to know what town I lived in." As Vierling explained that his father taught school, that he commuted from east Detroit, he noticed a souring of Romney's demeanor.

Romney was bowled over by the wealth of some of his friends. He briefly dated Mary Fisher, the daughter of the philanthropist and diplomat Max Fisher, who acted as a finance chairman to George Romney's political campaigns. At her house, he watched the James Bond film "Goldfinger" in the family's private theater before it was widely released. He reported excitedly back to Friedemann about the theater, noting that the seats even had numbers.

The largest chasm of all at Cranbrook was between the boarders and the "day boys." Students within the limits of Detroit's Eight Mile Road had the option to attend the school without boarding. The requirements for enrollment as a day student were generally tougher, leading day boys to consider themselves academically superior. Day boys also had the freedom to leave campus when school let out late in the afternoon. Often those with cars would gas up at nearby service stations, cruise Woodward Avenue and plot "how and where we could get some beer," said Gregg Dearth, who went by the nickname Daiquiri Dearth. Drugs were generally unheard of, but day boy parties often included someone downing beers or toting bottles of scotch.

Romney began his Cranbrook career as a day boy and quickly adapted to the school's unofficial code. He was prohibited by his religion from drinking alcohol but excelled at elaborate practical jokes.

During spring break of his senior year, when most of his friends went to Florida for vacation, Romney stayed behind to make movies for an upcoming Cranbrook talent show. For one, he filmed his friends Stu White and Judy Sherman seated at a table to dine on fine china on a Woodward Avenue median as their friend Pike John, now deceased, acted as the waiter. Romney filmed the luncheon until a police officer pulled up. "And that was it," Sherman said.

But in a well-known prank in which Romney flashed a police siren and, bearing a fake badge and cap, approached two friends and their dates parked on a dark country road, there was a stronger undercurrent of fear to the incident than commonly conveyed. Candy Porter, a Kingswood boarder from a small town in Ohio, had a strict 11 p.m. curfew. As Romney and his Cranbrook pals played out the joke, pretending to be shocked over empty bourbon bottles in the trunk, Porter thought of the dorm mothers waiting at the door and the threat of expulsion. "I just remember being like a deer in headlights," she said. "I just remember being terrified." Once she realized it was all a prank, and was safely back at her dorm, Porter joined in the laughter.

Romney's sense of humor ran through his family.

Sherman, a friend of the Romneys from high school, recalled Ann telling her about the time Romney and his older brother, Scott, dressed up in white coats and wheeled a gurney up to the Birmingham train station to meet their aunt. When she got off the train, they rushed her away as if to a madhouse.

By the time Romney started dating Ann in his senior year, he had immersed himself into the Cranbrook culture. In 1962, when his father won the governorship and his parents moved to Lansing, he entered the boarding life as a resident of Stevens Hall, named after the school's first headmaster. From the inside, Cranbrook was an entirely different place.

"The day students," said Steph Lady, a boarder and now a screenwriter in Hollywood, "it was like they didn't even go there."

Romney breathed Cranbrook day and night.

He met the Kingswood girls at the Get Acquainted Dance in the school gym. There was the Chateau de Noel girl-ask-boy dance at Christmas, and the World A-Fair, in which students dressed up in the garb of other nations. He sang in the Glee Club and started the Blue Key Club, an organization of students who "know the campus and Cranbrook traditions well" and served as ambassador to parents and prospective students. The school newspaper noted that his "diligent and capable leadership" of the homecoming weekend, where he delivered a "brilliantly hilarious monologue," earned him a citation reserved for "students whose contributions to school life are often not fully recognized through already existing channels." He was co-chairman of the Speculators Club and played a leading role in the American Field Service, which helped bring foreign students to the campus. He also served a leadership role on a student cabinet organization and during his senior year took a bus with some Kingswood girls to volunteer at the nearby state mental hospital. There, he danced to spinning 45s and talked and ate chips with the young patients.

"His altruism was apparent then and is apparent now," said Candy Porter, who volunteered with Romney at the hospital. "I just remember him being really nice," said Mary Fisher.

Romney also found time to contribute to the school paper as a special correspondent at the funeral of President John F. Kennedy. "Mitt Romney Comments on Kennedy Funeral," read the front page headline on the Dec. 17, 1963, edition of the Crane. "Note: Personal comments and observations made by Mitt Romney in Washington, Nov. 25, 1963."

The old Washington theory of relativity, briefly: one is important only until a bigger brass appears, was blatantly [sic] obvious for whenever before have we had the top potentates of the world here to outrank our dignitaries? We all recall the day when we saw a senator of the like in some big, black limosine [sic] drive through our town. Most likely our mouths were hanging wide open as our Mommies and Daddies told us the man out there was a very important person who worked in Washington.

Even without extracurricular activities, Cranbrook demanded long days. The morning bell rang at 7 and breakfast was served in the dining hall at 7:30, coat and tie required. After breakfast, students returned to clean their rooms in anticipation of white-gloved senior prefects who scoured the bed frames for dust. After classes and study hall at 9:30, students could go beneath Stevens Hall to the school store, where the boys received letters, via an inter-school postal service, from the girls at Kingswood. Some were perfumed.

The letters Romney wrote were delivered to the Green Lobby in Kingswood. Around 10:15 every morning, the girls, all wearing saddle shoes, hoped to hear their names called amid walls of rich green tile, and banisters, benches and clocks all in the art deco style.

"The person who wrote the most consistently was Mitt," said Lyn Moon Shields, who dated Romney in the fall semester of 1964. Gentlemanly and fun, Romney was her best date in her six years at school. He called every evening and picked her up in his powder blue Rambler and drove her up and down Woodward Avenue on weekends, and to school dances where she wore blue-green formal dresses and he a dark suit and tie. "Things were so innocent," she said. "We kissed each other, I think Mitt would admit to that." One day, she said, Romney just stopped calling. He had taken an interest in a Kingswood sophomore. "They got intentional about their relationship very soon," Shields said of Mitt and Ann.

Like every other student, Romney completed a rigorous workload that made most college requirements seem easy by comparison. Between the seventh and eighth grades, the faculty selected a dozen or so students to enter an advanced-placement program. Romney at first was not among the chosen, and he objected. "He went into the headmaster and convinced him that 'I should be in this,'" John French, who had been friends with Romney since they served together as Cub Scouts, recalled Romney telling him. "He had gumption. He had his sights on what he wanted to achieve."

The time after class was set aside for sports. Romney was not a natural athlete, according to classmates. He wore the Cranbrook "C" on his white tank top as a cross-country runner, but the greatest impression he made in that pursuit was collapsing near the finish line during a meet — although his perseverance won him admiration and applause. He was more at home on the sidelines, cheering the football team on as a member of the Pep Club, chanting such cheers into a megaphone as "Iron them out. Iron them out. Smoooooth."

He participated on the school's hockey team as its manager, lugging a duffle bag full of pucks and sticks. Dressed in suit and tie and three-quarter coat, he rode the bus with the uniformed players and kept stats in the coach's box at the cold outdoor rink. The team's senior year began with promise, but ended badly. The players took out their frustration on the ice, getting into brawls with Lakeview and Catholic Central. During one fight, Maxwell pulled the jersey over the head of an opposing player and pummeled away. Romney dashed onto the ice, slipping and sliding in his Brogan wingtips in an apparent attempt to break up the fight.

During the winter of Romney's sophomore year, the faculty assigned him and Maxwell to mop the floors of the academic halls, part of a World War II-era program meant to instill a work ethic in the students. During their six-week detail, the two old friends had long, rambling conversations about religion, and Maxwell pressed Romney on how he could believe in Mormonism.

As Maxwell later recalled their discussion, he asked Romney, "How can you believe that thing about the tablets?" referring to the divine gold tablets Mormons believe were discovered in New York and translated by Joseph Smith.

Romney, he said, responded, "What about the Virgin birth and the holy trinity?"

"I don't believe that, either," Maxwell responded. The discussions ultimately came down to a faith vs. reason equation.

"You simply have to have faith," Romney concluded.

"That's a cop-out," Maxwell said.

While there were seeds of Romney's future devoutness at Cranbrook, he was then more interested in goofing off. In the evenings, he cut loose with Friedemann, a scholarship kid from the small town of Romeo, dubbed the Kraut. The two boys stayed up late, joking around and racing mops like racehorses up and down the hallway.

One regular in the Stevens Hall revelry was the school's security guard, Chester. In police uniform, chubby and middle-aged, Chester would let Romney and Friedemann examine and play with his gun. In the student yearbook, Romney posed with his arm around Chester wearing thick black glasses, similar to those the guard wore, but also a ski hat and a silly Jerry Lewis expression. At the Swingin' Sweeney Dance, Romney pointed a toy gun under his chin as two girls shook hands in front of him. A photo of the pose ran in the yearbook above the caption, "Give a guy enough rope and he'll hang himself."

Romney spent months trying to convert Friedemann, the son of New Deal-worshipping Democrats, to the Republican Party. He asked to meet his friend's grandmother, so that he could convert her, too. "He talked politics all the time," Friedemann said. "It was more big government versus small government. He was a business guy back then."

Romney's political and personal idol, George Romney, was never far away. Once Crawford Elder, a student a year behind Romney, saw the governor in the basement under Stevens Hall getting a haircut from Everett Arthurs, the school barber and part-time bartender at faculty cocktail parties. When Ev, as he was widely known, dropped dead after a round of golf, Gov. Romney eulogized him at a tree dedication ceremony on the quad, a few steps away from his son's room.

After lights out, John Lauber often left his door open. Larry Olson and some other boarders would check for the hall monitor they called Sneaky Pete and slip into Lauber's room. From there, they would crawl out his window, climb over the bushes and scurry off campus to Lone Pine Road, where a pizza truck regularly parked. Sated, they would

climb back through the window and check on the bottles of apple juice that they hoped fermenting grapes would turn into hard cider. Then Lauber and his friends played poker until the early morning.

When Lauber's younger sister, Betsy, visited the campus, she said she found him happy and sporting a preppy look. He took her to an off-campus party at a fellow student's house where they danced to Motown records and laughed.

But he was always a bit different from the rest. During breaks from school, he worked as a mortician's assistant. He spent more time devouring books than making friends in clubs.

"He was very quiet, not a jock," said Steph Lady. "Very soft-spoken. I know nothing, probably gay, but who knows. We were so stupid and naive. I know there was homosexuality there, but we didn't even have a word for it. And there was homophobia then, too."

On an overcast Saturday, David Craig, a senior prefect and day student, drove his car down Martell Drive along the school grounds and saw a figure duck into the hedges. He thought the person might be trespassing and stopped, only to find Lauber puffing on a cigarette. In a move that he said he later regretted as an excess of the "dorm trooper" mentality instilled by Cranbrook, Craig reported Lauber to the headmaster. Soon after, Lauber was expelled.

"He just disappeared," Lady said.

Sudden disappearances at Cranbrook were not unheard of. Students might pass a dorm neighbor on the way to class and come back hours later, with all their belongings gone and their beds stripped by maintenance staff. Bad behavior and bad grades were not tolerated.

Ben Snyder, who as an assistant headmaster later spearheaded the school's effort to recruit inner-city students, said Cranbrook in Romney's time "had its standards and applied them briskly when needed." As chairman of a group of faculty members and students who were in charge of discipline, he described a strict school in which offenders could be "dismissed, period." Snyder could not recall dealing with any transgressions involving Romney. "I wouldn't expect to see him," Snyder said of the disciplinary tribunals. "The family was so straight, they don't do those types of things."

On June 12, 1965, Romney concluded his Cranbrook career at a commencement ceremony at the Christ Church, in which his father delivered a keynote address reported on by the local papers.

"This is a special occasion for us as a family," George Romney told the gathered boys before emphasizing that religion and "the one girlfriend whom you finally take the greatest interest in" and good health habits were critical for a successful life. So, he said, was character. "Developing character is going to be more important than your education from now on." The ceremony concluded with all the boys singing a final rendition of their school song, "Forty Years On."

Forty years on, when afar and asunder
Parted are those who are singing today,
When you look back, and forgetfully wonder
What you were like in your work and your play,
Then, it may be, there will often come o'er you,
Glimpses of notes like the catch of a song—
Visions of boyhood shall float them before you,
Echoes of dreamland shall bear them along,
Follow up! Follow up! Follow up!

Forty years on, Mitt Romney accepted the school's 2005 Distinguished Alumni Award.

A year earlier, John Joseph Lauber died at a Seattle hospital.

The boy few at Cranbrook knew or remember was born in Chicago, grew up in South Bend, Ind., and had a hard time fitting in. He liked to wander and "had a glorious sense of the absurd," according to his sister Betsy. When the chance to get out of Indiana presented itself, he jumped at it and enrolled at Cranbrook. He never uttered a word about Mitt Romney or the haircut incident to his sisters. After Cranbrook asked him to leave, he finished high school, attended the University of the Seven Seas for two semesters, then graduated in 1970 from Vanderbilt, where he majored in English.

He came out as gay to his family and close friends and led a vagabond life, taking dressage lessons in England and touring with the Royal Lipizzaner Stallion riders. After an extreme fit of temper in front of his mother and sister at home in South Bend, he checked into the Menninger Clinic psychiatric hospital in Topeka, Kan. Later he received his embalmer's license, worked as a chef aboard big freighters and fishing trawlers, and cooked for civilian contractors during the war in Bosnia and then, a decade later, in Iraq. His hair thinned as he aged, and in the winter of 2004 he returned to Seattle, the closest thing he had to a base. He died there of liver cancer that December.

He kept his hair blond until he died, said his sister Chris. "He never stopped bleaching it."

(Researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.)

[20120510-22](#) 19:33 Dennis Fw: Sen. Bernie Sanders Petition: End Polluter Welfare



At a time when we have a record debt, Congress should not continue to give away taxpayer money to the established, highly profitable fossil fuel industry.

- Fossil fuels are subsidized at nearly 6 times the rate of renewable energy. From 2002 to 2008, the US Government gave the mature fossil fuel industry over \$72 billion in subsidies, while investments in the emerging renewable industry totaled \$12.2 billion.
- The fossil fuel energy industry does not need taxpayer subsidies. In 2011, the Big Five oil companies alone made \$137 billion in profits. During the first quarter of 2012, the Big Five oil companies earned a combined \$33.5 billion, or \$368 million per day.
- Unlike renewable energy incentives which periodically expire and require Congress to approve extensions, the fossil fuel industry has dozens of subsidies permanently engrained in the tax code from decades of successful lobbying. In 2011, the oil, gas, and coal industries spent a combined \$167 million on lobbying the federal government.

Use this link to sign sponsorship petition:

<http://www.sanders.senate.gov/end-polluter-welfare/>.

[20120510-23](#) 19:34 SteveG Re: Sen. Bernie Sanders Petition: End Polluter Welfare

Done.

"JPMorgan Chase Discloses \$2-Billion Trading Loss" by Scott Reckard, Andrew Tangel, and Walter Hamilton, *Los Angeles Times*

<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-0511-jpmorgan-chase-20120511,0,4625412.story>

May 10, 2012, 5:56 p.m.

Barely four years after Wall Street's wrong-way bets plunged the world into a financial crisis, JPMorgan Chase & Co. admitted it lost \$2 billion from a trading portfolio that was supposed to have helped the bank manage credit risk.

"These were egregious mistakes," said Chief Executive Jamie Dimon, who is considered one of the world's savviest bankers. "We have egg on our face, and we deserve any criticism we get."

The announcement stunned the financial industry, in part because it came from such a highly regarded bank. Dimon had navigated JPMorgan through the crisis in good shape by clamping down on some of the excessive risks that torpedoed rivals.

Dimon told analysts that the bank racked up \$2 billion in trading losses during the last six weeks, and that could "easily get worse." He said JPMorgan could suffer an additional \$1-billion loss from the portfolio during the second quarter.

"My jaw is on the table," said Nancy Bush of SNL Financial. "I never expected this right now — not in a million years."

The losses stemmed from derivative bets that backfired in the company's Chief Investment Office. This part of the bank was in charge of trading to balance the company's assets and liabilities, although it had been criticized by some analysts for operating more like a hedge fund.

There had been media reports that a single JPMorgan trader in Europe, known in the bond market as "the London whale," was making massive bets that were influencing prices in the \$10-trillion market.

Investors bailed out of JPMorgan stock in after-hours trading, a sign it will open sharply lower in New York on Friday. The stock fell 6%, and rivals such as Citigroup Inc., Wells Fargo & Co., and Bank of America Corp. also posted modest declines.

The blowup at the nation's largest bank came amid a heated debate in Congress over how much regulation is needed to rein in the risk-taking that caused the near-meltdown of the financial system in 2008.

The crux of the argument had been whether the so-called Volcker rule, which limits how much federally insured banks can risk in trading for their own accounts, had gone too far.

Indeed, Dimon acknowledged that the trading losses might lead to more calls for stronger banking regulations.

"It's very unfortunate, plays right into all the hands of a bunch of pundits out there, but that's life and I'll have to deal with that," he said.

Critics of Wall Street lost no time in calling for regulators to proceed with cracking down on big banks such as JPMorgan, which began the year with \$863 billion in federally insured domestic deposits.

"The enormous loss JPMorgan announced is just the latest evidence that what banks call 'hedges' are often risky bets that so-called 'too big to fail' banks have no business making," U.S. Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) said in a statement.

This "is a stark reminder of the need for regulators to establish tough, effective standards to protect taxpayers from having to cover such high-risk bets," he said.

Bank lobbyists had argued that the biggest U.S. banks need more flexibility if they are to compete against global financial giants. But the latest debacle provided new fodder for critics.

At a minimum, JPMorgan's admission shows that large and unforeseen losses can erupt at any time despite the banks' efforts to limit risk-taking.

"It demonstrates that even at an institution like JPMorgan, which has done a remarkable job at staying out of trouble compared to other banks, a bolt out of the blue can come at any time," said Anthony Sabino, a law professor at St. John's University in New York.

The problems at JPMorgan stem from the trading of synthetic credit products, which are derivatives whose values are tied to a portfolio of underlying bonds. The bank lost money when it was trying to unwind these exotic instruments, which were originally intended to hedge JPMorgan's credit exposure.

Dimon said that the investments' extreme volatility could continue to roil JPMorgan for months to come.

The CEO said he hopes to have the situation under control by the end of the year.

He previously had dismissed reports of an out-of-control trader in London as "a tempest in a teapot," Bush said. "How do you go so fast from a tempest in a teapot to a \$2-billion loss and maybe more?"

"There's something here we're not being told," Bush said.

She recalled a series of debacles in the 1990s involving rogue traders such as Nick Leeson, who hid losses that eventually totaled \$1.3 billion, wiping out the reserves and capital at England's august Barings Bank.

Credit Agricole securities analyst Mike Mayo asked if the failure of Dimon's main risk-avoidance unit might foreshadow similar problems at other banks.

Dimon demurred on speaking for the industry.

"Just because we're stupid doesn't mean anyone else was," he said.

20120510-28 23:58 SteveG Quote: Equal Rights



Maybe this picture explains why Sen. Lugar lost?

<http://bustedcoverage.com/tag/drunk-indy-500-infield/>

Beer Hose-Down (by Jay Koot, May 27, 2011)



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #137 — MAY 14, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Where Lies the Truth?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 14, 2012)

Here's an interesting piece that totally contradicts the article from *The Washington Post* we re-printed this past Friday (FoM Newsletter #136), which attacked a teenage Romney for forcibly cutting a gay fellow schoolboy's offensively long and piercingly blond hair. It sure would be interesting to get to the bottom of this. One hopes the liberal media are above the deceptions of the Right...but that can't always be the case, and, in this case, we shall surely see.

If the Obama campaign (and *The Washington Post*???) really have it together, this was just their little, weak teaser piece. Next, in Breitbart-style, they will roll-out some hellacious prep-school story that not only reinforces the impression that this dude is an out-of-touch, rich, bully elitist, but also an incredible—let us say—cad, that the American people will decide in droves that Mittens can never be allowed any nearer to the Presidency.

Yet...where lies the truth?

Well...I can tell you one thing. This story contains at least one paragraph that we already know is a pack of lies (thanks to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #130, May 3, 2012):

In 1996, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a Bain Capital partner was kidnapped. [My emphasis. —SteveB] When Mitt Romney learned of this, he *shut down the entire multi-million dollar firm* and flew the *entire staff* to New York, so they could help look for the girl. Romney hired private detectives, set up a toll-free tip line, coordinated with the NYPD, papered the streets with fliers, contacted every Bain customer in the city, and personally hit the bricks with the Bain crew to join the search. **They found her, just in the nick of time – she was dying from an overdose of drugs in a New Jersey basement.** She was only rescued because someone saw news coverage of Romney's search efforts.

The part in bold type is complete and utter fabrication—blatant lies almost two weeks old. Catch up, old codger, John Hayward!

You see, the Right keeps telling themselves the same old, tired lies, long after everyone else has acknowledged the truth. But separating truth from fiction about the rest of story will, apparently, take a bit more time.

"The Washington Post's Romney Hit Piece Comes Apart" by John Hayward, *Human Events*

May 11, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51441>)

(An astonishing journalistic train wreck.)

The Washington Post was already skating on thin ice with its fantastically convenient hit piece on Mitt Romney, published in perfect synchronization with President Obama's embrace of gay marriage. Designed to paint Romney as a mean-spirited homophobic bully during his prep school days – which, let us remember, occurred over seventeen thousand days ago – the ridiculously bloated and overly-dramatic 5000-word *Post* "expose" related the story of how Romney allegedly led a gang of high-school hooligans and forcibly cut the hair of a "presumably gay" fellow student named John Lauber.

The piece does a great deal of mind-reading to insinuate homophobia, and in an amazing set of concluding paragraphs, heavily implies that Romney essentially *murdered* this poor kid with his scissors – it just took his body four decades to collapse around his broken spirit. John Lauber died of liver cancer in 2004, an even the *Post* dramatically contrasts with Romney accepting the Distinguished Alumni award from the Cranbrook prep school, concluding with a melancholy salute to Lauber's hair, which he never stopped bleaching blond.

The *Post* based this hit on testimony from five men who "mostly lean Democratic," including one who was a volunteer for the 2008 Obama campaign. No one else seems able [to] remember the incident taking place.

Including, as it turns out, both a friend of Romney's that the *Post* **openly and fraudulently asserted** had "long been bothered" by the haircut hazing... and the "victim's" *own family*.

Romney friend Stu White dropped the first bombshell on the *Washington Post's* phony story, telling ABC News "he was not present for the prank, in which Romney is said to have forcefully cut a student's long hair, and was not aware of it until this year when he was contacted by the *Washington Post*." The assertion that he was "long bothered" by Romney's alleged display of full-contact barbering was entirely false, and there is no way to claim it was not a *deliberately false* impression inserted into the *Post* story, since they knew perfectly well that they are the ones who told White about it, just a few weeks ago.

Much worse for the *Post* was a statement released by John Lauber's sister Betsy, which reads, in full:

The family of John Lauber is releasing a statement saying the portrayal of John is factually incorrect and we are aggrieved that he would be used to further a political agenda. There will be no more comments from the family.

Wow. Just... wow. The *Post* apparently didn't bother clearing their smear job with the victim's family, even though they interviewed both Christine and Betsy Lauber for the piece. They thought they were contributing to a respectful tribute, not an ugly partisan hit.

Christine Lauber told ABC News that her brother never mentioned the allegedly life-destroying traumatic incident related by the *Washington Post*, and "probably wouldn't have said anything" even if something like it did happen, because he presumably was not the fragile character he has been portrayed as. Furthermore, she tearfully insisted that "if he were still alive today, he would be furious" over the *Post* story.

But wait! This gets worse. Someone at the *Post* apparently panicked after Stu White spilled the beans to ABC News, because they committed one of the greatest sins in journalism: they quietly edited the Romney hit piece without publishing a retraction, as Breitbart.com requested in writing. The false statement about Stu White has been changed to read as follows:

"I always enjoyed his pranks," said Stu White, a popular friend of Romney's who went on to a career as a public school teacher and said he has been "disturbed" by the Lauber incident **since hearing about it several weeks ago, before being contacted by *The Washington Post***. "But I was not the brunt of any of his pranks."

This was a colossally stupid move on the *Post's* part. How often do people have to be reminded that the Internet never forgets? That caches and screen grabs of dishonestly edited material rest comfortably in the hands of media watchdogs?

ABC mentions that some other, as yet nameless, classmates of Romney are eager to dish dirt on his teenage misbehavior, although no one seems ready to corroborate the Lauber hair hazing incident. That effort will misfire *badly*, and solidify support for Romney from a public sick unto death of attempts to distract from Barack Obama's record in office.

They're almost equally sick of journalistic double standards. They've been hearing for years that even the most reasonable inquiry into Obama's shadowy past – even simple requests for ordinary documentation – are completely out of bounds, and can only be motivated by racial animosity. But now they're supposed to sit still while a bunch of 60-year-olds are trotted out to reminisce about what a handful Mitt Romney was, during his school days in 1965? All because Obama hatchet man David Axelrod needs to spin a campaign narrative that plugs into the "gay marriage" and "bullying" crusade?

At this point, the most interesting "journalism" remaining to be done on the Teen Mitt haircut incident is determining whether Axelrod was directly involved in crafting the *Post* story. Does anyone want to leak some internal emails so we can get the ball rolling, and find out if there were direct, documentable ties to the Obama campaign? Or did the *Post* cook this up on their own, taking the initiative to offer journalistic support after being told the Obama gay marriage flip-flop was coming, with one eye fixed nervously on the President's cratering poll numbers? This is already the most spectacular case of journalistic malpractice since George Zimmerman became the world's pre-eminent "white Hispanic." Let's take this baby into the stratosphere and leave some chemtrails!

It's really interesting the way the *Washington Post* chose to end their article, by noting that Romney received an alumni award just a year after John Lauber's untimely death. You know what happened a year *before* Lauber lost his battle against liver cancer? A boat carrying a family of four, two friends, and the family's dog sprang a leak on Lake Winnepesaukee, dumping them into the dark waters of early evening, and leaving them to howl in terror as other boats zipped around them. Mitt Romney and two of his sons happened to be vacationing in the area. They jumped onto jet skis and raced to the rescue. Governor Romney was pulled off his jet ski at one point. They even saved the dog, a Scottish terrier.

A couple of years before that, Romney performed a similar rescue for a group of kayakers who were shoved onto hard rocks by fierce winds.

In 1996, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a Bain Capital partner was kidnapped. [My emphasis. — SteveB] When Mitt Romney learned of this, he *shut down the entire multi-million dollar firm* and flew the *entire staff* to New York, so they could help look for the girl. Romney hired private detectives, set up a toll-free tip line, coordinated with the NYPD, papered the streets with fliers, contacted every Bain customer in the city, and personally hit the bricks with the Bain crew to join the search. They found her, just in the nick of time – she was dying from an overdose of drugs in a New Jersey basement. She was only rescued because someone saw news coverage of Romney's search efforts.

[We know, now, these are lies, uncorrected here. —SteveB]

Thirty years earlier, Mitt Romney was a high school student who may, or may not, have been slightly more of a jerk than the average teenage boy. How's that for an "evolution?" Why on Earth would any reasonable person think his high school misadventures tell us more about his character than his deeds later in life?

Update: After enduring a day of pounding for their stealth edit, the *Post* added this editor's note to the bottom of the Romney piece: "An earlier version of this story reported that White 'has long been bothered' by the Lauber incident. White later clarified in a subsequent interview that he has been disturbed by the incident since he learned of it several weeks ago from a former classmate, before being contacted by *The Washington Post*."

Horsefeathers. White didn't "clarify" anything in a "subsequent interview." The *Post* author invented that false assertion out of thin air.

[20120511-01](#) 10:10 Art

Re: "Mitt Romney's Prep School Classmates Recall Pranks..." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #136)

I think what someone did 50 years ago does not necessarily reflect on what he/she may have become today. What does bother me is Romney's response that he doesn't remember the incident. Think back on your own HS days, you would have remembered something like that.

Can this man be trusted?

[20120511-02](#)

13:19 SteveG

Fw: One.org Action: Send a Message to the G8

from One.org:

The eight most powerful leaders in the world are meeting for their yearly fireside retreat, the G8 Summit, at Camp David next week...and we need to work harder than ever to get them to hear us.

So we're taking our message to the street...literally.

We worked with some friends to create the 'Street Tweeter' - a tweet-fed robot that will take your message to the streets in the run-up to the G8 so our leaders can't ignore us. But we need your help to make it work.

Here's what to do:

1. Write a 40-character message (including spaces) in your own words to inspire and encourage G8 leaders to act now to break the cycle of hunger and poverty.
2. Tweet your message to @ONESTreetTweet (not on Twitter? You can submit your message in the form on this blog post here).
3. Please do it now!!
4. If your message gets printed then we'll snap a photo of it and tweet it back to you.

So get creative! Make your 40-character message personal, inspiring, attention-grabbing – whatever you want to say to the G8. I can't wait to see what you come up with.

<https://twitter.com/#!/onestreettweet>

Thanks for all you do, Malaka Gharib New Media Coordinator, ONE.org

P.S. Want to know more about how the Street Tweeter works? Check out the ONE Blog for more details right here:

<http://act.one.org/go/508?akid=3088.5789054.zVrIR&t=5>

[20120511-03](#)

16:40 SteveB

"What the China Crisis (& His Gay Crisis) Revealed About Mitt"

"What the China Crisis (and His Gay Crisis) Revealed About Mitt" by Joe Conason, NationofChange

May 11, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/what-china-crisis-and-his-gay-crisis-revealed-about-mitt-1336744930>)

Just as aspiring judges ought to possess the quality known as "judicial temperament," a would-be president should have certain obvious attributes of mind and character. Two incidents tested Mitt Romney this week — and both times, his ambition overwhelmed his judgment.

On Thursday morning, as Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton conducted tense negotiations with the Chinese government over the fate of Chen Guangcheng, the blind dissident who had sought refuge in the U.S. embassy in Beijing, Romney seized on rumors of American capitulation to launch a political salvo: "If these reports are true, this is a dark day for freedom and it's a day of shame for the Obama administration," he said at a rally in Virginia. "We are a place of freedom here and around the world, and we should stand up and defend freedom wherever it is under attack."

Clearly, Romney had no knowledge or experience with which to judge the situation unfolding in Beijing, which concluded much differently than his harsh remarks suggested. In fact, both the Chinese and the Americans were seeking a face-saving solution that was achieved when New York University (whose president John Sexton happens to be a close friend of Secretary Clinton and is well-connected in Beijing, as well) offered a fellowship to Chen, which the government had agreed he could accept.

The result, of course, was that Romney looked either "foolish" or "very foolish," depending on whether the assessment came from Weekly Standard editor Bill Kristol or from Abby Huntsman Livingston, the daughter of former Republican presidential candidate Jon Huntsman, who lived in the Beijing embassy when her father served as U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic.

But Romney's error was worse than a misguided political tactic. It showed a woeful ignorance of diplomacy and a callow opportunism that don't befit the next occupant of the Oval Office. To endanger Chen's safety and the prestige of the United States in those difficult hours was an act of weak character as well as stupidity.

Earlier in the week, Romney revealed another potential weakness when he let religious right activists bully his campaign over its hiring of an openly gay foreign policy staffer, Richard Grenell. After the campaign froze him out of press briefings to quell the controversy, Grenell finally quit on Tuesday, with no effort by the presumptive nominee to persuade him to stay. If Grenell was qualified to hold the sensitive post of foreign policy spokesman, why did Romney cave instantly to demands from radio hosts and other ignorant bigots to let him go?

For many years, various ethnic, sexual and religious prejudices hobbled American intelligence and diplomacy — a national flaw for which the United States paid dearly over and over again in bad policy based on inadequate information.

Meanwhile, his longtime critics on the far right are laughing at Romney. Bryan Fischer, right-wing extremist and leader of the American Family Association, openly gloated: "Let me ask you this question, people have raised this question," he said Friday on his radio show. "If Mitt Romney can be pushed around, intimidated, coerced, co-opted by a conservative radio talk show host in Middle America, then how is he going to stand up to the Chinese? How is he going to stand up to Putin? How is he going to stand up to North Korea if he can be pushed around by a yokel like me?"

Those are indeed the questions that linger after Romney's performance this week.

20120511-04	17:05 SteveG	Fw: Dennis Kucinich: The Power of Now
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from Dennis Kucinich:

I want to share with you this Commencement speech I gave this week to 5000 attendees from over 100 countries at American University in Dubai (AUD). Previous AUD Commencement speakers include President Clinton and Secretaries of State Powell, Albright and Baker. In the speech I strive to inspire the graduates to embrace the power of NOW and to move forward to build communities of peace -- as we all must endeavor to do.

Thank you. Dennis

Dennis J. Kucinich, United States Representative to Congress

Commencement Speech, American University in Dubai
Wednesday, May 9, 2012, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

His Highness, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum; Members of the Royal Families of the United Arab Emirates; Dr. Lance de Masi, President of American University in Dubai, Mr. Elias Bou Saab, Executive Vice President, Members of the Board, Members of the Faculty of American University of Dubai, Esteemed Officials, Parents and Sponsors, Students, Alumni and Friends and especially you, our dear Honored Graduates:

Thank you for the great honor of addressing this esteemed gathering upon an occasion of singular importance in the lives of each and every one of you. This day announces you are prepared. The journey which brought you here has conferred upon you a commencement to the future of your dreams.

For when you ascend this stage you are confidently passing through a portal in the time and space of your life, presenting yourself to the world as a person of accomplishment, as an individual prepared to tap the transformative power of this moment which brings to bear every talent and ability you have developed, pouring it into the moment when you present yourself at the door of opportunity, the moment which is called NOW. The NOW which contemplates that the past, the present, and the future exist simultaneously, the power of NOW as it connects with eternity, your timeless self which finds its power in expression of self recreation, self actualization. "Come my friends," wrote the poet Tennyson, " 'tis not too later to seek a newer world."

Behold the new world being born in the moment. The NOW which comes again and again and again in each and every day forward as you watch for it, recognize it, be mindful of the possibility it presents, be grateful for its immanent unfolding potential. The NOW which bids you to think, to speak, to act, to challenge, to create, to change. The NOW which declares that years of preparation have come to meet the seedling of a single moment. The NOW which whispers: "Do not spill a single seed." The NOW which makes joyous the challenge of venturing forth in faith. The NOW which bids you, "Come, you are ready!" And reminds you there is no time to waste. The NOW which unveils your deepest potential when you summon the courage to knock upon an unfamiliar door. The NOW which has been secretly awaiting your arrival.

"What you seek, is seeking you," wrote the poet Rumi. The NOW which waits for you to embrace its endless possibilities, its extraordinary beauty of presence. Yours, the restless quest of the human soul for true purpose, for a place in the world, for life, for love, for a spiritual home all awaits your attention, your touch, your gaze. Your place in the scheme of things is unfolding and even resistance can be your friend as you align with the time signature with which the hand of destiny inscribes your name. Be relentless in pursuit of excellence. Though your reach exceeds your grasp every moment, "What's a heaven for?" asked the poet Browning.

What do I know? From my earliest, I heard my life's drummer banging out a rapid tempo, a quick march to college, to work, to public life, all at the same time, twenty years old working two jobs, going to school, running for city council. When I put my ear to the ground I could hear the heart of the world beating and I rushed excitedly to embrace it fully, no apprenticeships, only the experience of trying and failing, trying and succeeding, climbing the mountains outside or the mountains within, looking up, walking up, running up one path, then another, then still another, sometimes pausing as the crowd passed me by. Then, a new moment, sensing a new possibility, stepping out into the crowd, coursing with it, stepping briskly to meet it, to embark upon a new destination, a new life, the unfolding of each and every day: I chose a career in public service while I was still in college in Cleveland, Ohio, and was elected America's youngest Mayor at age 31.

I ran for Congress five times in a period of twenty-five years before I was elected. I know what it is to try and to fail. Do not fear failure. Let failure be your friend. It prepares you for what you desire to achieve and you arrive at your new destination with growing beauty and wisdom, thanking your friend for the visit.

My dear graduates, the world needs you. I know how important you are. The raw, kinetic, intellectual and spiritual power here from one hundred countries can save our planet from destruction.

We are constantly being told that there is nothing we can do about war, nothing we can do about global climate change, nothing we can do about poverty. Those who accept the self-fulfilling prophecies of doom may have a

stake in the status quo or, fearing a new order, delay change. Life, however, is not inert. The human heart is not inert. Its rhythms excite to the call of the future. The soul is not inert. Its eyes see the future.

George Bernard Shaw wrote in *Back to Methuselah* "You see things and say 'Why'? I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'" He spoke to the capacity of vision, of possibility thinking, of the certainty that life is a profoundly creative experience, an expression of the workings of the mind, the heart and the soul -- the nonphysical, spiritual world which sanctifies the physical world. Ideas come through our senses, bathing in a world of dreams, imagination, the magical, mysterious province of poets and prophets, inventors and painters, the realm of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* where man receives from the divine the spark of life.

A photograph by the Hubble Telescope has captured a picture of the Eagle Nebula: "Pillars of Creation," that place in deep space where stars are born. Quantum physicists have identified gluon particles which exist in interstitial space, the space between the spaces, the unseen element of our physical universe which holds together the world with the primal energy of the Big Bang.

We travel back and forth upon the bridge between spirit and matter, at large in a physical universe, we breathe in the eternal spiritual sustenance. Inspired, we fling our dreams back into the physical world and create islands in the sea, buildings which reach to the heavens, new structures in society, and new ways of living. Possibility thinking is a science grounded in old truths. It is the capacity to call forth new outcomes.

Let me share with you a few examples from my own experience. Again and again in my public career I have confronted circumstances where I was told there was nothing I could do about a given condition: a city electric system sold to a giant private utility under indecent conditions. "Nothing you can do," said my top advisors. I saw something else, organized a civic movement and a three year struggle resulted in regaining for the people of my community a light system which recently observed its 100th anniversary. Two hospitals were to be closed. "Forget it," I was told. There is nothing you can do. I saw another possibility. Creative legal action ensued, the community rallied, hospitals were saved one still stands. A steel mill which provided thousands of jobs was about to be closed. Again I was told, "there is nothing you can do." Long story short, we organized the community, intervened in court, stopped the shutdown of the mill long enough for a buyer to emerge and that mill today is the largest integrated steel mill in the world.

There is a practical physics to civic involvement and action. Look deeply into the appearances of things. Deeper within is another possibility. Envision it, call it forward, act upon it, drawing upon that same elemental energy which comes from where the eternal first touched us and where we touched the eternal, where stars are born.

What I have learned from experience is this -- when you see a condition you desire to see change, when you seek to make something happen and you are told it is not possible -- that may be exactly the place to put your energy, to change the outcome. When you do, people will say a miracle occurred. We live in a world where miracles are waiting to be welcomed.

This brings me to a thought I would like to share with you, my fellow citizens of the world; We have inherited a world where war is dropped on our doorstep and we are asked to adopt it as our own. We are told deadly force must be used to change people's conduct. Violence to stop the violence, war to prevent war, war to end war. When we believe war is inevitable, we come to accept the self-fulfilling prophecy of war. War happens. We wonder why.

We must call forth from this world which is so fraught with fear and foreboding that which is beautiful and glorious, a new possibility, a new thinking, a new physics, if you will, of peace. We must do it with courage. We must do it in fulfillment of salaam, the peace which comes from the unseen, the peace which comes from the heart, the peace which comes from our collective yearning, the peace which comes from an awareness that the world is one. That all people are interconnected, interdependent, one with the human family, one with the world, one with the spirit, one with the divine.

War is never inevitable. Peace is inevitable if we desire to call it forward, if we approach it as a science. I speak of peace not simply as the absence of war, but as a practice of the science of human relations, as a capacity of human evolution and human development. But if we call peace forward from the unseen we must name it, we must give it

structure, we must prepare for it a place to exist - a space to breathe, to be nurtured - to flower, so that it can be appreciated as an expression of that divine spark of creation.

In writing of the unfolding potential of nature, the poet Lowell celebrated the month of June: "Every clod, [or piece of earth], feels a stir of might, an instinct within it that reaches and towers, and groping blindly above it for light, climbs to a soul in grass and flowers." His poem was about the search for the Holy Grail, a sacred vessel said to contain drops of the blood of Christ. Peace is a Holy Grail and the quest for peace is empowered by thoughts of peace, words of peace and actions for peace and attainment of peace. It is a temporal question. It is also a spiritual journey: "Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light, guideth them to a path that is straight." -- Qur'an 5:16

Think of the possibilities if we could create within every nation a place where the best minds and hearts are brought together within the context of a cabinet level position or ministry wherein resides the power to develop social structures for peace and strategies to avert conflict between groups and between states.

Such a proposal exists; I brought it to the United States Congress two months before 9/11. In its simplest expression, it seeks to develop an organized approach to make the daily work of our nation engage our top social and economic scientists to deal with the root causes of domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, gang violence, gun violence, violence against gays, and racial violence. It would develop skills for non-violent conflict resolution on a domestic level, as well as internationally, where such a ministry would be prepared to assist to ameliorate the causes of violence inherent in poverty, lack of access to food, water, shelter and the instability caused by environmental disasters.

As violence is learned, so is peace. Education has a powerful social purpose. A ministry of peace would create the resources for peace education within every culture and within each government to construct a world where we learn to settle differences by tapping the spiritual principles of salaam, shalom, of peace. We are then within reach of creating cultures of vision, cultures of creativity, cultures of unlimited wealth and cultures of sustainability.

I have been in Congress for 16 years and involved in government for the better part of 45 years. I am told, "Dennis, such an idea is so impractical." After all, my nation spends more money for weapons and war than all the other nations of the world put together. We spend so much time, so many resources human and financial preparing for war. Why not begin to spend time and resources preparing for peace?

Will this vision be realized for creating new structures for peace? I was reading a speech given in Dubai in 2007 by His Highness, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, observing the challenges facing his new organization, the Foundation His Highness created. He quoted a friend: "... in this Foundation you are like one ploughing the sea. The challenge is huge; the gap of knowledge in most of the Arab and Islamic countries is bottomless. There is a lot of talk about building communities of knowledge, but little action. The pit is too wide to be seamed, so why should you weary yourself over this matter?"

At a time when the technology of destruction and the capacity of human destructiveness is so great, this is exactly the time to create a common global effort to build communities of peace, to provide structures in every country to help peace issue forth and flourish. I, too, believe that if we will make of human development a new art, we will set our eyes to the distant horizon and plough the seas with wondrous effect. We can then lift up our eyes to the heavens and, with our imagination, with joyous abandon, plough the stars, and a thundering universe will burst forth with new possibilities and we will make heaven on earth. "Come my friends, 'tis not too late to seek a newer world."

20120513-02	11:04 SteveB	Re: Dennis Kucinich: The Power of Now (reply to SteveG, above)
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Definitely a cool guy. Thanks, SteveG.

And as Ram Dass once said, "Be here now."

20120511-05 20:39 SteveG Speculation vs. Reality

Speculation:

- JP Morgan Chase
- Chesapeake Energy
- BP
- Exxon
- News broadcast
 - Why do you think they did that?
 - What do you think will happen?

Is our whole world based on speculation or is something based on reality?

20120512-01 08:09 Pam Re: Speculation vs. Reality (reply to SteveG, above)

I read somewhere that we have moved from a production economy to a financial economy, which is pretty obvious when you think about it. "Financial instruments" are real in the sense that corporations are people. We are living in La-La Land.

20120512-02 09:24 Art "GOP Elephant in the Room: Themselves"

When someone from American Enterprise Institute says this, might pay to read.

"GOP Elephant in the Room: Themselves" by Ezra Klein, *The Washington Post*

May 11, 2012,

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/2012/05/11/gIQAZEo7IU_story.html?tid=pm_business_pop)

(Republicans have taken a more polarizing political turn than Democrats in recent years.)

"We have been studying Washington politics and Congress for more than 40 years, and never have we seen them this dysfunctional," wrote Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein in *The Washington Post*. "In our past writings, we have criticized both parties when we believed it was warranted. Today, however, we have no choice but to acknowledge that the core of the problem lies with the Republican Party."

In Washington, "Mann and Ornstein" are a brand. Mann works at the centrist Brookings Institution, Ornstein at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. Over their four-decade partnership, they have established themselves as the two most respected, committed scholars — and defenders — of the U.S. Congress. They never tire of pointing out that the way the Founders designed the federal government, Congress came first, and it was intended to have an "institutional identity," not a partisan identity. It's that institutional identity, they now say, that is under threat, and more from one party than the other.

Their *cri de coeur* hit a nerve. The column, published two weeks ago, was recommended more than 241,000 times on Facebook. It generated more than 5,000 comments. It was tweeted more than 3,000 times. It made many Republicans very, very angry. But if you want to see why Mann and Ornstein wrote it, look no further than Senator Richard Lugar's concession statement Tuesday night, which showed, in its wan effort to make the two parties sound equivalently extreme, just how much further the Republican Party has gone, and how right Mann and Ornstein were.

Here's Lugar, after losing to Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock in the Republican primary:

I don't remember a time when so many topics have become politically unmentionable in one party or the other. Republicans cannot admit to any nuance in policy on climate change. Republican members are now expected to take pledges against any tax increases. For two consecutive presidential nomination cycles, GOP candidates competed with one another to express the most strident anti-immigration view, even at the risk of alienating a huge voting bloc. Similarly, most Democrats are constrained when talking about such issues as entitlement cuts, tort reform and trade agreements.

First, note the policies he highlighted on both sides: Republicans have radicalized on climate, tax and immigration — by any measure, three of the most significant policy problems the country faces. Meanwhile, "most" Democrats are constrained when talking about entitlement programs, tort reform and trade agreements.

"Entitlement programs" — fine, that's a big one. But tort reform and trade agreements? It's like saying Republicans ignore the elephant in the room while Democrats have trouble talking about the guinea pig.

It's not even true. You'll notice that Lugar was careful in his phrasing. Republicans "cannot admit to any nuance" on climate change, they are "expected to take pledges" forswearing any tax increases, and they "competed with one another to express the most strident anti-immigration view." Meanwhile, "most Democrats are constrained when talking about such issues as entitlement cuts, tort reform and trade agreements."

"Cannot admit" is not the same as "constrained from talking." It's not even close, actually. Lugar, a senator known for his deliberate demeanor, clearly chose his words with care. Democrats might be "constrained" when talking about these issues, but they do it. Obama, for instance, has signed free-trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea. He told CBS's "60 Minutes," "I don't believe malpractice reform is a silver bullet, but I've talked to enough doctors to know that defensive medicine may be contributing to unnecessary costs," and he said in his 2011 State of the Union address that he'd be open to "medical malpractice reform to rein in frivolous lawsuits."

As for entitlements, Democrats cut \$500 billion from Medicare in the Affordable Care Act and created an appointed board designed to make far-reaching, cost-saving reforms to Medicare on an accelerated schedule. You may or may not like those changes, but they're definitely "entitlement cuts" to Medicare, as Republicans, who successfully campaigned against them in 2010, know full well.

In his August 2011 negotiations with Speaker John Boehner, Obama broached raising the eligibility age for Medicare and slowing the growth in Social Security benefits by "chaining" the program to the consumer price index. At the end, those negotiations fell apart not because Obama couldn't persuade Democrats to sign onto entitlement changes, but because Boehner couldn't persuade Republicans to sign onto tax increases. More recently, Senator Kent Conrad, who is chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, proposed the Simpson-Bowles deficit-reduction plan as the Democrats' long-term budget proposal, with the support of his party's Senate leadership.

Then, of course, there's the simple fact that Lugar was in a position even to write this concession speech. Over the past three years, there's been a systematic effort uniting crucial parts of the conservative infrastructure to cull the Republican Party of legislators who are willing to compromise with Democrats.

Groups such as Americans for Prosperity and the Club for Growth. They targeted Mike Castle in Delaware, Bob Bennett in Utah, Arlen Specter in Pennsylvania, Lisa Murkowski in Alaska, Olympia Snowe in Maine, Orrin Hatch in Utah and, of course, Lugar.

This has exerted a polarizing force on the Republican Party that simply doesn't exist in today's Democratic Party. Indeed, Senate Democrats chose to permit Joe Lieberman, who went much further than any of these Republicans in undercutting his party — even endorsing the Republican presidential nominee, John McCain, in 2008 — to keep all of his committee assignments. The move angered liberal activists who had organized a primary challenge to Lieberman in 2006. But just as primary campaigns from the right have shown Republican moderates that they must hew closer to the party line, the Democratic leadership's embrace of Lieberman proved to Democratic moderates that the party would permit dissension.

The political scientists Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal provide some independent empirical confirmation of the two parties' "asymmetric polarization." They've developed a system for tracking congressional polarization all the

way back to the first congresses. Their research shows that the “median Republican and Democrat has moved toward their respective ideological poles in the contemporary period, but this effect is considerably larger in the House than the Senate and for Republicans more than Democrats.”

They’ve also found that since 2006, Democratic primaries where the incumbent lost and the challenger took office were as likely to end with a more moderate legislator holding the seat as with a more liberal one. In Republican primaries, 75 percent of the successful challengers were more conservative — and that’s without considering instances, such as Specter’s campaign in Pennsylvania, where a more conservative challenger drove an incumbent out of the race or into the other party.

Whether the Republican Party is “the problem” is a subjective judgment. Perhaps you loathe taxes and, in the face of all available evidence, consider global warming a hoax. In that case, the Republican Party is doing exactly what it should be doing. But there is simply no denying that the Republican Party has gone much further right than the Democratic Party has gone left, and that, from policy pledges to primary challenges, it has done much more to discourage its members from compromising than the Democratic Party has. So if you think polarization is the main problem in Washington today, then Mann and Ornstein are right: Your beef is largely with the Republicans.

20120512-03 09:48 Art *The End of the Dream*

Back in the BC era (before computers) when I was reading a lot I used to focus on an author I kind of liked and read all his/her books I could find. For a while I got hooked on a kind of quirky SF sort of writer, Philip Wylie. He wrote a lot of disaster type books and his last was *The End of The Dream* I think he passed away before it was published. It took place in a not to distant future when humans had pretty much destroyed the planet by pollution. The theme of the story was a writer documenting what had happened by finding odd extracts from old newspapers that indicated what was happening but, each by themselves, didn't paint a complete picture. I remember the one about the pig in Iowa who had been fed on discarded TV dinners blowing up because of gas accumulation, when someone threw a lit cigar next to the pig at the State Fair. There are many more but you get the idea.

What set this off was a TV news article about collapsing honey bee populations. It has been going on for some time and, if it continues, will have very serious affects on agriculture production in this country. Researchers at Purdue University think they have identified the culprit, a coating used to protect seeds prior to planting, but of course the producer, Bayer in this case, denies any connection.

At any rate the book is an interesting read and may well portray the future.

20120512-04 10:07 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell Obama: Stop the Fricking Fracking!

from CREDO Action:

Across the country, the risky method of gas drilling known as "fracking" is causing polluted air, explosions, earthquakes and even flammable tap water.

But incredibly, as frackers rush to expand the practice, it remains totally unregulated by federal health and safety officials.

The Obama Administration has begun the process of passing some rules, but it's clear they are bowing to pressure from the gas industry at every turn.

Last week, the Department of Interior released a draft rule to regulate fracking on federal lands, and like a number of opportunities before it, the Obama Administration caved to the gas industry to allowing major loopholes that fail to protect us from the dangers of fracking.¹ The agency is now accepting comments on the rule, and we need to urge them to protect public land, water and health — not the gas industry.

Tell the Obama Administration: Stop caving to the gas industry! Pass strong rules to protect federal lands from fracking.

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/interior_fracking/

You know that when American Petroleum Industry president Jack Gerard is crowing about how closely the administration is listening to the natural gas industry, and a lobbyist from the American Chemistry Council says "It took a while for the administration to realize the role it could play...What we've seen is an evolution in thinking," we are in trouble.²

But after months of pressure from industry³ the latest Interior rule represents another in a string of recent concessions by the Obama Administration, including weakening a draft rule to reduce air pollution from fracking, refusing to take action to ban diesel fuel from fracking fluid, and even downplaying EPA studies which found water contamination from fracking in Pennsylvania and Wyoming.

Fracking, involves pumping millions of gallons of water and a largely secret mix of toxic chemicals, deep underground at high pressure, to literally fracture the rock and release trapped pockets of natural gas.

One fifth of all fracking happens on federal lands, so the Interior Department rule could be an opportunity for the administration to fill the void for strong national standards to at least force companies to disclose the toxic chemicals they are pumping through our groundwater, and set strong standards for safe disposal of the fracking fluid.

But the rule fails to do even that — and we need to urge the Department of Interior to substantially strengthen it.

Tell the Obama Administration: Stop caving to the gas in industry! Pass strong rules to protect federal lands from fracking.

Rather than set strong standards for chemical disclosure and water treatment, the new rule opens up key loopholes on both.⁴

This allows gas drillers to keep secret until after they drill the toxic mix of chemicals in their fracking fluid — making it far easier for them to avoid accountability in cases of water contamination.

Additionally, the rule continues to allow dangerous open evaporation pits drillers use to dispose of the huge volumes of toxic fracking wastewater that is recovered after fracking. The open chemical mixture goes airborne, unleashing toxic air pollution in the surrounding area. These pits can also leak this toxic fluid into land and water, and pose a major spill risk from floods or storms.

As the gas industry rapidly scrambles to expand fracking all over the country, it isn't waiting for states or the federal government to adequately fill the regulatory void that was created when Dick Cheney exempted fracking from federal regulation in his 2005 energy bill.

It is clear that the Obama Administration has been hearing from the gas industry. Now they need to hear from us too — there is no time to waste to pass strong rules to protect us from the substantial dangers posed by natural gas fracking.

Thank you for defending our water from fracking.

Elijah Zarlin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

¹"Interior Department Releases Proposed Rules for Fracking on Public Lands," Earthworks, May 7, 2012 (<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6883886&id=39994-3891339-Otqgj7x&t=10>).

²"Obama Warms to Energy Industry by Supporting Natural Gas," Bloomberg, May 9, 2012 (<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6886910&id=39994-3891339-Otqgj7x&t=11>).

³"Gas industry presses White House on 'fracking' rules," The Hill, April 9, 2012 (<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/220581-gas-industry-takes-fracking-rule-concerns-to-white-house->).

⁴"Obama Administration Caves To Oil And Gas Industry On Controversial Fracking Rules," Republic Report, May 3, 2012 (<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6883887&id=39994-3891339-Otqgj7x&t=12>).

20120512-05 10:08 SteveG "Pilots Aren't Guinea Pigs: Ground the F-22..."

"Pilots Aren't Guinea Pigs: Ground the F-22 Until Dangerous Oxygen Problem Resolved" by Dana Liebelson, POGO

May 9, 2012, (<http://pogoblog.typepad.com/pogo/2012/05/pilots-arent-guinea-pigs-ground-the-f-22-until-dangerous-oxygen-problem-resolved.html>)



Two elite pilots that came forward to CBS's "60 Minutes" saying that they refuse to fly the F-22 Raptor because of potentially deadly oxygen-system problems have dramatically changed their positions, according to the *Daily Press's* HRMilitary.com. The pilots are claiming, through their attorney, that they are now willing to fly the aircraft because the Air Force recently removed a charcoal filter which may have been causing the health issues.

If you think this sounds fishy, you're not the only one. There have been multiple reports that the Air Force appears to be attempting to intimidate the pilots who spoke out. The about-face shouldn't quell growing evidence that an unknown problem or problems is making the F-22 too unsafe for pilots to fly. According to *Air Force Times*, the problems are even affecting maintainers who work on the plane.

The pilots, who despite the health allegations have consistently praised the F-22, should not be blamed for possibly fearing for their livelihoods and changing their public opinions. However, after multiple groundings, validated reports of pilot health and safety problems, a fatal crash due to a malfunction, and now these new reports—it's time to say enough is enough. The F-22, which has yet to be used in a combat zone—like Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya—should be grounded until we know exactly what's causing the dangerous health and safety problems.

"This is a classic case of the Air Force putting hardware before people, and generals sacrificing pilots in order to avoid embarrassment" Pierre Sprey, who co-designed the F-16 and the A-10 jets, told POGO.

Lawmakers should ensure that the pilots who came forward are fully protected from reprisal now, as Congressman Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) has already done, to his great credit. They also owe these and other service members a much-needed upgrade of the laws that protect military whistleblowers, which lag far behind protections for civilian federal workers and many private sector employees.

As you may remember, the F-22 is the most expensive fighter jet (per unit) ever purchased by the U.S. government. Every hour an F-22 flies costs taxpayers around \$63,929 (in years it is not grounded). The whole fleet cost \$77.4 billion, or a casual \$412 million per jet (in FY 2011 dollars). POGO has outlined the F-22's cost and procurement problems for years. In 2010, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stopped procurement of the jet thanks to the gigantic cost of each F-22—a major victory for taxpayers.

The F-22 fleet was grounded twice in 2011 because of problems with the aircraft's oxygen system. The grounding was lifted, but the cause was never determined. POGO's Winslow Wheeler, Director of the Straus Military Reform Project said that "there was good reason to ground the fleet then—there's even more of a reason now."

According to Sprey, Navy Safety Center figures show that the incident rate of "hypoxia-like" symptoms has more than quadrupled since the last grounding was lifted. Hypoxia occurs when the brain can't get enough oxygen, which leads to severe disorientation. F-22 pilot Josh Wilson told "60 Minutes" that he had such severe in-flight hypoxia, doctors put him in a hyperbaric chamber upon landing.

Pilot Jeremy Gordon told the program that among F-22 pilots, there's a phenomenon called "the raptor cough"—where "the vast majority will be coughing a lot of the time." Gordon also pointed to other latent problems pilots have: like vertigo and dizziness when they go to bed. These symptoms also suggest that the problem may go beyond simple oxygen deprivation; the possibility of toxins in the air system must be considered.

According to an ABC News report, the Air Force reported that there have been at least 25 cases since 2008 of F-22 pilots experiencing various symptoms. Additionally, the deadly crash that occurred in November 2010 during a training exercise in Alaska has been attributed to a malfunction in the jet's On-Board Oxygen Generating System (OBOGS).

Still, the Air Force initially blamed the oxygen-deprived pilot for the crash, not the F-22. It has back-tracked somewhat since.

So what's depriving these pilots of oxygen? That's the problem—no one knows. Sprey hypothesizes that: "[The fact that] so many F-22 pilots have persistent coughing and vertigo means that, even though a small fraction of incidents could be due to oxygen deprivation or carbon monoxide, most of the F-22 incidents have to be due to some toxin in the F-22 breathing air supply that has persistent after effects and that is NOT present in other OBOGS, such as the F-18's air supply."

Some of these toxins could be hydraulic fluid, combustion byproducts, off-gassing glues, overheated plastics or composites—or what Sprey believes to be the most likely candidate—stealth coatings, which are "freshly reapplied on the F-22 all the time."

That's one possible explanation, but ultimately, the cause has yet to be determined.

And while the Air Force is definitely implementing safety measures and claiming that it's addressing concerns, it's doing so while keeping the pilots in the planes—and it doesn't know how or when the problem occurs or how long it's going to take to figure it out.

"I believe we are making significant progress toward an answer," said Gen. Mike Hostage, commander of Air Combat Command, in a statement. "I don't want to characterize how far or when because I don't own the progress of science."

It should be reiterated that in order to fly an F-22, pilots have to be the best of the best, with superb pilot skills, command of the highly complex flying and avionics systems, and unwavering dedication. But of those 200 top pilots certified to fly the jet, there are several beyond just Major Jeremy Gordon and Captain Josh Wilson who have silently expressed their profound concern by taking out additional life insurance for fear of the aircraft being their undoing.

The F-22 program should never have been allowed to come to this. It's time to stop holding the aircraft above its pilots—the F-22 should be grounded now and for as long as it takes to understand and fix the problem. It's non-appearance in war makes this a task we can clearly take.

20120512-06 14:35 Dennis "How the Ayn Rand-Loving Right Is Like a Bunch of Teen Boys Gone Crazy"

"How the Ayn Rand-Loving Right Is Like a Bunch of Teen Boys Gone Crazy" by Sara Robinson, AlterNet

May 11, 2012 (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155393/>)

Flowers are nice, but this Mother's Day, what I really want is for these immature boys to grow up already.

If, as George Lakoff says, we view politics through the metaphor of family, then Mother's Day is a good time to ask the question: Where's Mom in this picture? What are all those dirty socks and pizza boxes doing in the living room? (Seriously: it looks like a frat house in here.) Who's been drinking the beer I hid in the basement fridge?

And, sweet mother of God: how did we end up letting the 16-year-old boys take over the entire household?

Make no mistake: all this Ayn Rand libertarian me-first-and-the-rest-of-you-go-to-hell stuff -- the there's-no-government-like-no-government theology that's now being piously intoned as Holy Received Truth by everybody, male and female, in the GOP -- is, very precisely, the kind of politics you'd come up with if you were a 16-year-old boy trying to explain away his dependence on Mom.

Parents? I don't have any parents. I raised myself, on roots and berries and small vermin I dug up in vacant lots. That lady hanging around, feeding me and nagging me and picking up my socks and driving me to practice? She's just the nanny state. That bitch. I hate her.

Society? There's no such thing as society. There's only what I want right now, which is the ultimate good in my universe. And what I want right now is more time on the Xbox, pizza money, and the keys to the family car.

The future? If I pursue everything I want now, then the future will magically take care of its self. Dinner will appear. So will clean socks and the next-gen Xbox.

Obligations? I am God's gift to the world. I don't owe it anything. In fact: it owes me -- just for being so magnificent, cute and special. (Even my mom thinks so.)

On behalf of America's mothers, let me say: I have had enough of this. I don't care how cute they are: it's high time these so-called "libertarian" freeloaders get off the couch, stand up, and show some respect to the rest of us who've done the hard work that makes their cushy lives possible.

You know what I want for Mother's Day? I want these so-called "self-made men" to grow up and get a life.

No More "Nanny State" — Ever

Also: I'm putting them on notice: I don't ever want to hear one more word about the "nanny state." Not one. Not ever again.

First of all : It's ugly. It just reeks of that 16-year-old boy being told to clean up his mess. The big sigh. The dramatic eye-roll. The drawn-out, agonized, "yyezzzz, mommmm..." that lets you know you're about to spend the

rest of the evening in a passive-aggressive battle during which your teenager will generate enough inertia to bring the rotation of this and several neighboring galaxies to a dead stop.

The "nanny state" is making you do the dishes, and then it wants you to clean out the garage. You poor persecuted darling. Go dial 1-976-WAAAAAH.

Second of all: It's sexist as hell. Anti-feminist at its very core. It says that the concerns that we most identify with mothers -- cleaning up your crap, minding your manners, not annoying other people, taking responsibility for your actions -- are intrusive and unwarranted infringements on your essential freedom, instead of the basic adult responsibilities that are required of everybody if society is going to remain free and functional.

It says that the power and authority by which mothers -- "nannies," in this construction -- set the rules within the family is illegitimate. It belittles women who are bossy enough to insist on adult behavior from men.

It suggests that the things women are stereotypically most bossy about -- politically, this would be issues like child welfare and education (looking after your little brother), the environment (housework), and peace and social justice (playing fair and being nice) are beneath the attention and dignity of men. You can almost hear John Wayne: "Don't you worry about what your Mom says, boys. Dad's here, and he'll set her straight. (Big fat wink. Deep chuckle.) You go right on ahead with what you were doing."

(Of course, when the Duke said stuff like this, the result was usually a shrieking, hair-pulling fight with Maureen O'Hara, which always ended with her turned triumphantly over his knee. And then, after a good, sound spanking that put the little lady firmly back in her place, he'd wrestle her tiny hands away so she couldn't slap him, and kiss her until she stopped struggling. And she'd love every minute of it, because in this deranged view of gender relationships, that kind of manhandling is just what all pi*s*y women are really secretly asking for.)

It implies that Real Americans are honor-bound to resist any and all exercise of female bossiness in the sacred name of preserving their almighty "freedom."

And then, as the final insult, it identifies all government action with that exaggerated feminine weakness. Corporations: the domains of independent, active men who are busy creating a better world for themselves -- and therefore, automatically, for everybody else as well. Government: the domain of dependent, passive women who are fussing about everybody's business, insisting that they clean up their stuff, eat right, play nice, and get to bed at a decent hour.

Government, like Mom, is a real buzz-killer. And also powerless. You can safely ignore her. After all: all she can do is yell at you, ground you, and dock your allowance. And Dad (or, in the case of government, his lawyers and lobbyists) is the truly sane and powerful one around here, and can be counted on to set her straight when he gets home.

How to Tell the Men from the Boys

Conservatives completely fetishize masculinity. They idolize sports heroes, warriors and the Manly Jesus of modern evangelicalism. They eagerly seek the trappings that will buttress their sense of maleness in their own minds -- guns, big trucks, enough money and power to push other people around. The further right you go, the more exaggerated this focus on hypermasculinity becomes.

Psychiatrist Stephen Ducat explained this phenomenon at long length in his book, *The Wimp Factor*. Ducat's research shows that right-wing men are so obsessed with the external trappings of maleness precisely because they've failed to develop the inner qualities and accept the obligations that are required of actual adult men. It's all show, with nothing solid on the inside to back it up. And the more fragile their masculinity feels to them, the more exaggerated the outer display they put on is.

Given the insecurity that lies at the heart of this sad compensation, it's especially ironic that they've got the whole country buffaloed into thinking this is appropriate adult behavior. We've ended up with a culture of maleness that emphasizes the objectification and degradation of women, a lack of male accountability for anything that happens

in the culture, and a definition of masculinity that's all about empty shows of dubious might -- like peacocks preening on parade.

For the record: This is a comic-book stereotype of manhood as it's imagined by little boys. But it's not the real deal - not even close.

The essential difference that separates the men and the boys is that men understand and accept that they have an obligation to the greater good, and are willing to unflinchingly step up to that responsibility. They commit to their families. They work to improve their homes and communities, so they're safe and nurturing places for everyone to be. They take the long view as they plan for their kids' future. They look out for people around them who are weaker than they are. And they respect and cherish the co-parents of their children as their equal partners in that effort.

Adult men do not resent being asked to contribute to the collective whole. They know that their actions have consequences, and that they are responsible for the impact of those consequences on the greater good of the community.

As a veteran mom, I understand that it's totally developmentally appropriate for a teenage boy to desperately struggle to separate from his female parent as he begins to find his way toward his adult male identity. But at some point, that oppositional process is supposed to come to an end -- usually in the early- to mid-20s, with a reconciliation and renewed acceptance of Mom as a useful guide in his life. And, if he's straight, there will be a mature acceptance of his obligations to a female partner and their children as well.

A 50-year-old CEO who's still whining because Big Bad Government is asking him to clean up his sh*t, look after his little brother, and not act like a psychopath in public is flat-out suffering from arrested emotional and social development. He's not a grown man, despite his thousands of employees and millions in salary. He's still that teenager, hating on Mom because she dared to remind him that he's still deeply dependent on the resources provided by his larger family. And as a mother, I'd invite other moms to join me in calling out this immaturity for what it is, wherever we see it.

What I really want for Mother's Day is for America's Lost Boys -- the libertarian Peter Pans, the free-market feral children, the neo-liberal ramblin' men -- to stop pretending that they're something special and uniquely free because they've managed to disassociate themselves from women's care and women's concerns.

I want respect for the role mothers play -- both in our personal families, and in our national one. I want some recognition of the fact that the issues that are typically dismissed by the masculine fetishists as "women's issues" or "nanny-state meddling" are, in fact, the issues that the future of our country most depends on. And I want the common wealth and the common good -- the health and wealth of our national family -- to get the same kind of loving respect that all mothers are entitled to.

Flowers and chocolate and a nice brunch are appreciated, too. But they're a meaningless insult -- a sop to authority we don't have, and aren't seen as entitled to -- long as we let the 16-year-olds run the household the other 364 days out of the year.

20120513-01	09:19	SteveB	Fw: Mother's Day Card (for next year, now)
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from MoveOn:

Have you sent a Mother's Day card to all the moms in your life?

Our friends at MomsRising—who spend every day fighting for good stuff like paid family leave and lead-free toys—have created a fun, personalized online card you can send for free with just a few clicks.

Check it out:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275435&id=41282-20195165-rOg%3D3kx&t=1>.

And Happy Mother's Day to all the moms fighting for a better world for everyone.

Thanks for all you do.

–Elena, Tate, Victoria, Carrie, and the rest of the team

P.S. Our allies at StrongFamilies have made an amazing set of Mama's Day cards that show the full diversity of moms, kids, and families—check them out, too, and share with moms you love:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275444&id=41282-20195165-rOg%3D3kx&t=2>.

20120513-03	12:58	SteveB	"How to End This Depression"
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This is a really smart guy. Maybe we should listen? I wonder why, like Robert Reich, he's not in the Administration? President Obama sure seems to love the bankers...it's like they have him convinced that a "hands-off" attitude is best. On the other hand, what is a black President ever going to get through a Republican House?

We said before that maybe Keynes was right, after all. Krugman certainly agrees—apparently with good reason.

"How to End This Depression" by Paul Krugman, *The New York Review of Books*

May 24, 2012, (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/may/24/how-end-depression/?pagination=false>)

The depression we're in is essentially gratuitous: we don't need to be suffering so much pain and destroying so many lives. We could end it both more easily and more quickly than anyone imagines—anyone, that is, except those who have actually studied the economics of depressed economies and the historical evidence on how policies work in such economies.

The truth is that recovery would be almost ridiculously easy to achieve: all we need is to reverse the austerity policies of the past couple of years and temporarily boost spending. Never mind all the talk of how we have a long-run problem that can't have a short-run solution—this may sound sophisticated, but it isn't. With a boost in spending, we could be back to more or less full employment faster than anyone imagines.

But don't we have to worry about long-run budget deficits? Keynes wrote that "the boom, not the slump, is the time for austerity." Now, as I argue in my forthcoming book (*End This Depression Now!*, Norton, 2012). —and show later in the data discussed in this article—is the time for the government to spend more until the private sector is ready to carry the economy forward again. At that point, the US would be in a far better position to deal with deficits, entitlements, and the costs of financing them.

Meanwhile, the strong measures that would all go a long way toward lifting us out of this depression should include, among other policies, increased federal aid to state and local governments, which would restore the jobs of many public employees; a more aggressive approach by the Federal Reserve to quantitative easing (that is, purchasing bonds in an attempt to reduce long-term interest rates); and less timid efforts by the Obama administration to reduce homeowner debt.

But some readers will wonder, isn't a recovery program along the lines I've described just out of the question as a political matter? And isn't advocating such a program a waste of time? My answers to these two questions are: not necessarily, and definitely not. The chances of a real turn in policy, away from the austerity mania of the last few years and toward a renewed focus on job creation, are much better than conventional wisdom would have you believe. And recent experience also teaches us a crucial political lesson: it's much better to stand up for what you believe, to make the case for what really should be done, than to try to seem moderate and reasonable by essentially accepting your opponents' arguments. Compromise, if you must, on the policy—but never on the truth.

Let me start by talking about the possibility of a decisive change in policy direction.

Nothing Succeeds Like Success

Pundits are always making confident statements about what the American electorate wants and believes, and such presumed public views are often used to wave away any suggestion of major policy changes, at least from the left. America is a “center-right country,” we’re told, and that rules out any major initiatives involving new government spending.

And to be fair, there are lines, both to the left and to the right, that policy probably can’t cross without inviting electoral disaster. George W. Bush discovered that when he tried to privatize Social Security after the 2004 election: the public hated the idea, and his attempted juggernaut on the issue quickly stalled. A comparably liberal-leaning proposal—say, a plan to introduce true “socialized medicine,” making the whole health care system a government program like the Veterans Health Administration—would presumably meet the same fate. But when it comes to the kind of policy measures I have advocated—measures that would mainly try to boost the economy rather than try to transform it—public opinion is surely less coherent and less decisive than everyday commentary would have you believe.

Pundits and, I’m sorry to say, White House political operatives like to tell elaborate tales about what is supposedly going on in voters’ minds. Back in 2011 *The Washington Post’s* Greg Sargent summarized the arguments Obama aides were using to justify a focus on spending cuts rather than job creation:

A big deal would reassure independents who fear the country is out of control; position Obama as the adult who made Washington work again; allow the President to tell Dems he put entitlements on sounder financial footing; and clear the decks to enact other priorities later.

Any political scientist who has actually studied electoral behavior will scoff at the idea that voters engage in anything like this sort of complicated reasoning. And political scientists in general have scorn for what *Slate’s* Matthew Yglesias calls the pundit’s fallacy, the belief on the part of all too many political commentators that their pet issues are, miraculously, the very same issues that matter most to the electorate.

Most real voters are busy with their jobs, their children, and their lives in general. They have neither the time nor the inclination to study policy issues closely, let alone engage in opinion-page-style parsing of political nuances. What they notice, and vote on, is whether the economy is getting better or worse; statistical analyses say that the rate of economic growth in the three quarters or so before the election is by far the most important determinant of electoral outcomes.

What this says—a lesson that the Obama team unfortunately failed to learn until very late in the game—is that the economic strategy that works best politically isn’t the strategy that finds approval with focus groups, let alone with the editorial page of *The Washington Post*; it’s the strategy that actually delivers results. Whoever is sitting in the White House next year will best serve his own political interests by doing the right thing from an economic point of view, which means doing whatever it takes to end the depression we’re in. If expansionary fiscal and monetary policies coupled with debt relief are the way to get this economy moving, then those policies will be politically smart as well as in the national interest.

But is there any chance of actually getting them enacted as legislation?

Political Possibilities

It’s not at all clear what the political landscape will look like after the election. But there do seem to be three main possibilities: President Obama is reelected and Democrats also regain control of Congress; Mitt Romney wins the presidential election and Republicans add a Senate majority to their control of the House; the president is reelected but faces at least one hostile house of Congress. What can be done in each of these cases?

The first case—Obama triumphant—obviously makes it easiest to imagine America doing what it takes to restore full employment. In effect, the Obama administration would get an opportunity at a do-over, taking the strong steps it failed to take in 2009. Since Obama is unlikely to have a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate, taking these strong steps would require making use of reconciliation, the procedure that the Democrats used to pass health care reform and that Bush used to pass both of his tax cuts. So be it. If nervous advisers warn about the political fallout, Obama should remember the hard-learned lesson of his first term: the best economic strategy from a political point of view is the one that delivers tangible progress.

A Romney victory would naturally create a very different situation; if Romney adhered to Republican orthodoxy, he would of course reject any government action along the lines I've advocated. It's not clear, however, whether Romney believes any of the things he is currently saying. His two chief economic advisers, Harvard's N. Gregory Mankiw and Columbia's Glenn Hubbard, are committed Republicans but also quite Keynesian in their views about macroeconomics. Indeed, early in the crisis Mankiw argued for a sharp rise in the Fed's target for inflation, a proposal that was and is anathema to most of his party. His proposal caused the predictable uproar, and he went silent on the issue. But we can at least hope that Romney's inner circle holds views that are much more realistic than anything the candidate says in his speeches, and that once in office he would rip off his mask, revealing his true pragmatic, Keynesian nature.

Of course, a great nation should not have to depend on the hope that a politician is in fact a complete fraud who doesn't believe any of the things he claims to believe. And such a hope is certainly not a reason to vote for that politician. Still, making the case for job creation may not be a wasted effort, even if Republicans take it all this November.

Finally, what about the fairly likely case in which Obama is returned to office but a Democratic Congress is not? What should Obama do, and what are the prospects for action? My answer is that the president, other Democrats, and every Keynesian-minded economist with a public profile should make the case for job creation forcefully and often, and keep pressure on those in Congress who are blocking job-creation efforts.

This is not the way the Obama administration operated for its first two and a half years. We now have a number of reports on the internal decision-making processes of the administration from 2009 to 2011, and they all suggest that the president's political advisers urged him never to ask for things he might not get, on the grounds that it might make him look weak. Moreover, economic advisers like Christina Romer who urged more spending on job creation were overruled on the grounds that the public didn't believe in such measures and was worried about the deficit.

The result of this caution was, however, that as even the president bought into deficit obsession and calls for austerity, the whole national discourse shifted away from job creation. Meanwhile, the economy remained weak—and the public had no reason not to blame the president, since he wasn't staking out a position clearly different from that of the GOP.

In September 2011 the White House finally changed tack, offering a job-creation proposal that fell far short of what was needed, but was nonetheless much bigger than expected. There was no chance that the plan would actually pass the Republican-led House of Representatives, and Noam Scheiber of The New Republic tells us that White House political operatives "began to worry that the size of the package would be a liability and urged the wonks to scale it back." This time, however, Obama sided with the economists—and in the process proved that the political operatives didn't know their own business. Public reaction was generally favorable, while Republicans were put on the spot for their obstruction.

And early this year, with the debate having shifted perceptibly toward a renewed focus on jobs, Republicans were on the defensive. As a result, the Obama administration was able to get a significant fraction of what it wanted—an extension of the payroll tax credit, not an ideal stimulus but nonetheless a measure that puts cash in workers' pockets, and maintenance for a shorter period of extended unemployment benefits—without making any major concessions.

In short, the experience of Obama's first term suggests that not talking about jobs simply because you don't think you can pass job-creation legislation doesn't work even as a political strategy. On the other hand, hammering on

the need for job creation can be good politics, and it can put enough pressure on the other side to bring about better policy too.

Or to put it more simply, there is no reason not to tell the truth about this depression.

A Moral Imperative

It has been more than four years since the US economy first entered recession—and although the recession may have ended, the depression has not. Unemployment may be trending down a bit in the United States (though it's rising in Europe), but it remains at levels that would have been inconceivable not long ago—and are unconscionable now. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens are suffering vast hardship, the future prospects of today's young people are being eroded with each passing month—and all of it is unnecessary.

For the fact is that we have both the knowledge and the tools to get out of this depression. Indeed, by applying time-honored economic principles whose validity has only been reinforced by recent events, we could be back to more or less full employment very fast, probably in less than two years. All that is blocking recovery is a lack of intellectual clarity and political will.

But one question remains. I have argued that in a deeply depressed economy, in which the interest rates that the monetary authorities can control are near zero, we need more, not less, government spending. A burst of federal spending is what ended the Great Depression, and we desperately need something similar today.

Yet how do we know that more government spending would actually promote growth and employment? After all, many politicians fiercely reject that idea, insisting that the government can't create jobs; some economists are willing to say the same thing. So is it just a question of going with the people who seem to be part of your political tribe?

Well, it shouldn't be. Tribal allegiance should have no more to do with your views about macroeconomics than with your views on, say, the theory of evolution or climate change. The question of how the economy works should be settled on the basis of evidence, not prejudice. And one of the few benefits of this depression has been a surge in evidence-based economic research into the effects of changes in government spending. What does that evidence say?

Before I can answer that question, I have to talk briefly about the pitfalls one needs to avoid.

The Trouble with Correlation

You might think that the way to assess the effects of government spending on the economy is simply to look at the correlation between spending levels and other things like growth and employment. The truth is that even people who should know better sometimes fall into the trap of equating correlation with causation. But let me try to disabuse you of the notion that this is a useful procedure by talking about a related question: the effects of tax rates on economic performance.

It's an article of faith on the American right that low taxes are the key to economic success. But suppose we look at the relationship between taxes—specifically, the share of GDP collected in federal taxes—and unemployment over the past dozen years. What we find is that years with high tax shares were years of low unemployment, and vice versa (see Figure 1). Clearly, isn't the way to reduce unemployment to raise taxes?

Figure 1

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TAXES
AND UNEMPLOYMENT, 2000–2010**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Tax Share of GDP</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
2000	20.6%	4.0%
2003	16.2%	6.0%
2007	18.5%	4.6%
2010	15.1%	9.6%

Source: Congressional Budget Office

Even those of us who very much disagree with tax-cut mania don't believe this. Why not? Because we're surely looking at spurious correlation here. For example, unemployment was relatively low in 2007 because the economy was still buoyed by the housing boom—and the combination of a strong economy and large capital gains boosted federal revenues, making taxes look high. By 2010 the boom had gone bust, taking both the economy and tax receipts with it. Measured tax levels were a consequence of other things, not an independent variable driving the economy.

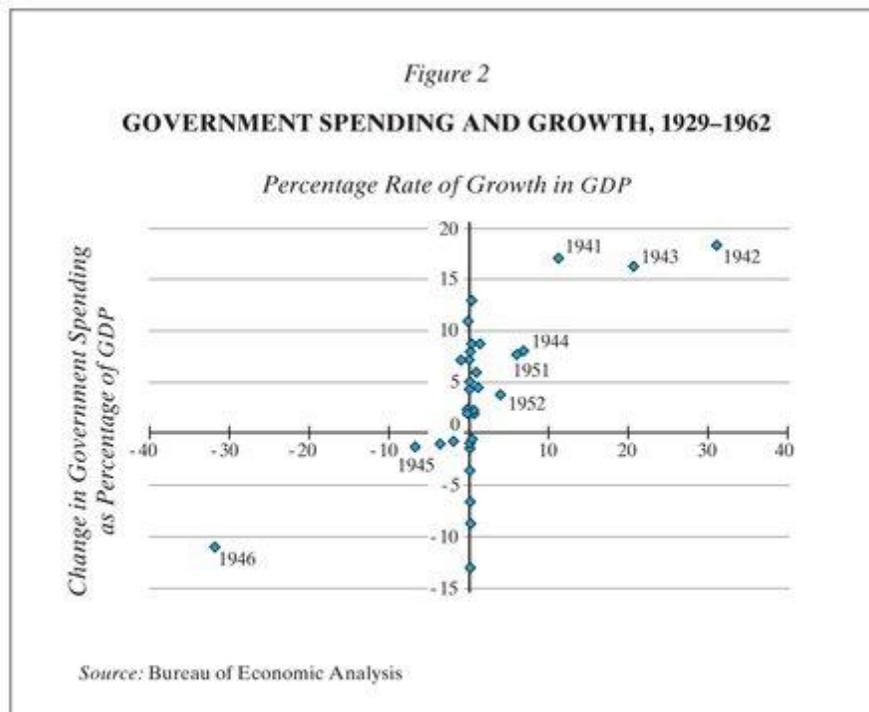
Similar problems bedevil any attempt to use historical correlations to assess the effects of government spending. If economics were a laboratory science, we could solve the problem by performing controlled experiments. But it isn't. Econometrics—a specialized branch of statistics that's supposed to help deal with such situations—offers a variety of techniques for "identifying" actual causal relationships. The truth, however, is that even economists are rarely persuaded by fancy econometric analyses, especially when the issue at hand is so politically charged. What, then, can be done?

The answer in much recent work has been to look for "natural experiments"—situations in which we can be pretty sure that changes in government spending are neither responding to economic developments nor being driven by forces that are also moving the economy through other channels. Where do such natural experiments come from? Sadly, they mainly come from disasters—wars or the threat of wars, and fiscal crises that force governments to slash spending regardless of the state of the economy.

Disasters, Guns, and Money

As I wrote, since the crisis began there has been a boom in research into the effects of fiscal policy on output and employment. This body of research is growing fast, and much of it is too technical to be summarized in this article. But here are a few highlights.

First, Stanford's Robert Hall has looked at the effects of large changes in US government purchases—which is all about wars, specifically World War II and the Korean War. Figure 2 on this page compares changes in US military spending with changes in real GDP—both measured as a percentage of the preceding year's GDP—over the period from 1929 to 1962 (there's not much action after that). Each dot represents one year; I've labeled the points corresponding to the big buildup during World War II and the big demobilization just afterward. Obviously, there were big moves in years when nothing much was happening to military spending, notably the slump from 1929 to 1933 and the recovery from 1933 to 1936. But every year in which there was a big spending increase was also a year of strong growth, and the reduction in military spending after World War II was a year of sharp output decline.



Big rises and falls in government spending centered on World War II and the Korean War were associated with corresponding booms and busts in the economy as a whole. Each dot represents one year.

This clearly suggests that increasing government spending does indeed create growth and hence jobs. The next question is, how much bang is there per buck? The data on US military spending are slightly disappointing in that respect, suggesting that a dollar of spending actually generates only about fifty cents of growth. But if you know anything about wartime history, you realize that this may not be a good guide to what would happen if we increased spending now. After all, during World War II private-sector spending was deliberately suppressed by rationing and restrictions on private construction; during the Korean War, the government tried to avoid inflationary pressures by sharply raising taxes. So it's likely that an increase in spending now would yield bigger gains.

How much bigger? To answer that question, it would be helpful to find natural experiments telling us about the effects of government spending under conditions more like those we face today. Unfortunately, there aren't any such experiments as good and clear-cut as World War II. Still, there are some useful ways to get at the issue.

One is to go deeper into the past. As the economic historians Barry Eichengreen and Kevin O'Rourke point out, during the 1930s European nations entered, one by one, into an arms race, under conditions of high unemployment and near-zero interest rates resembling those prevailing now. In work with their students, they have used the admittedly scrappy data from that era to estimate the impact that spending changes driven by that arms race had on output, and have come up with a much bigger bang for the buck (or, more accurately, the lira, mark, franc, and so on).

Another option is to compare regions within the United States. Emi Nakamura and Jon Steinsson of Columbia University point out that some US states have long had much bigger defense industries than others—for example, California has had a large concentration of defense contractors, whereas Illinois has not. Meanwhile, defense spending at the national level has fluctuated a lot, rising sharply under Reagan, then falling after the end of the cold war. At the national level, the effects of these changes are obscured by other factors, especially monetary policy: the Fed raised rates sharply in the early 1980s, just as the Reagan buildup was occurring, and cut them sharply in the early 1990s. But you can still get a good sense of the impact of government spending by looking at the differential effect across states; Nakamura and Steinsson estimate, on the basis of this differential, that a dollar of spending actually raises output by around \$1.50.

So looking at the effects of wars—including the arms races that precede wars and the military downsizing that follows them—tells us a great deal about the effects of government spending. But are wars the only way to get at this question?

When it comes to big increases in government spending, the answer, unfortunately, is yes. Big spending programs rarely happen except in response to war or the threat thereof. However, big spending cuts sometimes happen for a different reason: because national policymakers are worried about large budget deficits and/or debts, and slash spending in an attempt to get their finances under control. So austerity, as well as war, gives us information on the effects of fiscal policy.

It's important, by the way, to look at the policy changes, not just at actual spending. Like taxes, spending in modern economies varies with the state of the economy, in ways that can produce spurious correlations; for example, US spending on unemployment benefits has soared in recent years, even as the economy weakened, but the causation runs from unemployment to spending rather than the other way around. Assessing the effects of austerity therefore requires painstaking examination of the actual legislation used to implement that austerity.

Fortunately, researchers at the International Monetary Fund have done the legwork, identifying no fewer than 173 cases of fiscal austerity in advanced countries over the period between 1978 and 2009. And what they found was that austerity policies were followed by economic contraction and higher unemployment.

There's much, much more evidence, but I hope this brief overview gives a sense of what we know and how we know it. I hope in particular that when you read me or Joseph Stiglitz or Christina Romer saying that cutting spending in the face of this depression will make it worse, and that temporary increases in spending could help us recover, you won't think, "Well, that's just his/her opinion." As Romer asserted in a recent speech about research into fiscal policy:

The evidence is stronger than it has ever been that fiscal policy matters—that fiscal stimulus helps the economy add jobs, and that reducing the budget deficit lowers growth at least in the near term. And yet, this evidence does not seem to be getting through to the legislative process.

That's what we need to change.

20120513-04 15:15 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Action: Stop the Sale of Trayvon Shooting Targets

Tell me that this is not incredibly unbelievable...

from Daily Kos:

Please help stop the sale of Trayvon Martin shooting targets by asking Mars, Inc. to take legal action against the Hiller Armament Company. Click here to sign the petition:

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=144.

The silhouette on the shooting target is faceless. But the hoodie, the Skittles and the iced tea leave nothing to the imagination. This is meant to be Trayvon Martin, the unarmed 17-year-old shot to death in February in Sanford, Florida.

Skittles brand candy is clearly depicted on the targets. The Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company, a division of Mars, Inc., produces and markets Skittles. They could stop the sale of these targets by taking legal action against the Hiller Armament Company, which sells the targets online.

Stop the sale of Trayvon Martin shooting targets by asking Mars, Inc. to take legal action against the Hiller Armament Company.

[20120513-05](#) 17:04 SteveB HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On")

Today's Incredible Video Could Be Important to Your Very Safety!

Give it a chance... be here now...

MUST SEE AND HEAR UNTIL THE END.

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

ALSO A HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY PRESENT TO ALL YOU QUINTESSENTIAL MOMS OUT THERE! MUCHAS GRACIAS!

[20120513-06](#) 20:16 SteveG Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveB, above)

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[20120513-07](#) 21:17 SteveB Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveG, above)

Darn! I wonder if this one works for you? [And you too, Art! –SteveB]

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgizC2R6_l8&feature=related

[20120513-08](#) 22:24 SteveG Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveB, above)



This video contains content from EMI, who has blocked it in your country on copyright grounds.

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[20120513-09](#) 23:58 SteveG Quote: Howard Zinn on Class Warfare

One percent of the nation owns a third of the wealth. The rest of the wealth is distributed in such a way as to turn those in the 99 percent against one another: small property owners against the propertyless, black against white, native-born against foreign-born, intellectuals and professionals against the uneducated and the unskilled. These groups have resented one another and warred against one another with such vehemence and violence as to obscure their common position as sharers of leftovers in a very wealthy country - Howard Zinn

<http://www.bikeandthelike.com/maine.html>

Low Tide Between the Mainland & the Island of the Eagle's Nest



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

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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.

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #138 — MAY 15, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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[INDEX: Click here.](#)

The War on Gays Continues

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 15, 2012)

Regardless of the truth or fiction of Mitt Romney's gay haircutting story, Republicans continue to try to beat down everyone but their rich buddies. Make that—even including some of their rich buddies! I read that some rich gay man was asking Romney to return his campaign donation. Ouch! "Keep yer damned mittens off my money, you robotic creep!"

"Mitt Romney Bullying Story Creates Message Headache for House Vote" by Laura Bassett and Sam Stein, Huffington Post

May 14, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/14/mitt-romney-bullying-washington-post_n_1515844.html?ref=politics)

Last week's blockbuster report in the *Washington Post* that Mitt Romney bullied a closeted gay classmate in prep school creates a bit of uncomfortable timing for House Republicans as they consider a reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

The House will vote this week on VAWA. But rather than follow the Senate's lead, House GOP leadership will consider a pared-down version that does not extend protections to gay and lesbian victims of domestic abuse. House Republicans have insisted that such an extension was unnecessary.

But with Romney, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, eager to change the subject to different matters, the House bill could not be more poorly timed -- inviting critics to portray the GOP as insensitive to the serious threats of violence the LGBT community faces.

"The Republican Party is certainly not making friends when the news of the week is that the president is for gay marriage, Mitt Romney was an anti-gay bully in high school, and House Republicans don't think gay people should fall under violence protections," said Michael Cole-Schwartz, communications director for the Human Rights Campaign. "It's one thing to have a conversation about marriage, where obviously there are different opinions on it, but when you get into the realm of 'should we protect people from violence and bullying,' one would hope that these partisanship issues would go out the window."

Romney apologized for what he called his "hijinks and pranks" in high school during a radio interview last week, and he said he didn't know that his classmate was gay. But he also said he was "not going to be too concerned" about

the *Washington Post* story, a remark that seems to downplay the seriousness of the incident at a time when anti-gay bullying is at the forefront of the national conversation.

Amanda Henneberg, a spokeswoman for Romney, referred The Huffington Post to a statement the campaign put out on VAWA's reauthorization in mid-April, which said Romney wanted the bill passed "without it turning into a political football." Pressed specifically for the candidate's position on extending protections to gay and lesbian Americans, Henneberg did not return a request for comment.

House Republicans have been less vague. GOP members of the House Judiciary Committee voted down several measures that would have included protections for LGBT victims of domestic violence in the House version of the VAWA reauthorization. One of those measures, sponsored by Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Ill.), sparked a heated argument after Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas) said "there is little data" to support the need for "special protected status" for LGBT people.

Quigley told HuffPost that as a supporter of gay rights, the debate was "startling and traumatic" for him.

"The folks that sit next to me in Judiciary Committee, I feel like they're scoring this, trying to figure out how many bills can they get out there, how many statements can they make to say 'I'm more anti-gay than you,'" he said. "I'd like to see us move toward universal acceptance, and it pains me to think we're going in the opposite direction with a major party. I actually get the feeling that it's almost like a competition to be the most anti-gay, and it's a shame Romney can't pull away from that and lead."

"What I heard from [Republicans] on my first day was, 'If you want to get along with us, stay away from guns, gays and God,' and I haven't seen them move away from that," he continued. "If anything, as they go farther to right socially, they've latched onto that stronger and stronger."

Democrats have certainly sensed a political opening. The Obama campaign and allied committees criticized Romney in the wake of last week's bullying story. Meanwhile, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee sent out an email to supporters on Monday asking them to sign a petition holding Republicans accountable for their failure to support an anti-gay bullying bill.

"Nine out of 10 LGBT students are bullied in school – and many times much worse," the email says. "Congressman Jared Polis and Senator Al Franken have taken on this difficult issue by offering the Student Non-Discrimination Act. The bill would simply give LGBT kids the same civil rights protections guaranteed by other anti-discrimination laws... Now get this: Republicans in Congress won't bring it to a vote and Mitt Romney refuses to say whether he supports it."

CORRECTION: A previous version of this article stated that the DCCC sent out a fundraising email Monday. It has been corrected to reflect that the email directed supporters to a petition and did not ask for money.

[20120514-07](#)

16:38 SteveB

Fw: MoveOn Action: Condemn Mitt Romney for Meanness / "Prank or Pattern? Why Romney's Bullying Is Relevant to the Election"

from MoveOn.org:

Every once in a while a story comes along that captures a candidate and what he represents. **And *The Washington Post* just did that by revealing a dark incident from Mitt Romney's past.**

At 18, he led a group of boys who hunted down younger student John Lauber because he *seemed* gay to them.¹ They held Lauber down, screaming and crying, while Romney cut off his dyed-blond hair. It's something that haunted Lauber and those who participated in his assault decades later.

But Romney laughed it off in a radio interview last week.² **And the right-wing media is pushing the Romney campaign's spin that this bullying story is nothing.**³

Romney's right that this election isn't about what happened 48 years ago. It's about the man who, in business, picked on struggling companies, fired their workers, pocketed the profits, and then dumped the companies back out riddled with debt.⁴

It's about a man whose policies would take from those struggling in a tough economy, to give to those on top. Because after 48 years one thing hasn't changed for Romney: **there are people who count and people who don't, like young John Lauber, or the 99% of us who get beat up by Romney's policies.**

Why does this matter? **Because Romney's ahead of Obama or running even in the latest polls and has a real good shot at winning.**⁵ And that's *before* conservative super PACs will spend an unprecedented \$300 million to tear Obama down.⁶

So we need Americans to think about the light this story sheds on Romney today. But with the Romney camp and their Fox News friends trying to get the media to shrug this horrifying incident off as youthful hijinks, it's going to take thousands of us, across the country, writing to our newspapers about why this matters.

Write your letter to the editor about what Romney's past bullying says about him today:

http://pol.moveon.org/lte/lte_t.html?zip=94709<e_campaign_id=136&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x

As I wrote about Romney in a Huffington Post op-ed today (see below): "The man who rallied his chums to bully a vulnerable kid has produced a set of prescriptions that are striking in the degree to which they advantage his NASCAR-owning buddies over everyone else."

And those policies tell us exactly who Romney thinks counts and who doesn't:

- The wealthiest 1% deserve bigger tax breaks, while people who rely on Social Security and Medicare should have their benefits cut.⁷
- Wall Street executives deserve a bailout, not prosecution, for crashing our economy; while auto workers should face unemployment, foreclosure, and bankruptcy.⁸
- Trust-fund kids, like Romney, deserve the best education money can buy, while lower-income kids should have Pell grant funding slashed.⁹

Mitt Romney thought he was teaching Lauber a lesson when he held him down to cut off his hair. Instead, it's a lesson for all of us about what kind of man he is—and what kind of president he would be.

But if Romney and the right-wing media get their way, it's a lesson most Americans will miss. **That's why we have to tell it in one of the most read sections of every newspaper—the letters page—so Romney can't count us out.**

Write your letter to the editor about how Romney is trying to count the 99% out.

Thanks for all you do.

P.S. Another way to spread the word about the importance of the Romney bullying story is to read and share my op-ed, which was just published in the Huffington Post.

–Justin, Elena, Emily, Mark, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"Mitt Romney's prep school classmates recall pranks, but also troubling incidents," *The Washington Post*, May 11, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275508&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=6>.

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⁹"Romney's Attack on Obama's College Affordability Record," *The Nation*, May 8, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275517&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=16>.

"Prank or Pattern? Why Romney's Bullying Is Relevant to the Election" by Justin Ruben, Huffington Post

May 13, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/justin-ruben/prank-or-pattern-why-romn_b_1513555.html)

Five high school seniors at an elite prep school stalk, then jump a younger student with a new haircut they think looks too gay. Their 18-year-old ringleader cuts off the offending locks, while the victim screams and begs for help. Decades later, the victim and several participants are still haunted by the attack.

It's not a scene from *Bully*. It's a revealing episode from Mitt Romney's formative years.

We've all had moments in high school or college we'd rather forget. And certainly we all have the capacity to change. But sometimes behavior as a young adult can reveal much about one's present character. Romney's challenge is that his prep school bullying lines up well with the rest of what voters have learned about him.

Here's the simple picture that's emerging: If you're less fortunate or less powerful, Mitt Romney won't think twice about walking over you if you're in his way.

Mitt was born into a stratum of society that most Americans know only from movies and magazines. And maybe because of that, he often appears not to understand or care about people weaker than him -- even when they're harmed by his actions. If you're a member of the jet set, or if you're useful to him financially or politically, he's got your back. But if you're not as powerful you may be as good as invisible, or worse -- like his classmate John Lauber -- someone he'll tear down in order to lift himself up.

Romney made his millions in large part by laying off tens of thousands of people. So when he says, "I like to fire people," well, what would you expect from the silver-spoon bully who, according to one classmate, turned a prestigious prep school into something akin to *Lord of the Flies*? At a time when many Americans fear for their own financial future, it's no surprise many wonder if they're also on Romney's chopping block.

Even the bizarre episode with Seamus, the family dog who spent 12 hours strapped to the roof of the Romney car, fits the pattern. Mitt Romney seems to have a serious empathy problem.

Now we're seeing parallels as Romney lays out his policy agenda for the country. The man who rallied his chums to bully a vulnerable kid has produced a set of prescriptions that are striking in the degree to which they advantage his NASCAR-owning buddies over everyone else.

According to a recent CBS News report, Romney's tax plan "strongly favors the rich." While cutting taxes for his fellow millionaires, he'd actually raise taxes on the bottom 20 percent of earners. Of course this is the same Romney who earlier this spring said, "I'm not concerned about the very poor," as though existing antipoverty programs are sufficient.

Or consider how his policies would harm women. Romney would allow bosses to deny birth control coverage to their employees. He'd overturn health care reform, including a provision to stop insurers from billing women more than men for the same coverage. And he wants to "get rid" of funding for Planned Parenthood -- a lifesaving source of health care for millions.

None of these would pose much difficulty for Romney or his privileged friends. But if you're a woman who needs health care, in Romney's world, you could be out of luck.

Same goes for the low-income students who rely on Pell Grants as they pursue a higher education and the American Dream. They'd see cuts of up to \$170 billion under the Ryan budget Romney has embraced -- which could put college out of reach.

And if you're gay? Romney's bullying prep school behavior was just the start of it. Before a recent Fox News interview, Romney struck a mock effeminate tone as he considered a pink tie -- a nasty jab gay people anywhere would be quick to recognize. Again, there's a policy connection. Romney wants to end marriage equality in the six states that have it. No "evolution" here.

After the *Washington Post* broke the bullying story, Romney apologized for his high school "pranks and hijinks." He took pains to explain that it's been a long time since prep school, and that he's changed.

The problem for voters hunting for a leader who cares about their problems and will take their side, is that it doesn't appear he has.

20120514-01 10:10 Pam The End of the World?

The May 14th *New Yorker* contains an article that sounds like a death knell for all life as we know it. It is impossible to read it and not be terrified. Picture lemmings running off a cliff. A race is on between global warming and the scientists working on ways to pull us back from the brink that is already visible on the horizon. I feel fairly certain that the world will be here for as long as I'm alive, but I'm not so certain that by the time my grandsons are my age they will have an inhabitable planet to call home. Something in contemporary culture recognizes the threat and finds various ways to express it. The movies depict super-human enemies who fly around blowing things up. Religious prophets foretell Armageddon. Novelists create apocalyptic scenarios. Scientists continue publishing their findings, and politicians continue ignoring them. We all sense that something terrible is coming, and no one has an idea about how to avert the disaster. Pushed to the wall, I guess I would say I have faith that science will figure out a way to deflect the sun's rays and preserve a viable earth. I also believe that if that happens, it will be the prosperous north that will see the most benefit. Africa will get hotter, drier, and poorer. Low-lying areas from India to Indonesia will be submerged and hundreds of thousands will drown. Many of our greatest American cities will be home for whatever fish survive the warming of the oceans. Populations will push harder against borders,

and the rich will retreat to the mountaintops and erect walls. I look at my lush back yard and can't help imagining it a desert. I know that getting depressed solves nothing, and I know I'm not going to stop driving my car or buying blueberries from Chile. I know that if everyone continues to live as I do, humanity will not survive long. But knowing solves nothing either. Unless knowledge is married to action and our species responds as one, I fear we are doomed. Things never happen as you expect. We oldsters remember that haunting movie *On the Beach*. The nuclear threat, while still very real, does not seem as dangerous as it did then. Who could have foreseen that the sun itself would prove our undoing? I feel about as useful as Chicken Little wringing her hands while the sky falls.

[20120514-03](#) 11:17 Bill Re: The End of the World? (reply to Pam, above)

It's worse than you think. The drones—same issue of the *New Yorker*—are keeping an eye on you as you wheeze out another labored breath of bad air. The drones, of course, will be dispatched by those accumulating a dossier on you through their monitoring of the internet.

I jest. But I am uncomfortable with what seems to be a secular warming trend. But never fear; we can take comfort that our Department of Defense is building global warming scenarios into its war planning.

[20120514-05](#) 11:29 Pam Re: The End of the World? (reply to Bill, above)

I read the article about drones too. "Oh, brave new world, that has such people in it." Big Brother is watching you. He's probably looking through your webcam as we speak.

[20120514-02](#) 10:23 Art Re: The End of the World? (reply to Pam, 10:10, above)

On a more serious note (for Pam only) it's the little things you need to notice. The collapse of honey bee colonies, the bat decimation (they eat lots of insects that will now produce even more insects), the collapse of fish populations, the incredible reef decline, the pine beetle in the American West (good article in the *Washington Post* today on research on that) (whole mountains near our place in Colorado have turned brown as all, and I mean all, the pine trees die - a tinder box waiting to explode), the destruction of the rain forests in Brazil and Indonesia and on and on.

Not good, and we have a political party who thinks the solution to everything is to drill for more oil to pump more carbon into the atmosphere.

[20120514-04](#) 11:22 Bill Re: The End of the World? (reply to Art, above)

What a comfort!

[20120514-19](#) 22:36 SteveB Re: The End of the World? & "High-Resolution Image from Electro-L Satellite Shows Planet in Single Shot" (reply to all, above)

Amazing photos and video:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/11/high-resolution-earth-photo-electro-l-satellite_n_1510538.html?ref=mostpopular

Ah...this exquisite, fragile little world...

[20120514-06](#) 16:21 SteveB Re: Gomez—"Bring It On" & "Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveG & Art, FotM Newsletter #137)

How 'bout the Gomez video here:

<http://vimeo.com/39377347> ???

or

<http://www.gomeztheband.com> ???

On the band's homepage (above) they're giving away "Jumpin' Jack Flash" (live) and an entire live CD (*Live: Volume 3 Los Angeles*). Very highly recommended and what do you have to lose?

Try to hear "Bring It On". It's on the live CD mentioned above or maybe something else works for you on YouTube...???

[20120514-08](#) 17:32 SteveG Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveB, above)

Got it – thanks for the extra effort.

[20120514-09](#) 17:44 GaryF Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveB, above)

This was OK, but you just can't beat hearing the Stones do it live... I'm not sure, but I think I've experienced that either 5 or 6 times.

[20120514-10](#) 18:05 SteveB Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to GaryF, above)

You are 100% correct, except that you can't really do that now. I mean, ya, you can go see a bunch of old men in Depends do an amazingly good job—for old men—of playing old (only) rock 'n roll.

At the same time, you can go see Gomez now, IN THEIR PRIME! I believe they will be playing in Jacksonville this summer. (See <http://www.gomeztheband.com>, and get free MP#'s too.)

I think we should try to go see them, if at all possible, when I'm there next year staying at your house for two weeks. :-)

These guys picked up the mantle where the Beatles, Stones, the Who, Clapton, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, etc. dropped it years ago. They carry the "British Invasion" forward in a modern, lovely, surprisingly adult, and rockin' way—yet hardly anybody is listening. Almost nobody seems to be able to hear the genius for the din. I hope you will.

Good listenin'!

[20120514-11](#) 18:32 SteveB "America as a Shining Drone Upon a Hill"

There can be no such thing as "American Exceptionalism" if we are to have our rightful place in this world. And we do have a rightful place at that table of nations, and maybe even a seat at the best end. But the rest of the world does not react well when America considers itself to be above the rest of the family and its toilet to be the middle of the table.

"America as a Shining Drone Upon a Hill" by Tom Engelhardt, NationofChange

May 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/america-shining-drone-upon-hill-1337002235>)



Here's the essence of it: you can trust America's *crème de la crème*, the most elevated, responsible people, no matter what weapons, what powers, you put in their hands. No need to constantly look over *their* shoulders.

Placed in the hands of evildoers, those weapons and powers could create a living nightmare; controlled by the best of people, they lead to measured, thoughtful, precise decisions in which bad things are (with rare and understandable exceptions) done only to truly terrible types. In the process, you simply couldn't be better protected.

And in case you were wondering, there is no question who among us are the best, most lawful, moral, ethical, considerate, and judicious people: the officials of our national security state. Trust them implicitly. They will never give you a bum steer.

You may be paying a fortune to maintain their world -- the 30,000 people hired to listen in on conversations and other communications in this country, the 230,000 employees of the Department of Homeland Security, the 854,000 people with top-secret clearances, the 4.2 million with security clearances of one sort or another, the \$2 billion, one-million-square-foot data center that the National Security Agency is constructing in Utah, the gigantic billion headquarters the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency recently built for its 16,000 employees in the Washington area -- but there's a good reason. That's what's needed to make truly elevated, surgically precise decisions about life and death in the service of protecting American interests on this dangerous globe of ours.

And in case you wondered just how we know all this, we have it on the best authority: the people who are doing it - the only ones, given the obvious need for secrecy, capable of judging just how moral, elevated, and remarkable their own work is. They deserve our congratulations, but if we're too distracted to give it to them, they are quite capable of high-fiving themselves.

We're talking, in particular, about the use by the Obama administration (and the Bush administration before it) of a growing armada of remotely piloted planes, a.k.a. drones, grimly labeled Predators and Reapers, to fight a nameless, almost planet-wide war (formerly known as the Global War on Terror). Its purpose: to destroy al-Qaeda-in-whatever and all its wannabes and look-alikes, the Taliban, and anyone affiliated or associated with any of the above, or just about anyone else we believe might imminently endanger our "interests."

In the service of this war, in the midst of a perpetual state of war and of wartime, every act committed by these leaders is, it turns out, absolutely, totally, and completely legal. We have their say-so for that, and they have the documents to prove it, largely because the best and most elevated legal minds among them have produced that documentation in secret. (Of course, they dare not show it to the rest of us, lest lives be endangered.)

By their own account, they have, in fact, been covertly exceptional, moral, and legal for more than a decade (minus, of course, the odd black site and torture chamber) -- so covertly exceptional, in fact, that they haven't quite gotten the credit they deserve. Now, they would like to make the latest version of their exceptional mission to the world known to the rest of us. It is finally in our interest, it seems, to be a good deal better informed about America's covert wars in a year in which the widely announced "covert" killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan is a major selling point in the president's reelection campaign.

No one should be surprised. There was always an "overt" lurking in the "covert" of what now passes for "covert war." The CIA's global drone assassination campaign has long been a bragging in Washington, even if it couldn't officially be discussed directly before, say, Congress. The covertness of our drone wars in the Pakistani tribal borderlands, Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere really turns out to have less to do with secrecy -- just about every covert drone strike is reported, sooner or later, in the media -- than assuring two administrations that they could pursue their drone wars without accountability to anyone.

A Classic of Self-Congratulation

Recently, top administration officials seem to be fanning out to offer rare peeks into what's truly on-target and exceptional about America's drone wars. In many ways, these days, American exceptionalism is about as unexceptional as apple pie. It has, for one thing, become the everyday language of the presidential campaign trail. And that shouldn't surprise us either. After all, great powers and their leaders tend to think well of themselves. The French had their "*mission civilisatrice*," the Chinese had the "mandate of heaven," and like all imperial powers they inevitably thought they were doing the best for themselves and others, sadly benighted, in this best of all possible worlds.

Sometimes, though, the American version of this does seem... I hate to use the word, but exceptional. If you want to get a taste of just what this means, consider as Exhibit One a speech by the president's counterterrorism "tsar," John Brennan, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. According to his own account, he was dispatched to the center by President Obama to provide greater openness when it comes to the administration's secret drone wars, to respond to critics of the drones and their legality, and undoubtedly to put a smiley face on drone operations generally.

Ever since the Puritan minister John Winthrop first used the phrase in a sermon on shipboard on the way to North America, "a city upon a hill" has caught something of at least one American-style dream -- a sense that this country's fate was to be a blessed paragon for the rest of the world, an exception to every norm. In the last century, it became "a shining city upon a hill" and was regularly cited in presidential addresses.

Whatever that "city," that dream, was once imagined to be, it has undergone a largely unnoticed metamorphosis in the twenty-first century. It has become -- even in our dreams -- an up-armored garrison encampment, just as Washington itself has become the heavily fortified bureaucratic heartland of a war state. So when Brennan spoke, what he offered was a new version of American exceptionalism: the first "shining drone upon a hill" speech, which also qualifies as an instant classic of self-congratulation.

Never, according to him, has a country with such an advanced weapon system as the drone used it quite so judiciously, quite so -- if not peacefully -- at least with the sagacity and skill usually reserved for the gods. American drone strikes, he assured his listeners, are "ethical and just," "wise," and "surgically precise" -- exactly what you'd expect from a country he refers to, quoting the president, as *the* preeminent "standard bearer in the conduct of war."

Those drone strikes, he assured his listeners, are based on staggeringly "rigorous standards" involving the individual identification of human targets. Even when visited on American citizens outside declared war zones, they are invariably "within the bounds of the law," as you would expect of the preeminent "nation of laws."

The strikes are never motivated by vengeance, always target someone known to us as the worst of the worst, and almost invariably avoid anyone who is even the most mediocre of the mediocre. (Forget the fact that, as Greg Miller of the *Washington Post* reported, the CIA has recently received permission from the president to launch drone

strikes in Yemen based only on the observed "patterns of suspicious behavior" of groups of unidentified individuals, as was already true in the Pakistani tribal borderlands.)

Yes, in such circumstances innocents do unfortunately die, even if unbelievably rarely -- and for that we couldn't be more regretful. Such deaths, however, are in some sense salutary, since they lead to the most rigorous reviews and reassessments of, and so improvements in, our actions. "This too," Brennan assured his audience, "is a reflection of our values as Americans."

"I would note," he added, "that these standards, for identifying a target and avoiding... the loss of lives of innocent civilians, exceed what is required as a matter of international law on a typical battlefield. That's another example of the high standards to which we hold ourselves."

And that's just a taste of the tone and substance of the speech given by the president's leading counterterrorism expert, and in it he's no outlier. It catches something about an American sense of self at this moment. Yes, Americans may be ever more down on the Afghan war, but like their leaders, they are high on drones. In a February *Washington Post*/ABC News poll, 83% of respondents supported the administration's use of drones. Perhaps that's not surprising either, since the drones are generally presented here as the coolest of machines, as well as cheap alternatives (in money and lives) to sending more armies onto the Eurasian mainland.

Predator Nation

In these last years, this country has pioneered the development of the most advanced killing machines on the planet for which the national security state has plans decades into the future. Conceptually speaking, our leaders have also established their "right" to send these robot assassins into any airspace, no matter the local claims of national sovereignty, to take out those we define as evil or simply to protect American interests. On this, Brennan couldn't be clearer. In the process, we have turned much of the rest of the planet into what can only be considered an American free-fire zone.

We have, in short, established a remarkably expansive set of drone-war rules for the global future. Naturally, we trust ourselves with such rules, but there is a fly in the ointment, even as the droniacs see it. Others far less sagacious, kindly, lawful, and good than we are do exist on this planet and they may soon have their own fleets of drones. About 50 countries are today buying or developing such robotic aircraft, including Russia, China, and Iran, not to speak of Hezbollah in Lebanon. And who knows what terror groups are looking into suicide drones?

As the *Washington Post's* David Ignatius put it in a column about Brennan's speech: "What if the Chinese deployed drones to protect their workers in southern Sudan against rebels who have killed them in past attacks? What if Iran used them against Kurdish separatists they regard as terrorists? What if Russia used them over Chechnya? What position would the United States take, and wouldn't it be hypocritical if it opposed drone attacks by other nations that face 'imminent' or 'significant' threats?"

This is Washington's global drone conundrum as seen from inside the Beltway. These are the nightmarish scenarios even our leaders can imagine *others* producing with their own drones and our rules. A deeply embedded sense of American exceptionalism, a powerful belief in their own special, self-evident goodness, however, conveniently blinds them to what they are doing right now. Looking in the mirror, they are incapable of seeing a mask of death. And yet our proudest export at present, other than Hollywood superhero films, may be a stone-cold robotic killer with a name straight out of a horror movie.

Consider this as well: those "shining drones" launched on campaigns of assassination and slaughter are increasingly the "face" that we choose to present to the world. And yet it's beyond us why it might not shine for others.

In reality, it's not so hard to imagine what we increasingly look like to those others: a Predator nation. And not just to the parents and relatives of the more than 160 children the Bureau of Investigative Journalism has documented as having died in U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan. After all, war is now the only game in town. Peace? For the managers of our national security state, it's neither a word worth mentioning, nor an imaginable condition.

In truth, our leaders should be in mourning for whatever peaceful dreams we ever had. But mention drones and they light up. They're having a love affair with those machines. They just can't get enough of them or imagine their world or ours without them.

What they can't see in the haze of exceptional self-congratulation is this: they are transforming the promise of America into a promise of death. And death, visited from the skies, isn't precise. It isn't glorious. It isn't judicious. It certainly isn't a shining vision. It's hell. And it's a global future for which, someday, no one will thank us.

20120514-12	19:09 Art	"Five Facts That Put America to Shame"
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"Five Facts That Put America to Shame" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

May 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/five-facts-put-america-shame-1337005024>)

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses...I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" These words, from poet Emma Lazarus, were inscribed on the Statue of Liberty over 100 years ago. Today the golden door has a lock on it, paid for with record profits from the health care, education, and financial industries.

1. We're near the bottom of the developed world in children's health and safety.

According to a 2007 UNICEF report, the U.S. ranked last among 21 OECD nations in an assessment of child health and safety. The assessment measured infant mortality, immunization, and death from accidents and injuries.

A related 2009 OECD study generally agreed, placing the U.S. 24th out of 30 OECD countries for children's health and safety. It also showed the devastating effects of inequality in our country. Despite having the second-highest average income for children among the 30 OECD countries, the U.S. ranked 27th out of 30 for child poverty (percentage of children living in households that are below 50% of the median income).

2. We've betrayed the young people who were advised to stay in school.

Over 40% of recent college graduates are living with their parents, dealing with government loans that average \$27,200. The unemployment rate for young people is about 50%. More than 350,000 Americans with advanced degrees applied for food stamps in 2010.

As Washington lobbyists endeavor to kill a proposed bill to reduce the interest rates on student debt, federal loans remain readily available, and so colleges go right on increasing their tuition.

Meanwhile, corporations hold \$2 trillion in cash while looking for investments and employees in foreign countries, and American students are forced to accept menial positions. Yet delusions persist about our new generation of would-be workers. Conservatives are all bubbly about today's young entrepreneurs creating their own jobs -- jobs that "don't yet exist."

3. The main source of middle-class wealth has been largely wiped out.

American homeowners owe almost as much as the students, with \$700 billion of debt over and above the value of their homes.

This removes the only source of wealth for middle America, especially for blacks and Hispanics. Remarkably, for every dollar of NON-HOME wealth owned by white families, people of color have only one cent.

So when minority families were specifically targeted for high-risk, subprime loans that could be re-packaged and sold for a quick short-term profit, most of their assets were erased. Median wealth fell 66% for Hispanic households and 53% for black households. For whites the decline was 16%.

With a disturbing note of irony, Sanford Weill, the banker largely responsible for the reversal of the mortgage-protecting Glass-Steagall Act, was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences for "extraordinary accomplishment and a call to serve."

4. We give prison sentences for smoking marijuana, but not for billion-dollar fraud.

About half of our world-leading prison population is in jail for non-violent drug offenses. Americans have also been arrested for handing out free food in a park. Mothers in Ohio and Connecticut were jailed for enrolling their kids in out-of-district schools. As of 2003 in California there were 344 individuals serving sentences of 25 years or more for shoplifting as a third offense, in many cases after two non-violent offenses.

How does the market deal with this steady tide of petty crime? It strives for more. The new trend of private prisons is dependent on maintaining a sizable prison population to guarantee profits, with no incentive for rehabilitation.

As the number of inmates has surged, the people who devastated countless American lives "get out of jail free." The savings and loan fraud cost the nation between \$300 billion and \$500 billion, about 100 times more than the total cost of burglaries in 2010. The financial system bailout has already cost the country \$3 trillion. Goldman Sachs packaged bad debt, sold it under a different name, persuaded ratings services to label it AAA, and then bet against their own financial creation by selling it short. Other firms accused of fraud and insider trading were Morgan Stanley, Bear Stearns, Bank of America, Countrywide Financial, and Wells Fargo. The New York Times reported in 2008 that the Justice Department had postponed the bribery or fraud prosecutions of over 50 corporations, choosing instead to enter into agreements involving fines and 'monitoring' periods.

5. You can have health care, if you can pay for it.

A recent Commonwealth Fund study compared U.S. health care spending to 12 other OECD countries. The data shows that reducing our costs to the median level of spending among the OECD countries would save us \$1.5 trillion a year, more than our entire deficit.

Unfortunately, insurance companies and pharmaceutical companies and hospital administrators won't hear of it. There's too much money to be made. Bypass surgery in the U.S. costs 2 to 3 times more than in Great Britain, Canada, France, and Germany. Cataract surgery costs 4 times more.

That's if you can pay for it. There are currently about 50 million uninsured Americans. At the other extreme are \$2,400 oxymoronic penthouse hospital suites complete with butler and grand piano. Or, for those who don't get out much, emergency rooms in the home, with private cell-phone access to "concierge doctors."

Inequality in our country is so severe that 120,000 health care workers could have been hired with the salary paid to one man. That's a \$40,000 salary for 40 health care workers for every one of the 3,000 counties in the United States. Instead, \$5 billion dollars went to one man who reportedly made his first big haul (\$4 billion, in 2007) by conspiring with Goldman Sachs in the above-mentioned short sale subterfuge.

The result of ignoring the health needs of the greater population, according to a report in the Annual Review of Public Health, is that "the health rankings of the United States have declined substantially when compared with other nations."

Privatization simply hasn't worked for health care, mortgage banking, higher education, or prison management.

There is little incentive for profit motivated firms to invest in disadvantaged or underemployed Americans. That's why taxes are necessary -- to provide for the common good, and to return some of the gains from 60 years of productivity to the great majority of Americans who contributed to our growth. Unfortunately, the golden door on the Statue of Liberty seems to have an invisible hand holding it shut.

20120514-13 19:35 SteveB Re: "Five Facts That Put America to Shame" (reply to Art, above)

I think this is an important article, Art, and really pinpoints well what we have to do to fix our problems, though a herd of elephants stands smack dab in the middle of the path!

20120514-14 19:56 SteveM "Facebook Billionaire Gives Up Citizenship to Escape Bad American Tax Policy"

Baker this may be too difficult for you you understand, but Democratic socialist is bad for the USA

<http://www.dailyfinance.com/2010/07/20/more-rich-americans-renounce-u-s-citizenship-for-lower-taxes/>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2131225/Record-number-American-citizens-renouncing-citizenship-avoid-paying-taxes.html>

http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/specials/expat_woes/US_tax_deadline_sparks_expatriate_ideas.html?cid=8995438

<http://www.rogerhedgecock.com/story/16406745/californias-not-dreamin-this-is-the-nightmare-of-an-obama-second-term>

"Facebook Billionaire Gives Up Citizenship to Escape Bad American Tax Policy" by Daniel J. Mitchell, *Forbes*

May 11, 2012, (http://www.forbes.com/sites/danielmitchell/2012/05/11/facebook-billionaire-gives-up-citizenship-to-escape-bad-american-tax-policy/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

It is very sad that America's tax system is so onerous that some rich people feel they have no choice but to give up U.S. citizenship in order to protect their family finances.

I've written about this issue before, particularly in the context of Obama's class-warfare policies leading to an increase in the number of Americans "voting with their feet" for places with less punitive tax regimes.

We now have a very high-profile tax expatriate. One of the founders of Facebook is escaping for Singapore. Here are some relevant passages in a Bloomberg article.

Eduardo Saverin, the billionaire co-founder of Facebook Inc. (FB), renounced his U.S. citizenship before an initial public offering that values the social network at as much as \$96 billion, a move that may reduce his tax bill. ...Saverin's stake is about 4 percent, according to the website Who Owns Facebook. At the high end of the IPO valuation, that would be worth about \$3.84 billion. ...Saverin, 30, joins a growing number of people giving up U.S. citizenship, a move that can trim their tax liabilities in that country. The Brazilian-born resident of Singapore is one of several people who helped Mark Zuckerberg start Facebook in a Harvard University dorm and stand to reap billions of dollars after the world's largest social network holds its IPO. "Eduardo recently found it more practical to become a resident of Singapore since he plans to live there for an indefinite period of time," said Tom Goodman, a spokesman for Saverin, in an e-mailed statement. ...Singapore doesn't have a capital gains tax. It does tax income earned in that nation, as well as "certain foreign-sourced income," according to a government website on tax policies there. ...Renouncing your citizenship well in advance of an IPO is "a very smart idea," from a tax standpoint, said Avi-Yonah. "Once it's public you can't fool around with the value." ...Renouncing citizenship is an option chosen by increasing numbers of Americans. A record 1,780 gave up their U.S. passports last year compared with 235 in 2008, according to government records. ..."It's a loss for the U.S. to have many well-educated people who actually have a great deal of affection for America make that choice," said Richard Weisman, an attorney at Baker & McKenzie in Hong Kong. "The tax cost, complexity and the traps for the unwary are among the considerations."

What makes this story amusing, from a personal perspective, is that Saverin's expatriation takes place just a couple of days after my wayward friend Bruce Bartlett wrote a piece for the *New York Times*, in which he said that people like me are exaggerating the impact of taxes on migration.

Here are some key excerpts from Bruce's column.

In recent years, the number of Americans renouncing their citizenship has increased. ...the number of Americans renouncing their citizenship rose to 1,781 in 2011 from 231 in 2008. This led William McGurn of *The Wall Street Journal* to warn that the tax code is turning American citizens living abroad into "economic lepers." The sharply rising numbers of Americans renouncing their citizenship "are canaries in the coal mine," he wrote. The economist Dan Mitchell of the libertarian Cato Institute was more explicit in a 2010 column in *Forbes*, "Rich Americans Voting With Their Feet to Escape Obama Tax Oppression." ...the sharp rise in Americans renouncing their citizenship since 2008 is less pronounced than it appears if one looks at the full range of data available since 1997, when it first was collected. As one can see in the chart, the highest number of Americans renouncing their citizenship came in 1997...The reality is that taxes are just one factor among many that determine where people choose to live. Factors including climate, proximity to those in similar businesses and the availability of amenities like the arts and cuisine play a much larger role. That's why places like New York and California are still magnets for the wealthy despite high taxes. And although a few Americans may renounce their citizenship to avoid American taxes, it is obvious that many, many more people continually seek American residency and citizenship.

I actually agree with Bruce. Taxes are just one factor when people make decisions on where to live, work, save, and invest.

But I also think Bruce is drinking too much of the Kool-Aid being served by his new friends on the left. There is a wealth of data on successful people leaving jurisdictions such as California and New York that have confiscatory tax systems.

And there's also lots of evidence of taxpayers escaping countries controlled by politicians who get too greedy. Mr. Saverin is just the latest example. And I suspect, based on the overseas Americans I meet, that there are several people who quietly go "off the grid" for every person who officially expatriates.

The statistics say these people are "tax traitors" and "economic Benedict Arnolds," but those views are based on a quasi-totalitarian ideology that assumes government has some sort of permanent claim on people's economic output.

If people are leaving America because our tax law is onerous, that's a signal we should reform the tax code. Attacking those who expatriate is the fiscal version of blaming the victim.

20120514-17	21:10 SteveB	Re: "Facebook Billionaire Gives Up Citizenship to Escape Bad American Tax Policy" (reply to SteveM, above)
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This guy is ridiculous. U.S. tax rates are among the lowest of developed nation in the world—though Singapore can be even lower, true. But this intelligent dude will probably pay more in Singapore and not be a U.S. Citizen. If he enjoys a one-time gain, it's at the loss of U.S. taxpayers who largely created his fortune in the first place. I just looked up Singapore and it looks to me like he will likely pay a higher percentage than Mitt paid last year. Smart. His loss.

I believe he should face a stiff tax penalty for any money he ships to Singapore, any other money he makes here would be taxed here, anyway. And, as a tax traitor, he should be barred from re-entry.

20120514-15	20:10 SteveM	Fw: This Sounds Racist to Me
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[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

"You old white people. It is your duty to die."

HISPANIC LEADERS SPEAK OUT

Augustin Cebada, Brown Berets: "Go back to Boston ! Go back to Plymouth Rock, Pilgrims! Get out! We are the future. You are old and tired. Go on. We have beaten you. Leave like beaten rats. You old white people. It is your duty to die. Through love of having children, we are going to take over

Richard Alatorre, Los Angeles City Council: "They're afraid we're going to take over the governmental institutions and other institutions. They're right. We will take them over . . . We are here to stay."

Excelsior, the national newspaper of Mexico: "The American Southwest seems to be slowly returning to the jurisdiction of Mexico without firing a single shot."

Professor Jose Angel Gutierrez, University of Texas: "We have an aging white America . They are not making babies. They are dying. The explosion is in our population . . . I love it. They are shitting in their pants with fear. I love it."

Art Torres, Chairman of the California Democratic Party: "Remember 187--proposition to deny taxpayer funds for services to non-citizens--was the last gasp of white America in California ."

Gloria Molina, Los Angeles County Supervisor: "We are politicizing every single one of these new citizens that are becoming citizens of this country . . . I gotta tell you that a lot of people are saying, "I'm going to go out there and vote because I want to pay them back."

Mario Obledo, California Coalition of Hispanic Organizations and California State Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under Governor Jerry Brown, also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton: "California is going to be a Hispanic state. Anyone who doesn't like it should leave."

Jose Pescador Osuna, Mexican Consul General: "We are practicing 'La Reconquista' in California ..."

Professor Fernando Guerra, Loyola Marymount University: "We need to avoid a white backlash by using codes understood by Latinos . . . "

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I remember hearing about the immigrants that came through Ellis Island They wanted to learn English. They wanted to breathe free. They wanted to become Americans. Now too many immigrants come here with demands. They demand to be taught in their own language. They demand special privileges--affirmative action. They demand ethnic studies that glorify their culture.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?: Send copies of this letter to at least two other people, 100 would be even better. Help us get the word out.

Remember when you vote next year that we need someone in the White House who will balance the budget and control illegal immigration. If we make all illegals legal, then we have lost our country forever. Liberalism will have won and you will have a one party system forever. Redistribution of wealth will be the law. It is called socialism. Our country is heading in the wrong direction and we are doing it to ourselves without serious protest.

20120514-18	21:15 SteveB	Re: This Sounds Racist to Me (reply to SteveM, above)
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Snopes.com confirms, but greatly expands upon, the information presented here:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/quotes/hispanicleaders.asp>.

OK...so, show me a race without racists.

20120514-16 20:13 SteveM "Instant Justice for Sociopaths — Semper Justitia"

More racism?????????????????

"Instant Justice for Sociopaths — Semper Justitia" by Mark Alexander, PatriotPost

May 10, 2012 (<http://patriotpost.us/alexander/2012/05/10/instant-justice-for-sociopaths-semper-justitia/#post-comment>)

Sometimes the good guys win.

"Among the natural rights [of the people] are these: first, a right to life; secondly, to liberty; thirdly to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can." --Samuel Adams (1772)

"White Man Kills Two Unarmed Black Men"

Fortunately, that's not a real headline, but it is the type of hype that emblazons the top of the fold and 24-hour cable news spin "Special Reports."

However, after investigating a case in Onslow County (Jacksonville/Camp Lejeune), North Carolina, the district attorney made sure that justifiable self-defense did not become fodder for a media feeding frenzy sponsored by race hustlers Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. He did so by never mentioning the race of the victim who shot two black men. In fact, none of the Jacksonville investigators or media outlets have mentioned the race of the shooter. (How the DA achieved that media color-blind cooperation should be a case-study for every city in the nation.)

Heck, if anyone suggested this case might be spun on race, even Barack Hussein Obama might make a campaign stop in North Carolina to issue this proclamation about the two men killed: "If I had sons, they would look like Maurice Skinner and Diego Everette." (Recall that our Agitator-in-Chief brought the Zimmerman/Martin case in Florida to a national boiling point by announcing, "If I had a son, he would look like Trayvon.")

However, District Attorney Ernest R. Lee is a modest and humble man singularly devoted to Rule of Law rather than egomaniacal facetime in the national media. Thus, he chose to take the high road. In an interview, Lee told me, "Race, gender, socio-economic status -- these are not factors in this case nor should they be. What mattered was gaining a clear understanding of the facts in this case and applying the law."

Since you've likely heard nothing about this case, allow me to enlighten you.

In the early morning hours of Sunday, 15 April, two thugs burglarizing neighborhood cars decided to burglarize a house. Unknown to the perpetrators, the house is owned by a Marine from neighboring Camp Lejeune.

According to the official investigative finding of the Jacksonville Police Department, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the District Attorney, the Marine, who will remain unnamed, returned to his house with another Marine and a civilian friend, around 0140 Sunday after attending a birthday party and then patronizing a local club.

Upon entering his home, the Marine noted that things were not in order. As he walked toward the back of his house, Maurice Skinner, 33, stepped out and hit the Marine in the face with the butt of a Mossberg shotgun belonging to the Marine. Skinner and Diego Everette, also 33, had forced entry through the back of the house and had discovered the shotgun under a bed.

Skinner ordered the Marine and his two friends onto the floor and demanded their wallets and cell phones. Everette and Skinner told the men they would kill them if they caused any problems, but reassuringly noted that they would not shoot the Marine who was a father.

Skinner demanded duct tape and rope with which to bind the three victims.

At one point, as Skinner looked away, the Marine resident reached for the shotgun and a struggle ensued. Everette entered the room and joined the brawl, hitting the Marine and his civilian guest with a crowbar. Skinner broke loose and pointed the shotgun at the Marine saying, "You are going to die now," and squeezed the trigger. However, while the Marine resident kept the gun loaded, as a safety practice he didn't keep a round chambered. Thus, the gun did not discharge, leaving Skinner perplexed.

The Marine resident then kicked Skinner and freed the shotgun from the assailant's hands. The Marine retrieved the firearm, chambered a first round, shot Skinner and then shot Skinner again. He then moved to the other side of the room where Everette and the other Marine struggled. The Marine resident shot Everette once and then shot Everette again.

The Marine guest dialed 911 and Jacksonville police officers arrived on the scene minutes later to find perp Skinner and perp Everette deceased. The Marine, his Marine guest and the civilian all had injuries and their clothing was bloodied.

According to District Attorney Lee, "Both Everette and Skinner [had] criminal histories." Everette had numerous assault charges, but Skinner had the most serious charges including a previous felony conviction for assault. Both had served time in prison. Lee noted that neither of the Marines, nor their civilian guest, had previous criminal convictions.

Lee concluded, "Based upon my review of the facts of this case, the occupants of the residence were justified in using deadly force against both Everette and Skinner because the actions of Everette and Skinner caused the occupants to reasonably believe it necessary to use deadly force to protect their lives. The evidence shows that the occupants of the residence held a reasonable fear of imminent death or serious bodily harm to themselves and others and that both Everette and Skinner had unlawfully and forcefully entered the residence of the occupants. ... Furthermore, the general rules of self-defense and defense of others in North Carolina allow for the use of deadly force when the individual actually, or honestly, believed in the need to defend him or others from death or great bodily injury and the individual's belief is reasonable in light of the circumstances as they appeared to him at the time."

If those criteria sound familiar, it's because they are the basis for the so-called "stand your ground" laws in many states, including Florida, where evidence suggests that George Zimmerman, despite having been all but convicted by Obama, other race hustlers and the Leftmedia, may well be found to have justifiably protected himself by shooting Trayvon Martin. (If Zimmerman is not found "guilty," prepare for some inner-city turmoil.)

The editor of the *Jacksonville Daily News* concluded, "The innocent families of the two men who died, and their children in particular (of which Lee says there are nine between the two), must face the unfortunate consequences of the actions of these two men. They have been left to mourn the loss of their loved ones. The community should recognize that they, as much as anyone, are also victims. When individuals choose to break the law, they leave others behind to grieve their actions."

I certainly don't mean to spit on the graves of these two thugs, who will no longer pose a threat to anyone, but those occasions when the good guys win are worth noting. It is no small irony that this incident occurred on April 15, Tax Day. Perhaps Everette and Skinner thought they weren't getting enough of the graft from what Obama calls "redistributive justice" and were motivated by his "fairness doctrine" to redistribute wealth from another's home to their own.

Unfortunately for them, Skinner and Everette chose the residence of a gun owner, and moreover, a United States Marine. A clue to avoid this house might have been the word "Avengers" stenciled on the home's mailbox -- but

they chose to use the backdoor, not the front. Indeed, life is tough, but it's even tougher when you're stupid. Likewise, life is short, but it's even shorter when you're stupid.

The day after this incident, Jacksonville PD Chief Mike Yaniero announced increased patrols in the Marine's neighborhood in order to thwart future burglaries. However, I suspect that even if there are absolutely no patrols, the crime rate there will now be ZERO. And regarding police patrols and deadly threats, as this incident clearly demonstrates, when seconds count, law enforcement assistance is only minutes away.

[20120514-20](#)

21:47 SteveB

Re: "Instant Justice for Sociopaths — Semper Justitia" (reply to SteveM, above)

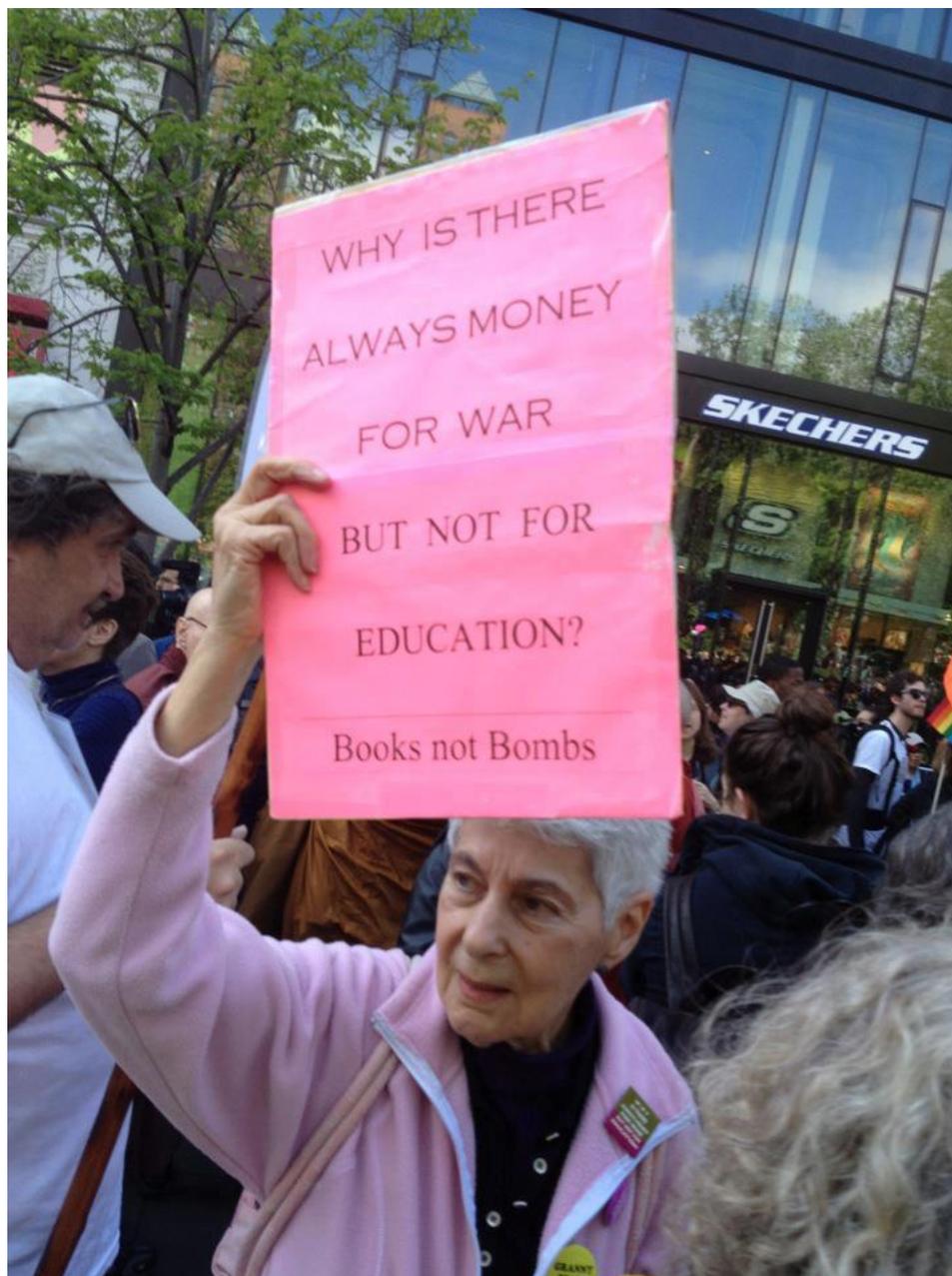
The "Leftmedia"? LOL!

I think a comment from the website where this (above) first appeared might be appropriate:

[posted by LesnOfYerLif3, Posted May 14, 2012](#)

<http://patriotpost.us/alexander/2012/05/10/instant-justice-for-sociopaths-semper-justitia/#post-comment>

This was a great article - and it's very clear you're not a fan of President Obama, I just fail to see a connection to him and this situation. You mention the President in almost 3/4 of the paragraphs - it's almost like the crime and resultant justifiable homicide is a back story to the accusations and insults you throw at Obama. I would have preferred to just read the story without all your political non-sense intermixed into the plot, actions and facts you presented. It's actually sad how polarized this country has become - this President has been a moderate - even using conservative ideas to reform the health care system and you Republicans howl like he is Lenin reincarnated. I mean just come out and admit it - there was and is nothing this man could have done in office to garner your support or change your mind about him. You've clearly "drank the GOP's koolaid" so I don't expect a logical debate - I am coming from a politically moderate position and it's like you could only enjoy this article if I had similar feelings about the President because this article was more about him than the actual incident - I just felt the crime was a circumstance you used to create a much desired monologue about Barack Obama. The fact is - you share this country with many other people with many different political perspectives and if you don't want this country to crash and burn (a real patriot places the welfare of the country above political ideology), you are going to have to work with those people. "No" and "Tax cuts for the Rich" aren't a way forward and that's all we've gotten out of the Republicans lately. Before you go blaming Obama for everything wrong in your life - turn around and apply the same standards to the people you obviously vote for because they haven't exactly been "pragmatists of the first rank" either. Going back to this situation - I'm glad these criminals got their "just deserts." Most criminals get away with the vast majority of their crimes (that's why they always look so surprised when they get caught) so the chances are, this wasn't their "first rodeo." They've probably been responsible for hurting and robbing other people - call it God's justice that they picked the wrong house with the wrong person that night. The author titled this article, "sometimes the good-guys win," I would have titled it; "sometimes things work out like they should," because that's exactly what happened. In a country that seems to care more about the constitutional rights of criminals than those of the victims, we need to re-evaluate our system of justice because these guys (when they get out of prison) go right back out there to do it again and statistics show repeat offenders are more prone to violence and murder after they have been imprisoned by the state. That's a problem - our "prison industrial complex" almost does our citizens a disservice and puts them at greater risk - it clearly needs to be drastically re-envisioned (I like the idea of hard-labor and chain-gangs over the current system where these guys lay around in their racks watching Jerry Springer and Mory Povich).



Well...they would't let them build a more truthful statue with the regal monarch actually pi*sing on the people, so...

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/foreign-manpower/working-in-singapore/Pages/default.aspx>



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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #139 — MAY 16, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

The War on the Planet Continues

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 16, 2012)

The War currently seems to have four fronts:

1. The War against the Poor
2. The war against Women
3. The war against Gays
4. The war against Planet Earth

I guess grown-up Republicans are exactly like the pr*cks Mitt R0mney and his friends were in prep-school—mean bullies who seek the weak, disadvantaged, and helpless as victims. I guess some things never change.

"Report: Global Biodiversity Down 30 Percent in 40 Years" by Stephanie Pappas, MSNBC

May 14, 2012, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/47421743/ns/technology_and_science-science/)

(Freshwater tropical species hardest hit, says World Wildlife Fund.)

The world's biodiversity is down 30 percent since the 1970s, according to a new report, with tropical species taking the biggest hit. And if humanity continues as it has been, the picture could get bleaker.

Humanity is outstripping the Earth's resources by 50 percent — essentially using the resources of one and a half Earths every year, according to the 2012 Living Planet Report, produced by conservation agency the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Colby Loucks, the director of conservation sciences at WWF, compared humanity to bad houseguests.

"We're emptying the fridge, we're not really taking care of the lawn, we're not weeding the flower beds and we're certainly not taking out the garbage," Loucks said.

The biannual Living Planet report is designed to call attention to the Earth's "invisible economy," said Emily McKenzie, the director of the WWF's Natural Capital Program. Natural resources — and the rate at which humans burn through them — rarely appear on policymakers' balance sheets, McKenzie said.

But humanity is essentially in debt to Mother Earth, conservationists find. As of 2008, the most recent year for which data is available, humans were outstripping Earth's biocapacity by 50 percent.

Biocapacity is the amount of renewable resources, land, and waste absorption (such as sinks for carbon dioxide) the Earth can provide. In other words, it takes the planet 1.5 years to restore what humanity burns through in a year. (The organization Global Footprint Network marks "Earth Overshoot Day" every year to draw attention to how fast humans use natural resources. In 2011, Earth Overshoot Day fell on Sept. 27, the day humans used up Earth's annual resources.)

The report scientists calculated the world's hogs when it comes to resources (called the ecological footprint) by determining each nation's productive land capacity and comparing it to the actual population and consumption per person. The United States has the fifth-largest ecological footprint of any nation on Earth, according to the report.

In order from most to least, the top 10 greediest resource users per capita are:

1. Qatar
2. Kuwait
3. United Arab Emirates
4. Denmark
5. United States
6. Belgium
7. Australia
8. Canada
9. The Netherlands
10. Ireland

All of this resource use is taking a toll. The Living Planet report also tracks biodiversity and species populations across the globe. This year's report details a startling loss of biodiversity around the globe: A loss of 30 percent of biodiversity on average, meaning a major decline in the number of different species of plants, animals and other organisms. Temperate species are doing relatively well, Loucks said, but tropical species have declined by 60 percent since the 1970s. Freshwater tropical species are the hardest-hit, having declined by 70 percent in that time period.

Globally, terrestrial species declined by 25 percent between 1970 and 2008, WWF reports. Marine (non-freshwater) species declined by 20 percent.

Many of the group's proposed solutions to humanity's out-of-control resource use center around Rio+20, the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development set for June 20, 2012.

The meeting is designed to help create pathways for sustainable development in the future, said Kate Newman, WWF's managing director of public sector initiatives. She cited the example of Mozambique, a poor country that may be home to one of the largest natural gas fields in the world. As international companies arrive to exploit this resource, local planners are concerned about how to make sure the entire nation benefits, she said.

In the same way, global decision-makers need to think long-term, Loucks said.

"As we're approaching a planet with 9 billion people on it, we need to find a global solution," he said. "The challenge for us is this is a long-term problem. This is the Earth for millennia. We need to move beyond the election cycle, beyond the quarterly report cycle."

[20120515-01](#) 12:11 SteveG Fw: Commom Cause Petition: Fix the Filibuster!

from Common Cause:

Common Cause has taken historic action to restore common sense in Washington. We have gone to federal court to file a constitutional challenge to the Senate's filibuster rules. In addition to Common Cause, our plaintiffs include four members of Congress, and three distinguished young people whose hopes of citizenship were dashed by the filibuster of the DREAM Act.

Once used to extend debate, the filibuster has become a partisan weapon that now is routinely used to block action – and even debate – on hundreds of bills and nominations.

Sign the petition and tell the Senate - end the gridlock:

<http://www.commoncause.org/site/apps/ka/ct/contactus.asp?c=dkLNK1MQIwG&b=8090653&en=fqLGLONAJgJGIUMzF4IFKUMEKpKQKQOuFeIUK4MGLoLZKdI>.

Fix the filibuster today!

No other democracy in the world gives a minority effective veto power over all legislation. It's a recipe for disaster, and puts America at a big disadvantage in the new world economy.

We need your support to restore the principle of majority rule and get America moving again. Sign the petition and tell the Senate - end the gridlock and fix the filibuster!

Most Americans have lost confidence in Congress and its ability to act in the best interest of the 'we the people.' And for good reason. The Senate is mired in gridlock that puts politics over the public interest, and the filibuster is a major weapon in that partisan warfare.

America can't wait any longer for Congress to tackle the issues facing our nation – whether it's the student loan debt crisis, creating jobs, reining in Wall Street, or keeping the wealthy and huge corporations from drowning out our voices in elections.

Sign the petition today. Tell the Senate: get America moving again.

Thanks for all that you do, Bob Edgar and the rest of the team at Common Cause

20120515-02	14:00	SteveB	"Colonized by Corporations"
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"Colonized by Corporations" by Chris Hedges, Truthdig/NationofChange

May 15, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/colonized-corporations-1337090922>)

In Robert E. Gamer's book *The Developing Nations* is a chapter called "Why Men Do Not Revolt." In it Gamer notes that although the oppressed often do revolt, the object of their hostility is misplaced. They vent their fury on a political puppet, someone who masks colonial power, a despised racial or ethnic group or an apostate within their own political class. The useless battles serve as an effective mask for what Gamer calls the "patron-client" networks that are responsible for the continuity of colonial oppression. The squabbles among the oppressed, the political campaigns between candidates who each are servants of colonial power, Gamer writes, absolve the actual centers of power from addressing the conditions that cause the frustrations of the people. Inequities, political disenfranchisement and injustices are never seriously addressed. "The government merely does the minimum necessary to prevent those few who are prone toward political action from organizing into politically effective groups," he writes.

Gamer and many others who study the nature of colonial rule offer the best insights into the functioning of our corporate state. We have been, like nations on the periphery of empire, colonized. We are controlled by tiny corporate entities that have no loyalty to the nation and indeed in the language of traditional patriotism are traitors. They strip us of our resources, keep us politically passive and enrich themselves at our expense. The mechanisms of control are familiar to those whom the Martinique-born French psychiatrist and writer Frantz Fanon called "the

wretched of the earth," including African-Americans. The colonized are denied job security. Incomes are reduced to subsistence level. The poor are plunged into desperation. Mass movements, such as labor unions, are dismantled. The school system is degraded so only the elites have access to a superior education. Laws are written to legalize corporate plunder and abuse, as well as criminalize dissent. And the ensuing fear and instability—keenly felt this past weekend by the more than 200,000 Americans who lost their unemployment benefits—ensure political passivity by diverting all personal energy toward survival. It is an old, old game.

A change of power does not require the election of a Mitt Romney or a Barack Obama or a Democratic majority in Congress, or an attempt to reform the system or electing progressive candidates, but rather a destruction of corporate domination of the political process—Gamer's "patron-client" networks. It requires the establishment of new mechanisms of governance to distribute wealth and protect resources, to curtail corporate power, to cope with the destruction of the ecosystem and to foster the common good. But we must first recognize ourselves as colonial subjects. We must accept that we have no effective voice in the way we are governed. We must accept the hollowness of electoral politics, the futility of our political theater, and we must destroy the corporate structure itself.

The danger the corporate state faces does not come from the poor. The poor, those Karl Marx dismissed as the Lumpenproletariat, do not mount revolutions, although they join them and often become cannon fodder. The real danger to the elite comes from *déclassé* intellectuals, those educated middle-class men and women who are barred by a calcified system from advancement. Artists without studios or theaters, teachers without classrooms, lawyers without clients, doctors without patients and journalists without newspapers descend economically. They become, as they mingle with the underclass, a bridge between the worlds of the elite and the oppressed. And they are the dynamite that triggers revolt.

This is why the Occupy movement frightens the corporate elite. What fosters revolution is not misery, but the gap between what people expect from their lives and what is offered. This is especially acute among the educated and the talented. They feel, with much justification, that they have been denied what they deserve. They set out to rectify this injustice. And the longer the injustice festers, the more radical they become.

The response of a dying regime—and our corporate regime is dying—is to employ increasing levels of force, and to foolishly refuse to ameliorate the chronic joblessness, foreclosures, mounting student debt, lack of medical insurance and exclusion from the centers of power. Revolutions are fueled by an inept and distant ruling class that perpetuates political paralysis. This ensures its eventual death.

In every revolutionary movement I covered in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, the leadership emerged from *déclassé* intellectuals. The leaders were usually young or middle-aged, educated and always unable to meet their professional and personal aspirations. They were never part of the power elite, although often their parents had been. They were conversant in the language of power as well as the language of oppression. It is the presence of large numbers of *déclassé* intellectuals that makes the uprisings in Spain, Egypt, Greece and finally the United States threatening to the overlords at Goldman Sachs, ExxonMobil and JPMorgan Chase. They must face down opponents who understand, in a way the uneducated often do not, the lies disseminated on behalf of corporations by the public relations industry. These *déclassé* intellectuals, because they are conversant in economics and political theory, grasp that those who hold power, real power, are not the elected mandarins in Washington but the criminal class on Wall Street.

This is what made Malcolm X so threatening to the white power structure. He refused to countenance Martin Luther King's fiction that white power and white liberals would ever lift black people out of economic squalor. King belatedly came to share Malcolm's view. Malcolm X named the enemy. He exposed the lies. And until we see the corporate state, and the games it is playing with us, with the same kind of clarity, we will be nothing more than useful idiots.

"This is an era of hypocrisy," Malcolm X said. "When white folks pretend that they want Negroes to be free, and Negroes pretend to white folks that they really believe that white folks want 'em to be free, it's an era of hypocrisy, brother. You fool me and I fool you. You pretend that you're my brother and I pretend that I really believe you believe you're my brother."

Those within a demoralized ruling elite, like characters in a Chekhov play, increasingly understand that the system that enriches and empowers them is corrupt and decayed. They become cynical. They do not govern effectively. They retreat into hedonism. They no longer believe their own rhetoric. They devote their energies to stealing and exploiting as much, as fast, as possible. They pillage their own institutions, as we have seen with the newly disclosed loss of \$2 billion within JPMorgan Chase, the meltdown of Chesapeake Energy Corp. or the collapse of Enron and Lehman Brothers. The elites become cannibals. They consume each other. This is what happens in the latter stages of all dying regimes. Louis XIV pillaged his own nobility by revoking patents of nobility and reselling them. It is what most corporations do to their shareholders. A dying ruling class, in short, no longer acts to preserve its own longevity. It becomes fashionable, even in the rarefied circles of the elite, to ridicule and laugh at the political puppets that are the public face of the corporate state.

"Ideas that have outlived their day may hobble about the world for years," Alexander Herzen wrote, "but it is hard for them ever to lead and dominate life. Such ideas never gain complete possession of a man, or they gain possession only of incomplete people."

This loss of faith means that when it comes time to use force, the elites employ it haphazardly and inefficiently, in large part because they are unsure of the loyalty of the foot soldiers on the streets charged with carrying out repression.

Revolutions take time. The American Revolution began with protests against the Stamp Act of 1765 but did not erupt until a decade later. The 1917 revolution in Russia started with a dress rehearsal in 1905. The most effective revolutions, including the Russian Revolution, have been largely nonviolent. There are always violent radicals who carry out bombings and assassinations, but they hinder, especially in the early stages, more than help revolutions. The anarchist Peter Kropotkin during the Russian Revolution condemned the radical terrorists, asserting that they only demoralized and frightened away the movement's followers and discredited authentic anarchism.

Radical violent groups cling like parasites to popular protests. The Black Panthers, the American Indian Movement, the Weather Underground, the Red Brigades and the Symbionese Liberation Army arose in the ferment of the 1960s. Violent radicals are used by the state to justify harsh repression. They scare the mainstream from the movement. They thwart the goal of all revolutions, which is to turn the majority against an isolated and discredited ruling class. These violent fringe groups are seductive to those who yearn for personal empowerment through hyper-masculinity and violence, but they do little to advance the cause. The primary role of radical extremists, such as Maximilien Robespierre and Vladimir Lenin, is to hijack successful revolutions. They unleash a reign of terror, primarily against fellow revolutionaries, which often outdoes the repression of the old regime. They often do not play much of a role in building a revolution.

The power of the Occupy movement is that it expresses the widespread disgust with the elites, and the deep desire for justice and fairness that is essential to all successful revolutionary movements. The Occupy movement will change and mutate, but it will not go away. It may appear to make little headway, but this is less because of the movement's ineffectiveness and more because decayed systems of power have an amazing ability to perpetuate themselves through habit, routine and inertia. The press and organs of communication, along with the anointed experts and academics, tied by money and ideology to the elites, are useless in dissecting what is happening within these movements. They view reality through the lens of their corporate sponsors. They have no idea what is happening.

Dying regimes are chipped away slowly and imperceptibly. The assumptions and daily formalities of the old system are difficult for citizens to abandon, even when the old system is increasingly hostile to their dignity, well-being and survival. Supplanting an old faith with a new one is the silent, unseen battle of all revolutionary movements. And during the slow transition it is almost impossible to measure progress.

"Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong," Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks*. "When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief."

The end of these regimes comes when old beliefs die and the organs of security, especially the police and military, abandon the elites and join the revolutionaries. This is true in every successful revolution. It does not matter how sophisticated the repressive apparatus. Once those who handle the tools of repression become demoralized, the security and surveillance state is impotent. Regimes, when they die, are like a great ocean liner sinking in minutes on the horizon. And no one, including the purported leaders of the opposition, can predict the moment of death. Revolutions have an innate, mysterious life force that defies comprehension. They are living entities.

The defection of the security apparatus is often done with little or no violence, as I witnessed in Eastern Europe in 1989 and as was also true in 1979 in Iran and in 1917 in Russia. At other times, when it has enough residual force to fight back, the dying regime triggers a violent clash as it did in the American Revolution when soldiers and officers in the British army, including George Washington, rebelled to raise the Continental Army. Violence also characterized the 1949 Chinese revolution led by Mao Zedong. But even revolutions that turn violent succeed, as Mao conceded, because they enjoy popular support and can mount widespread protests, strikes, agitation, revolutionary propaganda and acts of civil disobedience. The object is to try to get there without violence. Armed revolutions, despite what the history books often tell us, are tragic, ugly, frightening and sordid affairs. Those who storm Bastilles, as the Polish dissident Adam Michnik wrote, "unwittingly build new ones." And once revolutions turn violent it becomes hard to speak of victors and losers.

A revolution has been unleashed across the globe. This revolution, a popular repudiation of the old order, is where we should direct all our energy and commitment. If we do not topple the corporate elites the ecosystem will be destroyed and massive numbers of human beings along with it. The struggle will be long. There will be times when it will seem we are going nowhere. Victory is not inevitable. But this is our best and only hope. The response of the corporate state will ultimately determine the parameters and composition of rebellion. I pray we replicate the 1989 nonviolent revolutions that overthrew the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. But this is not in my hands or yours. Go ahead and vote this November. But don't waste any more time or energy on the presidential election than it takes to get to your polling station and pull a lever for a third-party candidate—just enough to register your obstruction and defiance—and then get back out onto the street. That is where the question of real power is being decided.

20120515-03	14:30	SteveB	From the Right: "Mitt Romney's Plan of Attack"
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"Mitt Romney's Plan of Attack" by Hope Hodge, *Human Events*

May 14, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51344>)

(Human Events Reporter Hope Hodge spoke with Karl Rove, senior adviser and deputy chief of staff to former President George W. Bush, about presumptive GOP nominee Mitt Romney and key tenets of a winning strategy for the 2012 presidential campaign. She also captured his key points in an address to a Young America's Foundation event at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.)

Romney's prospects

Karl Rove: Sure he can [win]. Will he? I don't know; that's what the election is all about.

Romney's biggest roadblocks

I think the question is going to be how strong and powerful is (Romney's) argument going to be for economic growth. How strong is his emphasis going to be on reform. If he comes across as a reform conservative who's focused on growing the economy and putting America back to work, then he's going to be in good shape.

And we've seen in the last couple of weeks very strong strains of him. Talking about how we need to put America back to work, talking about how we need to reduce tax rates and simplify the code. Having him talk candidly about the problem with entitlements and endorsing things like premium support, those are all good signs.

Issues in Romney's favor

The economy, the deficits, spending, entitlements. The [Patient Protection and] Affordable care act is a big issue. This is something that really matters to a lot of people, and him being able to go on the offense not only to say 'let's repeal it,' but to say, 'here's what I'm going to do [that] is going to be really useful.

States Romney needs to take

Three, two, one—Indiana, Virginia, North Carolina. Three historically Republican states that went Democrat; Florida and Ohio—together they have 49 electoral college votes. Swung into the Democratic column in '08, but were Republican in '04 and swung by a smaller margin. And if Republicans win those five states, then all they need to win is one more state—New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Colorado, New Mexico, or Nevada.

GOP targets states Obama won

Republican strategists view 9 states that went to Bush in 2004 and Obama in 2008 as crucial to the GOP hopes in 2012.

Electoral votes in 2012 and previous presidential winners:

	2004		2008	
	Bush	Kerry	McCain	Obama
Florida 29	52%	47%	48%	51%
Ohio 18	51	49	47	52
North Carolina 15	56	44	49	50
Virginia 13	54	46	46	53
Indiana 11	60	39	49	50
Colorado 9	52	47	45	54
Iowa 6	50	49	44	54
Nevada 6	51	48	43	55
New Mexico 5	50	49	42	57

SOURCE: AP reporting

AP

President Obama's present position in the minds of the American people

We're right at the end of a really ugly Republican presidential process; it's not over yet. Today [Tuesday, April 30] in the Gallup, it is Obama 46, Romney 47. Shouldn't be that way. We have a popular incumbent. They like him; the American people like him. They don't agree with a lot that he's done as president, but he came into office with the best wishes of the American people and they like him. And he's personally popular.

But, they don't like what he's done in office. They expected something different. He had one of the best-run presidential campaigns, and you step back and take a look at the message of the 2008 campaign, it was like, you know, just watching Mickey Mantle pounding it out of the park. Some of the best lines of modern American politics: 'I don't want to be the president of red states or blue states, but the United States'—that's a brilliant line.

The American people were just ready to turn the page, and along came this guy who sounded like a centrist: 'I'm going to cut taxes for everybody who makes less than 250K a year.'

He spends roughly four words devoted to cutting taxes ... for every word devoted to raising taxes.

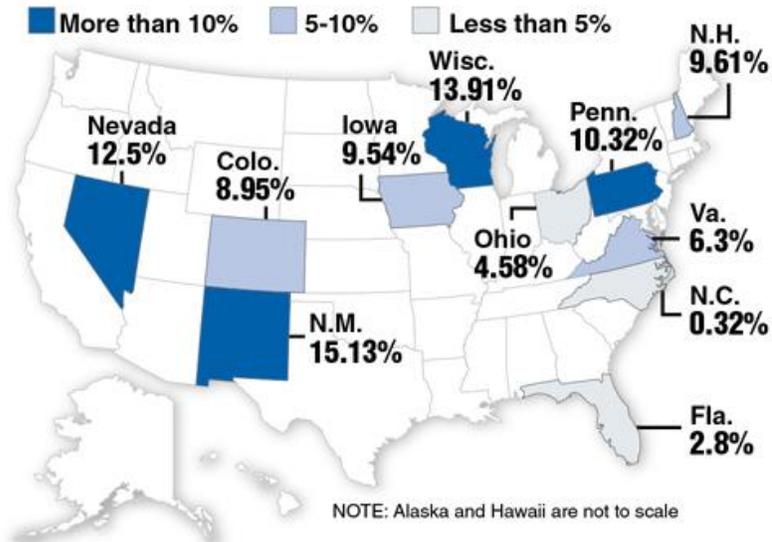
Also [he was] was really smart in how he talked about the deficit. Also talked about the deficits under the Bush years, saying 'I'm going to cut them in half by the end of my first term in office.

People had been led to believe (Obama) would be a centrist, and he has not been. And that's the first and most important thing that Romney needs to understand.

States to watch

President Barack Obama faces a challenge winning some of the swing states he carried in 2008. Tossup states for the last three presidential elections:

Obama's margin of victory in swing states in 2008



Margins of victory in recent elections

Swing state	2000	2004
Florida	0.01% Bush	5.01% Bush
Ohio	3.51 Bush	2.10 Bush
Nevada	3.54 Bush	2.59 Bush
Colorado	8.36 Bush	4.67 Bush
Pennsylvania	4.17 Gore	2.50 Kerry
Wisconsin	0.22 Gore	0.38 Kerry
New Mexico	0.06 Gore	0.79 Bush
Iowa	0.32 Gore	0.67 Bush
New Hampshire	1.27 Bush	1.37 Kerry

Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections
Graphic: Julie Sheer, Doug Stevens, Los Angeles Times

© 2012 MCT

Romney should focus on three key strategic ingredients

He needs to take President Obama on his own words and own actions, get him on video saying these things and hold him to account for it in a respectful manner. This is not about getting angry, this isn't about getting belligerent, it isn't about pounding the table. This is simply about saying, 'this is what the president said he was going to do when he was in office, and here's what he's done'—the facts.

The second [key strategic ingredient]: Mr. Romney needs to understand that he's going to have to absorb a lot of blows. This is not going to be the normal presidential re-election year. The presidency is a powerful presence in American minds. You have a lot of authority and prestige in office and if you use it effectively, it makes it relatively easy for a president to get re-elected. But President Obama has not used the power and prestige of the office to prepare for his re-election.

Last year—do you remember what the topics of the State of the Union were last year? Three of them. The most compelling and centered issues in America's life as a nation: High speed rail, high speed Internet, and countless green jobs. The last one doesn't sound too good after Solyndra. The first two are just plain weird.

I defy you to tell me what the theme of this year's State of the Union was. You think what are the two biggest signature accomplishments of president Obama—the stimulus bill, which got not one word in this year's State of the Union address, and the Affordable Care Act, which got 44 words and two sentences.

Obama campaign strategy: Kill Romney. We're going to see this. We're going to see it every day of the campaign. And it is not going to work to President Obama's advantage unless and until Mitt Romney stops replying to it. They want to see where these attacks are going. We're going to have this constantly throughout the campaign.

Third key strategic ingredient for Romney campaign: understand it's not merely enough to set the record straight or to use the president's own words and own statements and his own pledges and promises and statements to hold him accountable, but it's also very important for the American people to get a sense of who Mitt Romney is and what it is that he'll do. They want to know what he's going to do in office. They want to know that he's got an idea of what he wants to achieve.

Romney's going to be tested. What's he all about? How authentic is he? Who is he? You don't have to agree with someone 100 percent of time to kind of cave and say, you know what, 'I trust him.'

Romney needs to lay out an agenda. And it needs to be what he believes. This is not just about Obama did or didn't deliver. It's not just about going toe to toe with Obama, 'as he throws a punch at me I can defend myself and push back.' It's going to have to be 'what is it am I going to do if I get elected.' And that's really tough for people to do. That's conventional politics.

The stuff of laying out a vision sometimes comes across to the media as prosaic. That's strategic.

A few useful tactics

First of all, (the Romney camp) has to worry about money. I add it all up, Obama is likely to have \$1.2 billion dollars. So Romney has to worry about money and close the gap. He can't be like McCain... Obama vs. McCain \$850 million to \$525 million. So Romney needs to narrow that gap.

Romney also needs to be careful about his travel and what states he focuses on. One way to look at this is 12—that's how much closer the electoral college is going to be in 2012 if Romney only wins the states that McCain carried. Because between '08 and '12 we reapportioned the electoral college.

This is going to be one of the most interesting contests in recent memory.

20120515-04	14:36	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Contribute to help Tom Barrett Defeat Scott Walker
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from Daily Kos:

Steven, Wisconsin Democrats say they aren't getting the help they need from national Democratic Party committees to counter the avalanche of Republican money supporting Scott Walker:

"We are frustrated by the lack of support from the Democratic National Committee and the Democratic Governors Association," a top Wisconsin Democratic Party official tells me. "Scott Walker has the full support and backing of the Republican Party and all its tentacles. We are not getting similar support."

"Considering that Scott Walker has already spent \$30 million and we're even in the polls, this is a winnable race," the Wisconsin Dem continues. "We can get outspent two to one or five to one. We can't get spent 20 to one."

The Obama campaign has sent its Wisconsin supporters an email about the recall and has been working on ensuring that Wisconsin Democrats know how they will be affected by new voter ID laws. However, those efforts don't come with financial help. While unions have committed resources to this election, what they can give pales beside the huge amounts the Republican Party and the Koch brothers have put into keeping Walker in office.

The Democratic Party can't somehow make Wisconsin insignificant by not contributing—it's a win or lose proposition. Win, and you get the chance to undo some of the damage Scott Walker has done. Lose, and Walker gets the chance to make it worse—and especially to do his best to prevent Democrats from voting in November, thus forcing the Obama campaign to concentrate resources on Wisconsin that could be spent elsewhere if the governor of Wisconsin is Tom Barrett rather than Scott Walker.

The key to beating Scott Walker on June 5 is having a well-funded, effective GOTV operation. Please contribute \$4 to help Tom Barrett defeat Scott Walker:

https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/dailykoswisconsin?refcode=5_15_em3.

Keep fighting, Laura Clawson, Labor Editor, Daily Kos

20120515-05 15:38 SteveB From the Right: "Fuzzy Math on Energy"

"Fuzzy Math on Energy" by Mark LaRochelle, Human Events

May 15, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51502>)

"We [Americans] consume about 25 percent of the world's oil," says President Barack Obama, but we "only have 2 percent of the reserves."

Obama uses this statistic to argue against increasing U.S. oil production, saying that even if Americans "drilled every drop of oil" we have, "it still wouldn't be enough to meet our long-term needs." Instead, he says, "We've got to discover and produce cleaner, renewable sources of energy."

BUNK

As others have noted, the president's figures are suspect. However, let's assume for the sake of argument that his numbers are correct. If the U.S. share of global oil consumption is 25 percent, and the U.S. share of global reserves is 2 percent, the ratio of our shares of consumption to reserves is 25:2, or 12.5 to 1.

To put this ratio in perspective, let's compare the U.S. with other industrialized nations, using the CIA World Factbook's figures for consumption and proved reserves: For the European Union, this ratio is about 32:1; for Japan, 1,300:1; for Taiwan, 5,400:1. For Switzerland, Hong Kong, or Singapore, the ratio is infinite, since they have no proved reserves at all.

What exactly does the president think this proves? That the Swiss should use no oil?

Oil consumption compared with GDP

Global oil demand was 89.1 billion barrels per day last year, according to the International Energy Agency. The U.S. Energy Information Administration put daily U.S. consumption at 18.8 million barrels; so, our consumption was actually about 21 percent of the total.

However, global GDP was about \$63.3 trillion last year, according to the World Bank. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Research put U.S. GDP at \$15.3 trillion; so the U.S. contributed about 24.2 percent of the total. Thus, as a share of the totals, the U.S. contributes more to global GDP than to global oil consumption.

Is it unreasonable to use 21 percent of the world's oil to produce 24 percent of the world's total value of goods and services? Many other countries' shares of oil consumption are actually greater than their contribution to global output. Such countries range from Canada and Mexico, to Belgium and the Netherlands, to South Korea and Singapore.

As the world's third-largest oil exporter, the U.S. is unusual. According to the International Monetary Fund's GDP figures for 2011, most major oil-exporting countries contribute far more to global oil consumption than to global GDP. For example, Iran's share of global oil consumption is 58 percent greater than its contribution to global GDP; for Venezuela the figure is 69 percent; for Saudi Arabia, over 200 percent.

U.S. has more than "proved" [sic] reserves

Obama's claim that the U.S. has only 2 percent of the world's oil reserves refers only to currently "proved" [sic] reserves. But despite rising consumption, proved reserves more than doubled from 1980 to 2009. As oil analyst Daniel Yergin observes, "Just in the years 2007 to 2009, for every barrel of oil produced in the world, 1.6 barrels of new reserves were added."

Regarding what the president calls "our long-term needs," the U.S. Energy Information Administration estimates that "ultimately recoverable global reserves" of oil and natural gas total 2.4 trillion barrels, of which 185 billion barrels—more than 15 percent—are in North America. In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates domestic reserves to include another 2 trillion barrels of shale oil. This is nearly twice the reported reserves of all OPEC countries combined, meaning that the total U.S. share is not 2 percent, but closer to two-thirds of global reserves.

The president's fuzzy math has resulted in millions of dollars transferred from the American public to Obama's cronies at "green energy" black holes like Solyndra, failed maker of solar panels, while gas prices have doubled. It's time to put a stop to that, and to get serious about American energy, and energy self-reliance.

20120515-06 7:23 Charis "Bolivia's Main Private Airline AeroSur in Doubt"

"Bolivia's Main Private Airline AeroSur in Doubt" by Carlos Valdez, AP

May 14, 2012, (<http://www.wandtv.com/story/18394549/bolivias-main-private-airline-aerosur-in-doubt>)

(LA PAZ, Bolivia) Bolivia's principal privately owned airline, AeroSur, was down to a single domestic route Monday and hoping for an infusion of capital to stave off bankruptcy.

U.S. mining investor William Petty was in talks with company executives after proposing to make an investment without assuming any of the airline's debts, which exceed \$20 million. Petty is a shareholder in Franklin Mining Inc. of Colorado.

A representative of the airline's owners, Sergio Asbun, told The Associated Press that they were analyzing an offer from Petty but would not offer details.

A dozen AeroSur workers declared themselves on strike Monday at La Paz's international airport, saying they were going on a hunger strike, union leader Elias Quispe said. The company has more than 1,000 employees and Quispe said none have been paid for at least three months.

AeroSur's troubles were complicated in March when a court ordered that 100 percent of the company's revenues from ticket sales be seized by Bolivia's tax agency to cover unpaid taxes.

Beginning in January, AeroSur suspended nearly all its flights.

Until December, it had 26 daily flights with leased planes on routes within Bolivia and to Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Miami, Florida, and Madrid, Spain.

Now, the company can't afford jet fuel, Vladimir Sanchez, Bolivia's public works minister, said recently. He said the government would not help the airline until it pays its debts, makes its finances more transparent and defines a restructuring plan.

The airline's crisis exposed tensions between investors with blood relations.

The company's president, Sergio Sanzetenea, accused his half-brother and predecessor in the job, Humberto Roca, of embezzling \$37.2 million from the company. Roca says Sanzetenea misappropriated stock.

Roca has lived in Miami since leaving Bolivia last year when the government of President Evo Morales accused him of illegal enrichment. Sanzetenea lives in Argentina.

AeroSur began in 1992 after the collapse of state-run flag carrier LAB Airlines and it expanded market share until Morales launched state-owned Boliviana de Aviacion two years ago.

The state company lowered ticket prices to woo customers from AeroSur, which accused it of using government subsidies to undercut its private competition.

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<u>20120515-07</u> 18:36 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Petition: Tell DNC: Help Unseat Gov. Scott Walker
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from MoveOn:

As a Wisconsin progressive working day and night for the recall of Scott Walker, I'm shocked: The Democratic National Committee still isn't giving financial support to the recall fight in Wisconsin.

After more than a year of grassroots efforts, Wisconsin citizens have accomplished more than anyone thought possible. We now have a Democratic challenger to Scott Walker who is neck and neck in the polls, even though Tom Barrett is being outspent by Walker's millions from out-of-state donations.

There is no more time for the Democratic National Committee to wait—if Walker wins, it would be a huge setback to Democrats in races across the country this year. We need the DNC's support immediately!

That's why I created a petition on SignOn.org to DNC Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, which says:

Democratic National Committee and Debbie Wasserman Schultz, invest now in the crucial fight to remove Scott Walker from office in Wisconsin—the people have worked hard and it's time to help.

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

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275536&id=41481-20195165-YT0Jzhx&t=2>

Thanks! –Mary Magnuson

Source:

"EXCLUSIVE: Wisconsin Dems furious with DNC for refusing to invest big money in Walker recall," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275547&id=41481-20195165-YT0Jzhx&t=3>.

CHRISTIAN NATION?



So, America was founded on a Foreign born, Brown skinned, Jewish guy that never spoke a word of English, fed and healed the poor for free. Defended a woman from being slut shamed and killed, and chose not to conform to either Religious or Political nonsense?

Cool... When are we gonna start that?

@OlaBetiku

<http://the-empty-plate.blogspot.com/>



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

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



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #140 — MAY 17, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

'Willard the Bain'



Look Out! Here They Come to Rape and Pillage! (Viking Raiding Party Enactment)
<http://www.solarnavigator.net/history/vikings.htm>

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 17, 2012)

If this is what you want done to America, I guess you should vote for R0mney.

I think he wants to run us through the ringer and downsize us rather immediately.

Business, like sitting in a Hanoi prison, does not prepare one to be President of the United States. We are not a business, we are a nation. I know the Republicans want those two to become one, but that is one type of marriage Democrats will simply not permit.

The only part of "nation" or government Romney seems to understand is how to sell it to the Super-PACs and his rich buddies. Maybe he can turn a profit on the Presidency?

"If You Know Anything About the Vikings, You Know Everything You Need to Know About Willard Romney and Bain Capital!" by Jillian Barclay, OpEdNews

May 15, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/If-You-Know-Anything-About-by-Jillian-Barclay-120515-583.html>)

Bain Capital and Willard Romney think they have a great track record? Maybe they do. They made a lot of money for themselves and their investors. While their investors didn't make nearly as much as Romney and the other Bain principles, they saw a hefty profit. But where did the Romney/Bain business model originate? Who thought of it and actually put it into practice first?

Those ever-lovin' Vikings! No, not the football team, but the real Vikings! You know, those Middle Ages, free-market capitalists with the big ships and long swords. Their business plan was very similar to Romney/Bain's, and surely they deserve most of the credit for Willard the Bain's success.

The Vikings' concept of a leveraged buyout was simple (simpler times).

The Vikings would search out villages, some small, some big. The villages or towns were doing fairly well, had resources or something of value and in the early morning hours, the Vikings would swoop in and attack. They murdered the men in their sleep and then raped and killed the women. Most of the time they killed the babies, too, but many times, they kidnapped older children so they could turn them into slaves. Then the Vikings would take anything of value, leave the village in flames and be on their merry way with the spoils (profit).

One of the Vikings was SO well-versed in the art of the leveraged buyout that he eventually became the King of England! King? President? The Viking king's name was Knut the Great and even though he was more well known for slicing open the heads of his enemies with an axe than with a sword, he became a King! While Knut the Great was not the first of the Vikings to employ the successful model of leveraged buyouts, he was the best, in my opinion! He became a very powerful king and along the way, he stopped killing everyone. He soon evolved into a brute that only killed those who needed to be killed and, he gave tons and tons of the gold he had stolen to the churches. Although he never called it tithing, the gold-giving kept the churches on his side. What a smarty pants (politician) he became! Arguably, he could have gone to Harvard and gotten a couple of degrees...A full 99% of his subjects were poor because Gnut the Great took everything of value, but with churches on his side (while sharing in the loot), what could those subjects do?

Willard the Bain's leveraged buyouts are not quite as brutal as the Vikings. In fact, they seem boring by comparison. So boring, that very few people even understand what happens with a modern leveraged buyout, but minus the killing and raping, there is plenty of slashing, burning and looting. The fun stuff still plays a role.

Willard the Bain's concept of the leveraged buyout might seem, on its face, to be complicated (times are not so simple now). Just keep in mind the business model of the Vikings, and you will have no trouble with the plan that made Willard the Bain so wealthy.

Willard the Bain doesn't use the term leveraged buyout too much. Instead, you will hear the phrase, private equity (but they are basically the same). Private equity deals focus on debt-heavy leveraged buyouts of slightly troubled companies that have some wealth or resources that can be used as collateral for borrowing. The first thing Willard the Bain did was swoop in, usually while everyone was asleep, and start to restructure; cutting costs and eliminating jobs. Restructuring and cutting jobs tends to make a company appear financially healthy enough to borrow money on its collateral (wealth and resources) and that borrowed money went to pay off Willard the Bain's investors, principles and of course, Willard the Bain. Then, when the leveraged companies had serious financial troubles (who coulda predicted that?), Willard the Bain would file bankruptcy for the company and run away with the spoils (profits), leaving the company in flames and the workers unemployed.

See how simple that is?

The Wall Street Journal took a close look at Willard the Bain's top 77 deals and found out that those deals made "the Bain" most of his well over \$200 Million dollars. The companies? The companies didn't do so well.

The *Journal* pointed out that within 8 years of Willard the Bain's leveraged buyouts, 22 percent of the companies filed for bankruptcy or closed their doors. Another 8 percent were so bad off that Willard the Bain lost his company's investment.

There were also those companies where the pension funds were looted... It's all good, though, because the taxpayers picked up the cost. Pension plans were never a big part of the Viking business model, anyway, so I hesitate to even talk about them. Maybe next time...

Some have called Willard the Bain a vulture capitalist. I prefer to call him a Viking, and much like Gnut the Great, Willard the Bain wants to be King! He may wear a suit, but he carries a long sword, maybe even an axe, and just like Gnut the Great, Willard the Bain's subjects will be poor because he and his comrades will slash, burn and loot. It is what he knows!

Ooops, almost forgot! Willard the Bain will tithe...

20120516-01 09:18 SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Action: Tell Congress to Pass the Medical Device Safety Bill!
--	---

from Consumers Union:

You wouldn't buy a new car with a known safety defect. You'd expect the problem to be fixed first.

So why is Congress planning to let medical device manufacturers keep selling implants – from hip replacements to heart defibrillators to surgical mesh – without having them fix the safety flaw first?

Tell your Senators and Representative: Fix the Flaw!

<https://secure.consumersunion.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=2665&JServSessionIdr004=wpi6vpz473.app243a>

This week the Senate could vote on the bill that sets safety standards for the medical device industry. Lobbyists have managed to keep this gaping safety loophole from being fixed in the bill, and we need consumers to speak out today before it's too late.

Manufacturers love the loophole because they can put an implant on the market just by showing that it's 'substantially equivalent' to one already approved – even if the implant they're modeling it on was recalled for safety problems! And the FDA can't make the company prove they've fixed the flaw or do clinical safety testing before the device is sold to you!

The consequences are serious. Tens of thousands of women have various vaginal mesh implants inside them based on a 1999 recalled product. Last year the FDA warned about bleeding, infections and organ perforation from the mesh deteriorating, and many women require multiple surgeries to repair the damage. The FDA should have the authority to demand flaws like these be fixed before allowing the devices to be sold.

Congress: Fix the Flaw with medical devices, and hold industry responsible for safety!

It's important you get your Senators' attention on this matter, or the loophole might just slip quietly through. Consumers' emails have already made the safety bills stronger, so please forward this to others so they can add their voice to this critical issue.

Sincerely, Lisa McGiffert, SafePatientProject.org

20120516-02 10:36 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Reject the 'Bombs Not bread' Budget!

from CREDO Action:

How cruel and heartless are the Tea Party Republicans in Congress? The extreme right wing leadership of the House of Representatives just passed a budget plan that cuts off 300,000 kids from free school lunches at a time when one in five children lives in poverty.¹ And all to give more money to the Pentagon's already bloated budget.

In last summer's deal on the debt ceiling, the House and Senate agreed to mandatory future cuts to both the military and social programs. While painful, this represented a much better deal than anything under consideration by the Super Committee because the cuts to military spending were so deep — and it effectively spared Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare benefits from cuts.

But now House Republicans have passed a sweeping budget reconciliation bill reneging on the debt ceiling deal to cut military spending. Their latest budget bill increases Pentagon spending above the agreed-upon levels in the debt deal that would enact \$1.2 trillion in cuts over 10 years, split evenly between Pentagon spending and domestic programs.²

Tell Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell: Reject the House Republican's cruel budget plan. Say no to a heartless tea party budget that pays for Pentagon increases by taking food and health care away from children.

Click here to sign the petition:

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6887341&id=40192-3891339-LeDFTOx&t=11>.

The Republican budget is a Tea Party wish list. It increases an already bloated military budget and pays for it by taking away funding for food stamps, wiping out key parts of the federal health care law including health care for children, and slashes funding designated to reign in Wall Street.

Specifically the GOP budget package would cut \$36 billion from the food stamp program by reducing benefits and tightening eligibility, \$23.5 billion from Medicaid and children's health care, \$4.2 billion from hospitals that serve the poor and uninsured, and \$2.8 billion from a program that helps homeowners facing foreclosures.³ We need to organize today and make sure that this cruel and heartless House GOP budget plan dies in the Senate.

The deal was already made last summer. It was a compromise, but because it mandated equal cuts to military spending and social programs it was a better deal than Democrats imagined was possible on the deficit. Now we have to defend that deal to make sure Republicans don't block the required military cuts. If these cuts are rolled back, then all the required deficit reduction will come on the backs of children, the working class and the poor. It is urgent for us to speak up now to let the Senate know we will not stand for a compromise on the compromise.

Tell Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell: Reject the House Republican's cruel budget plan and hold the line on mandated military cuts. Click here to automatically sign the petition.

America already has the world's biggest economy and the most advanced and powerful military. No other country — including China — comes close. Reigning in the Pentagon budget won't change that. Keep in mind our military and defense spending played a significant role in increasing the national debt — over the last decade. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan contributed to record deficits. The U.S. defense budget is six times that of China's and equal to that of more than the next 17 highest spending countries combined.⁴

A consensus appears to be emerging among Americans with overwhelming support for military spending cuts. A recent nationwide poll showed that "not only does the public want deep cuts, it wants those cuts to encompass spending in virtually every military domain — air power, sea power, ground forces, nuclear weapons, and missile

defenses."⁵ According to that poll in which respondents were told about the size of the budget as well as shown expert arguments for and against spending cuts, two-thirds of Republicans and nine in 10 Democrats supported making immediate cuts.⁶ A chorus of security experts have also come out in support of a more streamlined military budget.⁷

Tell Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell: Reject the House Republican's cruel budget plan. Say no to a heartless tea party budget that pays for Pentagon increases by taking food and health care away from children.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid rose up last week and blasted the House Republicans for trying to fatten up the Pentagon spending at the expense of our kids, seniors and so many others who could least afford it. He called them out on the Senate Floor for failing a "basic moral test" and said that pushing a "one-sided solution to across-the-board cuts would take from the many to give to the few."⁸

It is time for rest of Senator Reid's colleagues in the U.S. Senate to come out and denounce this budget as a non-starter.

Thank you for fighting back against Republican extremists.

Murshed Zaheed, Deputy Political Director, CREDO Action from Working Assets

Sources:

¹Jonathan Weisman, "House Approves \$310 Billion in Cuts, but Passage in the Senate Is Very Unlikely," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2012.

²Rosalind S. Helderan, "GOP plan would forestall Pentagon cuts," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2012.

³Weisman, "House Approves \$310 Billion in Cuts, but Passage in the Senate Is Very Unlikely."

⁴Zaid Jilani, Memo To The Media: The U.S. Spends Six Times More On Military Than China, ThinkProgress.com, August 25, 2011 and the Economist online, "Defence costs," Economist.com, June 8, 2011.

⁵R. Jeffrey Smith, "Public overwhelmingly supports large defense spending cuts," iWatchNews.org by The Center for Public Integrity, May 10, 2012.

⁶Id.

⁷National Security Network, "Background Brief: Military and Bipartisan National Security Experts Agree: It's Time to Reduce Military Spending," October 25, 2011.

⁸"Reid: Democrats Will Not Go Back On Tough But Balanced August Budget Deal To Benefit Billionaires, Defense Contractors," Democrats.Senate.gov, May 9, 2012.

20120516-03	12:12 SteveB	Fw: USAction Action: Donate \$5 to Defeat Bush 2.0!
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from USAction:

WE DON'T NEED BUSH 2,0!

Last week President Obama made history when he announced to the American people, "I think same sex couples should be able to get married." We couldn't agree more and applaud Obama for his bold leadership on this issue.

Meanwhile, former President George W. Bush endorsed Mitt Romney for President yesterday. And while Bush's announcement should come as no surprise, let us not forget that it was Bush and Karl Rove who used the issue of gay marriage to divide our country in 2004.

All people are created equal. Period. Help us elect a President who stands up for equal rights. Donate \$5 now to help elect President Obama to a second term.

Coming on the heels of President Obama's historic announcement, Bush's support paints a contrast between the two candidates voters will be presented with this November.

A bold leader who bravely stood up for equality for all Americans, or a bully who pinned down a young gay boy and cut off his hair as a young man. The president who helped save the American economy or a vulture capitalist who amassed wealth by laying off workers and shipping jobs overseas. A commander-in-chief who ended the War in Iraq and has a plan to get us out of Afghanistan, or an ideologue who wants to send our sons and daughters to Iran.

The choice for us is clear. Donate \$5 right now so we can help re-elect President Obama. Your donation goes towards our critical election work around the country. Our affiliates are on the ground NOW in 8 of the 12 swing states -- New Hampshire, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Virginia, Iowa, Florida, and Pennsylvania. They are registering and contacting voters NOW -- at least 7500 per state, where additional progressive votes can push Obama and other progressive candidates over the top. We are one of the only groups doing voter registration in Florida --- a closely divided state we know can come down to hundreds of votes, so the 25,000 African Americans we're registering in the Tampa area could make the difference there. Or registering and turning out 25,000 single women in New Hampshire, a closely divided state that went Bush, Kerry, Obama but has Romney up 3 points right now.

It's fitting that Bush has endorsed Romney, he represents the same failed policies of the past.

Unpaid wars. Massive debt. Tax cuts for the richest few. And blatant disregard for our basic civil rights.

That is the Bush legacy and it will be the Romney legacy unless we stand up and rally around the progress President Obama has created these last four years.

We can help re-elect President Obama – a champion for the 99% but only with your help. Donate \$5 now to make it happen:

<http://act.truemajority.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=2M8xw9eMRCsjj8E7%2BmDmpz2kFc%2BNvULu>.

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction Fund for a TrueMajority PAC

20120516-04	12:14 Bill	Fw: Secret Service Scandal
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Irony:

The Secret Service scandal was discovered when a disagreement on how much a prostitute wanted for her services came to light. She wanted \$800. The Secret Service agent offered \$30. How ironic is it that the only person in Washington willing to cut spending gets fired?

20120516-05	12:20 Pam	Franz Fanon
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I really like the article on corporate colonialism. It rings true to me. I always feel like a conspiracy nut until I see someone else who is respectable saying the same things that I think. I've often thought that our politics is a side show, designed to keep us occupied while the real business goes on in boardrooms around the globe. Perhaps our elections are as mythical as those in Russia or Saudi Arabia. I don't really believe it's as bad as that, but if you look at history over the last 100 years or more, business has been the tail that wags the dog, and the tail is now bushy as hell. Is there anything that can curb corporate recklessness, and I include our amalgamated banks in that category? Glass-Steagal, Dodd-Frank, the Volker Rule--have any of them accomplished what they set out to do? I wonder why that is? Our best and brightest have been sucked into the vortex of never-ending expansion and

growth. They get to stay in the calm middle, while the outer fringes get flung to the winds of chance. I know history is supposed to be directionless, with no inevitable forces pace Marx, but overall it's always been the wealthy and the political elites (usually one and the same) who get what they want. Tear down one system, as in Russia, and another rises to take its place, i.e., the current Russian oligarchy with its gangster millionaires.

I've never read Fanon and always thought of him as a wild-eyed radical, taught to suggestible college students by left-wing professors, but now that I think about it, the person who led me to believe that is a conservative, Catholic Republican. Hmmmm. I agree with Fanon's analysis of revolutions, and, like him, I think we're going to have to have one if things are going to improve. I also hope that the revolution can be accomplished without violence, without rancor, always keeping in mind and protecting those who stand to be hurt the most by major change. People must adapt. Harness makers aren't needed as they once were. But can't we, with all our brains and resources, figure out a way to ease the transition from the horse and buggy to the Concorde? Do we have to throw whole generations under a bus in order to keep moving? Both of our political parties rattle on about values, standards, and morals, but politics is all about words and as little as possible about action. And why is it always the sons of bitches who accomplish good things--like Lyndon Johnson or Huey Long? If we're honest, how can we conclude anything but that the strong will always crush the weak, and the ruthless will always prevail above the good? Revolution we must have, but with responsibility. I'm not very sanguine about either.

Don't you just love my cheerful rants?! Sorry, guys. I'm really a pretty happy person. :-)

[20120516-06](#) 13:11 SteveG Re: Franz Fanon (reply to Pam, above)

All of Dodd-Frank and the Volker Rule have not been fully implemented and there is strong lobbying to keep them from being implemented. JP Morgan Chase has spent over \$20 million in lobbying against full implementation, they do say they agree with 70 % or so of the new rules – that was before the disclosure of the \$2 billion dollar loss within 6 weeks.

[20120516-07](#) 13:17 Pam Re: Franz Fanon (reply to SteveG, above)

Don't you love it?! Reforms have been watered way down, and what's left doesn't go into effect until 2014. By then the lawyers will have had a chance to dilute them even more. What did MLK used to say? "Justice delayed is justice denied."

[20120516-08](#) 13:23 SteveG Re: Franz Fanon (reply to Pam, above)

It is all a sorry state of affairs. This is the middle of May and Bonehead has said what he will do/not do between now and December. Read a biography of LBJ a few months ago – master of getting legislation done – learned from his dad and perfected as he worked his way up the ranks in Washington. Do not think many people have spent the time or energy to learn the trade since. Narcissism comes to mind as a good term to define current politics.

[20120516-09](#) 14:15 SteveB "Public vs. Private Morality"

"Public vs. Private Morality" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

May 16, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/public-vs-private-morality-1337170668>)

("Romney has come out strongly against same-sex marriage. He's also against abortion. He has no problem with government intruding on the most intimate of decisions a person makes.")

Mitt Romney's reaction to J.P. Morgan Chase's mounting losses from reckless trades is "the market will take care of it." His spokesman says "no taxpayer money was at risk" so we don't need more financial regulation. Romney has even promised to repeal Dodd-Frank if he's elected president.

Yet at the same time, Romney has come out strongly against same-sex marriage. He's also against abortion. He has no problem with government intruding on the most intimate of decisions a person makes.

He's got private and public morality upside down. He doesn't want to regulate where regulation is necessary — at the highest reaches of the economy, where public immorality has cost us dearly, and will cost even more unless boardroom behavior is constrained. Yet he wants to regulate where regulation is least appropriate — at the level of the individual, in bedrooms and other intimate spaces, where private morality should govern.

This is a dangerous confusion. It should be a matter of personal choice whom to marry and when to have children. But it is undoubtedly a matter of public choice whether big banks should be allowed to take the kind of risky bets that plunged the economy into the worst downturn since the Great Depression, and whether people with great wealth and should be able to buy our democracy with huge campaign contributions.

Please see the attached video and pass it on:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TB73Lw1XtE&feature=player_embedded.

20120516-12 15:11 SteveB From the Right: "JPMorgan Proves We Don't Need More Regulation"
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"JPMorgan Proves We Don't Need More Regulation" by David Harsanyi, *Human Events*

May 15, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51525>)

When banks generate huge profits, they are exploiting the American people, engaging in unadulterated greed and, needless to say, in need of more regulation. And when banks lose too much money? Yep, they're being insatiably greedy -- but stupid, too -- and, naturally, in need of more regulation.

The unscrupulous can't win for losing, apparently. [Hahahaha! –SteveB]

So when JPMorgan Chase & Co. suffers about \$2 billion in losses (probably more) via complex derivative trades that were used by an obscure unit within the bank to hedge against risk, everyone in Washington seems quite excited about the political possibilities. Yet, JPMorgan's problems prove that finance works without any meddling from Washington.

Rather than have someone point out the obvious -- "hey, that's how it's supposed to work"; "that'll teach 'em"; "neat, someone made 2 billion bucks on JPMorgan's stupid bets" -- we have the Justice Department opening an inquiry into the matter, the president calling for tighter regulations, Republican Sen. Bob Corker calling for hearings and a bunch of pundits falsely claiming that if the Wall Street reform bill had been fully implemented, we wouldn't have these kinds of "risky" transactions -- as if we should want to stop them in the first place.

The \$2 billion hasn't sunk JPMorgan (and with \$127 billion in equity, it hasn't come close), but if this kind of thing constitutes a national emergency, we should have better sense than to allow folks who squander \$2 billion on their lunch breaks to concoct the solution.

Unlike our friends in Washington, JPMorgan Chase paid a price for its bad choices; in this case, it cost a couple of billion dollars, caused the company's stock to drop, caused some executives to lose their jobs and damaged the reputation of the firm (though not very much) -- and if shareholders don't like how their money is being handled, they can take their business elsewhere or vote to make changes. This is how it would occasionally work without politics distorting the process.

New York Times columnist Paul Krugman [See FotM Newsletter #139. –SteveB], who believes trillions of taxpayer dollars should spread haphazardly around the economy as stimulus, also believes that a \$2 billion loss by a private equity firm is why Washington must regulate. "Banks are special," you see, "because the risks they take are borne, in large part, by taxpayers and the economy as a whole." (Banks are special. Select car companies are special. The

health care sector is special. The energy sector is special. Boeing is special. Etc. You may have noticed many industries getting special attention.)

If banks are too big -- and many economists I trust say they are -- they've only gotten bigger of late. The nation's five largest banks held assets of about 43 percent of the economy before the bank bailouts. They now control assets of 56 percent of the economy. And big is how Washington likes them. It's this kind of "special" relationship that allows politicians easier control and offers pliable donors in return. In the end, we are institutionalizing Too Big To Fail.

Richard W. Fisher, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, and others argue that massive banks are incubators for crony capitalism and bad decisions and should be broken up. Sounds like a good idea.

But the kerfuffle surrounding JPMorgan's losses helps ensure that politics will become an even bigger part of finance. Whereas Washington once created an environment in which big banks could act recklessly knowing full well they would be saved by taxpayers, now CEOs, such as JPMorgan's Jamie Dimon, may find themselves increasingly shying away from taking smart risk (or from hedging risk, which credit default swaps do), because any loss will be scrutinized by regulation-happy politicians looking to score points.

Now, I have no idea whether JPMorgan Chase is a "well-managed" bank as the president claims, but rather than turning banks into "special" cases, Washington should be working to let them sink or swim on their own.

20120516-10 14:30 SteveB "Tax Plan Attacked by Big Business"
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I believe the last paragraph says it best.

"Tax Plan Attacked by Big Business" by Eileen Appelbaum, NationofChange

May 16, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/tax-plan-attacked-big-business-1337175050>)

("On Wednesday, CEOs of 18 of the nation's largest companies sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner objecting to the proposal to raise the 15 percent tax rate on dividends and capital gains for households making more than \$200,000 (\$250,000 if married).")

In February, President Obama laid out his framework for reforming corporate taxes. He proposed a substantial cut in the corporate income tax rate from 35 to 28 percent—a boon to companies, especially small businesses that lack the opportunities for tax avoidance that major companies regularly exploit.

As I wrote at the time, the president proposed to make this tax cut revenue neutral so it doesn't increase the deficit. He called for reforming many of the provisions of the tax code that create significant inequities and economic distortions.

Last week, big business responded.

On Wednesday, CEOs of 18 of the nation's largest companies sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner objecting to the proposal to raise the 15 percent tax rate on dividends and capital gains for households making more than \$200,000 (\$250,000 if married). These CEOs claim that bringing the taxes of high-income households more in line with everyone else's will reduce investment "when we need capital formation here in America to create jobs and expand our economy." It's a claim that rings hollow. U.S. companies are currently sitting on a mountain of cash that they aren't investing, and many are engaged in buying back their own shares. This artificially raises share prices and serves no useful purpose, but it does increase the value of CEO stock options. The higher taxes might put a crimp in the lavish lifestyles of the wealthy, but they are unlikely to affect the investment behavior of companies. Notably, this change in the tax code would not affect anyone with household income under \$200,000 a year or whose money is invested in a 401(k) or an individual retirement account.

And earlier in the week, Ernst & Young put out a report conducted on behalf of the Private Equity Growth Capital Council that challenged the administration's proposal to limit the tax deductibility of corporate interest payments. This change to the corporate tax code would reduce the disparity in the tax treatment of debt and equity financing of investment. The administration did not specify what the limit might be, but Sen. Ron Wyden, a Democrat from Oregon, and Sen. Dan Coats, a Republican from Indiana, have proposed reducing the deduction from 100 percent of interest paid to 75 percent. This provision would have its greatest effect on private equity companies, which engage in leveraged buyouts that use lots of debt to acquire businesses for the portfolios of their investment funds. The ratio of debt to the enterprise value of publicly traded companies is about 14 percent, while companies acquired in leveraged buyouts have a debt-to-enterprise value of about 67 percent.

The Ernst & Young report claims that as a result of the Wyden-Coats tax plan, "the corporate capital stock in the United States would be smaller. ... A smaller corporate capital stock would adversely affect worker productivity and, ultimately, living standards." Sounds scary, but is it true?

As Dan Primack observes in his Fortune Term Sheet column, "The implementation of such a proposal need not lead to lower ROI prospects and, thus, less investment. Instead, it simply could result in private equity firms altering their equity-to-debt ratios [to take better advantage of the changes in the tax code]."

"In other words," Primack concludes, they could "put more equity and less debt into deals."

This could be good news for companies and communities. A recent study of 2,156 highly leveraged companies found that a very high proportion experienced financial distress. Default rates among these companies are very high, ranging from 12.3 percent for leveraged buyouts completed in 2001 to 31.6 percent for those completed in 1997. Looking at the recent period, the study found that a quarter of the highly leveraged companies in the study defaulted between 2007 and 2010. Defaults can end in bankruptcy, but even when they don't, they lead to serious cutbacks that negatively affect lenders, customers, workers, and communities.

Not only would the president's proposal to limit the interest deductibility of debt make the tax treatment of debt and equity more equitable, but more equity and less debt would reduce the rates of financial distress and bankruptcy. That would be good news for the communities that depend on these businesses for jobs and services.

Corporations and wealthy households trying to hang onto their unfair tax breaks want to label these changes in the tax code as "job killers." As usual when this claim is made, nothing could be further from the truth.

20120516-11	14:38 SteveG	"As Congress Continues Its Witch Hunt, Here Are 5 Things You Should Know About Clean Energy Investments"
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"As Congress Continues Its Witch Hunt, Here Are Five Things You Should Know About Clean Energy Investments" by Stephen Lacey. NationofChange

May 16, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/congress-continues-its-witch-hunt-here-are-five-things-you-should-know-about-clean-energy-investment>)

In an attempt to keep the political war against renewable energy in the headlines, Republicans are holding another hearing to question the value of government investments in the sector.

Looks like ten political sideshows on Solyndra weren't enough.

If tomorrow morning's hearing were being used as a chance to objectively assess where the industry stands, that would be one thing. But the title of the meeting gives away the real political intent: "The Obama Administration's Green Energy Gamble: What Have All The Taxpayer Subsidies Achieved?"

Actually, those green energy investments have yielded substantial returns. And before the political grandstanding begins in the House of Representatives tomorrow, here are five important things you should know about how promotion of clean energy has supported American businesses and consumers:

1. The 1603 grant program supported up to 75,000 jobs and 23,000 renewable energy projects during the height of the recession.

When the recession hit, it was very difficult for project developers to find banks that were willing to utilize tax credits. So a cash grant program was created to give companies an easier way to finance projects. While it's very difficult to know the exact influence of the grant on each project, the program played a major role in maintaining momentum — helping support \$25 billion in gross economic activity, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

2. The production tax credit helps leverage up to \$20 billion in private investment annually.

With this key tax credit in place, the wind industry has dropped costs by 90% over the last few decades. It's helped states like Iowa reach 20% wind penetration — bringing that state over 215 businesses that support 5,000 workers. Across the rest of the U.S., the entire industry supports 75,000 jobs, with 30,000 in manufacturing. However, up to 37,000 of those jobs could be due Congressional lawmakers' inability to extend the tax credit.

3. The loan guarantee program is expected to cost \$2 billion less than budgeted.

This program has gotten a black eye due to the bankruptcies of a few companies — most famously Solyndra — that received guarantees. But according to John McCain's National Finance Chairman, Herb Allison, the cost to taxpayers will likely be far less than initially thought. In fact, over the last 20 years of experience, the U.S. government has shown a knack for managing risk — with loans and loan guarantee programs only costing tax payers 94 cents for every \$100 dollars invested.

4. Home weatherization grew 1000% from April to June of 2011, creating 14,800 jobs.

After a slow ramp-up, efficiency programs supported by the stimulus package have helped weatherize hundreds of thousands of homes. In addition to supporting the retrofits of individual homes, the Obama administration has supported the Better Buildings Initiative, a program that has leveraged to upgrade more than 4 billion square feet of public and private buildings in the next two years. That's enough demand to support over 100,000 jobs.

5. ARPA-E has supported dozens of potentially groundbreaking technologies in advanced materials, renewable fuels, electricity generation, waste heat, and battery storage.

Helping enhance America's lead in technological innovation, the Advanced Research Research Projects Agency for Energy — initially funded through the stimulus package — has helped inventors, companies, and university labs boost their work. This program has immense bi-partisan support for promoting the "innovative research that makes America great and has fueled our economic growth for generations."

Despite these successes, Republicans continue milking the Solyndra bankruptcy for an election-year story that doesn't hold up — dragging the rest of the clean energy industry into the mud.

The sector has gone through some high-profile shake-ups and bankruptcies, so it's the duty of lawmakers to understand how taxpayer dollars are being deployed. That's a supportable endeavor. But holding yet another hearing to lambast the President for a so-called "gamble" in clean energy isn't productive for anyone.

May 16, 2012, (<http://www.cumber.com/commentary.aspx?file=051612.asp>)

Chapter two of our old book on Europe outlined the benefits of convergence. Charts and data displayed the boost to growth that occurs when interest rates coalesce at a lower level and when credit spreads narrow. The multiplier effect is huge. Europe experienced it during the formative stages in the last decade. Those were the good times.

All that has changed. The unthinkable has occurred.

We now have DIvergence instead of CONvergence. We now have DISintegration instead of Integration. The Eurozone is coming apart.

The book that Vincenzo Sciarretta and I wrote is out-of- date. Its value is to read it in reverse. By doing so, one can estimate the pain that still lies ahead for the countries of Europe which are still engaged in extending public debt burdens, high taxation, failure to rein back spending and deferral of confrontation with the reality of the situation. They are ignoring the old adage: "If you find you are in a hole and if it is getting deeper, stop digging."

Greece is no longer the issue. It is already dead. Its banks are bleeding. Liquidity to keep them from a collapse is provided through the mechanism of the Emergency Liquidity Assistance (ELA) funding. It allows the central bank of Greece to lend euro to its member banks against pledges of questionable value. Without ELA the Greek banking system would collapse.

In Greece, we have reached the "Endgame" as John Mauldin calls it in his book. Greece is doomed.

The issue for other Eurozone members is played out in Spain, Portugal and now, Italy. Portugal has experienced repudiation in the credit markets. Spain is getting it, too.

Italy is the one to watch. It is the 800-pound gorilla and it is sick. Its economy is shrinking, not growing. It has failed to rein back the public expenditures. Its demographic composition is impossible to balance with a debt-to-GDP ratio above 120%. Italy is the world's third largest debtor. The test of "too big to fail" will come with Italy.

Credit spreads with Italy are widening. I recall that the difference between the ten-year German bond yield and the ten-year Italian bond yield once reached nine basis points. That is correct 9 basis points. The charts start on page 27 of my old book and depict the good old days. That was only 7 years ago. Look at today's pricing vs. the old pricing and play the movie backwards and one can see where this is headed. Things are going to get worse.

Investors are running from Europe. That is why the world's credit spreads are widening between the "good guys" and the "bad guys." We update them weekly on our website, www.cumber.com. The hits on the charts there are rising each week as global investors want to see these comparisons. Visitors are welcome.

We are very underweighted in Europe and believe it is too soon to "bottom fish". We believe the US economy and financial system has already discounted much of the turmoil.

The US has become the world's safer haven among the OECD mature economies. We remain overweighted in the US stock market. We remain invested in US dollar denominated bonds and favor the spread sectors over the US Treasury bonds and notes. We are using hedges where practical to dampen strategic interest rate risk.

20120516-14	17:17 SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Help Defeat Gov. Walker in Wisconsin!
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from MoveOn:

BREAKING NEWS FROM WISCONSIN: The Democratic National Committee is refusing requests to fund the massive get out the vote effort planned in Wisconsin to recall Scott Walker.

Wisconsin is ground zero for Democrats this summer—and there are only three weeks before Election Day—which is why this breaking news just doesn't make sense.

Scott Walker and his right-wing allies have spent millions, and they'll spend millions more in the next few weeks. But Walker's poll numbers won't budge and if the Wisconsin Democrats can run the massive field program they have planned, we can win this.

Obama for America organizers are hard at work in the state, but the DNC's lack of support has left a huge hole in the get out the vote budget. So MoveOn members need to step up. Can you help recall Walker?

Chip in \$5 to the Wisconsin Democrats on ActBlue to beat Scott Walker.

Wisconsin citizens, with the support of activists from all around the country, have accomplished more than anyone thought possible. They've inspired all of us, and put fear into the hearts of other governors who wanted to attack the 99%. But if Walker survives the recall, we'll have wasted a year of effort.

With only a few weeks left, the DNC is feeling the heat and says they may provide more help, but we can't wait for them. We have to do it ourselves.

Can you chip in \$5 today via ActBlue to make sure that Scott Walker is finally recalled from office?

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275581&id=41553-20195165-99y8YKx&t=2>

Thanks for all you do.

–Daniel, Levana, and the rest of the team

Sources:

"EXCLUSIVE: Wisconsin Dems furious with DNC for refusing to invest big money in Walker recall," *The Washington Post*, May 14, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275547&id=41553-20195165-99y8YKx&t=3>.

"DNC is MIA in Wisconsin," Politico, May 16, 2012, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0512/76364.html>.

20120516-15 17:29 SteveG Fw: Breaking News from Dennis Kucinich

from Dennis Kucinich:

I would like to thank you for your support, and thank the tens of thousands of concerned Citizens for Kucinich who in the past few months have written, emailed and called to discuss my running for Congress in Washington State.

At the end of this term I will have served sixteen years in the House of Representatives, leading the way for peace, to bring an end to the wars, for workers' rights, for health care for all, for monetary policy reform and to end the corrupting influence which money has on our political decision-making process. My staff and I have worked to deliver a level of constituent service to the people of Cleveland, which most agree is unmatched for results. As testimony to our efforts in the Cleveland area I received about 75% of the vote from my present constituents who were included in the newly redistricted area in which I ran in March.

Because of my love of public service, I have given a great deal of time and much thought to the advice and encouragement I have received from so many people of good will in Washington State. I certainly want to continue to be of service to our country and to the working men and women who have built it.

After careful consideration and discussions with Elizabeth and my closest friends, I have decided that, at this time, I can best serve from outside the Congress. My commitments to peace, to workers' rights and to social and economic justice are constant and are not dependent upon holding an office. They are dependent upon my continuing to

stand up, to speak out, to organize, to motivate and to inspire our nation as to its deeper potential. This I promise I will do with great energy and heart.

I will complete my service in the U.S. House on January 2, 2013, with the same passion and devotion to duty with which I began it on January 3, 1997. And when I do, I shall think of you and all those who have given me encouragement to continue to be of service, and I will smile, knowing that we shall meet again in our celebration of the potential of citizen activists to change the world.

Please continue to encourage your friends and family to sign up at www.Kucinich.us because we will need to continue to work together for change outside Congress, as we have worked for it from within. This is just the beginning!

Sincerely, Dennis

[Too bad he's not going to be out there in your state, SteveG. But it will be interesting to see what he gets up to next. He's a good man. -SteveB]

20120516-16	18:14	Charis	"American Sits Almost a Year with No Charges in Isolated Bolivian Prison"
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"American Sits Almost a Year with No Charges in Isolated Bolivian Prison" by Terry Moran, ABC News

May 11, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/International/american-investor-sits-year-isolated-bolivian-prison-uncharged/story?id=16329344&singlePage=true>)

(Jacob Ostreicher has been sitting in Palmasola Prison in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, for almost a year, uncharged, but accused by Bolivian authorities of money laundering.)

(SANTA CRUZ, Bolivia) In a grim Bolivian prison, a lone American man has languished for nearly a year, uncharged by authorities who have accused him of money laundering, but he says he is innocent of any wrongdoing and refuses to give in.

"It's an absolute nightmare," Jacob Ostreicher said. "I feel all alone most of the time. I'm begging the American people to try to help me."

"Nightline" traveled to Bolivia to hear Ostreicher's story firsthand. What we found was a man trapped in the web of a truly Kafkaesque prosecution, held inside of a prison like any in the world, where inmates roam free.

"Are you innocent?" I asked him.

"Absolutely 100 percent innocent," Ostreicher shot back. "And the prosecutors know I am 100 percent innocent."

Jacob Ostreicher is a 53-year-old flooring contractor from Brooklyn. It's a family business, selling and installing flooring mostly for commercial clients in the New York City area. In 2008, as the construction industry collapsed in the U.S., Jacob said he heard from a family friend -- a prominent lawyer in Switzerland -- about a promising investment opportunity: growing rice in Bolivia.

Ostreicher said he put \$200,000 -- his life savings -- into the venture and became a very junior partner in a \$25 million project.

He said things went well for a year or so. The first harvest yielded nearly 40 million pounds of rice. More than 200 Bolivian workers were employed in the business. Ostreicher helped manage it, traveling frequently to Bolivia.

Then in 2011, Bolivian police arrested one of Ostreicher's former employees and accused him of being involved with drug criminals. Ostreicher said he cooperated fully with police -- and then was arrested himself.

Prosecutors claimed they were investigating whether the \$25 million that started the rice business came from drug money.

"So we spent close to \$20,000 to get together 1,300 documents to show them the origin of the money," Ostreicher said. "We provided that to the judge. And the judge gave me my freedom."

But six days later, in an extraordinary move, the judge reversed his decision and Ostreicher was sent back to prison. The judge was later promoted to the appellate court, further delaying proceedings.

Former FBI agent Steve Moore, who helped clear Amanda Knox of murder charges in Italy, has investigated Ostreicher's case. He is brutally frank in his conclusions.

"The whole system is corrupt," Moore said.

What's happening here, according to Moore and other sources on Ostreicher's defense team, is an old-fashioned shakedown: Bolivian officials are demanding money.

"There's no evidence to convict him of anything," Moore says. "But here's a guy they see coming in from New York, who's got probably a lot of liquid cash or represents a lot of liquid cash, and they saw an opportunity."

Jacob Ostreicher Case: Videos and Documents:

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/jacob-ostreicher-case-videos-documents/story?id=16330955>.

According to Transparency International, a non-profit group that tracks corruption, Bolivia ranks as one of the most corrupt nations in the Western Hemisphere, and in a 2010 poll, Bolivians themselves rated the judiciary as the most corrupt institution in their country.

Today, Jacob Ostreicher remains in prison, no charges and no evidence brought against him. Bolivian authorities informed us that Bolivian law allows for the incarceration of people without charge for up to 18 months. Ostreicher has been in prison for 344 days -- over 11 months.

And what a prison. Palmasola, it's called. It adds a "Lord-of-the-Flies" quality to Ostreicher's nightmare.

Because in Palmasola, there are no guards inside the walls. Prisoners govern themselves. They walk around the streets and alleys between the pavilions of cells. Some bring their wives and children to live with them.

But murders are common. So are drugs. So is prostitution.

When "Nightline" visited, it was a surreal scene, like a small Bolivian village, with shops and even restaurants, and an unmistakable air of menace and fear lurking just beneath the surface.

"I never, never go out at night," Ostreicher said. "It is absolutely frightening, walking around, like what you -- wherever you walked today, at night, it's very scary."

Jacob's wife, Miriam Ungar, comes to visit him frequently in this wild and strange prison. Leaving him to return home is "torture," she said.

"I feel like I'm abandoning him," she said. "The pain of watching him watch me leave, he stands behind the gate, and I just stare at him and I walk backwards, because I don't want him to see my back when I walk out the door, and he sees my anguish, and he runs in to make it easier for me to leave."

The Ostreichers have five children and 11 grandchildren. The little ones don't understand what's happening. Jacob Ostreicher showed us a letter from his granddaughter, in which she wrote, "We keep asking grandma and mommy when you will come home. And they told me they don't know when. Grandpa, who knows the answer? I want you to come home today."

"My family keeps me going, because there's nothing else here," he said. "I'm the only American between 3,500 prisoners."

On the wall in the dining area near his cell, Ostreicher's fellow prisoners painted an American flag for him. It is an emotional talisman for him -- a slender, essential lifeline home.

"It means everything to me," he said. "This is what I got, is my flag. I will never look at the American flag the same way again... basically I'm hoping, one day, I will see this flag in my country."

That day is nowhere in sight.

For more information about Jacob Ostreicher's case, visit his website:

<http://www.freejacobnow.com/index.html>.

20120516-17 23:58 SteveG Quote: Warren Buffett on the Deficit

“I could end the deficit in 5 minutes. You just pass a law that says that anytime there is a deficit of more than 3% of GDP, all sitting members of Congress are ineligible for re-election.”

~Warren Buffett

I ACKNOWLEDGE
CLASS WARFARE EXISTS

<http://www.mennoworld.org/2011/9/5/8-convicted-bolivia-rape-trial/>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #141 — MAY 18, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

'I Stand by What I Said, Whatever It Was'

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

Yes, indeed, that paragon of virtue, Mitt R0mney, says he's going to take the high road for a while, except that he already detoured down to the low road in a Sean Hannity interview which, unfortunately, was recorded. Imagine that!

The Huffington Post webpage, below, features two excellent videos. One shows R0mney's original position (Feb. 7, 2012), the other shows his latest flip-flop (yesterday).

Yes, this man has such a strong moral compass to lead us all...hey, Mittens, where the hell you thinking of leading us?"

"Mitt Romney: Ricketts Plan To Use Rev. Jeremiah Wright Against Obama Is 'Wrong Course'" by Huffington Post

May 17, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/17/mitt-romney-ricketts-plan_n_1525221.html?ref=elections-2012)

GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney on Thursday said that he disapproves of a Republican super PAC's plan to link President Barack Obama to Rev. Jeremiah Wright's inflammatory comments, a tactic that had been used by some in 2008, but rejected by then-presidential candidate John McCain.

"I want to make it very clear: I repudiate that effort," Romney told reporters in Florida, repeating a claim that he made in an earlier interview. "I think it's the wrong course for a PAC or a campaign."

But Romney also alleged that the Obama campaign was leading the charge with negative attacks.

"Having a campaign focused on character assassination is one thing I find offensive among many others," he said.

[It's great to know R0mney finds so many things offensive. Maybe the Obama Campaign can keep him in a constant state of offendedness. That should slow down even a robot a little bit. I'm sure the rich dude would be offended by a lot of the people I've hung out with, present company excepted, of course. —SteveB]

The billionaire, Joe Ricketts, founder of TD Ameritrade and father of Chicago Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts, has decided not to go forward with the campaign as a result of the pressure from Romney and Obama.

Asked about comments he gave to conservative commentator Sean Hannity earlier this year, Romney responded, **"I stand by what I said, whatever it was."**

At the time, Romney brought up Wright in order to criticize Obama for both being too secular and for being under the influence of Wright. **"I'm not sure which is worse, him listening to Reverend Wright or him saying that we ... must be a less Christian nation," Romney said in a February interview.**

[Let me see, Mitt, I just don't think it's possible to have this both ways. Are you on the high road or the low road? I certainly can't tell from what you've said (which is usually the case, by the way). You may well be a robot, but you're not simply a static hunk of whatever, you're a shifty, shape-changing robot such as the world has never seen before. –SteveB]

HuffPost's Sam Stein reported that the Obama campaign had been prepared for this line of attack, though it came earlier than they had expected.

Campaign manager Jim Messina took aim at the report earlier Thursday, calling it a "hate-filled, divisive campaign of character assassination" and accusing Romney of falling "short of the standard that John McCain set, reacting tepidly in a moment that required moral leadership."

[20120517-01](#) 09:18 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Action: Tell the USDA Not to Play Chicken

from CREDO Action:

Three chickens per second.

Under a new plan proposed by USDA, that's how fast inspectors would have to conduct quality control inspections in poultry factories — six times the current rate.

Worse, USDA's proposed rules privatize these inspections, letting the industry police itself by replacing highly trained USDA food inspectors with poultry facility employees who have no required training.

Salmonella in our meat and poultry makes nearly a million people sick every year in the US — it's our number one cause of food-borne illness. USDA's new plan could make the problem even worse, and we have just days to stop it. Tell the USDA: Don't weaken poultry inspection standards!

Food safety groups are opposing the standards and veteran poultry inspectors are calling them "a big step back," and "a very, very bad idea."

Current rules provide for three inspectors to examine 140 birds per minute. Under the new rules, inspections would speed up to 200 per minute — with only one inspector on the line. Even the professionals say that is way too fast.

With far less time to inspect each chicken, unsanitary, defective poultry meat has a higher chance of making it into our supermarkets. And while USDA says it would save less than \$30 million per year on poultry inspection costs, it could cost the agency (and us) far more to deal with potential increases in foodborne illness.

Speeding up the poultry line isn't just hazardous to our health — it's also hazardous to those who work in poultry factories. Poultry workers already have an alarming rate of workplace injury from conditions which include a workplace full sharp objects like knives and scissors, and from the repetitive nature of poultry factory tasks. Speeding up the chicken line will only make conditions even more hazardous.

Tell the USDA: Don't weaken poultry inspection standards!

But while food and worker safety will undoubtedly suffer, the new rules are expected to result in a quarter of a billion dollar windfall to poultry companies.

The safety of our food, especially poultry which has such a high incidence of contamination, should be the highest priority of USDA. If their answer is less quality control inspection, more dangerous workplace conditions, and allowing an industry with a horrible safety record to police itself, it's probably time to go back to the drawing board.

Click below to submit a comment to the USDA before the May 29th deadline:

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=3912&id=40256-3891339-XIeqOhx&t=9>

Thank you for fighting for safe and healthy food.

Elijah Zarin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

20120517-02	10:00	MarthaH	"G.O.P. 'Super PAC' Weighs Hard-Line Attack on Obama"
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"G.O.P. 'Super PAC' Weighs Hard-Line Attack on Obama" by Jeff Zeleny and Jim Rutenberg, *New York Times*

May 17, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/17/us/politics/gop-super-pac-weighs-hard-line-attack-on-obama.html>)

(WASHINGTON) A group of high-profile Republican strategists is working with a conservative billionaire on a proposal to mount one of the most provocative campaigns of the "super PAC" era and attack President Obama in ways that Republicans have so far shied away from.

Timed to upend the Democratic National Convention in September, the plan would "do exactly what John McCain would not let us do," the strategists wrote.

The plan, which is awaiting approval, calls for running commercials linking Mr. Obama to incendiary comments by his former spiritual adviser, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., whose race-related sermons made him a highly charged figure in the 2008 campaign.

"The world is about to see Jeremiah Wright and understand his influence on Barack Obama for the first time in a big, attention-arresting way," says the proposal, which was overseen by Fred Davis and commissioned by Joe Ricketts, the founder of the brokerage firm TD Ameritrade. Mr. Ricketts is increasingly putting his fortune to work in conservative politics.

The \$10 million plan, one of several being studied by Mr. Ricketts, includes preparations for how to respond to the charges of race-baiting it envisions if it highlights Mr. Obama's former ties to Mr. Wright, who espouses what is known as "black liberation theology."

The group suggested hiring as a spokesman an "extremely literate conservative African-American" who can argue that Mr. Obama misled the nation by presenting himself as what the proposal calls a "metrosexual, black Abe Lincoln."

A copy of a detailed advertising plan was obtained by The New York Times through a person not connected to the proposal who was alarmed by its tone. It is titled "The Defeat of Barack Hussein Obama: The Ricketts Plan to End His Spending for Good."

The proposal was presented last week in Chicago to associates and family members of Mr. Ricketts, who is also the patriarch of the family that owns the Chicago Cubs.

Brian Baker, president and general counsel of a super PAC called the Ending Spending Action Fund, said Mr. Ricketts had studied several advertising proposals in recent months and had not signed off on a specific approach to taking on Mr. Obama.

"Joe Ricketts is prepared to spend significant resources in the 2012 election in both the presidential race and Congressional races," Mr. Baker said in an interview Wednesday. "He is very concerned about the future direction of the country and plans to take a stand."

The document makes clear that the effort is only in the planning stages and awaiting full approval from Mr. Ricketts. People involved in the planning said the publicity now certain to surround it could send the strategists back to the drawing board.

But it serves as a rare, detailed look at the birth of the sort of political sneak attack that has traditionally been hatched in the shadows and has become a staple of presidential politics.

It also shows how a single individual can create his own movement and spend unlimited sums to have major influence on a presidential election in a campaign finance environment in which groups operating independently of candidates are flourishing.

Should the plan proceed, it would run counter to the strategy being employed by Mitt Romney's team, which has so far avoided such attacks. The Romney campaign has sought to focus attention on the economy, and has concluded that personal attacks on Mr. Obama, who is still well liked personally by most independent voters surveyed for polls, could backfire.

Mr. Ricketts has become an increasingly active player in Republican politics through several political action committees, including Ending Spending. He has a son, Pete, who is a member of the Republican National Committee from Nebraska and a daughter, Laura, who is a top contributor to Mr. Obama's re-election campaign. She has not been involved in her father's political efforts.

The 54-page proposal was professionally bound and illustrated with color photographs, indicating that it is far beyond a mere discussion. The strategists have already contacted Larry Elder, a black conservative radio host in Los Angeles, about serving as a spokesman, and the plan calls for a group of black business leaders to endorse the effort. The strategists have also registered a domain name, Character Matters.

The proposal suggests that Mr. Ricketts believes the 2008 campaign of Senator John McCain erred in not using images of Mr. Wright against Mr. Obama, who has said that the pastor helped him find Jesus but that he was never present for Mr. Wright's politically charged sermons. Mr. Obama left the church during the campaign.

Apparently referring to a Wright ad that was produced for the McCain campaign by Mr. Davis's firm but never used, the proposal opens with a quote from Mr. Ricketts: "If the nation had seen that ad, they'd never have elected Barack Obama."

The planning document is emblazoned with the logo of Strategic Perception, the political advertising firm of Mr. Davis, the colorful Republican operative who last worked on the Republican presidential campaign of former Gov. Jon M. Huntsman of Utah. Included on his "Recommended Team of Pirates" are the former Huntsman pollster Whit Ayres and the McCain campaign Internet strategist Becki Donatelli.

The document, which was written by former advisers to Mr. McCain, is critical of his decision in 2008 not to aggressively pursue Mr. Obama's relationship with Mr. Wright. In the opening paragraphs of the proposal, the Republican strategists refer to Mr. McCain as "a crusty old politician who often seemed confused, burdened with a campaign just as confused."

"Our plan is to do exactly what John McCain would not let us do: Show the world how Barack Obama's opinions of America and the world were formed," the proposal says. "And why the influence of that misguided mentor and our president's formative years among left-wing intellectuals has brought our country to its knees."

The plan is designed for maximum impact, far beyond a typical \$10 million television advertising campaign. It calls for full-page newspaper advertisements featuring a comment Mr. Wright made the Sunday after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. "America's chickens are coming home to roost," he said.

The plan is for the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., to be "jolted." The advertising campaign would include television ads, outdoor advertisements and huge aerial banners flying over the convention site for four hours one afternoon.

The strategists grappled with the quandary of running against Mr. Obama that other Republicans have cited this year: "How to inflame their questions on his character and competency, while allowing themselves to still somewhat 'like' the man becomes the challenge."

Lamenting that voters "still aren't ready to hate this president," the document concludes that the campaign should "explain how forces out of Obama's control, that shaped the man, have made him completely the wrong choice as president in these days and times."

20120517-03	10:23 Pam	Re: "G.O.P. 'Super PAC' Weighs Hard-Line Attack on Obama" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I ask myself what Obama could have done differently. IMHO he did the best he could with Wall Street, the banks, and the auto industry. He did what he had to do. But there are other areas where his diffidence and conciliatory nature have led to disappointing results, ie., equal rights for LGBTs, green energy, the quality of our food supply--especially in poor communities, govt. programs to create jobs, at least until the private sector kicks in, global warming. He should be shouting from the rooftops about these things. The people who hate him will hate him anyway, and the people who like him, or want to, will feel validated. Everyone talks about how well Obama speaks, but, honestly?, he sounds just like any other slick politician to me, a fount of benign cliches. He is never impassioned. I only hope his campaign staff will steer him in the direction of plain speaking, tough talk, and a clear articulation of exactly what we're up against and how the old ways won't work anymore. I hate to say this, but politics is about who has the biggest bully on the playground.

20120517-09	17:32 MarthaH	"GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright"
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"GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright" by Rachel Weiner, *The Washington Post*

May 17, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/gop-super-pac-considering-jeremiah-wright-attack-on-obama/2012/05/17/gIQABYtzVU_blog.html)

The founder of a conservative super PAC has rejected a proposal that would link President Obama to his former pastor Jeremiah Wright, a line of attack that the GOP rejected in 2008 and one which presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney repudiated today.

"It reflects an approach to politics that Mr. Ricketts rejects and it was never a plan to be accepted but only a suggestion for a direction to take," said Brian Baker, president of the Ending Spending Action Fund, who said the proposal was "one of several submitted ... by third-party vendors."

The New York Times got hold of the proposed campaign playbook, submitted by Republican strategists to TD Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts, who has become increasingly involved in GOP politics of late.

The plan, called "The Defeat of Barack Hussein Obama: The Ricketts Plan to End His Spending for Good," would "do exactly what John McCain would not let us do," the strategists write, according to the Times report — tie Obama to Wright's controversial sermons.

Fred Davis, the ad man behind "I am not a witch," oversaw the proposal. Davis worked on the McCain campaign and argued in favor of a Wright ad then.

Strategic Perception, Davis' firm, said in a statement that the "the Ricketts family, never approved" the proposal "and nothing has happened on it since the presentation."

In an interview with TownHall.com, Romney also rejected the idea.

"I repudiate the effort by that PAC to promote an ad strategy of the nature they've described," Romney said. "I think what we've seen so far from the Obama campaign is a campaign of character assassination. I hope that isn't the course of this campaign. So in regards to that PAC, I repudiate what they're thinking about." (Asked later which Obama attacks he was referring to, Romney pointed to the president's Bain Capital ads.)

Earlier, Romney campaign manager Matt Rhoades said "we repudiate any efforts" to run "a campaign of character assassination." But he did not specifically condemn the PAC. That response was not enough for Obama's campaign; Obama campaign manager Jim Messina said in a statement that Romney "has fallen short of the standard that John McCain set, reacting tepidly in a moment that required moral leadership."

In his statement, Baker said that "Mr. Ricketts intends to work hard to help elect a President this fall who shares his commitment to economic responsibility, but his efforts are and will continue to be focused entirely on questions of fiscal policy, not attacks that seek to divide us socially or culturally."

House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) also weighed in, telling reporters, "I don't know what these other people will do or why they do it. All I know is the American people vote with their wallets."

The playbook prepared for Ricketts includes footage for a five-minute film called "Next," which includes footage of Wright declaring "God Damn America" and calls the pastor "the inspiration for Obama's campaign." Over an image of the two together, the ad declares that there's "simply a fundamental difference between his view of America and ours."

The document refers to Obama derisively as a "metrosexual black Abe Lincoln."

Wright was pastor of the president's Chicago church, Trinity United Church of Christ, and served a largely ceremonial role on Obama's 2008 African American Religious Leadership Committee until some of his more incendiary remarks came to light. Obama disavowed Wright's words in a March 2008 speech calling the sermons "a profoundly distorted view of this country."

McCain's campaign cut a Wright-themed ad in 2008 that never aired; the candidate decided he did not want to touch the subject. (The ad footage was later obtained by ABC News.)

"I remain proud of our campaign and proud of what we were able to accomplish," McCain said today. "I made my decision. I stand by that decision. The Romney campaign has repudiated that kind of strategy. It seems to me the matter is closed."

He laughed off descriptions in the playbook from some of his 2008 advisers that he was "crusty" and "confused" during the campaign. "It is what it is. My life has moved on. I moved on after, it's over. I enjoy being in the Senate. There's no reason for me to hold any grudges. It's a way for political operatives to continue to make money," he said.

Obama remains personally very well-liked. Republicans have shied away from attacks on his character, focusing instead on who best can handle the economy.

The proposal obtained by the *Times* suggests hiring an "extremely literate conservative African-American" to shield Republicans from accusations of race-baiting, the *Times* report says. (That same spokesman would claim that Obama presented himself, falsely, as a "metrosexual black Abe Lincoln.")

The \$10 million plan would include television and newspaper ads as well as outdoor advertisements and aerial banners, according to the *Times* report.

Attacks on Obama using Wright did air in the 2008 campaign.

Late in the 2008 race, an outside group did spend millions on an ad in battleground states tying Obama to the controversial pastor. The North Carolina GOP also aired a TV ad attacking Obama for his past association with Wright, over McCain's objections.

Pollster Whit Ayres and Internet consultant Becki Donatelli, named as recommended hires for the project in the playbook, said they had nothing to do with the proposal.

Ricketts's super PAC was a player in state Sen. Deb Fischer's surprise victory in Tuesday's Nebraska Republican Senate primary. His son, Pete Ricketts, is a member of the Republican National Committee from Nebraska who ran against Sen. Ben Nelson (D) in 2006. His daughter, Laura Ricketts, is co-owner of the Chicago Cubs — making her the first openly gay owner of a Major League Baseball team. She is a major fundraiser to Obama's reelection campaign.

20120517-04	10:23 Pam	Re: 'Willard the Bain' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #140)
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I love Willard the Bain!! Whatta guy!

20120517-05	10:38 Paula	Fw: This Belongs in the Email Hall of Fame!
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Interesting viewpoints...

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

(I agree and it's TIME FOR A CHANGE. Enough of this Nonsense Already! Yes, come November we need to Get Out and VOTE! Each of you must vote in November. Your vote matters. Vote wisely.)

Greetings All

Alas, alas, the times have changed, due to the Pied Piper from Chicago.

A really clever treatise, but sadly true...Hopefully we can set things right this fall!

How's this for apocalyptic literature. This was written by a pastor's wife in biblical prose as a commentary of current events. It is brilliant.



And it came to pass in the Age of Insanity that the people of the land called America , having lost their morals, their initiative, and their will to defend their liberties, chose as their Supreme Leader that person known as "The One."

He emerged from the vapors with a message that had no meaning; but He hypnotized the people telling them, "I am sent to save you." My lack of experience, my questionable ethics, my monstrous ego, and my association with evil doers are of no consequence. I shall save you with hope and change.

Go, therefore, and proclaim throughout the land that he who proceeded me is evil, that he has defiled the nation, and that all he has built must be destroyed.

And the people rejoiced, for even though they knew not what "The One" would do, he had promised that it was good; and they believed.

And "The One" said "We live in the greatest country in the world. Help me change everything about it!"

And the people said, "Hallelujah! Change is good!"

Then He said, "We are going to tax the rich fat-cats."

And the people said "Sock it to them!"

"And redistribute their wealth."

And the people said, "Show us the money!"

And then he said, "Redistribution of wealth is good for everybody."

And Joe the plumber asked, "Are you kidding me? You're going to steal my money and give it to the deadbeats??"

And "The One" ridiculed and taunted him, and Joe's personal records were hacked and publicized. One lone reporter asked, "Isn't that Marxist policy?" And she was banished from the kingdom.

Then a citizen asked, "With no foreign relations experience and having zero military experience or knowledge, how will you deal with radical terrorists?"

And "The One" said, "Simple. I shall sit with them and talk with them and show them how nice we really are; and they will forget that they ever wanted to kill us all!"

And the people said, "Hallelujah!! We are safe at last, and we can beat our weapons into free cars for the people!"

Then "The One" said "I shall give 95% of you lower taxes." And one,lone voice said, "But 40% of us don't pay ANY taxes."

So "The One"said, "Then I shall give you some of the taxes the fat-cats pay!"

And the people said, "Hallelujah! Show us the money!"

Then "The One" said, "I shall tax your Capital Gains when you sell your homes!" And the people yawned and the slumping housing market collapsed.

And He said. "I shall mandate employer-funded health care for every worker and raise the minimum wage. And I shall give every person unlimited healthcare and medicine and transportation to the clinics."

And the people said, "Give me some of that!"

Then he said, "I shall penalize employers who ship jobs overseas."

And the people said, "Where's my rebate check?"

Then "The One" said, "I shall bankrupt the coal industry and electricity rates will skyrocket!"

And the people said, "Coal is dirty, coal is evil, no more coal! But we don't care for that part about higher electric rates."

So "The One" said, Not to worry. If your rebate isn't enough to cover your expenses, we shall bail you out. Just sign up with the ACORN and you troubles are over!"

Then He said, "Illegal immigrants feel scorned and slighted. Let's grant them amnesty, Social Security, free education, free lunches, free medical care, bi-lingual signs and guaranteed housing..."

And the people said, "Hallelujah!" and they made him king!

And so it came to pass that employers, facing spiraling costs and ever-higher taxes, raised their prices and laid-off workers. Others simply gave up and went out of business and the economy sank like unto a rock dropped from a cliff. The bank banking industry was destroyed. Manufacturing slowed to a crawl. And more of the people were without a means of support.

Then "The One" said, "I am the "the One"- The Messiah - and I'm here to save you! We shall just print more money so everyone will have enough!"



But our foreign trading partners said unto Him. "Wait a minute. Your dollar is not worth a pile of camel dung! You will have to pay more..."

And "The One" said, "Wait a minute. That is unfair!!"

And the world said, "Neither are these other idiotic programs you have embraced. Lo, you have become a Socialist state and a second-rate power. Now you shall play by our rules!"

And the people cried out, "Alas, alas!! What have we done?" But yes verily, it was too late.

The people set upon The One and spat upon him and stoned him, and his name was dung. And the once mighty nation was no more; and the once proud people were without sustenance or shelter or hope. And the Change "The One" had given them was as like unto a poison that had destroyed them and like a whirlwind that consumed all that they had built.

And the people beat their chests in despair and cried out in anguish, "give us back our nation and our pride and our hope!!" But it was too late, and their homeland was no more.

You may think this a fairy tale, but it's not. It's happening RIGHT NOW

P.S. -- Yeah, this is too true to be funny.. Tragic, but not funny; tragic but true.

IF YOU CAN'T SEE THIS HAPPENING.... JUST RUB YOUR EYES AND BLINK A FEW MORE TIMES REALLY GOOD.

[The mild-mannered, weak, compromising Obama did all that??? Amazing! --SteveB]

20120517-14 21:11 SteveB Re: This Belongs in the Email Hall of Fame!

Thanks for forwarding this to me. However, I must take exception to a few things I found that might keep this email out of my personal "hall of fame."

First of all, it's pretty old. Originally, I would guess from before the 2008 election, but after Joe the Plumber. The best reference I found has it word-for-word and is dated June 22, 2009:

http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=132x8488588.

ACORN has been defunct a long time now.

It's kinda funny that this email challenges "The One's" ability to fight terrorism. President Obama certainly seems to be handling this task at least as well as Bush, and I don't see bin Laden or Gaddafi bothering us anymore.

I loved this line, where "The One" says: "We live in the greatest country in the world. Help me change everything about it!"

How ironic! Until Reagan and Bush and the fat cats started cutting taxes, deregulating and destroying the middle class and unions, America was doing fine, as I remember it.

From Reagan (at least) through Bush, America was forced to embark on a radical course of conservative Republican experimentation—in lower taxes, especially for the rich; in deregulation of nearly everything regulated, especially the pet projects of the fat cats like markets and investments and mortgages; in unending wars and deficits; in massive illegal immigration. This is simply the Republican economic legacy. It caused the Crash of 2008, the Housing Bubble, the loss of American manufacturing, the dramatic increase in the number of poor, and the dramatic decrease in the middle class and their purchasing power. This email tries to blame the current economic problems on "The One." Some of us have memories. The deceit isn't going to work. All the data is too clear.

"The One" is just one of us (most of the nation's smartest economists agree) who believe we must change course from this disastrous conservative radicalism.

As far as redistribution of wealth goes, and if we're going to get Biblical, it seems to me that Jesus would have favored pretty radical redistribution of wealth, but maybe you'd say I'm wrong. Besides, it's perfectly OK to ignore whatever you choose, as far as the Bible goes.

Sorry to tell you, Joe the Plumber, but redistribution of wealth has always happened in America, will always happen, and should happen. The problem has been that most of the redistribution has been from the bottom to the top. That is what must change for America to thrive. History proves that.

My newsletter provides loads of verifiable facts and numbers: <http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org>.

Health care? You don't find that we have huge health care problems in America? Who's trying to fix them? "The One" and who else?

One other thing...I am so tired of the socialist label being thrown around. George Bush and Mitt Romney believe in a progressive income tax system, or have said they do. Bush proved he did. I guess that makes them redistributors of wealth and socialists? Bush took a lot of tax dollars from you and me and redistributed them to his rich friends at Halliburton, etc. The defense budget is fully half the total U.S. budget. It constitutes a nearly total redistribution of wealth. I don't hear any of the "socialist" Republicans squawking about that.

I could go on and on, there are more lies here to be debunked, but read our FotM Newsletter for more, or this:

[Here's another rebuttal from the first website listed above:](#)

Yea, though thou has followed the deceitful guidance of false prophets for lo these past 8 years, thou shalt still receive salvation. Those who have found enemies, even amongst friends, those who have claimed false provenance, masquerading as one entity when truly another (ye Joseph that does not plumb), those who have stolen your money while claiming to be protecting your treasures, and those who invoke their Lord's name while committing acts that blaspheme his teachings are to be shunned and driven into exile. Thou hast adorned the temple with gold, not faith. Thou hast allowed the weakest amongst you to be cast aside, contrary to the most fundamental teachings of your Lord. Thou hast been blinded by devotion to the words of elders who present interpretations of God's word as though their own, and thou has thus lain with wolves masquerading as sheep. Yea, though the words of one, who those amongst you have chosen to lead you, can do little to save you from yourselves, you can choose to make the journey together. To decry a mortal man as a false messiah, while acclaiming another of your choosing as a true messiah shall render you both afflicted and powerless. To squander the treasures of life and resource on war and profit while not taking

care of your people, to tithe and devote faith to the moneylenders and not the church, to honor the lucre more than the Lord, and to find the value of human existence in gold instead of faith has cast your people into a chasm of bewilderment and fear. The light of salvation shines brightly, though the darkness is not easily overcome. There are those amongst you that will say the bright light blinds them and causes them pain. They will be wont to lead you back into the darkness. They must not be shunned, they must be helped to seek the light; they only know the comfort of their fears, and will only listen to those amongst you who prey upon those fears. The true strength of your nation lies in the faith of the shepherd, not the wolf nor the sheep. To claim true faith, while sowing the seeds of destruction with false claims and petty arguments, shall provide you with no salvation. A man amongst you must lead, not without question, but with support. Wouldst thou rather continue along the path that has gotten one to this dire condition? Do you still worship the golden calf, do you still seek true salvation in gold?

Yea, the wolf had found the voice of the sheep, and many, yea most, of the sheep followed. The shepherd, the lowly shepherd who makes no false claims to be the messiah, must now overcome the wolves and reassemble the flock. Many of the sheep will follow the wolves, to their peril. One must pray that the shepherd will gather most of the flock and restore their peaceful lives.

Thanks again. I love diggin' into this stuff.

20120517-06 15:53 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Action: Join the Fight to Recall Gov. Scott Walker

from Daily Kos:

Nearly a year and a half ago, statewide protests in Wisconsin provided the spark that became the national Occupy movement. Now, Wisconsin can close the deal by recalling Scott Walker as governor, and you can help make that happen.

Please help turn out voters for the June 5 recall election by signing up with Workers' Voice:

<http://act.workersvoice.org/page/s/recall-walker?source=dkos-email-120517a>.

In a race where public opinion is hardened and millions on television barely moves the polls, a top-notch voter turnout effort is going to mean the difference between victory and defeat.

Our partners at Workers' Voice, a new political action committee affiliated with the AFL-CIO, is deploying get out the vote tools that leverage the power of your social networks with information in the voter file.

You can help identify voters, make phone calls, or send your own personalized direct mail to people you know. And you can do it all from home, no matter where you live.

Please join the final push to turn out voters for the Wisconsin recall election by signing up with Workers' Voice.

Keep fighting, Markos Moulitsas, Publisher, Daily Kos

20120517-07 16:47 SteveB From the Right: "The Menace of Bipartisanship"

[But, George, the bankers and fat cats are borrowing money from the government night and day for about 0% interest. Why should students be gouged? Surely it would benefit the nation more to subsidize student loans than fat cat bankers at 0%. And you're griping about 3.4%? I say let all students above a certain level of achievement attend college for free, as an investment in the future of our nation which is obviously of no real concern to bankers. -SteveB]

"The Menace of Bipartisanship" by George F. Will, various

May 16, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51540>)

(WASHINGTON) Bipartisanship, the supposed scarcity of which so distresses the high-minded, actually is disastrously prevalent. Since 2001, it has produced No Child Left Behind, a counterproductive federal intrusion in primary and secondary education; the McCain-Feingold speech rationing law (the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act); an unfunded prescription drug entitlement; troublemaking by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; government-directed capitalism from the Export-Import Bank; crony capitalism from energy subsidies; unseemly agriculture and transportation bills; continuous bailouts of an unreformed Postal Service; housing subsidies; subsidies for state and local governments; and many other bipartisan deeds, including most appropriations bills.

Now, with Europe's turmoil dramatizing the decadence of entitlement cultures, and with American governments -- federal, state and local -- buckling beneath unsustainable entitlements, Congress is absent-mindedly creating a new entitlement for the already privileged. Concerning the "problem" of certain federal student loans, the two parties pretend to be at daggers drawn, skirmishing about how to "pay for" the "solution." But a bipartisan consensus is congealing: Certain student borrowers -- and eventually all student borrowers, because, well, why not? -- should be entitled to loans at a subsidized 3.4 percent interest rate forever.

In 2006, Democrats, trying to capture control of Congress by pandering to students and their parents, proposed cutting in half the statutory 6.8 percent rate on some federal student loans. Holding Congress in 2007, and with no discernible resistance from the compassionately conservative Bush administration, Democrats disguised the full-decade cost of this -- \$60 billion -- by pretending the subsidy, which now costs \$6 billion a year, would expire in five years.

The five years are up July 1 and of course the 3.4 percent rate will be extended. Barack Obama supports this. So does Mitt Romney, while campaigning against a "government-centered society." What would we do without bipartisanship?

The low 6.8 percent rate -- private loans for students cost about 12 percent -- was itself the result of a federal subsidy. And students have no collateral that can be repossessed in case they default, which 23 percent of those receiving the loans in question do. The maximum loan for third- and fourth-year students is \$5,500 a year. The payment difference between 3.4 percent and 6.8 percent is less than \$10 a month, so the "problem" involves less than 30 cents a day.

The 3.4 percent rate applies only to one category of federal loans, but because the Obama administration has essentially socialized the student loan business, federal loans are 90 percent of student borrowing and this "temporary" rate probably will eventually be made permanent for all federal student loans.

Unsurprisingly, Obama has used this loan issue as an occasion to talk about himself, remembering the "mountain of debt" he and Michelle had when, armed with four Ivy League degrees (he from Columbia, she from Princeton, both from Harvard law), they graduated into the American elite. The Atlantic's Conor Friedersdorf notes that if Washington is feeling flush enough to spend another \$60 billion on education in a decade, it could find more deserving people to subsidize than a privileged minority of college students who are acquiring credentials strongly correlated with higher-than-average future earnings.

The average annual income of high school graduates with no college is \$41,288; for college graduates with just a bachelor's degree it is \$71,552. So the one-year difference (\$30,264) is more than the average total indebtedness of the two-thirds of students who borrow (\$25,250). Taxpayers, most of whom are not college graduates (the unemployment rate for persons with no college: 7.9 percent), will pay \$6 billion a year to make it slightly easier for some fortunate students to acquire college degrees (the unemployment rate for college graduates: 4 percent).

Between now and July, the two parties will pretend that it is a matter of high principle how the government should pretend to "pay for" the \$6 billion while borrowing \$1 trillion this year. But bipartisanship will have been served by putting another entitlement on a path to immortality.

Campaigning recently at Bradley University in Peoria, Romney warned students about their burden from the national debt, but when he took questions, the first questioner had something else on her peculiar mind: "So you're all for like 'yay freedom and all this stuff and yay like pursuit of happiness.' You know what would make me happy? Free birth control." While awaiting that eventual entitlement, perhaps she can land a subsidized loan so she can inexpensively continue to hone her interesting intellect.

[20120517-08](#) 16:49 Dale Video: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole"

\$ 4 Billion per year! They know about it and don't take action! I know, let's raise taxes to keep paying this out.

Can you understand how a conspiracy theory around Obama's interest in supporting illegal aliens and "buying" their votes could develop? Can you see why many people are disgusted with federal government inefficiency and/or corruption? By the way, which is it?

[Please also see "20120508-06" in FotM Newsletter #134 (May 9, 2012) and subsequent discussion. To me, this is not so much a "loophole" as simply a crime with severe penalties and will either be caught or not, like all crime. I would hope the IRS is extremely diligent in its enforcement efforts, even upon poor illegal aliens, but Republicans have hampered the work by their budget constraints—not seeing the forest for the trees. –SteveB]

Video:

http://www.wthr.com/video?autoStart=true&topVideoCatNo=default&clipId=7054149&goback=%2Egde_114362_m ember_114332814

[20120517-11](#) 19:26 Art Re: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole" (reply to Dale, above)

Hi Dale, We've all seen this and agree, ugly. On a case by case basis doubt it is cost effective for the IRS to do an audit of each of these individuals, so it needs to be addressed collectively. What puzzles many of us is why this somewhat self righteous Congress has not taken action, since apparently it is in their jurisdiction to take action.

Of course, you are absolutely correct, those who are looking to point fingers will somehow make the President at fault.

[20120517-13](#) 20:26 SteveG Re: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole" (reply to Dale & Art, above)

Add to this \$4 billion the billions the government is subsidizing major oil companies and the fact that GE gets a tax refund and Bank of America pays zero taxes – a few billion here and a few billion there isn't chump change.

"Tourist Attractions in Bolivia: Ecotourism in Santa Cruz" BoliviaBella.com

May 17, 2012 (<http://networkedblogs.com/xMus7>)



Bolivia Ecotourism is a great way to enjoy the beauty of our planet while not contributing to its destruction. Also called socially responsible touring, it gives you the opportunity to experience first hand how our world must have looked before we existed, and as Bolivia is one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet (known as the 10 mega-diverse regions) it one of the best places in the world to get in touch with Earth's ancient history. The following are some of the many natural gems you can visit in Bolivia's largest state, Santa Cruz in Eastern Bolivia.

Here you can go trekking or rafting, take birdwatching and wildlife observation tours, visit ancient ruins like El Fuerte the pre-Colombian fort near Samaipata (the drive to Samaipata itself is well worth a day-trip) and even experience living history in towns like colonial Buena Vista or the Jesuit Missions where time seems to have stopped and people still live in much the same way as they did hundreds of years ago.

You can also learn about more recent events and people by literally walking the same paths they did, like the Che Guevara trail and visiting other historical monuments, museums, and sites.

Lush, pristine, and virtually unaltered, Bolivia's millions of acres of protected areas and national parks are the perfect place to practice culturally and environmentally conscious touring. Noel Kempff Mercado, Amboró and Kaa Iya national parks, in Eastern Bolivia, are some of the most biologically diverse regions on the planet, as is the Pantanal, the Otuquis Nature Reserve and Puerto Suarez one of the largest wetland ecosystems on the planet. And once you've taken a rain forest cruise on the Amazon River on the Reina de Enin riverboat, your outlook on life will be changed forever.



Because even ecotourism alters our environment I would like to keep beautiful places like Espejillos a secret, but I won't for two reasons:

First, because I also happen to believe the only way to preserve Bolivia's beautiful natural areas is, paradoxically, to give people the chance to experience them in person. I believe your experience will change you in such a phenomenal way that when you leave, you will share with others the importance of preserving these habitats and the species that live within them.

Second, ecotourism is important to Bolivia's economy and benefits the people who act as your tour guides, and provide your meals, accommodations, and transportation. For some families and entire towns, this is their only source of income.

For visitors, this is a chance to learn about, and gain respect for, their local customs and traditions.

So prepare to be amazed! And prepare to be transformed! But the key word here is prepare. Because ecotouring is challenging. You must come with an open mind, be willing to give up some of the comforts you may be used to, and leave behind no evidence of your visit.

from <http://buburuza.net/2009/02/michelangelos-david/>):

After a two year loan to the United States, Michelangelo's *David* is being returned to Italy.



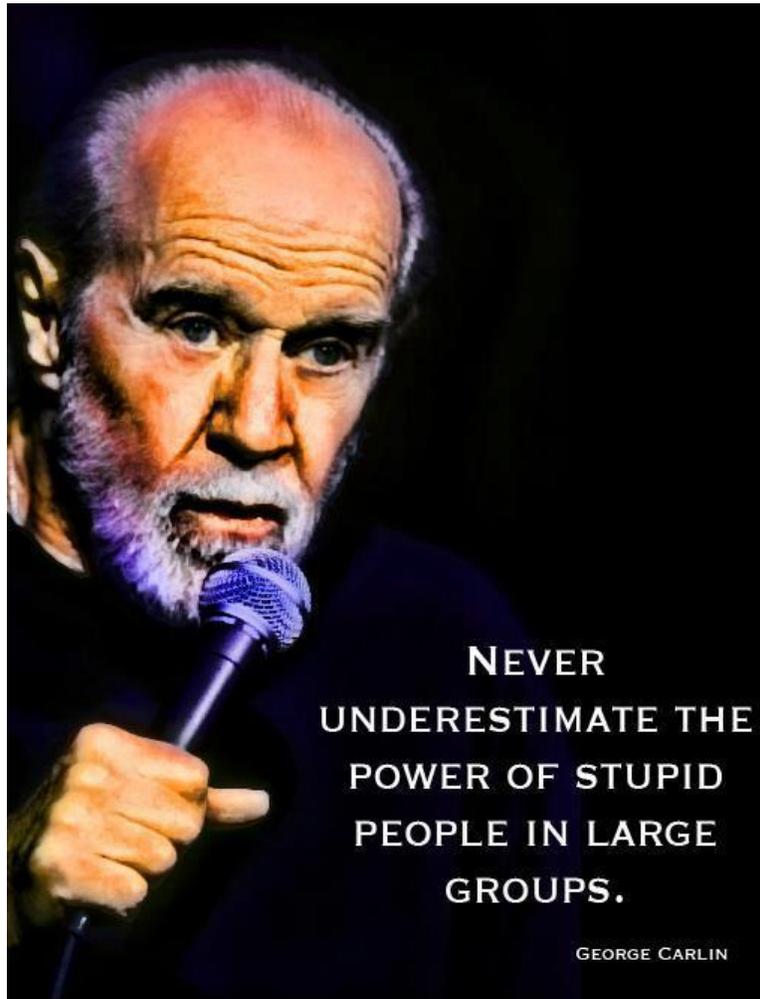
His proud sponsors were: KFC, McDonalds, Starbucks, and Burger King.

[20120517-15](#)

23:58

SteveG

Quote: George Carlin on Groups of Stupid People



<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/photos/summer-pictures/>

Two swimmers reach for the surface after making it under the breaking wave at Bronte Beach, Sydney, Australia (Mark Tipple).



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

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

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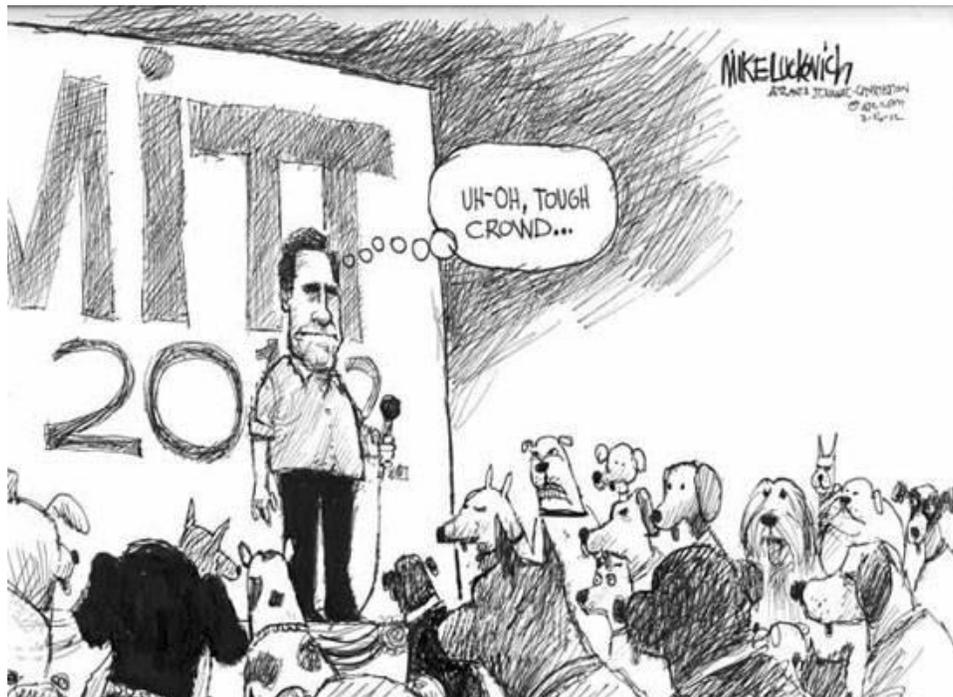
FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #142 — MAY 21, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

The War on Jobs Continues

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 21, 2012)



"Mitt Romney is saying his comments about liking to fire people were taken out of context. Yeah, what he actually said was he likes to set poor people on fire." —Conan O'Brien

"The Austerity Trap and the Jobs Deficit" by Robert Borosage, OpEdNews

May 19, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/The-Austerity-Trap-and-the-by-Robert-Borosage-120519-495.html>)

The dire threat facing America, according to Mitt Romney and Republicans this week, is debt, not mass unemployment.

We face "a prairie fire of debt," Mitt Romney warned in Iowa. Debt is "a grave threat to freedom," intoned House Speaker John Boehner in Washington, while threatening to hold the country hostage again over raising the debt ceiling in December.

In the Senate, Republicans forced votes on the House Republican budget that would gut Medicaid, cut all of the domestic services of government by one-third, enact deep cuts in food stamps, college grants and loans and more. (Even five Republican senators -- including two in competitive races -- couldn't stomach that).

First Things First

There are only two problems with this. Reducing deficits isn't actually the first priority of Romney or Republicans. And the plans they champion will surely cost jobs, and most likely add to the debt burden.

Before dealing with the "prairie fire" that threatens the nation, Romney and Republicans want to add fuel to the flames. Their first priority is spending more money on the military and collecting less money from the rich and the corporations.

Romney's tax plan would cut revenue by some \$4.9 trillion over a decade, less some unspecified loophole closings. Millionaires would pocket an average tax cut of \$250,000 and those making \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year would end up paying an average \$174 more in taxes.

If Social Security and Medicare were protected for those near retirement, as Romney sometimes suggests, then the domestic side of government -- everything from the FBI to food safety to Medicaid and food stamps -- would have to be cut by over one half in 10 years. Romney can sell that plan only by denying its effects.

The Austerity Temptation

This Republican extremism tempts Democrats to offer alternative plans for austerity. Because Democrats are prepared to raise taxes on the rich and put a lid on military spending, they can reduce deficits without ending Medicare or eviscerating all government services.

Their position of "shared sacrifice" is much more popular in the polls. Two-thirds of Republicans support a mix of spending cuts and tax hikes to reduce the deficit. And in any "grand bargain," the President can put everything on the table, and expose Republican hypocrisy on deficits and extremism on taxes. Many Democrats relish a face-off on austerity.

The Austerity Trap

But arguing about austerity is a trap -- because what the economy needs is jobs and growth.

The best deficit-reduction program is to put people to work. Americans would prefer to cash paychecks and pay taxes than to collect unemployment insurance and rely on food stamps. When people go back to work, government revenues go up and expenditures go down. No measure will do more to reduce deficits. A full employment economy erases more than a third of the deficit. With a stronger workforce, we could focus on the real source of our long-term debt problem: the soaring costs of our broken health care system.

But when Democrats focus on the austerity debate, they get tongue-tied about jobs.

With the Federal Reserve already keeping interest rates near zero, there are only two major theories about how to generate job growth.

One view is what has infamously become known as the oxymoronic "expansionary austerity." The argument is that if you cut spending, taxes and deficits and roll back regulations, businesses will gain the confidence to invest and hire.

The alternative suggests that business owners don't lack confidence; they lack customers. With mass unemployment, businesses sit on profits; the rich move money elsewhere. So the government must act to put people to work.

With money "cheaper than free," (that is, the government is able to borrow at interest rates lower than the rate of inflation), there will never be a better opportunity to rebuild America, launch a major program to renovate our decrepit public infrastructure and put a construction industry that is flat on its back to work. Add to that revenue sharing so the states can rehire teachers and cops, and a Veteran's Corps and Urban Corps to directly employ veterans and young people. Accelerate refinancing and mortgage relief for underwater homeowners. Keynesians would pay for this by borrowing the money, but even if we taxed the wealthy and corporations to use the money they are sitting on, we'd still generate more jobs, and then more revenue and less spending--and in this way lower deficits.

Romney and the Republicans champion expansionary austerity. But we've had a real-world experiment in such austerity in Europe. While Obama resisted Republican calls for drastic budget cuts, Britain's conservative coalition government embraced them. This approach drove Britain back into a recession, increased misery and will likely end up raising, not lowering, its deficits and debt burden. Across Europe, we've seen that austerity in a weak economy is like bleeding a patient just recovering from an operation. It's dangerous to your health.

But Democrats are virtually silent about their jobs agenda. Obama put a decent one out last fall and campaigned for Republicans to pass it, but hasn't said much about it recently. When Republicans failed even to pass a decent transportation bill -- traditionally a bipartisan jobs bill -- the White House barely took note.

At present, the Obama campaign seems intent on selling the growth we have. "We're on the way back." But with mass unemployment, wages still not keeping up, and home prices still in the pits, momentum is not an answer.

Americans are naturally skeptical about Romney's trickle-down promises. We've been there, done that. A few made out like bandits; 99 percent didn't share in the rewards.

Democrats need to lay out a big argument on jobs first as part of building a new strategy for the economy. They must challenge Romney's hysteria and hypocrisy on debt not with a better austerity plan, but with a plan for an economy that works for working people. A mandate from voters for jobs first will be vital when the lame-duck Congress confronts the fiscal train wreck after the election, and jobs first is the only sensible way to begin getting our books in order.

20120518-01	08:50 Pam	Re: Video: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole" (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #141)
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This doesn't look good.

20120518-02	08:53 Pam	Re: "GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #141)
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I have to give Romney credit for putting a stop to his PAC's plan, but this incident raises a disturbing question. How is a candidate to be sure "his" PAC isn't undermining him or doing things he doesn't like? If there's no communication between PAC and candidate, the PAC is off the hook. There's no oversight for these things, is there?

20120518-08	12:26 Art	Re: "GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright" (reply to Pam, above)
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Personally I think they all got caught with their hands in the cookie jar. The *NYT* article preempted the strike and the Republicans are all now running for cover. They would all have loved to have the adds come out and then claim "Oh to bad", after the damage has been done.

Just call me cynical.

20120518-03 09:18 MarthaH "College Graduation: Weighing the Cost...and the Payoff"

"College Graduation: Weighing the Cost...and the Payoff" by Pew Research Center

May 17, 2012 (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2261/college-university-education-costs-student-debt>)

(This year's college graduation season comes against a backdrop of rising concern over the costs of higher education, the burdens of student debt and the challenges graduates face in a difficult job market.)

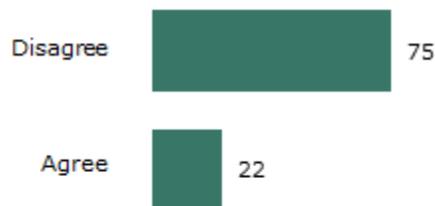
The issue of costs and rising student debt have have touched off a national debate about the cost and value of a college education. Surveys by the Pew Research Center present a portrait of the views of the general public and college graduates.

[The Cost of College Raises Questions with Public About its Value](#)

- 94% of parents expect their child to go to college.
- 57% of Americans say colleges fail to provide students with good value for money spent.
- 75% of public says college too expensive for most Americans to afford.

Is College Affordable?

Agree or disagree: College costs in general are such that most people can afford to pay for a college education. (%)



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/14

More than nine-in-ten parents (94%) who have at least one child under 18 say they expect their child to attend college. But even as college enrollments have reached record levels, most young adults in this country still do not attend a four-year college. The main barrier is financial.

Despite parents' belief that their children should go to college, a majority of Americans (57%) say the higher education system in the United States fails to provide students with good value for the money they and their families spend. An even larger majority -- 75% -- says college is too expensive for most Americans to afford.

Is College a Good Value?

% who rate the job the higher education system is doing in providing value for the money spent by students and their families as ...



Note: Views from the general public (GP) are based on a Pew Research Center survey of 2,142 adults, March 15-29, 2011

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Concern about the cost of college, while widespread throughout the population, is felt more acutely by some groups than others. Adults ages 50 and older are more likely than those under age 50 to question the affordability of college. Among those ages 50 and older, more than eight-in-ten disagree with the notion that most people are able to afford to pay for college. This compares with roughly seven-in-ten among those under age 50. Men ages 50 and older (many of whom may be in the midst of paying for their children's college education) are especially concerned about college costs: 83% doubt that most people can afford to pay for college.

Women, who have made substantial gains in educational attainment in recent decades, have a more favorable view of the higher education system overall than do men. This gender gap is based solely on differences between men and women under the age of 50. Among women in that age cohort, nearly half (46%) say the higher education system is doing an excellent or good job providing value for the money spent. This compares with only 36% of men under age 50.

[Despite Cost Concerns, Graduates See a Payoff](#)

- 86% of college graduates say their schooling has been a good investment.
- Adults with a college degree believe they earn \$20,000 a year more because of it.
- A typical college graduate earns an estimated \$650,000 over a work life than a high school graduate.

The Annual College Payoff: \$20,000

How much more/less do you think you would earn annually if you did/didn't have a college degree?

The Public's Estimates

High school graduates (If I had a college degree) \$20,000 more

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Census Data

2009 median annual earnings, all workers, March 2010 CPS

College graduates \$46,931

High school graduates \$27,381

Median annual difference \$19,550

Note: "College graduates" refers to people with a four-year college degree and no advanced degrees. The public's estimates are based on median estimates of Q.39, Q.40 in the general population survey (GP).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The negative assessments of the job the higher education system is doing generally do not appear to be tied to one's personal experience with college.

When asked whether college has been a good investment for them personally, considering how much they or their family paid for it, fully 86% of college graduates say it has been a good investment. Only 6% say college has not been a good investment for them, and 7% say they are not sure.

Likewise, those who are currently enrolled in college express a strong belief that they are making a worthwhile investment. Among current college students, 84% think college will be a good investment, considering what they or their families are paying for it. Some 14% say they are not sure if it will be a good investment, and only 2% think it will not be a good investment. Adults with a college degree estimated, on average, that they earn \$20,000 a year more by virtue of having gotten that degree. Likewise, the survey finds, adults with only a high school diploma believe, on average, they earn \$20,000 a year less as a result.

An analysis of census and college cost data by the Pew Research Center finds that a typical college graduate earns an estimated \$650,000 more than the typical high school graduate over the course of a 40-year work life.

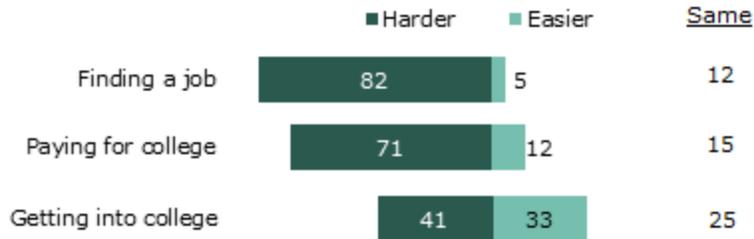
This average figure masks wide variations in the financial returns to a college education, such as field of study -- work-life earnings tend to be much higher for undergraduate majors requiring numerical competencies (computers and engineering) than fields such as education and liberal arts.

[Student Debt and Financial Challenges](#)

- 48% of students who took out college loans and are no longer in school say repaying the debt has made it harder to make ends meet.
- 71% of adults say it's harder for today's young people to pay for college than it was for their parents' generation.
- 82% of all adults say it's harder for young people to find a job than it was for their parents' generation.

Times Are Tougher for Today's Young Adults

% saying ... is harder/easier/about the same for today's young adults than it was for their parents' generation



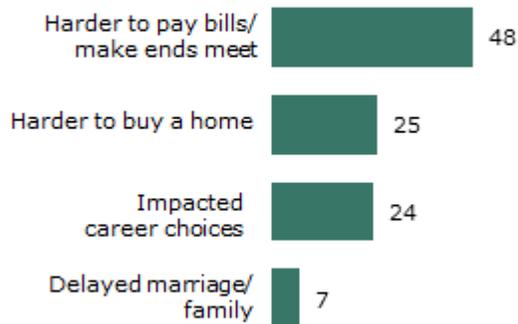
Notes: Based on all adults, N=2,048. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q10

A growing share of undergraduates take out student loans, and a rising share of families have outstanding student loans they are paying back. In 2007, 15% of families had outstanding student loan obligations, up from 9% in 1989. The average balance was \$21,500 in 2007, up from \$8,700 in 1989 (all figures in 2007 dollars). Outstanding student loan debt is now about 5% of all outstanding debt in the household sector -- more than double its share a decade ago.

How Student Debt Affects Borrowers

% of student borrowers who say having to pay back student loans had this impact on them



Note: Based on those who took out loans for postsecondary education and are not currently enrolled in school, n=332.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/29

Among respondents in the March 2011 Pew Research Center survey who say they took out college loans and are no longer in school, about half (48%) report that paying back the loan has made it harder to make ends meet; 25% say it has made it harder to buy a home; 24% say it has had an impact on the kind of career they are pursuing; and 7% say it has delayed their getting married or starting a family.

The combined challenges of paying for college, and finding a job after graduation, has made times tougher for today's young adults. Paying for college is also viewed as a greater challenge today than it was in the past. Fully 71% of all adults say it's harder for today's young people to pay for college than it was for their parents' generation.

Among adults of all ages, 82% say it's harder for today's young adults to find a job than it was for their parents' generation. Only 5% say it's easier now to find a job, and 12% say finding a job is about the same as it was a generation ago.

[20120518-04](#) 10:58 Dale Re: FotM Newsletter #141

Unfortunately my extreme attention to business isn't allowing me to participate as much as I'd like to, but I still open the newsletter and quickly scan at least the opening commentary. It seems this newsletter, curiously named Friends of the Middle, has pretty much morphed into a Romney bashing session. Day after day, there are negative diatribes, followed by laments about ... almost everything.

Was this the purpose you had in mind? Are there no positive aspects, from any political perspective, worth commenting on? I know you put a lot of time and effort into the project and I respect your energy, even if I disagree with many of the conclusions and claims. I get that the editor controls the content, but being so close to the day to day act creation of the product, I'm wondering if you realize this overview of what you are putting out?

This is not intended to be a mean spirited question, but why didn't you name the newsletter, Friends of the Progressive Movement, or Friends of Liberal Thought Advancement? When looking at the full political/economic/social spectrum, it doesn't seem much like "the middle" to me. Just an observation.

[20120518-05](#) 10:09 SteveB Re: FotM Newsletter #141 (reply to Dale, above)

Thanks for your comments, Dale.

I believe very much that the Republican party, unfortunately now including a formerly more moderate Mitt Romney, has taken a dangerous and destructive turn to the far Right. They and their rigid positions have radicalized greatly. Every thinking person in America knows that. Look at Lugar in Indiana.

When I can't simply talk about more taxes for the rich—which anyone would have to agree has been the norm in our more prosperous past—I'm yelled at and repeatedly called a socialist and a communist and guilty of consorting with Castro, etc. If one questions the anti-abortion movement, that person must be Satan.

This behavior is far, far from the middle, my brother. It is radical! Let's not kid ourselves about all this.

You certainly raise an important subject here!

So I see me sitting here smack dab in the middle of American politics, opposed to extremism on any side. Despite all the screaming emails from the Right (of which you might notice I publish maybe way too many, as a service to my contributors) about how Obama is a radical socialist out to destroy America, I see no evidence of anything in him but a mildly effectual moderate.

I.e., I see no threat of radicalism from the Left, but it is rampant on the Right. (Let us not forget the Republican primaries so soon.)

So I might appear further from the middle than you assume. I always make sure the legitimate, moderate Right is represented here when I can find it. It seems to have nearly disappeared, swallowed up in the dogma.

Now, as to your comments on my editorial selection of my daily lead piece, I think I probably agree with you. I usually start thinking about it the night before unless something before that really strikes my fancy. Sometimes I wait until early the morning the issue will come out. Lately, I've been too busy responding to people and finishing

the template, monthly, and archive work to really do much real writing in the Newsletter, so I'm focused on what I see in the news that looks most important to me and fits into our areas of interest, etc. It's a seat-of-the-pants value judgment at that moment. I guess my first love is trying to point out lies.

Mitt is certainly important and is certainly a colossal, world-class liar, but he has probably dominated our cover with his bland, robotic façade too often.

But we have had a ton of stuff other than what you characterize. I'm sorry you didn't have the free time to find it, though I can understand, for sure. I guess you missed our "Gay Feature" the other day...that was a change of pace. :-)

You have a good weekend. Don't be too busy. Life is for living and will never come again. Take care.

20120518-06 10:46 SteveB FotM Newsletters — April, 2012 Edition

Here you can see the awesome power of the FotM Newsletter indexing:

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2012-newsletters/201204-FotM-Newsletters.pdf>.

Take a look.

The file may require a little time to load or download because it's 443 pages. If it fails the first time, simply click "reload" in your browser and the file will appear immediately, no problem.

There is at least one "secret" for now — after you click on an issue's cover (if you choose to use the Cover Index 1 rather than use the Subject Indexes 2 or 3), the first page FotM logo will return you to the Cover Index 1. The "INDEX: Click here." link on the first page of every issue leads to the headline article in Subject Index 3.

Now that I have my templates built, everything is much quicker and easier. I have already finished the May compilation through today's issue, so it will be available a day or two after the end of the month.

Have a great weekend everybody. Enjoy spring! We're certainly enjoying fall.

20120518-07 11:30 SteveB Fw: From the Right: Human Events Petition: Bypass *Roe vs. Wade!*

Here's something we don't see very often—an advocacy email from the Right.

Attack! Attack! Attack! How tragically wrong can one party be? Very, very scary!

Quick! Where can I sign the anti-petition petition?

from Sen. Rand Paul:

Tragically, over 4,000 babies are aborted every day in our nation.

That's over 1.6 million every year! **[And you Republicans are going to pay to feed and educate them, a*s-hole?]**

But by passing a Life at Conception Act you and I can end abortion in America!

The Supreme Court itself admitted in *Roe* that once Congress establishes the personhood of unborn children, they must be protected by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution which explicitly says: "nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property."

Since the Supreme Court is waiting for someone to tell them who the law counts as persons, let's not wait another minute!

Your petition will let your Senators and Congressman know that their constituents support full protection for the unborn and that they must stand for life in Washington.

After signing the petition, please consider chipping in with a donation of \$10, \$25 or more to NPLA. No matter the amount you give, your donation will be matched by a generous supporter!

http://nationalprolifealliance.com/rlacd_petition.aspx?pid=he2&npla=I1ABAW12I **[Any hackers out there? --SteveB]**

Sincerely, Rand Paul, United States Senator (R-KY)

Life at Conception Act Petition to Your U.S. Senators and Representative

Whereas: Because of Roe v. Wade, more than 56 million unborn children have died through abortion; and

Whereas: In Roe v. Wade, the U.S. Supreme Court declared it could not resolve "the difficult question of when life begins" – and on the basis of this unresolved question, declared a new "right to abortion" based on a "right of privacy"; and

Whereas: The 14th Amendment to the Constitution states: "nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law"; and

Whereas: In Roe, the Supreme Court admitted: "If . . . personhood [for the unborn] is established, the appellant's case, of course, collapses, for the fetus' right to life is then guaranteed specifically by the [Fourteenth] Amendment..." (Roe v. Wade [410 US 113 at 156-7]); and

Whereas: Science is clear that human life begins at conception when a new human being is formed; and

Whereas: The American people oppose abortion-on-demand and want innocent human life to be protected especially when it is most defenseless; and

Whereas: It belongs to Congress to resolve the question the Supreme Court said IT cannot resolve; and

Whereas: A Life at Conception Act, by declaring that unborn children are persons legally entitled to constitutional protection, will rescue millions of unborn children from dying by abortion-on-demand;

Therefore: I urge you to cosponsor and cast every vote for a Life at Conception Act, and to do everything necessary to win ultimate passage in the United States Congress.

[20120518-10](#)

13:36 SteveB

Fw: MoveOn Petition: Support a Constitutional Amendment to Reverse
Citizens United!

Now, this is a little better. Whew!

from MoveOn:

Corporations already have so much power. But what happens to our democracy when ExxonMobil, the oil baron Koch brothers, Bank of America, and all of Wall Street can spend unlimited amounts to influence a presidential election?

We're about to find out in our first presidential election year since Citizens United. And because the limitless spending has been protected by the Supreme Court, the only way we can stop it is by amending the Constitution to reverse Citizens United and get big money out of politics for good.

Passing an amendment isn't easy—we need to get overwhelming support at both the state and federal levels. But we have a powerful opportunity right now, in an election year, to flex our political muscle as MoveOn members. We can use the election to help convince politicians up and down the ballot to get on board if they want to earn our votes.

So we're starting today by launching a new petition asking every state legislator, governor, and member of Congress who hasn't yet declared their support for a constitutional amendment to undo Citizens United and permanently get big money out of politics.

Will you add your name?

<http://pol.moveon.org/amend/?id=41692-20195165-fVxGRwx&t=2>

The plan is to deliver the petitions to state capitols and governors' mansions in all 50 states and to the local offices of every member of Congress who hasn't yet joined the call for an amendment.

And we aren't, by any means, starting from scratch. MoveOn members and our allies have been working hard ever since Citizens United to build a movement for an amendment—and there's already a lot of grassroots momentum.

President Obama is on board, along with more than 25 U.S. senators, at least 80 members of the U.S. House, and hundreds of state-level lawmakers.

It's an impressive start, and this year, we have the opportunity to help massively increase those numbers. Polling shows that Americans are fed up with the 1% flooding our political system with cash and getting get lax regulation, rollbacks of workers' rights, huge bailouts, and tax giveaways in return.

Nearly all of the economic impacts that the 99% movement has mobilized around are tied to the overwhelming influence of big money in our democracy. So once we know who's with us, we're going make the issue personal, confront politicians who won't take a stand with stories of the real-world consequences of a system run by corporations and the 1%, and demand that every last one of them chooses a side.

When President Obama announced his support for marriage equality last week, we all saw how powerful it can be when our political leaders stand behind an idea that—just a short time ago—seemed "unrealistic" or "politically impossible."

It's time, again, to change what's "politically possible" in America.

Will you sign the petition and ask every one of your state and federal lawmakers who isn't on board yet to declare their support for a constitutional amendment to reverse Citizens United and get big money out of our democracy?

Thanks for all you do. –Robin, Elena, Victoria, Emily, and the rest of the team

20120518-09	13:16	Tom	Video: Aimee Allen Sings the "Ron Paul" Anthem!
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Good Video! @ 593,000 + Views.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QikH9Ko3mw4&sns=em>

[20120518-11](#)

13:47

SteveB

Re: Ban on Farm Chores — Really? (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #126) & "Over 100 Children a Year Die Working on Farms: Why Do Prominent Right-Wingers Fight Safety Regulations?"

"Over 100 Children a Year Die Working on Farms: Why Do Prominent Right-Wingers Fight Safety Regulations?" by Mariya Strauss, AlterNet

May 13, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155410/>)

Norma Flores López has a calm, musical voice that frequently bubbles over with laughter, but she speaks with electrifying urgency when it comes to the plight of kids who work in agriculture. She knows firsthand about the brutal heat, dizzyingly high ladders, dangerous equipment and lack of safety protections they face: Flores López spent much of her teen years picking crops alongside her family as a migrant farmworker.

"When I was asked to go up on a ladder to pick apples, I wasn't given any safety training, any safety equipment, I was told just to go over there and get that ladder," said Flores López, who now directs the Children in the Fields campaign at the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) in Washington, DC. Flores López, who went on to earn a bachelor's degree, also serves as chair of the Domestic Issues committee for the Child Labor Coalition. Helping to protect farmworker kids is her vocation--but it's a particularly tough one these days.

On April 26, the US Department of Labor announced that it was scrapping what Flores López and other child farmworker advocates thought was going to be "a natural process" of updating the safety rules for kids working in agriculture. These rules had been proposed without fanfare in September 2011 as a farm labor version of the safety rules for kids in non-agricultural industries the Labor Department put out in 2010.

Sally Greenberg, co-director of the National Consumer League's Child Labor Coalition, a network of organizations pushing to protect children in the workplace, is still fuming at the Labor Department's decision to withdraw the rules. Calling it "a devastating setback," Greenberg said, "The forces of misinformation and distortion won out," and "riled up a lot of people and got them very frightened--falsely--about the impact of these rules." Greenberg is referring to what a Labor Department spokesperson described as "an overwhelming number of comments on this, largely folks pushing back" on the rules.

The comments came, Greenberg said, mainly from growers' groups like the American Farm Bureau (a right-wing growers' association) expressing fear that the new rules would be so hard to put into practice that they would effectively keep farmers' kids from working on their own parents' farms.

That was never a real threat, says Flores López, who adds that the updates were intended to protect children and teens of migrant farmworkers in rural communities who "are out there out of necessity and are pushing themselves harder than any child should, all out of the need to help make ends meet."

A May 11 *Washington Post* article about the political forces that led to the rules being yanked confirms that the so-called "parental exemption" allowing kids of any age to work on their family's own farm would have remained intact under the new rules. The growers' groups' main objection to the rules, then—which led to the intervention of high-profile members of Congress like Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), who the same article suggests may be on Mitt Romney's short list for running mate—was based on false information.

[As I stated in Newsletter #126. –SteveB]

In fact, said Mary E. Miller, child labor specialist for the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, the rules would have updated existing safety rules for kids working in agriculture that have not seen an update since 1970. NIOSH, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's workplace safety and health arm, "came out with a fabulous report in 2002 with lots of updates for the child labor regulations," said Miller. "A bunch had to do with non-agricultural labor," she added, and those updated rules took effect in July of 2010. So, Miller continued, "The next obvious item was to update the agricultural child labor safety rules."

The existing safety rules allow 16- and 17-year-olds to work in hazardous conditions in agriculture, but not in other industries. They allow kids as young as 12 to work in the fields, picking crops like tobacco, which can cause serious health problems. "So we don't allow them to buy cigarettes until they are 18, yet we allow them to work in those fields as young as 12," Flores López said.

The updates would have included preventing kids aged 12-17 from working in hazardous conditions--like up on the high ladders Flores López had to use--and with heavy equipment like tractors. Miller explains that tractors "cause the most deaths for workers of all ages" in agriculture. Yet, Miller said, she routinely sees kids aged 14 or 15 driving tractors after receiving "one single training course."

And kids do die while working in agriculture. "Between 1995 and 2002 there were an estimated 907 youth that died on American farms," said Flores López, citing NIOSH's data. "That's well over 100 preventable deaths each year." For young workers under the age of 16, agriculture production accounted for almost 60 percent of deaths in this age group, and 79 percent of all work-related deaths for youth ages 10 or younger occurred in agriculture, according to a 2006 report in the *Journal of Agromedicine*.

Many of these deaths occurred while the kids worked in some of the hazardous environments the new rules would have made off-limits, said Flores López. The updated rules would, among other things, "keep kids from working in manure pits, in grain silos," said Flores López. Grain silos are particularly deadly places to work for workers of all ages: in one high-profile case from 2010, two youths, Wyatt Whitehead, 14, and Alejandro Pacas, 19, were trapped and asphyxiated inside a grain silo in Mount Carroll, IL. In another case in 2009, 17-year-old Cody Rigsby died after being buried alive in a grain silo in Haswell, CO. The proposed rule updates would have prohibited working in and around grain silos at any time for youth under 16 on farms and for all youth in commercial grain handling.

Why aren't these deaths and grievous injuries causing much public outcry? "Farmworker kids are kept in the shadows and forgotten," said Greenberg, "and nobody cares all that much about them." Human Rights Watch is one watchdog group that does care about them. It has put together a comprehensive report on the subject, called *Fields of Peril*, that documents the problem of kids under 17 working unsafely in agriculture in the US. On May 7, nearly two weeks after the updated rules were withdrawn, Human Rights Watch published a scathing op-ed in *The Hill* that re-stated the problem in concrete terms:

"Nationwide," it said, "hundreds of thousands of kids this year will cut the roots off onions, hoe cotton, climb tall ladders to pick oranges and apples, and drive tractors. If the past is a guide, some will be injured, some will be maimed, and some will die."

In the absence of updated safety rules, Flores López and her fellow advocates say they will have to fall back on their long-term strategy: promoting best practices in child safety in agriculture, building a grassroots movement to protect farmworker kids and working to get the CARE Act passed.

CARE, or Children's Act for Responsible Employment, would change and update the regulations governing child labor in agriculture to make them more closely match those governing child labor in all other industries. Right now, explained Miller, child labor regulations for agriculture are a jumble of outdated safety rules, enforcement, and penalties for negligent growers and farmers. "Historically, anyone can see that the protections for kids in agriculture have lagged behind the ones for non-agricultural [sectors]," she said.

The CARE Act, which features increased fines for child safety violations, stronger safety rules and raised age minimums for working in hazardous conditions and with heavy equipment, would "help better protect farmworker kids by making sure that all kids receive the same protections whether they work in agriculture or not," said Flores López.

"We need a groundswell" of support to help protect farmworker kids, said Greenberg. "We need parents whose kids have been injured and killed to come forward and say this is not how children in America should be treated and we should be taking every step possible to keep them safe."

Flores López agrees. "We need for there to be more discussion and more conversation around this issue," she said, especially among consumers buying food at the market. "It's very difficult right now for us to be able to trace whether food includes child labor--it's not part of the American consciousness. People don't think to ask."

The Labor Department spokesperson said the Department does intend to work with "those on both sides" to "develop public education programs that will hope to meet the initial objectives of ensuring the safety of young people working in agriculture."

As frustrating as the safety rules update setback was for Flores López, she is not giving up on the process. "We're going to continue to find ways to work with the administration on ways to protect kids," she said. "Our work is not done--as long as there are children out there that continue to be put in a vulnerable position."

"I'm totally in favor of kids working," said Miller, "but it has to be age-appropriate and well-supervised. It's about finding a balance—we are the adults that have to look after the children. They have no voice, they can't vote. We have to keep them from becoming an issue related to political self-interest."

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20120520-02	15:51 Dale	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — Really? (reply to SteveB, above) & "Latest Word On Child Labor Law Most Encouraging News Yet"
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Yes, there is more to the story, but before reading about the bi-partisan rational move to scrap this ill-conceived rule making, think carefully about these next questions, if a so-called CARE act were to be passed:

1. How is it going to be enforced? What new army of federal employees will be hired to do inspections, accompanied by the administrative staff to oversee it all? Or, is this another federal law dumped on the states to enforce?
2. How much is it going to cost? Does anyone have any estimate of what the cost is for the government, for privately funded businesses and for family businesses?

Before you give a knee-jerk reaction, "Isn't saving children's lives important? We need to do whatever is necessary to protect the little ones," know that the conditions have been improving without any new legislation. There are thousands injured by sunburn and hundreds hit by lightning every year, some even killed, but we don't craft laws forcing people to stay indoors during dangerous periods, for obvious reasons. One reason is the cost to enforce such a rule is completely disproportionate to the possible value. This is known as Common Sense, a concept lost on those dedicated to running other people's lives.

Critics of the DOL, however, are now pointing to a new study published by the USDA's National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) showing a downturn in farm accidents without the DOL changes. Looking at injuries to youth in 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2009, NASS found that "agriculture-related injuries to youth under 20 years of age on United States farms have decreased from 13.5 injuries per 1,000 farms in 2001 to 7.2 injuries per 1,000 farms in 2009. ... An injury was defined as any condition occurring on the farm operation resulting in at least four hours of restricted activity or requiring professional medical attention."

So, why was the DOL and the Obama administration introducing the rules, really a backdoor way of usurping legislative power instead of having the Congress enact legislation, at this time? My answer would be, because they know they won't be around next year.

Read what farmers say about "...Encouraging News..." that the Obama administration is dropping the regulation changes forever. By the way, when he flip-flops, if he is reelected, no one will be surprised.

The below article comes from "Farm Progress" e-newsletter:

Farm Progress Companies, Inc. is the largest U.S. media company serving the agricultural market. The company is headquartered in the suburban Chicago area and publishes 18 state and regional farm publications, such as NEBRASKA FARMER in Nebraska and PRAIRIE FARMER in Illinois.

Our rich history, tradition and reputation for quality and editorial integrity date back nearly 200 years to 1819 with AMERICAN FARMER magazine. Additionally, PRAIRIE FARMER, first published in 1841, holds the distinction of being the nation's oldest, continuously published magazine.

The ground swell already happened from those most affected by the proposed rule changes - America's farmers. We don't need a ground swell from liberal progressives in New York, Boston and LA.

Ms. Strauss, the author of this fine article you sent is a graduate of Haverford College, BA Sociology and The School of the Fine Art Institute Chicago, Master Fine Arts. Among her accomplishments are being an instructor in sculpture and a "digitizer" of documents. What great credentials for postulating on Child Labor laws related to agriculture.

"Latest Word On Child Labor Law Most Encouraging News Yet" by Tom Bechman, *Farm Progress*

May 2, 2012, (<http://farmprogress.com/story-latest-word-child-labor-law-encouraging-news-yet-0-59414>)

(Pledge not to bring back rule during Obama Administration defies predictions by some.

Official word is out that the Department of Labor has withdrawn its' proposed standards for changes in child labor laws. The laws as proposed last fall would have severely hampered the ability of youth under 18 to work on farms and in many ag businesses, and might have even made it difficult for kids to work on their own parent's farm.

The fact that it is withdraw is not news. Bill Field, Purdue University safety specialist, reported a couple of weeks ago that it was to be withdrawn. However, Field was confident that another rule would be proposed in its place as early as this summer. He believed that the rule makers were starting to understand that they would need to reword the exemption for kids working on their own farms since many family farms are incorporated. However, he was less optimistic that they understood how such a rule could cripple FFA programs and vocational agriculture instruction, and at the same time deny young people a chance for meaningful employment that has helped shaped the work ethic and led to many careers in various fields related to agriculture in the past.

Now comes news that the Obama Administration has no intention of reintroducing any such rule as long as it is in power. DOL issues this statement on April 26:

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 Obama Administration is also deeply committed to listening and responding to what Americans across the country have to say about the proposed rule. As a result, the Department of Labor is announcing today the withdraw of the proposed rule dealing with children under the age of 16 working in agricultural vocations. The decision to withdraw the rule- including provisions to define the parental exemption- was made in response to thousands of comments expressing concerns about the effect of the rule on small, family-owned farms. To be clear, this regulation will not be pursued for the duration of the Obama Administration. Instead, the DOL will work with rural stakeholders to develop an educational program to reduce accidents to young workers and promote safer agricultural working practices.

20120520-03	16:30 SteveB	Re: Ban on Farm Chores — Really? (reply to Dale, above)
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Since children on the farm were not affected by the proposed change, this whole affair has proven to be nothing but an attempt to slander the President. The Right has misrepresented the whole thing, the sissy liberals backed-off, and children are no more safe than they were before.

Oh my, and this would have been the death knell of the family farm...finance and economics would have nothing to do with it. President Obama, personally, would be solely to blame.

Maybe Republicans think the farmers are just lazy, like everyone else in our society who is not rich and/or failing?

20120518-12 18:59 Charis "Air Travel Tips: How to Get Cheap Tickets & Best Flights"

"Air Travel Tips: How to Get Cheap Tickets and Best Flights" BoliviaBella

May 18, 2012 (<http://networkedblogs.com/xOVTu>)

Read these air travel tips to be sure you get the best flights and cheapest tickets.

1. Remember that the deals you get on flights are based on the number of seats available at the time you book your flight. When airlines can't fill seats prices drop.
2. Book your flights as far in advance as you can, a minimum of 21 days prior. However, by booking 60-90 days in advance you can save even more! If you can plan ahead that far.
3. Last minute deals are a good deal - for the airline! Even if their prices have gone down from their initial prices they usually won't be as low as what you can get if you book way in advance.
4. Fly during off-peak times of the week. Airlines have the hardest time filling their seats on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. That's when you hone in for a discount!
5. Usually airlines post new discounted prices on Monday mornings. By the evening, and Tuesday morning, other airlines are working hard to match those discounts. So Tuesday morning is one of the best times to book a great deal.
6. An exception to point 5 may be really large cities. Big cities get a LOT of business travelers. So you may not find great Tuesday or Wednesday discounts on flights to and from really big cities because airlines have so many business passengers flying to these cities on weekdays that they don't need to offer discounts. In the case of big cities, your best bet for discounts may be weekends.
7. If you fly during the week and not on a weekend, you may have a more pleasant experience at the airport. Air terminals tend to be way more crowded on weekends.
8. A travel tip I use myself a LOT is "take the red-eye!" You can get the best prices on really early morning (dawn) flights and really late evening flights. Even on holidays you can get better prices if you take the "unpopular" flights (and great sunrise photos).
9. Direct non-stop flights usually cost more than flights with one or more stops. Not all flights with stops require you to change planes and in most cases you can check your luggage all the way through to your final destination at your point of origin (some exceptions apply for international flights). But you'll get a better price because airlines know that's an inconvenience to you. Also there is the chance your luggage will get lost or delayed when it changes planes. Airlines know that.
10. Stand-by isn't always bad. If you have the time to chance it this almost always works with late afternoon and evening flights pretty well: you see when you purchase an evening flight chances are it cost you less than a day flight. BUT find out the times earlier flights leave. Go and ask the counter personnel to put you on the stand-by list for one of those. If a seat on an earlier flight opens up, you'll have gotten a peak-hour flight at an off-peak price! Added bonus: during day flights, when business travelers fly, sometimes a cancellation will happen in first class or business class.

11. Stand-by is not a good idea if you're traveling with kids. If there are several cancellations, chances are the seats won't be together. Flight attendants often do ask other passengers if they'd be willing to change seats, but they often aren't. (By the way if you travel often, travel stand-by, or travel with children, Priority Pass is a great idea).

12. If your flights are late or if the airlines inconvenience you in any other way, let them know you expect something in return! Most airlines have great customer service rules (although it often doesn't seem like it) and airlines would much rather give you vouchers or discounts than leave you unsatisfied and mad. So don't be mean or rude, but do be persistent and firm. After all, you are paying for their services. Letting you on their planes is not a favor they are doing you. See information for Bolivia air travelers.

13. If you book your flight online through one of the many well-known travel sites, you'll almost always get a better deal if you book a flight+hotel or a flight+hotel+car or other package deals they offer. We've got the Latest Offers from some of the major travel booking sites here.

14. Travel lightly. Risk living a few days without your curling iron, computer, 12 pairs of shoes and other heavy stuff. Mix and match your wardrobe so you can use the same pieces several times. In general, travel lightly and avoid paying excess luggage fees. Besides, the less luggage you take, the less you risk losing.

15. Many people rack up miles and points when they fly and then never use them because they can't find a convenient time or way to use them before they expire! There's one site where you can buy, trade, share, or redeem them so you get the most out of your points and miles. Manage all your rewards programs in one place. In short, you should make use of all the tools available to travelers. Today, there are a lot of them! So use them to your advantage.

Disclaimer (cuz you know you can't please everyone): This is all based on my own experience. I don't work for an airline and I'm not a travel agent. So just use what works for you and ignore the rest.

20120519-01 07:13 MarthaH "Want to End Partisan Politics? Here's What Won't Work & What Will."

"Want to End Partisan Politics? Here's What Won't Work — and What Will." by Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *The Washington Post*

May 17, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/want-to-end-partisan-politics-heres-what-wont-work--and-what-will/2012/05/17/gIQA5jqcWU_story.html)

(Political dysfunction. Partisanship at record levels. Attack politics run amok. And public approval of Congress scraping the single digits (Sen. John McCain is fond of saying it's down to blood relatives and paid staff).)

We've all heard the laments — we've made some of them ourselves — that Washington is broken, that our political system can't grapple with the nation's big, long-term problems. So what can be done about it? Unfortunately, the cures that get tossed around are often misguided, sometimes even worse than the disease. Here are five much-praised solutions we should avoid, followed by four that have a chance to make a meaningful difference.

1. A third party to the rescue

Ah, if only we had a third force, an independent movement that could speak plain truths to the public and ignite the silent, centrist majority around common-sense solutions.

Sound familiar? In recent decades, Ross Perot, John Anderson and George Wallace have pursued a serious third-party route, although only Wallace managed to win any electoral votes. But that hasn't stopped high-profile columnists such as Tom Friedman of the *New York Times* and Matt Miller of *The Washington Post* from singing this siren song, along with former elected officials such as Republican Christine Todd Whitman, Democrat David Boren and many others. The much-hyped Americans Elect group — which was to harness

the democratic spirit of the Internet to find a centrist third-party presidential candidate for the 2012 race — is a prime example of this approach.

One problem: Despite Americans' disgust with our politics, about 90 percent of us identify with — or at least lean toward — one of the two major parties. Among Americans who call themselves independent, two-thirds lean to one of the parties, and behave at the polls just like the partisans. So the core audience for a third party is perhaps 10 percent of the electorate. So-called independents are classic referendum voters; when times are bad, they want to throw the bums out rather than carefully attribute responsibility or parse alternatives.

The third-party fantasy is of a courageous political leader who could persuade Americans to support enlightened policies to tax carbon; reform entitlements; make critical investments in education, energy and infrastructure; and eliminate tax loopholes to raise needed revenue. But there is simply no evidence that voters would flock to a straight-talking, independent, centrist third-party candidate espousing the ideas favored by most third-party enthusiasts. Consensus is not easily built around such issues, and differences in values and interests would not simply disappear in a nonpartisan, centrist haze.

Just ask Americans Elect, which was unable to coalesce around a single candidate, despite spending \$35 million.

2. Term limits will save us

This is the quintessential bromide for curing American democracy. The case seems self-evident: Career politicians in safe seats lose touch with their constituents, become beholden to the Washington establishment and stop acting in the public interest. Term limits, we're told, would replace them with citizen-lawmakers who cared less about reelection and more about acting on behalf of their fellow citizens — thus restoring Congress to its intended role as the citadel of deliberative democracy.

Does it work? Term limits of some sort have been implemented in 21 states since 1990 (in six of them, the limits were ultimately overturned), and the experience has given scholars time and opportunity to evaluate them. But instead of channeling ambition in the right, public-interest direction, term limits have the opposite effect: New lawmakers immediately begin planning for ways to reach the next level, or to find lucrative lobbying jobs when they are term-limited out. They have no incentive to do things for the long-term and no regard for maintaining their own institutions. With the loss of expertise among senior lawmakers, power devolves to permanent staff members and to lobbyists.

If anything, voters should look to candidates with a stake in the regular order, an understanding of the need to compromise, a willingness to build expertise in important policy areas, and an incentive to listen to constituents — all features that are more likely among politicians with longer horizons.

3. A balanced-budget amendment can fix the economy

Another hardy perennial is the notion that a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget would end Washington's rapacious habits and force politicians to make tough fiscal decisions. After all, 49 states have such an amendment in their constitutions, so why not Washington?

In fact, the states' balanced budgets are the best reason to avoid one at the federal level. When a downturn occurs, basic economic theory tells us that we need "counter-cyclical" policies to inject adrenaline into a fatigued economy — meaning more government spending and/or lower taxes. States do the opposite: A downturn means less revenue and more demands from unemployed residents, so they cut spending and raise taxes to preserve their balanced budgets. The fiscal drag from states in the recent Great Recession amounted to \$800 billion, which the Obama administration's stimulus plan barely offset. A federal balanced-budget amendment would only have aggravated the downturn — the economic equivalent of bleeding an anemic patient.

The latest House Republican proposals for a balanced-budget amendment would limit spending to 19.9 percent of gross domestic product and make any tax increases contingent on a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers of Congress. Because federal revenue is now at barely more than 15 percent of GDP and spending is at 24 percent, balancing the budget under these conditions would essentially eliminate all of the government other than the big entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare — or would require cutting those programs severely.

Maintaining fiscal flexibility is critical in the American political system, particularly in a globalized economy where less and less of our destiny is under our control. And the experience of the 1990s demonstrates that the White House and Congress together can take the steps needed to balance the budget under existing rules.

4. Public financing of elections will restrain special interests

Certainly, in the post-*Citizens United* world, the financing of political campaigns is a nightmare — a Wild West of secret big money and a new Gilded Age of influence peddling by special interests.

But full public financing of campaigns is not the answer. We understand the appeal, but short of an unlikely constitutional amendment or a reconstituted Supreme Court placing limits on private money in political campaigns, public funding simply cannot provide candidates enough resources to overcome hugely expensive “independent” campaigns against them by super PACs. Even then, the influence of organizations such as the National Rifle Association, AARP, the Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO is not defined simply by the money they spend on campaigns. They also mobilize powerful collections of single-minded members and followers to pressure lawmakers; and they hire former lawmakers or congressional staff members to gain access to power and boost policy expertise on key issues. Campaign donations are a relatively small part of the resources they invest in influencing government.

Whether or not campaign money is the key, restricting the flow of private money in politics has proven devilishly difficult, and the actions of the Roberts Supreme Court and the feckless Federal Election Commission have made it virtually impossible.

5. Stay calm — things will get back to normal eventually

Finally, there are some analysts who do not think that our times are particularly exceptional, that under economic stress, advanced democracies grapple with dysfunction, and that as life calms down, so will our politics. They also point out that the 111th Congress (the last one) was extremely productive, passing health-care reform, financial regulation and an economic stimulus package.

David R. Mayhew, a political scientist at Yale and the author of books such as *Divided We Govern* and *Partisan Balance*, is a prominent adherent of this view. Most of the political imbalances of our era “have not been major, permanent systemic problems,” he argues. “More precisely, at least during recent generations, many alleged problems have proven to be nonexistent, short term, limited, tolerable, or correctable.”

No doubt, acrimony and gridlock are built-in features of our political system, and it is true that we have had several eras of intense stress and polarization, including the period right before the Civil War and around the turn of the 20th century.

Yet, it is not exactly comforting to compare what’s going on now to the years leading up to the Civil War. And an examination of the Obama presidency suggests that we are experiencing neither politics as usual nor an odd blip. We are witnessing unprecedented and unbalanced polarization of the parties, with Republicans acting like a parliamentary minority party opposing almost everything put forward by the Democrats; the near-disappearance of the regular order in Congress; the misuse of the filibuster as a weapon not of dissent but of obstruction; and the relentless delegitimization of the president and policies enacted into law.

Given the defeat of problem-solvers such as Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) and the emergence of take-no-prisoners partisans such as Richard Mourdock, there is no reason to think the system will correct itself anytime soon.

So, if these solutions won't work, what will? There is a more sensible and promising reform agenda, one more focused on fixing the party system and addressing the roots and the weapons of political partisanship.

1. Realistic campaign finance reform

So, if these solutions won't work, what will? There is a more sensible and promising reform agenda, one more focused on fixing the party system and addressing the roots and the weapons of political partisanship.

Without a different Supreme Court, serious problems with money in politics will endure. But there are fruitful reform possibilities outside the public financing of elections; namely, restoring the effectiveness of two provisions of the law the court affirmed in *Citizens United*: disclosure and the separation of independent spending groups (such as super PACs) from the candidates and campaigns they support.

Passage of straightforward disclosure legislation requiring the timely identification of all significant donors to independent campaign ads (say, of \$5,000 or more) would be a big step. Combine that with real efforts by the Internal Revenue Service to simply enforce its own regulations on nonprofit 501(c)4 entities to keep sham organizations from exploiting the law to hide political donors, and we would be on a path to real disclosure.

Congress could also pass a measure to sharply tighten the anti-coordination provisions that require unlimited donations to be totally independent of candidates and their campaigns. Even absent such legislation, the Justice Department could prosecute those who violate the coordination bans in cases where the brazen behavior has been most evident. (The fact that Foster Friess, who bankrolled the "independent" effort to back Rick Santorum's presidential candidacy, sat next to Santorum on his campaign plane and stood behind him at campaign rallies shows how farcical the practice has become.) Justice does not need to wait for the Federal Election Commission to act — it would be waiting a long time.

2. Converting votes into seats

With the partisan redrawing of congressional district lines skewing American politics, we support a redistricting process that — like several states have done — uses independent commissions to draw the lines based on respect for communities' boundaries and for real political competitiveness. It is no cure-all (none of these solutions is), but such an effort could contain and possibly reduce our escalating partisanship.

Another option that would help make votes more accurately reflect the electorate's real feelings is instant runoff voting, where voters can rank their candidate preferences. Such a system produces majority winners, eliminates the spoiler role and reduces the "wasted vote" calculation for minor-party candidates, allowing them to participate more fully in the election process. Building more legitimate majorities in this fashion could extend the electoral reach of the major parties and thereby reduce their polarization.

3. Restoring majority rule in the Senate

Restoring the filibuster to its traditional role of allowing an intense minority to temporarily hold up action on issues of great national import — and away from its new use as a regular weapon for obstruction — should be a top priority. Senate rules should allow only one filibuster on any bill (now there can be two or more). Currently, the burden is on the majority to provide the 60 votes to break a filibuster; instead, the minority party should have to take the floor and hold it via debate, and provide the 41 votes needed to maintain the filibuster.

Senate rules should guarantee an up-or-down vote on executive and judicial nominations reported out of the relevant committees, with a time limit for holds on the nominations.

In return for allowing true majorities to ultimately prevail, finding a way to allow a minority to offer a respectable number of relevant amendments on most bills is a reasonable trade-off.

4. Expanding the electorate

Consider the Australian system of mandatory attendance at the polls, where not showing up results in a fine of \$15 or so. This modest penalty has spurred participation of more than 90 percent since the 1925 reform. Australian politicians can count on their bases turning out, so they focus on persuadable voters in the middle. Instead of campaigning on marginal wedge issues, they talk about the economy, jobs, education — and they seek to attract a majority from the entire citizenry.

In the United States, such near-universal voting could eliminate the parties' incentive to diminish the turnout of their opponents' supporters and to mobilize the ideological extremes. Boosting overall turnout would help tilt the balance back toward where most Americans actually are: closer to the middle.

Other promising avenues to expand the electorate include automating the registration process (so voters can register online and carry their documentation with them when they move from one state to another) and to open up the primaries, as California has done, to all voters. Over time, open primaries could produce more moderate elected officials.

Finally, if we can't persuade more Americans to vote with the threat of a fine, how about the promise of untold riches? Millions lined up — sometimes wasting all night — for a shot at the Mega Millions lottery in March. How about another lottery, where your vote stub is a ticket, and where the prize is the money collected from the fines of those who didn't vote? The odds of the mega-jackpot were about 1 in 176 million — we'd like to believe that the chances of fixing American politics are a bit better than that.

[I love the lottery idea. I think it would work great! Republicans would hate it! —SteveB

[20120519-02](#)

17:07 SteveB

Re: "Want to End Partisan Politics? Here's What Won't Work & What Will."
(reply to Martha, above)

This is a super article that sums up so many things I've come to believe. Thanks, Martha!

The piece seems right-on about the Third party. When you look at the math as the authors do, you can see why third parties have gone nowhere for so long. I don't know what could or should significantly change that math...

Term limits seem like a really, really bad idea to me. There is proof. Surely we can figure out a way to control these scoundrels short of keeping Washington full of even more short-sighted people.

I'd like to see us do something to come closer to balancing the budget. Defense would have to take most of the cuts, which doesn't help jobs right now, but there would be compensations. Why don't we conduct a "War of Trade" and make some money off the world? Upper income levels need to be taxed more, there needs to be a **big tax** on gasoline, marijuana, being in the country illegally, leaving the country or shipping money out, and transferring jobs overseas. The revolving regulatory doors and lobbyist abuses must be shut-down. If intelligent, reasonable minds could prevail, all discussion of a balanced budget amendment would become moot.

Somehow, someday, campaigns and elections have to be reformed to remove undue influence by big money. It's a totally corrupt system we have now. There are some good suggestions presented here. I like the idea of dividing the problem into little pieces that could possibly be passed...if Democrats sweep in November... I like the idea of implementing the Australian voting system. It works excellently here in Bolivia too, along with the national ID system, which makes doing so many things—including voting—so much easier.

[20120519-03](#)

18:47 SteveB

"How to Fix the Deficit"

"How to Fix the Deficit" by Dave Johnson, NationofChange

May 19, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-fix-deficit-1337441906>)

The public is demanding jobs, jobs, jobs so DC's wizards and geniuses are gathered at a "Fiscal Summit" -- put on by a hedge-fund billionaire -- to not talk about jobs. This summit takes place at the seat of our representative government but none of the speakers will be unemployed or homeless or poor or retired or even middle class. The premise of the discussion is framed as "we need to find a way to cut entitlements" - to cut the benefits that democracy entitles citizens to receive so that the 1% can have even more. Speakers knowingly say they "need to get away from the reporters and the glare of the camera lights" so they "don't have to worry about public backlash" -- i.e. the transparency and accountability of democracy -- and "come up with a deal." They even talk about "coming out of a room with a deal" after the elections and before those we elect take office! This entire arrogant, anti-democracy display further erodes people's faith in their leaders.

No Jobs 25 million Americans either don't have a job, don't have a job that pays enough to live on or have given up even bothering to look for a job and these people are gathered to talk about how to cut back the things democracy does for We, the People. People who once thought of themselves as middle class are eating at churches, living with their parents or relatives or sleeping in cars, going through trash bins but the "solutions" offered by the remote wizards and geniuses take even more money out of the economy and give it to the 1%ers.

How To Actually Fix The Deficits Here are some clues for the wizards and geniuses at the "Fiscal Summit:"

1. JOBS fix deficits. Because so many people are out of work we aren't bringing in tax revenue and we're paying out huge amounts for unemployment, healthcare assistance, food stamps, etc. Unemployed people don't have the disposable income to spend at clothing stores, etc.
2. Investment grows the economy, and that fixes deficits. We have an aging, crumbling national infrastructure while our international competitors have modern, efficient infrastructure. Our businesses are trying to compete but have to depend on 1950's road and rail, etc. Fixing the infrastructure has to be done at some point and right now millions of people need the work, and financing costs have never been lower.
3. A trade deficits bleeds money out of the economy and our trade deficit is HUGE. The trade deals have benefited the 1%ers and Wall Street, but they have devastated our industrial regions and their supply chains, cost millions of jobs and sucked trillions from our economy.
4. The top tax rate is low and that encourages a scam economy. When you can make a fortune overnight and keep it it makes no sense to take the time to grow a solid business. Instead of look for quick-buck schemes. Growing a solid business over time requires solid communities with good infrastructure and educated people around those businesses and we have thrown that away.
5. A democracy tariff on goods that come from countries where people have no say would remove the competitive advantage from exploitation. We have allowed countries where workers and the environment are mistreated to have a competitive advantage over our democracy where people demand good wages, good working conditions and a clean environment. Use the revenue from that tariff to make our goods competitive elsewhere.
6. Our huge, bloated, incredible, wasteful, unbelievable military budget is equal to all the rest of the world combined. Obviously this drains our economy. The Soviet Unions is gone.

Those are just a few of the things that would fix the deficit problem. Don't forget, just 12 years ago we were paying off the debt.

[20120520-01](#)

12:30 SteveB

"The European Stabilization Mechanism, or How the Goldman Vampire Squid Just Captured Europe"

"The European Stabilization Mechanism, or How the Goldman Vampire Squid Just Captured Europe" by Ellen Brown, NationofChange

May 20, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/european-stabilization-mechanism-or-how-goldman-vampire-squid-just-captured-europe-1337519246>)

The Goldman Sachs coup that failed in America has nearly succeeded in Europe—a permanent, irrevocable, unchallengeable bailout for the banks underwritten by the taxpayers.

In September 2008, Henry Paulson, former CEO of Goldman Sachs, managed to extort a \$700 billion bank bailout from Congress. But to pull it off, he had to fall on his knees and threaten the collapse of the entire global financial system and the imposition of martial law; and the bailout was a one-time affair. Paulson's plea for a **permanent bailout fund**—the Troubled Asset Relief Program or TARP—was opposed by Congress and ultimately rejected.

By December 2011, European Central Bank president Mario Draghi, former vice president of Goldman Sachs Europe, was able to approve a **500 billion Euro bailout** for European banks without asking anyone's permission. And in January 2012, a permanent rescue-funding program called the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) was **passed in the dead of night** with barely even a mention in the press. The ESM imposes an open-ended debt on EU member governments, putting taxpayers on the hook for whatever the ESM's Eurocrat overseers demand.

The bankers' coup has triumphed in Europe seemingly without a fight. The ESM is cheered by Eurozone governments, their creditors, and "the market" alike, because it means investors will keep buying sovereign debt. All is sacrificed to the demands of the creditors, because where else can the money be had to float the crippling debts of the Eurozone governments?

There is another alternative to debt slavery to the banks. But first, a closer look at the nefarious underbelly of the ESM and Goldman's silent takeover of the ECB . . .

The Dark Side of the ESM

The ESM is a permanent rescue facility slated to replace the temporary European Financial Stability Facility and European Financial Stabilization Mechanism as soon as Member States representing 90% of the capital commitments have ratified it, something that is expected to happen in July 2012. A December 2011 YouTube video titled "The shocking truth of the pending EU collapse!", originally posted in German, gives such a revealing look at the ESM that it is worth quoting here at length. It states:

The EU is planning a new treaty called the European Stability Mechanism, or ESM: a treaty of debt . . . The authorized capital stock shall be 700 billion euros. Question: why 700 billion? (Probable answer: it simply mimicked the \$700 billion the U.S. Congress bought into in 2008.)

[Article 9]: ". . . ESM Members hereby irrevocably and unconditionally undertake to pay on demand any capital call made on them . . . within seven days of receipt of such demand." . . . (If the ESM needs money, we have seven days to pay. . . . But what does "irrevocably and unconditionally" mean? What if we have a new parliament, one that does not want to transfer money to the ESM?)

[Article 10]: "The Board of Governors may decide to change the authorized capital and amend Article 8 . . . accordingly." (Question: . . . 700 billion is just the beginning? The ESM can stock up the fund as much as it wants to, any time it wants to? And we would then be required under Article 9 to irrevocably and unconditionally pay up?)

[Article 27, lines 2-3]: "The ESM, its property, funding, and assets . . . shall enjoy immunity from every form of judicial process" (Question: So the ESM program can sue us, but we can't challenge it in court?)

[Article 27, line 4]: "The property, funding and assets of the ESM shall . . . be immune from search, requisition, confiscation, expropriation, or any other form of seizure, taking or foreclosure by executive, judicial, administrative or legislative action." (Question: . . . This means that neither our governments, nor

our legislatures, nor any of our democratic laws have any effect on the ESM organization? That's a pretty powerful treaty!)

[Article 30]: "Governors, alternate Governors, Directors, alternate Directors, the Managing Director and staff members shall be immune from legal process with respect to acts performed by them . . . and shall enjoy inviolability in respect of their official papers and documents." (Question: So anyone involved in the ESM is off the hook? They can't be held accountable for anything? . . . The treaty establishes a new intergovernmental organization to which we are required to transfer unlimited assets within seven days if it so requests, an organization that can sue us but is immune from all forms of prosecution and whose managers enjoy the same immunity. There are no independent reviewers and no existing laws apply? Governments cannot take action against it? Europe's national budgets in the hands of one single unelected intergovernmental organization? Is that the future of Europe? Is that the new EU – a Europe devoid of sovereign democracies?)

The Goldman Squid Captures the ECB

Last November, without fanfare and barely noticed in the press, former Goldman exec Mario Draghi replaced Jean-Claude Trichet as head of the ECB. Draghi wasted no time doing for the banks what the ECB has refused to do for its member governments—lavish money on them at very cheap rates. French blogger Simon Thorpe reports:

On the 21st of December, the ECB "lent" 489 billion euros to European Banks at the extremely generous rate of just 1% over 3 years. I say "lent", but in reality, they just ran the printing presses. The ECB doesn't have the money to lend. It's Quantitative Easing again.

The money was gobbled up virtually instantaneously by a total of 523 banks. It's complete madness. The ECB hopes that the banks will do something useful with it - like lending the money to the Greeks, who are currently paying 18% to the bond markets to get money. But there are absolutely no strings attached. If the banks decide to pay bonuses with the money, that's fine. Or they might just shift all the money to tax havens.

At 18% interest, debt doubles in just four years. It is this onerous interest burden, not the debt itself that is crippling Greece and other debtor nations. Thorpe proposes the obvious solution:

Why not lend the money to the Greek government directly? Or to the Portuguese government, currently having to borrow money at 11.9%? Or the Hungarian government, currently paying 8.53%. Or the Irish government, currently paying 8.51%? Or the Italian government, who are having to pay 7.06%?

The stock objection to that alternative is that Article 123 of the Lisbon Treaty prevents the ECB from lending to governments. But Thorpe reasons:

My understanding is that Article 123 is there to prevent elected governments from abusing Central Banks by ordering them to print money to finance excessive spending. That, we are told, is why the ECB has to be independent from governments. OK. But what we have now is a million times worse. The ECB is now completely in the hands of the banking sector. "We want half a billion of really cheap money!!" they say. OK, no problem. Mario is here to fix that. And no need to consult anyone. By the time the ECB makes the announcement, the money has already disappeared.

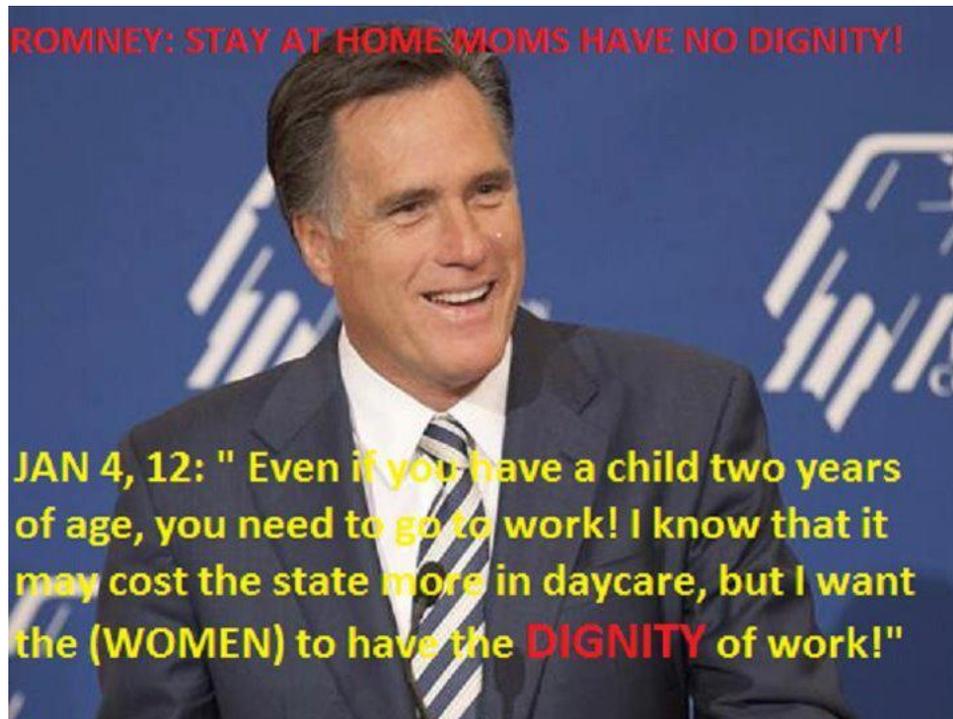
At least if the ECB was working under the supervision of elected governments, we would have some influence when we elect those governments. But the bunch that now has their grubby hands on the instruments of power are now totally out of control.

Goldman Sachs and the financial technocrats have taken over the European ship. Democracy has gone out the window, all in the name of keeping the central bank independent from the "abuses" of government. *Yet the government is the people*—or it should be. A democratically elected government represents the people. Europeans are being hoodwinked into relinquishing their cherished democracy to a rogue band of financial pirates, and the rest of the world is not far behind.

Rather than ratifying the draconian ESM treaty, Europeans would be better advised to reverse article 123 of the Lisbon treaty. Then the ECB could issue credit directly to its member governments. Alternatively, Eurozone governments could re-establish their economic sovereignty by reviving their publicly owned central banks and using them to issue the credit of the nation for the benefit of the nation, effectively interest-free. This is not a new idea but has been used historically to very good effect, e.g. in Australia through the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and in Canada through the Bank of Canada.

Today the issuance of money and credit has become the private right of vampire rentiers, who are using it to squeeze the lifeblood out of economies. This right needs to be returned to sovereign governments. Credit should be a public utility, dispensed, and managed for the benefit of the people.

[20120520-04](#) 23:58 SteveG Quote: Mitt R0mney on Stay-at-Home Moms



<http://movies.yahoo.com/photos/2012-cannes-film-festival-slideshow/>

2012 Cannes Film Festival



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #143 — MAY 22, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Your Tax Money for Salvation?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 22, 2012)



The Right starts bouncing off the walls if you bring up the subject of federal money being used for anything to do with abortion. But they don't have any problems taking your tax dollars to push their agenda—as quietly as they possibly can.

And they perform these insidious instructions utilizing what used to be America's stalwart system of public education—now co-opted by evangelicals. But, believe me, home schooling is even scarier (and, once again, your taxes usually pay for at least part of it)!

This kind of "education" (now often called "brain washing") is why our public school system was founded to begin with, and to help maintain the separation of church and state we used to find so desirable.

"10 Frightening Things That Happen at Conservative Christian Schools That May Be Funded with Your Tax Dollars"
by Kristin Rawls, AlterNet

May 17, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155482/>)

School vouchers have long been a pet cause of Christian school advocates who want to shore up profits and increase their ranks. In 2002, the United States Supreme Court ruled that public funds designated for private school tuition were not an infringement on church/state separation. That gave private Christian school advocates a green light to promote vouchers for themselves.

Though vouchers have become legal in some states, like Ohio, others, like North Carolina, are still holding out. Either way, Christian school advocates show no signs of slowing down their efforts. One reason vouchers remain so contested is that they sometimes fund activities in private Christian schools that many American taxpayers would not want to support. Here are 10 strange things that happen at Christian schools that may give you pause next time vouchers are debated in your state:

1. Inflammatory anti-choice rhetoric.

You might think grade school is a bit young to start learning violent anti-choice rhetoric. Luke Jones, who graduated from an Alabama Church of Christ school in 2004, tells AlterNet it started around the sixth grade. "I remember my English teacher passing around shocking photographs of dismembered babies. That was where I learned about abortion." The pictures that feature in these discussions usually picture late-term fetuses terminated as a result of natural miscarriage. This means that they are not at all reflective of aborted fetuses in general, and give children a skewed – and overly emotive – reaction to a medical service.

Material from a 2005 anti-choice handbook called *Abortion: From Debate to Dialogue* is sometimes used to teach students how to argue with people who are pro-choice. Among the misinformation contained in its pages, the handbook teaches students that serious conditions like preeclampsia, eclampsia, placental previa and placental abruption do not usually endanger a pregnant woman's life. Moreover, it implies, questions about a woman's health are just distractions.

Strategies meant to help anti-choicers seem nice in abortion debates may be practiced in classroom role-playing activities. For example, the handbook says, anti-choice proponents sometimes "appear callous by showing no concern for women who die." Pro-choice advocates, the handbook assures students, sometimes ask about this "to see if you have compassion on the circumstances of women... If you don't show concern for these women in the midst of your response, you lose." In other words, women's well-being is not really the point – anti-choicers must learn to feign compassion for women in order to win arguments.

Some Christian schools use a controversial film – Ray Comfort's *180 Movie* – to insert talking points conflating abortion with the Holocaust.

2. Hands-on anti-choice activism.

Sometimes Christian schools go beyond teaching anti-choice propaganda by encouraging students to get involved in anti-choice activism. Oklahoma's Augustine Christian Academy helped mobilize students to participate in Tulsa's annual March for Life this year. The school's Web site still features information about the January protest that instructed students how to get involved. Some Christian schools even transported students to the much bigger March for Life in Washington, DC. A Catholic school in Lafayette brought

busloads of students to the Capitol for the event. Not only this, but the school made a weeklong field trip of the march that also included a pro-life mass at the National Basilica and a tour of the Mount Saint Mary's and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine, where students would honor saints revered by the Catholic anti-choice movement.

Christian schools also arrange opportunities for students to assist crisis pregnancy centers – that is, anti-choice organizations set up to look like abortion clinics when their real goal is to convince young women to carry their pregnancy to term. Some schools, like Maryland's Connelly School of the Holy Child, feature school clubs that organize fund drives to benefit the centers. Others, like Tri-Cities Christian Schools of Tennessee, encourage students to become directly involved in volunteer work at crisis pregnancy centers in the state, where they may assist with anything from filing to conducting intake interviews.

Some Christian schools even schedule field trips in which students are transported to an abortion clinic for a protest. Fundamentalist homeschoolers throughout the country have been hosting such field trips for years, but Christian schools have taken up the practice more recently. Pro-Life Wisconsin organizes Christian school field trips that include prayer vigils outside abortion clinics.

3. Christian sex-ed. [Welcome to the 11th Century! --SteveB]

In the mid- to late-1980s, evangelical Christians began campaigning to promote abstinence-only education in public schools. Though abstinence-only education remains contested in public schools, it has long been the order of the day in Christian schools. Many schools pressure students to take virginity pledges from Passion 2 Purity Pledge or True Love Waits in which they promise never to have sex outside heterosexual marriage.

A South Carolina curriculum called Heritage Keepers teaches that “[s]ex is like fire. Inside the appropriate boundary of marriage, sex is a great thing! Outside of marriage, sex can be dangerous.” Rather than thinking too much about sex, the curriculum encourages students to think about the qualities they desire in a future spouse and to envision what their wedding day might be like. One example, directed at girls: “Your true love stands at the front. This is the man who you have waited for (remained abstinent for) and who has waited for you...This man wants to be strong and courageous for you, to cherish and protect you... You are ready to trust him with all that you have and all that you are, because you have waited (sexually) you have it all to give.”

If that weren't groan-worthy enough, many abstinence-only programs teach objectively false information. Heritage Keepers notably claims that condom use results in pregnancy one in seven times.

A curriculum called Why kNow? tells sixth graders, “WARNING! Going on this ride could change your life forever, result in poverty, heartache, disease, and even DEATH.” At the eighth-grade level, students learn that “premature birth, infant pneumonia, and neonatal eye infections may result from transmission of [Chlamydia] during delivery...” and “If [syphilis] treated (sic) is not received, a pregnant woman will usually transmit the disease to the unborn child. Stillbirth and death within the neonatal period occur in 25% of these cases.”

If evangelicals really believe the consequences of sex are usually this dire, it's no wonder some schools go a step beyond abstinence-only education and encourage students not to date at all. Inspired by a trend in the homeschool movement called “courtship,” a parent-directed, supervised form of dating, some schools use Joshua Harris' popular book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, in their curriculum. Harris makes the unsubstantiated claim that dating – and break-ups – in the teenage years encourage young people to forego committed relationships and may set them up for painful divorce later in life. Courtship proponents also argue that dating is too risky for teens since sexual temptation is too much to bear.

4. Intolerance.

Since September 11, 2001, Christian schools have become increasingly Islamophobic. In 2010, the Texas State Board of Education ignited a national controversy when it “voted to scrub [public school] textbooks of

anything that smacked of a 'pro-Islam' or 'anti-Christian' bias." In other words, public schools would now be required to use school curriculums that whitewash Christians and demonize Muslims. Though relatively new to public education, Islamophobia has long run rampant at Christian schools.

Last May, AlterNet reported that Christian elementary and secondary curriculums A Beka Book, Bob Jones University Publishing, and Accelerated Christian Education teach that Islam is a "false religion." Rethinking Schools reports that Bob Jones curriculum generally provides a surprisingly unbiased look at Islamic history, but sometimes makes wild claims like, "[T]he darkness of Islamic religion keeps the people of Turkey from Jesus Christ as their savior." At the seventh-grade level, A Beka attempts to bolster its case against Islam by claiming, "[O]ver 500 people saw the resurrected Jesus Christ, no one witnessed Mohammed's supposed encounters with the angels." Not only this, but the curriculum also casts Islam as a "fanatically anti-Christian."

Many Christian school teachers also create lesson plans based on the teachings of self-styled "historian" David Barton, who has wasted many, many articles on "anti-Shariah" fear-mongering. At his own Web site, Wallbuilders, Barton waxes paranoid about what he calls President Obama's "preferential treatment of Muslims and Muslim nations" and contrasts this with what he interprets as Obama's "anti-Biblical" positions when, "In fact, there have been numerous clearly documented times when his pro-Islam positions have been the cause of his anti-Biblical actions." Most of his backing "evidence" is pretty vague. For example, Barton alleges that, in August 2010, Obama spoke "with great praise of Islam and condescendingly of Christianity."

5. Punishment by gender.

Teachers in Christian schools sometimes stereotype boys as more rambunctious and rebellious than girls. In practice, this means that boys are often the targets of harsher corporal punishment. In 2007, a Chicago school was sued for injury and surgical costs after a forcing a 14-year-old boy to kneel in place for nine days, causing a hip injury. A few years later, in 2011, a Christian school teacher in Orlando was arrested on charges of beating a boy at her home with a rusted broom handle.

Many Christian schools punish girls more harshly because of perceived sexual acting out. In 2009, a California appeals court upheld a Christian school's decision to expel two female students simply because administrators suspected they were involved in a same-sex relationship. Just last year, a 15-year-old girl was expelled from another California school for writing on Facebook that she was bisexual. Luke Jones tells AlterNet of an incident he remembers from high school, when a boy and girl were caught having sex in a school bathroom. The boy "got suspended for a little while but then came back," but the girl was expelled for the remainder of the school year.

6. Pregnancy expulsions and firings.

Punishing girls who have sex also extends to pregnancy. In recent years, some students have started fighting back with lawsuits on the basis of "civil rights violations due to discrimination based on race, sex and pregnancy." In 2009, Arkansas parents sued their daughter's Christian school when she was expelled for pregnancy. She said she had been treated like she had a "communicable disease." (Ironically, the blowback girls get for out-of-wedlock pregnancies may end up encouraging abortion -- several sources report girls in their schools turning to abortion in order to remain in school.)

In some schools, it's not just students who are punished for getting pregnant out of wedlock. Cathy Samford was a 39-year-old teacher at a Christian school in Texas when she was fired for getting pregnant while in a long-term committed relationship. The school alleged that the award-winning teacher had violated its "morals clause." A New York preschool teacher sued her former school for the same treatment in 2005. The school's justification? A school handbook requiring every teacher to "convey the teachings of the Catholic faith by his or her words or actions." There are no well-publicized cases of male teachers being fired for impregnating adult women.

7. Revisionist evangelical history classes.

In conservative Christian schools, historical events are filtered through the literal Biblical creation story, and can be understood in the context of sin, redemption and "God's plan" for the United States. On its own Web site, Bob Jones boasts that its US history curriculum includes "special attention...to God's providence and America's Christian heritage." A Beka curriculum opens with a full-on endorsement of theocracy, stating, "All governments are ordained by God, but none compare to government by God, theocracy." From there, the curriculum pushes the false belief that the United States was founded as a Christian nation.

The racist history of the United States is usually whitewashed or romanticized in Christian school curriculum. Writing for AlterNet Rachel Tabachnik highlighted the following in a Bob Jones text: "To help them endure the difficulties of slavery, God gave Christian slaves the ability to combine the African heritage of song with the dignity of Christian praise. Through the Negro spiritual, the slaves developed the patience to wait on the Lord and discovered that the truest freedom is from the bondage of sin." Another A Beka textbook says, "A few slave holders were undeniably cruel. Examples of slaves beaten to death were not common, neither were they unknown. The majority of slave holders treated their slaves well." Even the Klan gets whitewashed. A Bob Jones textbook states that "the Klan in some areas of the country tried to be a means of reform, fighting the decline in morality and using the symbol of the cross to target bootleggers, wife beaters and immoral movies."

These curriculums also engage in a fair amount of Red Scare tactics. Liberalism is conflated with socialism, and a liberal is said to be "a person who believes government should have more control over people's lives[;] that government through taxes should provide for more of people's needs[;] and that Biblical traditional values are not strong considerations." The same curriculum teaches that every social welfare program in US history is evidence of "creeping socialism." In the editors' own words, "A serious flaw developed in American culture during the Cold War period as America began to drift away from the institutions and heritage that made her great. For example, the US government continued to move toward socialism following the 'New Deal'; under the Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter administrations, government spending grew enormously as welfare programs sapped the economy and resulted in a heavier tax burden upon the American people."

8. Creationism-only science.

Many Christian schools teach young earth Christian creationism – that is, the idea that God literally created the earth, humans and animals in seven days, all of 4,000 years ago – in lieu of learning about evolution. A Beka boasts that its "Science and Health Program presents the universe as the direct creation of God and refutes the man-made idea of evolution."

Kentucky's Creation Museum hosts field trips for Christian school groups. Its Web site boasts that "thousands of students like yours have received answers to the tough questions they face in today's culture."

Christian author and blogger Rachel Held Evans has written critically about the fact that she never learned anything about evolution over the course of her Christian education. When she found the information years later she "felt betrayed – by my teachers, by my church, by my culture."

9. Ridiculous dress codes, mostly for girls.

The idea that modest dress among girls tempers teen hormones is magical thinking, but it has never gone out of fashion at Christian schools. As a result, these schools maintain strict dress codes, especially for female students. A California school made headlines in 2005 for enforcing a dress code on its cheerleaders to make them seem more "wholesome." That meant skirts no more than four inches raised above the knees. One school in Indiana doesn't even allow dresses during school. Instead, girls have to wear jumpers and skirts of a "boxy character with no slits." Several other sources report knee-length skirts and loose, boxy tops. Though the regulations differ from school to school, their purpose remains the same -- to somehow prevent boys from entertaining lustful thoughts about their female peers. [Not an entirely bad idea. Catholic schools do it world-wide. It seems a silly thing to condemn here. –SteveB]

10. Proms without dancing. [Come on, though stupid, is this really a serious problem? –SteveB]

Christian schools often have pretty strong opinions about dancing. They tend to be against it. The original *Footloose* film, in which Kevin Bacon challenges a school's prohibition on dancing, seems extremely dated to most contemporary viewers. But in 2009, an Ohio student was suspended from his Christian school for attending a public school prom. Respected evangelical publication Christianity Today explains that objection to dancing among Christians started in the very beginning: "[D]ance played a prominent role in many pagan cults, such as the orgiastic cult of Dionysius. Because early Christians in no way wished to be associated with such rites, they most likely avoided dancing in church, though their intense, sometimes ecstatic worship...may well have included motions of some sort. Christians avoided social dancing, too, as it was usually associated with drinking and sexual immorality in Roman culture."

Even now, a quick Internet search for the term "Christian prom" turns up a host of ongoing evangelical debates about whether or not Christian students should be permitted to attend a secular prom and/or dance in any social context. But how are these regulations keeping up with loosening cultural mores? Luke Jones says that his fundamentalist school prohibited "all forms of social dancing," but that this led to some very odd rituals. Every year, his school held "what they called a Junior/Senior Banquet." Students "would get together a fancy menu, dress up with all the same stuff you'd have at a normal prom with a corsage and boutonniere," but there would be no dancing. He says the affair was "pretty starched" – that is, until what came next. When it was over, students would leave the premises, and "there would usually be a second event that was an unofficial addition to the banquet. It was usually hosted nearby in a different venue. In our case, it was held across the street in a different hotel." What came next was "just the dancing part of prom. You'd walk into a room, and there was the dance floor, and everybody was dancing." The school did not formally sanction this event, but because social attitudes were changing, it didn't try to prevent it either. Parents hosted the ostensibly salacious dancing event, allowing the school to relax its approach to the rules without changing them on paper.

Supporters of school vouchers usually speak in very broad terms about supporting "religious schools," but they are often reluctant to talk specifics. Instead, they prefer to focus on intellectual niche schools that focus, for example, on classical education or fine arts. That is because of, as you can see, the peculiar beliefs and behaviors documented at these schools. It would be an exaggeration to argue that all private Christian schools provide a poor education, but **perhaps we need to think twice about spending public money diverted from public schools to private religious schools.**

(Kristin Rawls is a freelance writer whose work has also appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*, *GOOD Magazine*, *Religion Dispatches*, *Killing the Buddha*, *Global Comment* and elsewhere online.)

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20120521-01 07:46 MarthaH "A Mormon Moment"

"Column: A Mormon Moment" by Stephen Prothero, *USA Today*

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/story/2012-05-20/romney-mormon-evangelicals-liberty-commencement/55096402/1>)

(Romney: "We can meet in service, in shared moral convictions about our nation stemming from a common worldview," he says this month at a commencement ceremony.)

(On Religion: Faith. Religion. Spirituality. Meaning. In our ever-shrinking world, the tentacles of religion touch everything from governmental policy to individual morality to our basic social constructs. It affects the lives of people of great faith — or no faith at all. This series of weekly columns — launched in 2005 — seeks to illuminate the national conversation.)

On the final exam for an American religion class I taught this spring, I asked my Boston University students to offer Mitt Romney some unsolicited advice on how to talk to the American public about his Mormon faith.

He needs it. In many respects, Mormons have become quintessentially American, yet "gentiles" (as Mormons call the rest of us) remain wary. Evangelicals often view the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an unchristian "cult," and many liberals are at least as uncomfortable with the idea of a Mormon president. What to do?

Most of my students told me that the former Massachusetts governor could not sidestep "TMT," as his 2008 presidential team referred to "That Mormon Thing." He should discuss his faith in a heartfelt manner. But he should steer clear of its controversial history and unusual beliefs and rituals. What is to be gained from addressing Mormons' rejection of the Trinity, their baptisms of dead Holocaust victims, or their founder Joseph Smith (who also ran for president)? Romney should emphasize morality instead, my students said, underscoring the convergence of Mormonism and Christianity on "family values."

Earlier this month Romney traveled to Lynchburg, Va., to deliver a much-anticipated commencement address at Liberty University, an evangelical mecca founded by televangelist Jerry Falwell. He followed my students' advice to a tee.

Romney salted his remarks with evangelicalese, referring to the "purpose-driven life" and to God standing at the door of our hearts and knocking. He spoke repeatedly of Christ, Christians and Christianity. In fact, in one sentence, he praised a Methodist (John Wesley), an Anglican (William Wilberforce), a Lutheran (Dietrich Bonhoeffer), a Catholic (John Paul II) and a Baptist (Billy Graham). But he never mentioned a Mormon. In fact, Mormonism appears in this speech only as the faith that dare not speak its name.

Differences run deep

In my book *God Is Not One*, I argued that the differences between the world's religions run deep. Many evangelicals e-mailed me to say they agreed. They are perfectly willing to debate the Bible with skeptics, they told me, but they are flummoxed by those who short-circuit that debate by proclaiming on faith that the world's religions are different paths up the same mountain.

In a key passage in his commencement address, Romney acknowledged the theological differences between Mormonism and evangelicalism, only to move on to their ethical similarities. "People of different faiths, like yours and mine, sometimes wonder where we can meet in common purpose, when there are so many differences in creed and theology," he said. "Surely, the answer is that we can meet in service, in shared moral convictions about our nation stemming from a common worldview."

This surprising admission of theological differences is one reason why evangelicals have moved so quickly to embrace a Mormon as their man. But it is not the only reason.

Divided denominations

Twenty-five years ago, sociologist Robert Wuthnow observed that American religion is no longer divided along denominational lines. Instead, each denomination is itself divided into liberals and conservatives. The contagion of partisan politics has infected our religious institutions, Wuthnow wrote, converting groups that used to debate baptism and the Trinity into groups that debate homosexuality and abortion.

This is a sad development for people like me, who prefer the conversations about the Incarnation, which animated the Episcopal Church of my youth, to conversations about gay bishops. But it should be music to the ears of Romney's supporters. Not so long ago, Romney would have had to explain Mormon theology to voters in some detail. But now that religion has collapsed almost entirely into morality, all he has to do is assure us that its values are compatible with our own.

I do not want liberals or evangelicals to use this election as an excuse to attack the Mormon faith. I am glad there is no religious test in the Constitution, and I would be happy to call a Mormon (or a Hindu) my president. But I am chagrined to see our public square stripped of real religious conversation. Has the religious right pushed so hard to reinvest our politics with religion only to turn our religion into politics? Did Jesus take on a human body in order to tell us that homosexuality is wrong?

This is Romney's moment. But it is also a Mormon moment. At least for now, evangelicals seem to have heard enough about Romney's faith. But given how little most Americans know about the LDS church, I suspect other voters are going to want to know more before they decide whether to replace the nation's first black president with its first Mormon one.

As we head toward November, lots of people will doubtless step up to answer their questions. One of them ought to be Mitt Romney.

(Stephen Prothero is a professor in Boston University's religion department and the author of *The American Bible: How Our Words Unite, Divide, and Define a Nation*.)

20120521-02	10:21	Art	"A Choice of Capitalisms"
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Bain...

There's a lot I really dislike about Romney, in fact the more I learn the less I think of him, but as far as Bain Capital goes, he apparently did a very good job. His job was to make money for his investors and he did that, substantially.

The question for the rest of us then is, is what he learned and the skills he demonstrated at Bain Capital what the country needs? I would argue that those skills were not those of building but rather skills of dismembering. His arguments that he created jobs are specious and have been discounted by virtually everyone. His task was not to create jobs but rather to earn lots of money for his investors. Any incidental job creation was just that, incidental. I seriously doubt any of those investors, nor Romney at the time, was interested in sacrificing one penny of profit for themselves in the interest of job creation for others. {Excellent, excellent point! –SteveB}

Article from *Washington Post* below does a better job of explaining this.

"A Choice of Capitalisms" by E.J. Dionne Jr., *The Washington Post*

May 20, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-choice-of-capitalisms/2012/05/20/gIQA2h31dU_story.html)

(Why adopting Bain Capital's values is insane for a national candidate.)

In this election, we're not having an argument that pits capitalism against socialism. We are trying to decide what kind of capitalism we want. It is a debate as American as Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay — which is to say that we have always done this. In light of the rise of inequality and the financial mess we just went through, it's a discussion we very much need to have now.

The back-and-forth about Bain Capital, Mitt Romney's old company, is part of something larger. So is the inquest into the implications of multibillion-dollar trading losses at JPMorgan Chase. Capitalism can produce wonders. It is also capable of self-destruction, and it can leave a lot of wounded people behind. The trick is to get the most out of what capitalism does well, while containing or preventing the problems it can cause.

To describe this grand debate is not to deny that President Obama's campaign has some, shall we say, narrower motives in going after Bain. Obama's lieutenants need to undermine Romney's claim that his experience in the private equity business makes him just the guy to get our economy back on track.

The Bain conversation has already been instructive. Romney's friends no less than his foes have had to face the fact that Bain's purpose was never about job-creation. Its goal was to generate large returns to Bain's partners and investors. It did that, which is why Romney is rich.

Romney wants to focus on the positive side of his business dealings that did create jobs. He wants to brag about the companies Bain helped bring to life, among them Staples, Sports Authority and Domino's.

That's fair enough. But having made an issue of Bain on the plus side, he also has to answer for the pain and suffering — or, as defenders of capitalism like to call it, the "creative destruction" — that some of Bain's deals left in their wake.

This leads naturally to the question of how creative the destruction wrought by our current brand of capitalism actually is. Since the dawn of the leveraged buyout era three decades ago, many friends of capitalism have questioned whether loading companies with debt as part of these deals is good for companies and for the economy as a whole.

Does this approach cause unnecessary suffering among the employees of the companies in question and the communities that often lose plants and jobs as a result? Sucking pension and health funds dry to aggrandize investors seems less like a creative act than a betrayal of workers who made bargains with their employers in good faith.

More generally, while some of the innovations in the financial sphere have been beneficial to growth, it's far from clear that this is true of all or even most of them. Some of them helped cause the downturn we are still trying to escape and created incentives for the dangerous risk-taking that led to JPMorgan's troubles. And there's little doubt that our new financial system has transferred wealth from other sectors of the economy to the people at the top of the financial business.

Vice President Biden's speech last week in Youngstown, Ohio, drew wide attention for its criticism of Romney as someone who just doesn't "get it." But when Biden moved beyond Romney, he offered an energetic broadside against the new world of finance, and he picked the right venue to make his case: a noble blue-collar town that has been battered by the winds of globalization and economic change.

"You know the difference between having an economy that makes things that the rest of the world wants, and having an economy that is based on financialization of every product," Biden told his listeners. "You know the difference between an economy . . . that's built on making things rather than on collateralized debt, creative credit-default swaps, financial instruments like subprime mortgages. That's not how you build an economy."

Romney, by contrast, is wary of dismantling any of these nifty new Wall Street inventions, one reason why he wants to repeal the Dodd-Frank financial reforms.

We need to have this great national argument. To borrow a term pioneered by Germany's Christian Democrats, we can try to build a social market. Or we can have an anti-social market. An election is the right venue for deciding which it will be.

20120521-05	11:47	GaryF	"A Choice of Capitalisms"
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Will Bain values ruin Romney? Mitt Romney embraces his own destruction...

"A Choice of Capitalisms" by E.J. Dionne Jr., *The National Memo*

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/a-choice-of-capitalisms/>)

20120521-03 10:42 Art Video: "Who Are the Job Creators?"

This pretty thought provoking, if you have not seen it...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBx2Y5HhplI&feature=player_embedded.

20120521-04 11:25 Pam Re: "Who Are the Job Creators?" (reply to Art, above)

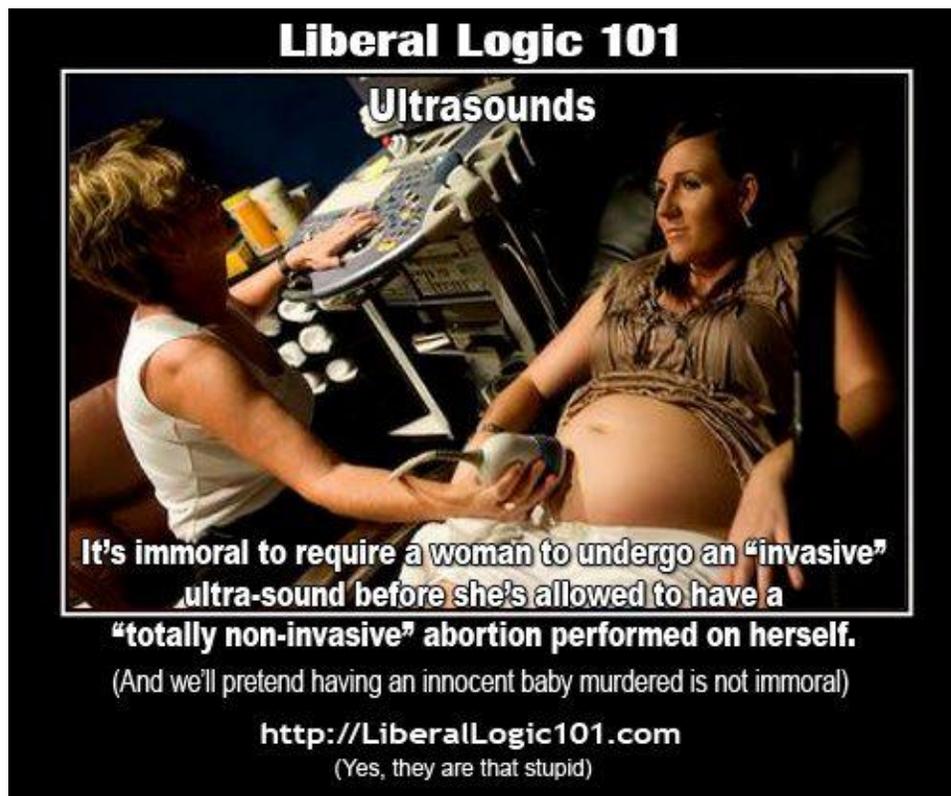
This is great, Art. I'm going to forward it to my libertarian, right-wing friend.

20120521-06 13:31 Dennis "Standard Right-Wing Propaganda"

"Standard Right-Wing Propaganda" by Justin "Filthy Liberal Scum" Rosario, [Addicting Info](http://www.addictinginfo.org)

May 20, 2012, (<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/05/20/propaganda/>)

I try not to pay attention to these things but sometimes the stupid is so thick I just can't resist.



What you have here is the usual deliberate distortion from the right. And it IS deliberate. It's possible that the person who made this picture is actually so profoundly ignorant that they think this is accurate but I seriously doubt it. After months of the phrase "trans-vaginal ultrasound" being tossed around and the magical power of the internet that can show what that is as quickly as you can type it, I can only conclude that the point is to mislead gullible idiots. How else would a person confuse a regular ultrasound for a T-V ultrasound?

Just so you know, this particular picture was posted on April 21, long after the controversy started.

A further deliberate distortion is that liberals think abortion is "non-invasive." This insinuates that we think it is no big deal. Nobody thinks this. We think it's a traumatic and heart-wrenching decision to make but absolutely private and no one else's business. Our goal is to make them safe and as rare as possible.

Conservatives think pregnancy is a divine punishment for women having sex and want to do everything they can to ensure as many "punishment pregnancies" possible. Why else do you think they oppose contraception and sex-ed so bitterly? This is how the right debases political and moral debates in this country.

Liberals say, "We want to keep violent criminals from buying guns" and a conservative will claim we said, "Ban all guns." Liberals say, "We want everyone to have access to healthcare" and a conservative will claim we said, "Kill the sick and elderly." Liberals say, "America is open to all religions, not just Christianity" and a conservative will claim we said, "Ban Christianity and the Bible."

This is how people who are afraid to confront their own failings respond. Rather than simply admit their greed or fear or prejudice, they mischaracterize our positions to make it easier on their conscience when they oppose us. If conservatives would only be honest about their motivations, we could have an honest conversation but that will never happen as long as the political platform of the right is built on hate and anger.

(Feel free to tell me what a terrible person I am at Proudtobeaufilthyliberalscum.com or follow me on Twitter @FilthyLbrlScum.)

20120521-07 13:50 SteveB "How the Ultra-Rich Betray America"
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"How the Ultra-Rich Betray America" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-ultra-rich-betray-america-1337616055>)

The betrayals come in many forms. Here are a few of the more outrageous, and destructive, examples:

Evasion: Corporations suddenly stopped meeting their tax responsibilities

While corporate profits have doubled to \$1.9 trillion in less than ten years, the corporate income tax rate, which for thirty years hovered around the 20-25% level, suddenly dropped to 10% after the recession. It has remained there for three years.

We are seeing a manifestation of the Shock Doctrine. Corporations are using the national emergency of the financial collapse to make a statement about taxes, and a traumatized nation is too preoccupied to do anything about it.

Delusion: Technology companies won't admit that much of their 'innovation' is due to public assistance

According to the report Funding a Revolution, government provided almost half of basic research funds into the 1980s. Federal funding still accounted for half of research in the communications industry as late as 1990. Even today, the federal government supports about 60 percent of the research performed at universities.

Apple's first computer was introduced in the late 1970s. Apple still does most of its product and research development in the United States, with US-educated engineers and computer scientists.

Google's business is based on the Internet, which started as ARPANET, the Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency computer network from the 1960s. The National Science Foundation funded the Digital Library Initiative research at Stanford University that was adopted as the Google model.

Apple got its tax bill down to 9.8% last year. About 2/3 of its profits remain overseas for tax avoidance purposes. Google, like Apple, avoids taxes by moving most of its foreign profits through Ireland and the Netherlands to Bermuda. Both Apple and Google, along with Microsoft and Cisco, are lobbying for a repatriation tax holiday to allow billions of overseas dollars to come home at a greatly reduced tax rate.

An Apple executive said: "We don't have an obligation to solve America's problems." That may be true, but they do have an obligation to pay the taxes that help America solve its problems.

Desertion: The people who benefit most from government are renouncing their citizenships to avoid taxes

Perhaps the ultimate insult to America is to just quit on your country after making a fortune off of it. In 2011 almost 1,800 Americans gave up their citizenship to avoid taxes.

The wealthy benefit disproportionately from property and inheritance laws, contracts, stock exchanges, favorable SEC regulations, the Small Business Administration, patent and copyright and intellectual property laws, estate planning, trust funds, Internet marketing, communications infrastructure, highway maintenance, air traffic control, local and national security, and 60 years of research in technology and other industries.

A recent outrageous example is Facebook part-owner Eduardo Saverin, whose family came to America from Brazil partly for safety reasons, and who happened to land Mark Zuckerberg as a roommate at Harvard. Now after falling into billions, he's decided to renounce his U.S. citizenship to avoid taxes.

Denial: Traders feel it's inappropriate to pay even a tiny tax on a quadrillion dollars in sales

A quadrillion dollars sounds like a fake amount. But it's all too real. That's a thousand trillion dollars of derivatives transactions which, along with the high-frequency computer-generated transactions (5,000 per second) that make up over half of U.S. stock trades, contributed to a financial meltdown and a \$3 trillion bailout for reckless trading.

But there's no tax on these transactions.

While average Americans pay a 10% sales tax on necessities, millionaire investors pay just a .00002% SEC fee (2 cents for every thousand dollars) for a financial instrument. And their supporters claim, inexplicably after the disastrous trading frenzy in 2008, that a tax would increase volatility.

Illusion: The media leads us to believe we should all be cheering when the stock market is booming

Conservatives insultingly assure us that the "democratization of stock ownership" is gradually making America more equal, as evidenced by the flattening of wealth ownership among the richest 1% in recent years. So we should all be excited about a rising stock market.

Here are the facts. Data from Edward Wolff confirms that from 1983 to 2007 the percentages of net worth and financial wealth for the top 1% remained steady. But the percentages for the rest of the richest 5% increased by almost 20%, while the percentages for the lowest 80% of the population DECREASED by almost 20%.

In other words, the share of wealth owned by the top 1% leveled off because the "democratization of stock ownership" spread the wealth among just 5% of the population, those earning an average of \$500,000 per year. A few people -- 5 out of 100 -- got very rich, but everyone else lost ground.

Conclusion

The issues are difficult to address with Congress largely on the side of the wealthy.

At the very least [we need to]:

1. **Eliminate the tax break on unearned income (capital gains).** The richest Americans, who own most of the stocks, should not pay a smaller tax than everyone else.

2. **Implement a small financial transactions tax.** It would be easy to administer on computer trades, it would generate hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue, and it would help guard against the reckless speculation that devastated the financial markets and our country.

20120521-08	14:42	Art	"Tanks, Jets or Scholarships?"
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Interesting article.

"Tanks, Jets or Scholarships?" by Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*

May 1, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/02/opinion/friedman-tanks-jets-or-scholarships.html>)

(AMMAN, Jordan) And so it came to pass that in 2012 — a year after the Arab awakening erupted — the United States made two financial commitments to the Arab world that each began with the numbers 1 and 3.

It gave Egypt's military \$1.3 billion worth of tanks and fighter jets, and it gave Lebanese public-school students a \$13.5 million merit-based college scholarship program that is currently putting 117 Lebanese kids through local American-style colleges that promote tolerance, gender and social equality, and critical thinking. I've recently been to Egypt, and I've just been to Lebanon, and I can safely report this: The \$13.5 million in full scholarships has already bought America so much more friendship and stability than the \$1.3 billion in tanks and fighter jets ever will.

So how about we stop being stupid? How about we stop sending planes and tanks to a country where half the women and a quarter of the men can't read, and start sending scholarships instead?

I am on a swing through the Arab world right now, and I am spending as much time as I can with public schoolteachers and students — and young Arabs doing technology start-ups — and as little time as possible with officials. It derives from my conviction about what really propelled the Tunis and Tahrir Square revolutions: Arab youths — 70 percent of this region is under 30 — who were humiliated and frustrated that they were being left behind. This Arab awakening was their way of saying: We want the freedom, the voice, the educational tools, the jobs and the uncorrupted government *to realize our full potential*. That's what sparked this revolution.

Yes, the various Muslim Brotherhoods have exploited the opening created by these uprisings because they were the most organized parties. But if the Islamists don't respond to the real drivers of this revolution — that yearning for education and jobs and the dignity they bring — they, too, will eventually face a rebellion.

If America wants to connect with the real aspirations of these revolutions, it will expand to other Arab awakening countries the \$13.5 million U.S. Agency for International Development scholarship program begun in Lebanon. And, by the way, hats off to President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah and the members of Congress who got this program going.

Iran is building dams and roads around Lebanon, decorated with "Thank You, Iran" signs. But no one is standing in line here to go to Tehran University. They still line up for American scholarships, though — one requirement of which is that winners have to do community service, so we are also helping to build better citizens.

The American Embassy in Beirut introduced me to four of this year's Lebanese scholarship students — who attend either the Lebanese American University or Haigazian University, which offer modern U.S.-style bachelor's degrees.

Israa Yassin, 18, from the village of Qab Elias, who is studying computer science, told me: "This whole program is helping to make the youth capable of transforming this country into what it should be and can be. We are good,

and we have the capabilities and we can do a lot, but we don't get the chance. My brother just finished high school, and he could not afford [university]. His future is really stopped. The U.S. is giving us a chance to make a difference. I do believe if we are given the chance, we can excel. ... We will not be underestimated anymore. It is really sad when you see a whole generation in Lebanese villages — hundreds of guys doing nothing — no work, not going to college."

After getting the U.S. scholarship, said Yassin, "my family and my community feel differently about America. Why would they hate someone who is helping them?"

Word of the American scholarships has spread quickly; the program is now being swamped with applications for next year, a majority from young women. Wissal Chaaban, 18, from Tripoli, also attending the Lebanese American University and studying marketing, told me: "We have a lot of talent in the Middle East, and young people do not feel appreciated. They feel their voice is shut down and not heard enough."

This program is in America's interest, she said, because it sends young people to colleges that "encourage openness, to accept the other, no matter how different, even if he was from another religion."

I wish my government was giving more scholarships to Americans, but since we budget this money specifically for foreign aid, let's use it intelligently. We can still give military aid — but in the right proportion.

While in Amman, I interviewed some public schoolteachers at Jordan's impressive Queen Rania Teacher Academy, which works with a team from Columbia University to upgrade teaching skills. We talked about the contrast between the \$13.5 million in U.S. scholarships and the \$1.3 billion in military aid, and Jumana Jabr, an English teacher in an Amman public school, summed it up better than I ever could:

One is "for making people," she said, "and the other is for killing people." If America wants to spend money on training soldiers, she added, well, "teachers are also soldiers, so why don't you spend the money training us? We're the ones training the soldiers you're spending the \$1.3 billion on."

Correction: May 2, 2012

(An earlier version of this column used the wrong name for a university in Lebanon that received scholarships for U.S.-style bachelor's degrees. It is the Lebanese American University, not the Lebanese Arab University.)

20120521-09	17:11	SteveB	From the Right: "2012 GOP Platform Must Aim to Restore American Innovation"
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If you want to know what lies the Republicans will be telling in the future, just read the lies Newt is telling now:

"2012 GOP Platform Must Aim to Restore American Innovation" by Newt Gingrich, *Human Events*

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51608>)

Jobs and work must be at the heart of the Republican platform in 2012, just as they're at the heart of what makes America exceptional.

[But, Newt, Republicans don't believe the government has any connection to jobs. Jobs are solely created by the rich out of the kindness of their hearts, just to give the poor something to do to keep them out of trouble and add meaning to their lives. What heroes Newt and his friends are! —SteveB]

After three years of President Obama, we're in danger of losing these important values. The current economy has been so bad for so long that it is undermining the very fabric of American life. The prolonged economic downturn and destruction of jobs by high taxes, massive over-regulation, and class warfare has forced more and more Americans into dependence on government.

[That darned President Obama is destroying everything by...by...let me think...by being black, I guess. That blackness can really be a dangerous thing, I guess. –SteveB]

President Obama's policies, ostensibly solutions to these problems, have in truth focused on making people even more dependent on an even larger government. Under the Obama model, for instance, unemployment benefits and food stamps are satisfactory compensation for the president's own job-killing policies. Similarly, the president's health care law is praised for providing young people the chance to remain on their parents' health insurance until they are 26—a dependency made necessary only by the fact that so many young people are unable to get jobs in the Obama economy.

These changes are in accordance with the left's vision for America, in which dependence on the government is a legitimate lifestyle—even desirable.

A fundamentally different sense

Conservatives have a fundamentally different sense of the importance of independence, work, and jobs. It is up to us point out these moral and cultural failures of the left, and to respond with a platform for a dynamic, job creating, and prosperous economy. As conservatives, we believe a free society must be built on self-reliant individuals and their families, working together in a free economy. The centrality of work to that vision is one of the values that has always defined Americans.

At the very beginning, in 1608 at the Jamestown colony, aristocrats told their leader, Captain John Smith, that their contract provided for maintenance without effort. They argued their payment to come to the New World exempted them from any work requirement.

Faced with this legal argument, Captain Smith resorted to first principles and objective reality. In effect he told them there were too few resources to have freeloaders. He warned, "If you don't work, you don't eat." In asserting this principle of the necessity of work, John Smith cited Biblical precedent—specifically, a letter from Paul, Silas, and Timothy (Second Thessalonians 3:10) in which they assert, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

More than 250 years later, this centrality of effort in a free society was captured in our Declaration of Independence when the founding fathers wrote that "we are endowed by our Creator" with "the right to pursue happiness."

They did not suggest that we had a guarantee of happiness.

They did not suggest that there should be an equal distribution of happiness.

They did not propose a new right to be happy.

They suggested Americans had a right to "pursue" the possibility of happiness.

It is this connection of big dreams with hard work that has made the American experience unique. Here, everyone has a chance. Everyone can dream of being a first generation millionaire, a movie star, a president.

Strong work ethic

As conservatives, we want every American make the best of their God-given rights to pursue happiness. The pursuit of happiness requires a strong work ethic. A strong work ethic requires work.

Work is one of the most important components of the liberty we enjoy in America. With a job comes a paycheck. With a paycheck comes the freedom to make moral choices about what to buy, what to save, and what kind of lifestyle to follow. Those are big choices, and it's the job that makes them possible.

Without them—with an unemployed, passive, dependent America—we are inherently less free. The fact is a person who is working has far more control over their life and their choices than someone who is unemployed, relying on food stamps and maybe living in public housing.

Dependence is destructive

This is why the very basic framework of a healthy society relies on work and jobs. And conservatives understand that this means jobs are not merely an economic issue, but also a social issue and a key building block of the American constitutional experience.

We want strong families in America. They're a central pillar of our society. But for families to remain strong, for people to be able take care of their families and themselves, they have to have jobs. Families require incomes to be stable. Today, economic stress is a major factor in all too many marriages.

And if we want strong families, our policies have to favor a full employment society. President Reagan saw this clearly, and asserted over and over "the best social program is a job." Because when families have solid incomes they can plan for the future and sustain the present.

The conservative belief in the power of work and independence to liberate people was at the heart of the 1996 welfare reform. By then, Americans had reached the conclusion that giving people money to do nothing was actually destructive.

The long debate had begun 30 years earlier, in 1966, when Ronald Reagan—then a candidate for governor—proposed dramatic reform in the very principle of welfare. Later, Charles Murray's brilliant book *Losing Ground* proved that dependence was destructive.

Marvin Olasky's insightful *The Tragedy of American Compassion* outlined with compelling clarity that 19th century reformers would have been appalled and dismayed by the modern welfare state. The genuine reformers who devoted their lives to saving the poor had hated rich people who visited the slums to give unearned money to the poor. In the reformers' analysis, unearned money simply increased dependency, weakened personal initiative and subsidized addiction.

In effect, the welfare state had systematized and vastly expanded the redistribution of wealth to the poor. And that transfer had led to precisely the dependency on government and the decay of moral fiber the 19th century reformers would have predicted.

So in 1996, welfare reforms shifted the system from teaching dependence to teaching self-reliance. It shifted from subsidizing indolence to rewarding effort.

When two out of every three people on welfare left for a job or training, it was clear the new conservative reform was working. But the entire focus of the welfare reform program was to allow people to succeed for themselves in a full employment economy. Government is just as destructive when its job-killing policies make it impossible for people to get jobs.

Conservatives promise a future of lower taxes, more innovation, and full employment, in which you can have a job so you can provide for your family and for civil society.

President Obama believes this vision—one the founding fathers' shared with us—is obsolete. He instead promises a future in which government will take from someone else to give to you. He believes his borrowed vision of massive government financed with massive debt and punishing the successful by taking their money to "redistribute" it is the wave of the future.

[Well...the first part is what all governments do, including those of Republicans. The second part is what Republicans did to America when they had power from 2001 to 2009. President Obama inherited it. Let's get that straight, Newt. –SteveB]

But Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's classic critique of socialism—"You run out of other people's money to spend"—gets to the heart of why the president's policies will inevitably fail. His model is a tsunami of debt, bureaucracy, corruption, and incompetence doomed to crash.

[President Obama or George Bush and Dick Cheney??? Study history, Mr. Professor! –SteveB]

These are the sharp moral and practical distinctions the Republican platform must draw out. The choice between an America of work and independence and an America of unemployment and dependence is the defining fight of our time.

[This is nothing but a bullsh*t lie meant to distract the electorate from the real problems, which are Republican in nature. –SteveB]

It is politically, historically, and morally the right centerpiece for the 2012 election.

20120521-10	21:47	SteveG	Fw: Dennis Kucinich: "Peace Depends on All of Us"
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from Dennis Kucinich:

As we begin a transition for our movement to work from outside Congress, it is worth remembering that the cause of peace does not depend upon any of us having a certificate of election.

Indeed, in the past week, the House approved the "National Defense Authorization Act" which authorizes a continuation of War in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen and preparation for war against Iran. Additionally, arms reductions agreements with Russia were set back. Maybe Washington is ready to spend endless blood and treasure on endless war, but I do not believe Main Street is.

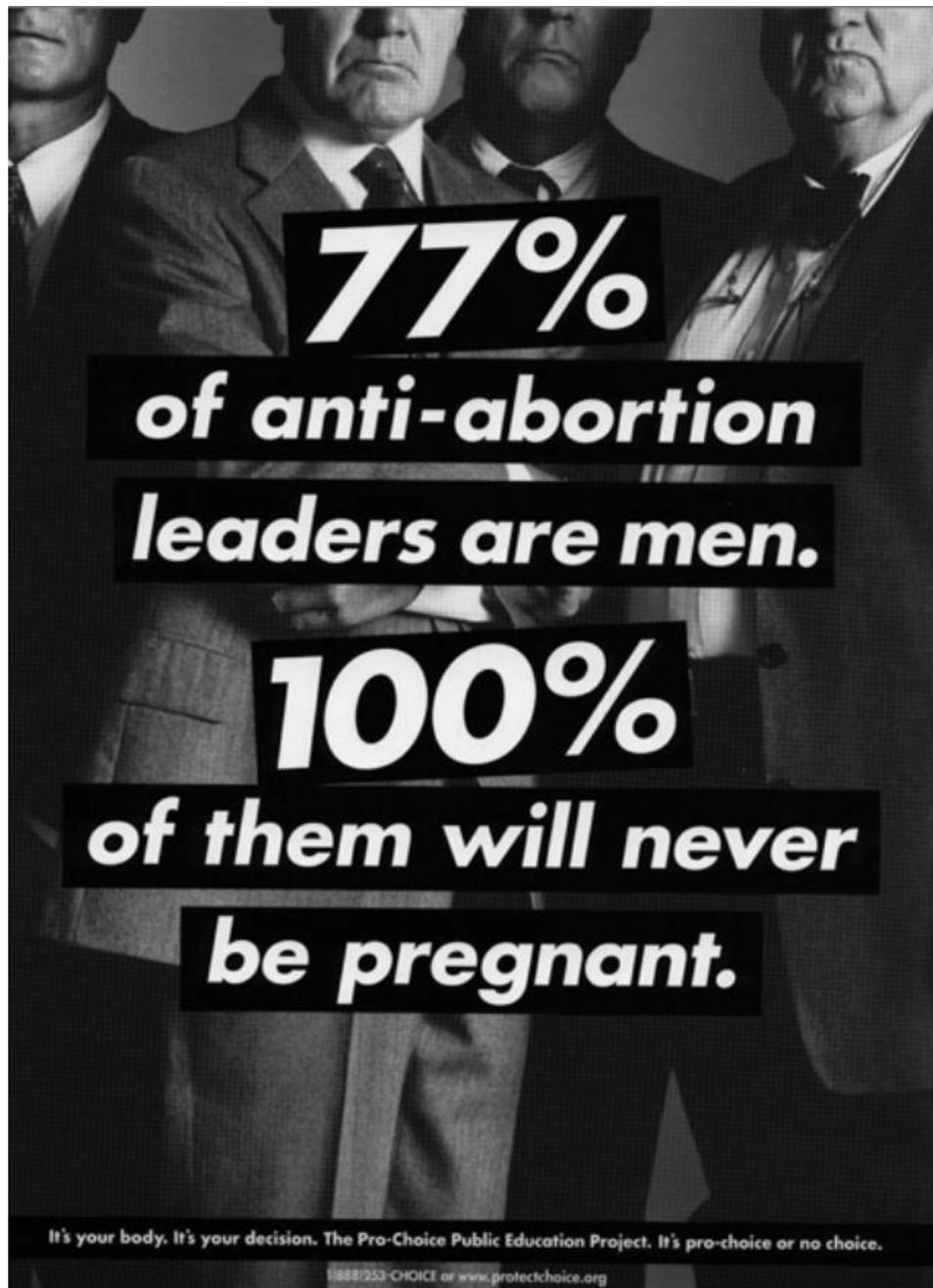
We need to instill in our fellow citizens the capacity to challenge our government to stop wasting lives and money on the foolish policy of permanent war for permanent peace.

We must use our nation's resources to build our lives at home.

The idea of a Department of Peace is to demonstrate that Americans have the ability and the desire to develop a capacity for peace-building at home and abroad.

Sunday's Washington Post article misses the point. Peace-building isn't about just one of us -- one leader or member of Congress. It's about every one of us. What do you think? Let's plan on continuing to work together to build new structures of peace. Please send me your comments and share this email on Facebook and Twitter to help us continue to grow this movement for peace.

Sincerely, Dennis (<http://kucinich.us/media/peace-depends-all-us#.T7rL2P682BA.twitter>)



77%
**of anti-abortion
leaders are men.**

100%
**of them will never
be pregnant.**

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #144 — MAY 23, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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The 'Vulture Capitalist' at His Best

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 23, 2012)

"Bain Capital: 9 Toughest Attacks" [to Defend!] by Mackenzie Weinger, Politico

May 22, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0512/76608.html>)

Mitt Romney's record at Bain Capital has been slammed from all sides since the former Massachusetts governor entered the presidential race, including by President Barack Obama on Monday. Here are the 9 harshest attacks:

1. **"... Mitt Romney and Bain Capital were involved with what I call vulture capitalism."** — Texas Gov. Rick Perry, Jan. 10, 2012
2. "Those of us who believe in free markets and those of us who believe that in fact the whole goal of investment is entrepreneurship and job creation, we find it pretty hard to justify rich people figuring out clever legal ways to loot a company, leaving behind 1,700 families without a job." — Newt Gingrich, Jan. 8, 2012
3. "If your main argument for how to grow the economy was 'I knew how to make a lot of money for investors' then you're missing what this job [president] is about." — President Barack Obama, May 21, 2012
4. "[Bain] made as much money off it as they could and they closed it down, they filed for bankruptcy, without any concern for the families or the communities. It was like watching an old friend bleed to death." — former GST Steel worker Joe Soptic, Obama campaign ad out May 14
5. "Romney made sure the guys at top got to play by a different set of rules, he ran massive debts, and the middle class lost. And folks, he thinks this experience will help our economy? Where I come from, past is prologue." — Vice President Joe Biden, May 16, 2012
6. "We were making money, and for them to just come out from nowhere and shut the place down — it was devastating. To me Mitt Romney takes from the poor and the middle class, and gives to the rich. He's just the opposite of Robin Hood." — Ampad factory worker Jerry Rayburn, Obama campaign ad out May 21
7. "Mitt Romney hasn't been vetted on Bain. I don't think David Axelrod and the Occupy movement are going to give him a pass on this. He's been running for six years. How much do we know about his 20 years at Bain?" — former Gingrich aide Rick Tyler, Jan. 9, 2012

8. "They closed down more than 1,000 plants, stores and offices. They outsourced tens of thousands of jobs, and they took 12 companies to bankruptcy. I don't think those are the values that people want to animate our economy. He is not a job creator, he is a corporate raider. Those aren't the values that we want to lead our economy." — Obama adviser David Axelrod, Jan. 8, 2012

9. "[T]here's something about raping companies and leaving them in debt and setting up Swiss bank accounts and corporate businesses in the Grand Caymans. I have a real serious problem with that." — Rep. Jim Clyburn, May 22, 2012

20120522-01	06:53	MarthaH	"Lugar Presides Over His Last Armed Forces Day at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway"
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"Lugar Presides Over His Last Armed Forces Day at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway" by John Kidd, WXIN

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.fox59.com/news/politics/wxin-richard-lugar-lugar-presides-over-his-last-armed-forces-day-at-the-indianapolis-motor-speedway-20120521,0,6719530.column>)

(INDIANAPOLIS) Indiana Senior Senator Richard Lugar presided over his 32nd, and possibly final, Armed Forces Day ceremony at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Lugar swore in 75 armed services recruits Sunday in a ceremony below the pagoda near the famed yard of bricks.

The 6-term Republican senator is a former Navy man who was defeated for re-election in the GOP Primary earlier this month by Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock.

When asked if he saw a lack of cooperation amongst Americans, Lugar responded "Yes, and some Americans who will remain nameless really extol the virtues of no cooperation. It's really my way or the highway. I understand the frustrations the anger the anxiety, but nevertheless I'm gonna try to get results."

Lugar says he hasn't had time to second guess his failed campaign or plan for his future.

20120522-02	09:11	Pam	Re: "Tanks, Jets or Scholarships?" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #143)
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Great article. He's right; we should be doing more of this kind of thing. If the Afghan people had a half-way decent education, the Taliban wouldn't stand a chance. It's young people and women who always lead the way. Anything we can do to empower them we should do--and Obama should crow about it a little.

What also strikes me about this, is the attitude of the kids who are so eager to go to university. They know the importance of having a good education. I've taught so many American kids who think school is irrelevant, boring, and way less fun than video games. All they want is enough money to put gas in their cars and spend 24/7 on their iPads. Of course, there are those who are nothing like this, but too many of our kids see school as a substitute for life. Kids need to understand from an early age how important it is, and as a society we need to give it much more support--and I don't mean passing more legislation with more "goals and objectives." We need to ask teachers themselves what they need in their classrooms today to enhance their teaching, and that might just be another teacher to allow for a smaller class size. Anyone who says class size doesn't matter is a liar.

My husband gets upset when articles he comes across in his work are riddled with errors, both spelling and grammatical. He has pointed these out to editors, who always thank him but do nothing to change things. I am left to conclude that they just don't care. When I look at the way we manage education--and health care--in this country, I have to conclude that, at some basic level, we simply don't care. Those who could make a difference don't need an improvement in the status quo, and those who can't, lack the means. When I was young, I thought my generation could change the world, and in many ways we did. I have that faith in young people today (despite

the apathy of so many American youth), especially those in repressive countries that are bursting at the seams. Necessity is the great driver of engines, and youthful energy and optimism are the fuels that make them run.

20120522-03	10:14	Art	"Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises."
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Not quite sure how to take this.

Bold is mine.

Colleges that rate high in study time are typically small liberal-arts schools, often set in **remote locales**. Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, DePauw University in Greencastle, Ind., and Centre College in Danville, Ky., all report more than 20 hours of average weekly study for freshmen, seniors or both.

"Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises." by Daniel de Vise, *The Washington Post*

May 21, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/is-college-too-easy-as-study-time-falls-debate-rises/2012/05/21/gIQAp7uUgU_story.html)

Over the past half-century, the amount of time college students actually study — read, write and otherwise prepare for class — has dwindled from 24 hours a week to about 15, survey data show.

And that invites a question: Has college become too easy?

Ashley Dixon, a sophomore at George Mason University, anticipated more work in college than in high school. Instead, she has less. In a typical week, Dixon spends 18 hours in classes and another 12 in study. All told, college course work occupies 30 hours of her week. Dixon is a full-time student, but college, for her, is a part-time job.

"I was expecting it to be a lot harder," said Dixon, 20, of Haymarket. "I thought I was going to be miserable, trying to get good grades. And I do get good grades, and I'm not working very hard."

Declining study time is a discomfiting truth about the vaunted U.S. higher-education system. The trend is generating debate over how much students really learn, even as colleges raise tuition every year.

Some critics say colleges and their students have grown lazy. Today's collegiate culture, they say, rewards students with high grades for minimal effort and distracts them with athletics, clubs and climbing walls on campuses that increasingly resemble resorts.

Academic leaders counter that students are as busy as ever but that their attention is consumed in part by jobs they take to help make ends meet.

Consider George Mason, Virginia's largest public university and a microcosm of modern academia. Some students care for dependents. Many commute to class. Seventy percent of seniors hold off-campus jobs. George Mason students spend 14 hours, on average, in weekly study, close to the national average.

"It's not enough," said Peter Stearns, the George Mason provost. "And it's a figure that troubles us, not only at Mason but in higher education generally."

The university has responded by launching an honors college and an undergraduate research initiative in recent years — driven, Stearns said, by "the need to create a more challenging undergraduate environment."

Tradition suggests that college students should invest two hours in study for every hour of classes. The reality — that students miss that goal by half — emerged from the National Survey of Student Engagement, a research tool for colleges that examines the modern student in unprecedented detail.

The survey, first published in 2000, queries freshmen and seniors. It reveals that study time can vary widely by college and by major. Architecture majors, for example, study 24 hours a week, while marketing majors put in only 12.

Colleges are not required to publish survey results. The Washington Post asked prominent colleges in Maryland, Virginia and the District to disclose their survey data on study time. Only at Washington and Lee University, in Virginia, did students report as many as 20 hours of weekly study.

At Sweet Briar College, a private women's school in Virginia, students reported 19 hours of study in an average week. Weekly study among seniors averaged 18 hours at St. Mary's College of Maryland, 17 hours at the College of William and Mary, 16 at the universities of Maryland and Virginia and Catholic University, 15 at American University and 13 at Howard University.

The University of the District of Columbia declined to release data on study time. Georgetown and George Washington universities have not given the survey recently.

Evidence of declining study was mostly ignored until 2010, when two economists at the University of California at Santa Barbara brought the issue to the fore in a paper titled "Leisure College, USA."

Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks unearthed previous research, part of a longitudinal study called Project Talent, that showed students of 1961 spent about 24 hours a week studying.

They calculated that those students spent another 16 hours in class time, or 40 hours in total weekly scholarship, giving college, for them, the feel of a full-time endeavor.

By contrast, the typical student today spends 27 hours a week in study and class time, roughly the same time commitment expected of students in a modern full-day kindergarten.

"This is an absolutely enormous change in postsecondary education, possibly as big as anything we've seen in the last 50 years," Babcock said.

The finding has led some critics to question whether college is delivering on its core mission: student learning. Sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa identified lax study as a key failing of academia in their 2011 report "Academically Adrift," which found that 36 percent of students made no significant gains in critical-thinking skills in college. Arum's own research found that students study only 12 hours a week.

"What students are getting is four or five years of country club living," said Richard Vedder, an Ohio University researcher who studies the economics of higher education.

Some academicians dispute the evidence of a downward trend in study time. They note that the findings are based on different surveys and on the fallible accounts of students. Babcock and Marks say their analysis accounts for those subtleties. The director of the student engagement survey, Alexander McCormick, concurs that the findings are sound.

By many accounts, students are far from lazy — it's just that things besides schoolwork are consuming more of their time.

"They're working full time and going to school full time, which I think is absurd," said Joe Scimecca, a sociology professor at George Mason. "I asked a class recently how many were working, and there were only two who weren't."

Dixon, the sophomore from Haymarket, is majoring in tourism, works 23 hours a week at a campus information desk, commutes up to two hours a day and volunteers at church.

"My planner is a wreck," she said.

Students at several other colleges report the same stressful pace. Karli Wood, a senior at Northern Kentucky University, maintains an A-minus average, even though she works nearly 40 hours a week and commutes up to an hour a day across the Ohio River from her Cincinnati home. She counts her study time in minutes, not hours.

"I don't mean to sound cocky," she said, "but if I had more time, I could have had a 4.0."

Modern technology helps and hinders collegiate study. Students are more efficient in researching and writing term papers now than 50 years ago. They also spend several hours a week using computers for fun, a pastime that did not exist in 1960.

Nationally, few colleges even approach the historical standard of 24 hours of weekly study. Private schools do not report much more study than public ones, and elite schools report only marginally more study time than the less elite. Even among colleges rated "most competitive" in the Barron's college guide, the survey shows, weekly study averages less than 18 hours.

Colleges that rate high in study time are typically small liberal-arts schools, often set in remote locales. Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, DePauw University in Greencastle, Ind., and Centre College in Danville, Ky., all report more than 20 hours of average weekly study for freshmen, seniors or both.

Sweet Briar, on a rural campus outside Lynchburg, is a regional leader in study time. Yet, the school is only modestly selective. Four-fifths of applicants are admitted, and SAT scores average about 1,100 out of a maximum 1,600 points in reading and math.

What sets such schools apart? Pedar Foss, dean of academic life at DePauw, found clues sprinkled across the student survey. DePauw students almost never work off campus, care for relatives or commute long distances. DePauw seniors are twice as likely as students at other schools to read at least 11 assigned books in an academic year. They write more than their peers.

"They're held accountable for how well they can speak, and how well they can draw upon evidence, and whether they know what they're talking about," Foss said.

Another key to study time is one's choice of major. McCormick, director of the student engagement survey, analyzed 85 majors and found a 13-hour spread in average weekly study. Architecture students studied the most, at 24 hours a week. Further down the list, in descending order: physics (20 hours), music and biology (17), history (15), psychology (14), communications (13) and, at 11 hours, parks, recreation and leisure studies.

"Every one of these colleges has some students who are studying quite a bit," McCormick said, "and, to balance things out, some students who are studying very, very little."

20120522-05	11:51	Pam	Re: "Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises." (reply to Art, above)
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Very interesting. I guess there's not much else to do in those small towns. :-) Actually, the education at schools like that is probably quite good, partly because the faculty isn't so research driven, at least I don't think so. At big name, big state universities, research that brings in big grants is all-important. Undergrads don't count for much (only grad students), and freshmen barely register on the faculty radar. That said, I prefer a larger school--more diversity, more opportunities, less conformity, and if you're a bright student, professors will be thrilled to take you under their wing.

20120522-08	16:03	Art	Re: "Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises." (reply to Pam, above)
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I somehow just never knew I grew up in a "remote locale".

20120522-04

10:31

SteveB

From the Right: "Leftists Continue to Misuse & Undermine American Exceptionalism"

"Leftists Continue to Misuse and Undermine American Exceptionalism" by Jarrett Stepman, *Human Events*

May 22, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51632>)

(Historically, America has a special set of values.)

The idea of American exceptionalism has become one of the primary pivot points that now divides the political right and left in America. What was once an established and accepted truth about the American people has come under assault by liberal radicals who would rather deny even the existence of American exceptionalism.

President Barack Obama, when asked whether or not he believes in American exceptionalism, said, **"I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism."**

Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne penned a column on May 10 called Obama's American Exceptionalism in which he said that conservatives were taking a "Western European path of austerity."

"The Obama administration, by contrast, has chosen a distinctly American path that kept austerity at bay," Dionne said.

Dionne went on to say. "Obama's thoroughly moderate economic policies are an excellent example of a practical American exceptionalism."

Although Obama tends to guard his words in order to sound moderate, many of his liberal allies have no qualms about directly attacking the idea of American exceptionalism.

Another recent article by Terrence McCoy in *The Atlantic* took a different track and claimed that the term "American exceptionalism" originated with Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, not the frequently attributed early 19th century French observer of American life, Alexis de Tocqueville.

All of these liberal statements on American exceptionalism are either based on an ignorance of its origin or an egregious abuse of its meaning.

Tocqueville is often given credit as the originator of the term because he wrote in his famous treatise *Democracy in America*, "The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one."

Stalin said of the American Communist Party, that it had the "heresy of American exceptionalism," which is how McCoy tries to tie the origination of the idea of American exceptionalism to the brutal Soviet dictator instead of Tocqueville.

McCoy wrote that this was meant not as a compliment but a ridicule of America for its "abnormalities." McCoy then goes on to claim that the idea of American exceptionalism became big "a few years ago."

However, the argument of McCoy on other liberals is merely over the etymology of the phrase instead of the ideas behind it.

Leftists clearly mean to denigrate American exceptionalism as a fictitious term created by conservative Republicans a few decades ago, instead of a timeless characteristic of the American experience.

American exceptionalism has even earlier roots than Tocqueville. American colonist John Winthrop gave a speech in 1630 called "A Model of Christian Charity," also known as the "Shining City Upon a Hill" speech, in which he explained the special conditions of the New World and its incredible potential for the future.

"For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world," Winthrop said.

That Stalin meant to use the term "American exceptionalism" as a way to ridicule America should really be considered a positive instead of a negative. It was American exceptionalism that prevented communism from ever taking hold in the United States; the values of private property, popular government, individualism, and natural rights prevailed over the statist and collectivist ideas that took hold of countries throughout the world.

Tocqueville said, "Democracy extends the sphere of individual freedom, socialism restricts it. Democracy attaches all possible value to each man; socialism makes each man a mere agent, a mere number. Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word: equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude."

As America was burgeoning into a powerful new country in the early 19th century, observers inside and out of the United States began to understand and express the ideas underpinning American exceptionalism.

The great American orator and statesman, Daniel Webster, who was originally from New Hampshire, but spent most of his political career in Massachusetts, described the special American character in a few famous orations.

In the Plymouth Oration in 1820, celebrating the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock, Webster said, "They left behind them the whole feudal policy of the other continent. The character of their political institutions was determined by the fundamental laws respecting property."

In this statement Webster was describing how Americans left behind feudal and aristocratic institutions in Europe. There were no great class divides in America even before it became a country.

Webster further described the historical American character in his Bunker Hill Address in 1825:

They were accustomed to representative bodies and the forms of free government; they understood the doctrine of the division of power among different branches, and the necessity of checks on each. The character of our countrymen, moreover, was sober, moral, and religious; and there was, little in the change to shock their feelings of justice and humanity, or even to disturb an honest prejudice. We had no domestic throne to overturn, no privileged orders to cast down, no violent changes of property to encounter. In the American Revolution, no man sought or wished for more than to defend and enjoy his own.

All of the statements and observations about what construes American exceptionalism originated in the 18th century, were expounded upon and advanced in the 19th century and became the most critical factors in saving Western Civilization in the 20th century.

These American values are antithetical to the left-wing agenda, something educated liberals are keenly aware of. That is why they must discredit and subvert them at every opportunity, hence the attempted connection of American exceptionalism to Stalin.

In an article titled, *Why America Needs the Left*, written by Eli Zaretsky, a professor of history at the New School for Social Research in New York City, the author reveals the values that are at the heart of American liberalism and why they are out of step with the most deeply held American values.

Zaretsky wrote, "The American Left inherited the idea of a crisis from Marx, not just the kind of 'economic crisis' that characterized the Great Depression and that afflicts the country today, but also broader crises reflecting Marx's influence on modern historiography."

For the American left to survive in America there must be a crisis, according to Zaretsky. This is the only way that Americans will even consider abandoning their values. He claims that the three crises were "slavery, corporate capitalism and hyper-globalization."

The connection to the left and abolition is fairly shaky, as the people that were most extreme in trying to free the slaves were either extremely religious, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, or considered the Constitution to be foundation for undoing the "peculiar institution" of slavery forever, such as in the case of men like former slave Frederick Douglas.

Modern parallels to abolitionists can probably more accurately be drawn to pro-life advocates calling for the end of abortion or Tea Party protestors demanding a return to the Constitution. These people are by no means a part of the liberal coalition in America.

The French writer, J. Hector St. John De Crevecoeur, who became a naturalized American citizen, was the first to write about the character of the American people after the nation was formed.

Crevecoeur wrote in his Letters from an American Farmer in 1782, "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world," he continued, "The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, self-interest; can it want a stronger allurement?"

What Crevecoeur was explaining was the American dream; the idea that every American has a chance to succeed based on their own merit, and that equality is achieved by unleashing humanity to pursue what is in their own self-interest. He is describing the melting pot that has been, and always should be, a part of the American ethic.

Embracing the idea of the melting pot is how America achieves racial and ethnic equality without losing its most deeply held values, something leftists have no desire to retain or restore.

Liberals have to fight traditional American ideals, because they stand in the way of the leftist radical agenda. They need to promote the idea of the "salad bowl" so that racial division continues, which is their only hope of creating the kind of class conflict and envy that allowed other countries to succumb to leftist ideology.

Counter to what E.J. Dionne claimed in his column, American exceptionalism does not stem from the policies of the president or any other governmental institution for that matter.

American exceptionalism is based on traditional characteristics embraced by American culture and described by Tocqueville: liberty, equality of opportunity, individualism, popular government and laissez-faire economics. It runs counter to collectivism, top-down government control, a massive and unaccountable bureaucratic-administrative state and equality of outcome.

These are the collectivist and statist ideologies that America resisted and defeated in the 20th century. It is why liberals must claw and scratch at every opportunity to undermine America's very old, yet radically different values.

20120522-06 12:56 SteveG Graphic: Life Is Good!



"Ten Reasons for Europe" by Dominique Moisi, NationofChange

May 22, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/ten-reasons-europe-1337699303>)

("The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas speaks of a 'transformational reality' – a complex word for a simple reality: divided we fall, whereas united, in our own complex manner, we may strive for 'greatness' in the best sense.")

The euro, many now believe, will not survive a failed political class in Greece or escalating levels of unemployment in Spain: just wait another few months, they say, the European Union's irresistible collapse has started.

Dark prophecies are often wrong, but they may also become self-fulfilling. Let's be honest: playing Cassandra nowadays is not only tempting in a media world where "good news is no news"; it actually seems more justified than ever. For the EU, the situation has never appeared more serious.

It is precisely at this critical moment that it is essential to re-inject hope and, above all, common sense into the equation. So here are ten good reasons to believe in Europe – ten rational arguments to convince pessimistic analysts, and worried investors alike, that it is highly premature to bury the euro and the EU altogether.

The first reason for hope is that statesmanship is returning to Europe, even if in homeopathic doses. It is too early to predict the impact of François Hollande's election as President of France. But, in Italy, one man, Mario Monti, is already making a difference.

Of course, no one elected Monti, and his position is fragile and already contested, but there is a positive near-consensus that has allowed him to launch long-overdue structural reforms. It is too early to say how long this consensus will last, and what changes it will bring. But Italy, a country that under Silvio's Berlusconi's cavalier rule was a source of despair, has turned into a source of real, if fragile, optimism.

A second reason to believe in Europe is that with statesmanship comes progress in governance. Monti and Hollande have both appointed women to key ministerial positions. Marginalized for so long, women bring an appetite for success that will benefit Europe.

Third, European public opinion has, at last, fully comprehended the gravity of the crisis. Nothing could be further from the truth than the claim that Europe and Europeans, with the possible exception of the Greeks, are in denial. Without lucidity born of despair, Monti would never have come to power in Italy.

In France, too, citizens have no illusions. Their vote for Hollande was a vote against Sarkozy, not against austerity. They are convinced, according to recently published public-opinion polls, that their new president will not keep some of his "untenable promises," and they seem to accept this as inevitable.

The fourth reason for hope is linked to Europe's creativity. Europe is not condemned to be a museum of its own past. Tourism is important, of course, and from that standpoint Europe's diversity is a unique source of attractiveness. But this diversity is also a source of inventiveness. From German cars to French luxury goods, European industrial competitiveness should not be underestimated.

The moment when Europe truly believes in itself, the way Germany does, and combines strategic long-term planning with well allocated R&D investments, will make all the difference. Indeed, in certain key fields, Europe possesses a globally recognized tradition of excellence linked to a very deep culture of quality.

The fifth source of optimism is slightly paradoxical. Nationalist excesses have tended to lead Europe to catastrophic wars. But the return of nationalist sentiment within Europe today creates a sense of emulation and competition,

which proved instrumental in the rise of Asia yesterday. Koreans, Chinese, and Taiwanese wanted to do as well as Japan. In the same way, the moment will soon come when the French want to do as well as Germany.

The sixth reason is linked to the very nature of Europe's political system. Churchill's famous adage that democracy is the worst political system, with the exception of all the others, has been borne out across the continent. More than 80% of French citizens voted in the presidential election. Watching on their televisions the solemn, dignified, peaceful, and transparent transfer of power from the president they had defeated to the president they had elected, French citizens could only feel good about themselves and privileged to live in a democratic state. Europeans may be confused, inefficient, and slow to take decisions, but democracy still constitutes a wall of stability against economic and other uncertainties.

The seventh reason to believe in Europe is linked to the universalism of its message and languages. Few people dream of becoming Chinese, or of learning its various languages other than Mandarin. By contrast, English, Spanish, French, and, increasingly, German transcend national boundaries.

Beyond universalism comes the eighth factor supporting the EU's survival: multiculturalism. It is a disputed model, but multiculturalism is more a source of strength than of weakness. The continent's fusion of culture makes its people richer rather than poorer.

The ninth reason for hope stems from the EU's new and upcoming members. Poland, a country that belongs to "New Europe," is repaying the EU with a legitimacy that it had gained from Europe during its post-communist transition. And the entrance of Croatia, followed by Montenegro and a few other Balkan countries, could compensate for the departure of Greece (should it come to that for the Greeks).

Finally, and most important, Europe and the world have no better alternative. The Greek crisis may be forcing Europe to move towards greater integration, with or without Greece. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas speaks of a "transformational reality" – a complex word for a simple reality: divided we fall, whereas united, in our own complex manner, we may strive for "greatness" in the best sense.

Investors, of course, are hedging their bets. Having ventured successfully into emerging non-democratic countries whose frailty they are starting to fear, some, out of prudence, are starting to rediscover Europe. They may well be the wise ones.

Comments:

Posted by luckylongshot, May 22, 2012 11:21 am:

It never ceases to amaze me how so many journalists keep pretending that what is happening in Greece is something that the current financial system can cope with when there is so much evidence that it cannot. Reason one is that even after all the chest beating and new loans there is no light at the end of the tunnel for Greece and things are getting worse. Reason two is that in all of history every fiat currency has failed. Reason three is that what has brought this situation about is a debt explosion and as the interest on this debt ballooned the chances of it ever being repaid correspondingly dwindled. Too much debt cannot be fixed by restructuring. It can be fixed by being written off or by having the interest cancelled, but both of these solutions involve systemic change. What is happening is a domino collapse of the Euro and as time passes and things deteriorate this is becoming so obvious that it is hard to imagine anyone but a very well paid off journalist could miss it.

Posted by southwind, May 22, 2012 3:15 pm:

Good article, Dominique. We complain from a very high plateau. And we know it's the very speculators and hedge fund operators, with special kudos to Goldman Sachs, who exploited the corrupt political system called Greece to foist mind-boggling levels of debt on all of the EU, and who are now placing massive bets on the collapse and disintegration of Europe.

Greece is unfortunately so corrupt and delusional that it needs to be ejected from the Eurozone. Greece also needs to be helped over many years to radically reorganize its society - its economic and political structures and institutions - so that Greece may survive and eventually prosper as a nation.

However, as the Goldmans and other Masters of the Universe will learn, Europe and the European peoples have an unbreakable will to unite and move forward. Europe will prosper long after the giant vampire squids of Goldman & Co. have vanished from the earth.

20120522-09 17:18 Art "Obama Spending Binge Never Happened"

I know the accusation has frequently been made, in fact by one of you :-), that President has spent "like a drunken sailor". Well, apparently not quite the case. Good short read.

"Obama Spending Binge Never Happened" by Rex Nutting, *The Wall Street Journal*

May 22, 2012, (http://articles.marketwatch.com/2012-05-22/commentary/31802270_1_spending-federal-budget-drunken-sailor/2)

(Government outlays rising at slowest pace since 1950s.)

(WASHINGTON) Of all the falsehoods told about President Barack Obama, the biggest whopper is the one about his reckless spending spree.

As would-be president Mitt Romney tells it: "I will lead us out of this debt and spending inferno."

Almost everyone believes that Obama has presided over a massive increase in federal spending, an "inferno" of spending that threatens our jobs, our businesses and our children's future. Even Democrats seem to think it's true.

But it didn't happen. Although there was a big stimulus bill under Obama, federal spending is rising at the slowest pace since Dwight Eisenhower brought the Korean War to an end in the 1950s.

Even hapless Herbert Hoover managed to increase spending more than Obama has.

Here are the facts, according to the official government statistics:

- In the 2009 fiscal year — the last of George W. Bush's presidency — federal spending rose by 17.9% from \$2.98 trillion to \$3.52 trillion. Check the official numbers at the Office of Management and Budget (<http://www.cbo.gov/publication/41753>).
- In fiscal 2010 — the first budget under Obama — spending fell 1.8% to \$3.46 trillion.
- In fiscal 2011 — spending rose 4.3% to \$3.60 trillion.
- In fiscal 2012 — spending is set to rise 0.7% to \$3.63 trillion, according to the Congressional Budget Office's estimate of the budget that was agreed to last August.
- Finally in fiscal 2013 — the final budget of Obama's term — spending is scheduled to fall 1.3% to \$3.58 trillion. Read the CBO's latest budget outlook.

Over Obama's four budget years, federal spending is on track to rise from \$3.52 trillion to \$3.58 trillion, an annualized increase of just 0.4%.

There has been no huge increase in spending under the current president, despite what you hear.

Why do people think Obama has spent like a drunken sailor? It's in part because of a fundamental misunderstanding of the federal budget.

What people forget (or never knew) is that the first year of every presidential term starts with a budget approved by the previous administration and Congress. The president only begins to shape the budget in his second year. It takes time to develop a budget and steer it through Congress — especially in these days of congressional gridlock.

The 2009 fiscal year, which Republicans count as part of Obama's legacy, began four months before Obama moved into the White House. The major spending decisions in the 2009 fiscal year were made by George W. Bush and the previous Congress.

Like a relief pitcher who comes into the game with the bases loaded, Obama came in with a budget in place that called for spending to increase by hundreds of billions of dollars in response to the worst economic and financial calamity in generations.

By no means did Obama try to reverse that spending. Indeed, his budget proposals called for even more spending in subsequent years. But the Congress (mostly Republicans, but many Democrats too) stopped him. If Obama had been a king who could impose his will, perhaps what the Republicans are saying about an Obama spending binge would be accurate.

Yet the actual record doesn't show a reckless increase in spending. Far from it.

Before Obama had even lifted a finger, the CBO was already projecting that the federal deficit would rise to \$1.2 trillion in fiscal 2009. The government actually spent less money in 2009 than it was projected to, but the deficit expanded to \$1.4 trillion because revenue from taxes fell much further than expected, due to the weak economy and the emergency tax cuts that were part of the stimulus bill.

The projected deficit for the 2010-13 period has grown from an expected \$1.7 trillion in January 2009 to \$4.4 trillion today. Lower-than-forecast revenue accounts for 73% of the \$2.7 trillion increase in the expected deficit. That's assuming that the Bush and Obama tax cuts are repealed completely.

When Obama took the oath of office, the \$789 billion bank bailout had already been approved. Federal spending on unemployment benefits, food stamps and Medicare was already surging to meet the dire unemployment crisis that was well under way. See the CBO's January 2009 budget outlook.

Obama is not responsible for that increase, though he is responsible (along with the Congress) for about \$140 billion in extra spending in the 2009 fiscal year from the stimulus bill, from the expansion of the children's' health-care program and from other appropriations bills passed in the spring of 2009.

If we attribute that \$140 billion in stimulus to Obama and not to Bush, we find that spending under Obama grew by about \$200 billion over four years, amounting to a 1.4% annualized increase.

After adjusting for inflation, spending under Obama is falling at a 1.4% annual pace — the first decline in real spending since the early 1970s, when Richard Nixon was retreating from the quagmire in Vietnam.

In per-capita terms, real spending will drop by nearly 5% from \$11,450 per person in 2009 to \$10,900 in 2013 (measured in 2009 dollars).

By the way, real government spending rose 12.3% a year in Hoover's four years. Now there was a guy who knew how to attack a depression by spending government money!

20120522-10	23:42	SteveG	Fw: Common Sense Is Not All That Common
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[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Good news:

It was a normal day in Sharon Springs , Kansas , when a Union Pacific crew boarded a loaded coal train for the long trek to Salina.

Bad news:

Just a few miles into the trip, a wheel bearing became overheated and melted, letting a metal support drop down and grind on the rail, creating white hot molten metal droppings spewing down to the rail.

Good news:

A very alert crew noticed smoke about halfway back in the train and immediately stopped the train in compliance with the rules.

Bad news:

The train had stopped with the hot wheel over a wooden bridge constructed of creosote ties and trusses. The crew tried to explain this to Union Pacific higher-ups, but were instructed not to move the train. They were informed that Rules strictly prohibited moving the train when a part was found to be defective.



'REMEMBER, RULES ARE RULES!'



Don't ever let common sense get in the way of a good Disaster.

[20120522-11](#)

23:58

SteveG

Quote: Nelson Mandela on Poverty

Poverty is not an accident.
Like slavery and apartheid,
it is man-made and
can be removed by
the actions of
human beings.



- Nelson Mandela

<http://photoblog.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/05/22/11806116-man-survives-plunge-over-niagara-falls?lite>



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #145 — MAY 24, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Higher and Higher Education

(posted by Pam McRae, May 24, 2012)

Now that I've read the whole article on student study time ["Is College Too Easy? As Study Time Falls, Debate Rises." in FotM Newsletter #144], I have a couple more observations. A school like DePauw is cut off from the larger world, students don't typically have jobs, and everyone lives on or near campus and stays put on the weekends. When I was a freshman, my sorority required us to spend so many hours in the library each weekday night--studying. We had to sign in and sign out. There was lots of friendly competition for top grades, and classes were small. Everyone who was admitted was expected to graduate in four years.



My, how times have changed. UNCG, where I taught for nearly 30 years, is typical. It is located in a city, with other schools and all the distractions a city provides; many more students are admitted than are ever expected to graduate, though great effort is made at "retention." What this boils down to is, students are seduced to campus by fancy apartment-like dorms with tons of amenities, often including giant flat-screen TVs. The Rec Center is state

of the art, and a new, even fancier, one is being built. The Athletic Department and the administration continue to hire new people at big salaries, even as programs, like the Writing Center, are eliminated. Faculty hasn't had a raise in several years. To pay for the comforts students have come to expect and to keep expanding the administrative bureaucracy tuition continues to outpace inflation and student fees keep rising. The state legislature makes budget cuts every year (for the past several years), but the campus serves more students than ever, and new buildings are going up everywhere. To keep this enterprise afloat it is necessary to have bodies in seats, if not boots on the ground. Classes often exceed 100 students, especially lower-level ones. Research trumps everything; student evaluations keep untenured faculty at the mercy of those they are expected to judge; many departments rely on adjunct faculty, who can be let go at any time and often are. Most students have jobs, sometimes more than one; they often have families. The ones with families are, in fact, often the best students, who win the top academic awards. The Honors College works to ameliorate the deficiencies of the larger university by offering smaller seminar-type classes taught by the best faculty, who compete for Honors classes. This is where a real liberal education happens. Students have to meet and maintain high standards, are expected to live in the Honors dorm (newly refurbished) at least for their freshman year, and many have scholarships, obviating the need to work. I could go on and on about the benefits of the Honors College, but in the end, it provides a balance between serious academics and the "Animal House" aspect of the university. It is evident that UNCG does care about its bright students, and it has to compete with bigger-name schools for top achievers, schools like Chapel Hill, Duke, and Davidson. This competition is a healthy goad to faculty excellence, and many of NC's best students choose UNCG precisely for its Honors College and the lower price tag that goes with a mid-level state school. Meanwhile, the university is run more and more like a corporation, with the same pressure to produce salable commodities and bring in as much money as possible. This corporatization is very often antithetical to real learning for all students. Students are divided into the best and the rest, and the vast majority are seen primarily as income producers. The more students the university admits, the more money the legislature allocates. It's a simple matter of profit and loss.

We talk about the pernicious influence of money in politics, but we need to remember that the same dynamic operates in education as well. Businesses need consumers; universities need students. What does a company do when it wants to attract customers? It offers irresistible goodies and puts the customer first. The motto of UNCG until last year was "Students First," and it is a "student-centered" institution. I see this trend toward education as customer satisfaction as inevitable, and, except for the thousands of students who beggar themselves with crushing debt to pay for their entree into the middle class, it undoubtedly does more good than harm. We should, however, be less hypocritical about what universities provide and more transparent about they operate. As in everything, the rich manage to get the best--every time. The top schools now charge upwards of \$50,000 per year. As my mother used to say, "You get what you pay for."

20120523-09 16:43 SteveB Re: Higher and Higher Education (reply to Pam, above)
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I too lament the way higher education has become just another business. I guess that's what happens when there is not enough government involvement and profits start to rule and education becomes watered down. I'm proud of DePauw!

The whole education problem is such a shame because it seems like we used to have it more figured out than we do now.

It doesn't have too much to do directly with your subject, exactly, but one of the best ideas I've heard is government 0% loans to college students. They give those to banks and it seems to be doing nothing for our economy or future. The rich aren't investing in America. Maybe it's time taxpayers demand that government invest in our students?

The cost of health care and education are in the control of the highly vaunted "private sector" and have spiraled wildly, until both are threatening to become out of reach for average Americans. Such a thing could be the death of America.

And if public education K12 is also allowed to be controlled by the "private sector"...well, all I can say is, "Look out for your jobs, janitors!"

But it's amazing to me that people like my old professors at Purdue and IU would ever have allowed education to become watered-down...yet that has apparently been the case...everywhere, almost, in some kind of slow erosion of standards, all the way up and down the line, it seems. One of the reasons being that education has, perhaps, become more egalitarian.

20120523-01	07:55 SteveB	Re: "Obama Spending Binge Never Happened" (reply to Art, Fotm Newsletter #144)
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Very good article! This will come in handy as we near the election. Thanks, Art!

20120523-02	11:30 Art	Fw: Efficient Airport Security
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[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Israel's new Cutting Edge Airport Security

(TEL AVIV) The Israelis are developing an airport security device that eliminates the privacy concerns that come with full-body scanners. It's an armored booth you step into that will not X-ray you, but will detonate any explosive device you may have on your person.



Israel sees this as a win-win situation for everyone, with none of this crap about racial profiling. It will also eliminate the costs of long and expensive trials.

You're in the airport terminal and you hear a muffled explosion. Shortly thereafter, an announcement: Attention to all standby passengers, El Al is proud to announce a seat available on flight 670 to London. Shalom!

[Well, Snopes.com says no, <http://www.snopes.com/crime/deserts/booth.asp>, but the thing just seems like a joke to me. I guess some people take it seriously. Actually, I think it's a very good idea, and the technology is easy and readily available. In Arab countries, the clean-up time between "customers" will need to be reduced, and you might want to keep your kids away from the area during the blow-up and wash-down. –SteveB]

[20120523-03](#) 11:43 Pam Re: Efficient Airport Security (reply to Art, above)

FANTASTIC!!

[20120523-04](#) 13:47 SteveB "New Study Confirms (Again): Keystone XL Would RAISE Gas Prices"

"New Study Confirms (Again): Keystone XL Would RAISE Gas Prices" by Dennis Kucinich, NationofChange

May 23, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/new-study-confirms-again-keystone-xl-would-raise-gas-prices-1337778028>)

("There was never any doubt that the Keystone XL pipeline would increase the price at the pump for consumers.")

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) today released the following statement after a study by the Council showed once again that the Keystone XL pipeline would raise gas prices for American consumers. Kucinich has frequently argued this point on the House floor, in an editorial in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and in public statements:

There was never any doubt that the Keystone XL pipeline would increase the price at the pump for consumers. In fact, TransCanada, the company that wants to build the pipeline, told Canadian regulators that the pipeline would allow TransCanada to raise the United States energy bill by \$4 billion per year by limiting the supply of Canadian crude to Midwest refineries and rerouting it to Gulf Coast refineries.

A foreign-owned oil company is playing us for fools. In order to convince Americans to accept a pipeline that will result in higher gas prices, we have been bombarded with a public relations campaign to convince us that the pipeline is a good idea.

It may be a good idea to foreign investors, but the Keystone XL pipeline is a bad idea for American consumers, a bad idea for America's fledgling economy, a bad idea for our health and a bad idea for our environment. Say no to the Keystone tax.

Researchers at the Cornell University Global Labor Institute also published a report confirming that the Keystone XL Pipeline would increase U.S. gas prices by 10 to 20 cents per gallon across the U.S. The greatest price increase – twice as much according to one estimate - will occur in 15 states, including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

[20120523-05](#) 15:03 SteveB Fw: USAction Action: Stop Outsourcing Our Jobs!

from USAction:

Last week, Facebook's co-founder Eduardo Saverin made headlines worldwide for renouncing his U.S. citizenship to avoid paying taxes on stock before Facebook's much anticipated I.P.O. Saverin's actions are reprehensible but every day big corporations outsource not just profits but thousands of jobs — destroying whole livelihoods and communities in the process.

But to make matters worse, American companies that outsource jobs can write off the cost of moving personnel as a business expense, and therefore become eligible for a tax deduction. How absurd for someone to have to lose their job, and then pay for corporate tax deductions to ship that job overseas?

With unemployment still hovering around eight percent and millions of Americans still out of work, instead of giving incentives to companies that ship jobs abroad, we should encourage companies to bring jobs back home and a new bill introduced by Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) will do just that. Will you ask your Representatives and Senators in Congress if they will cosponsor the **Bring Jobs Home Act** today?

<http://act.truemajority.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=or7%2Fi%2BxfqN5wDzmJvELs40sTXLbWvBP7>

The **Bring Jobs Home Act** will not only end this loophole, but would also give eligible firms a tax credit equal to 20 percent of the cost of relocating overseas jobs back to the U.S.¹ The **Bring Jobs Home Act** will directly reward companies who create jobs, not take them away.

Millions of Americans have lost their jobs because companies up and moved their operations to other countries like China and India. And plant closures can have a dire impact on middle class families and their communities. According to a new study conducted by the National Bureau of Economic Research, the disappearance of U.S. manufacturing jobs frequently leaves former manufacturing workers unemployed for years, if not permanently.²

While manufacturing has started to rebound in some sectors, the dilapidated communities of Detroit are a chilling reminder of what's at stake.

Let's replace "outsourcing" with "reshoring" by encouraging companies to return to the United States and create jobs here at home. Help us gain more cosponsors for the **Bring Jobs Home Act** by contacting Congress today.

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

¹<http://www.abc12.com/story/18503118/stabenow-bill-aims-to-bring-jobs-home>

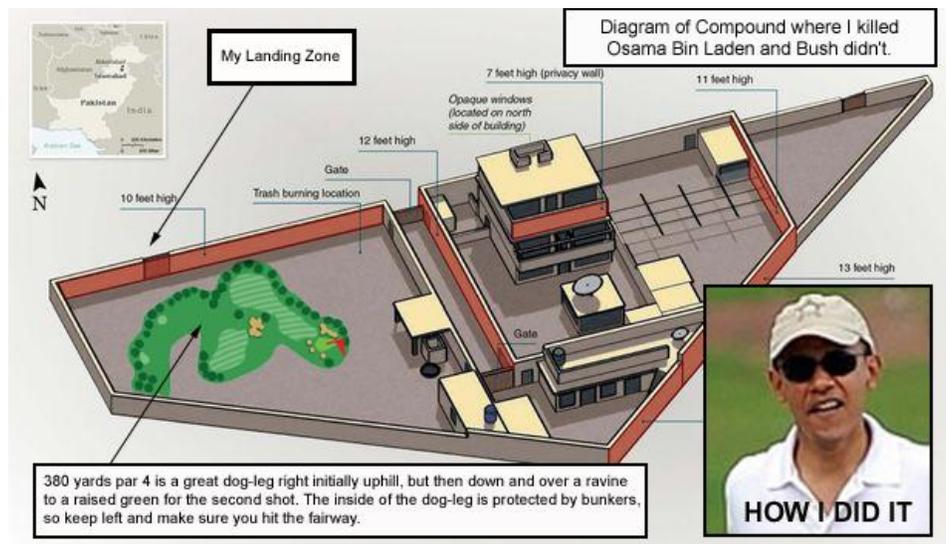
²<http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2012/02/26/The-High-Price-of-Losing-Manufacturing-Jobs.aspx#page1>

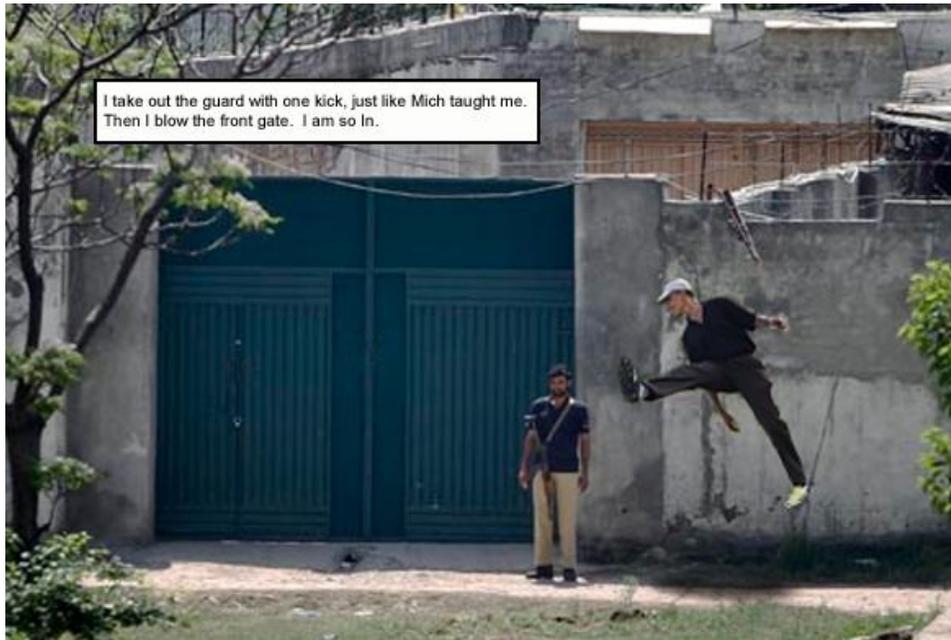
20120523-06 15:12 Dennis Fw: Golf with President Obama

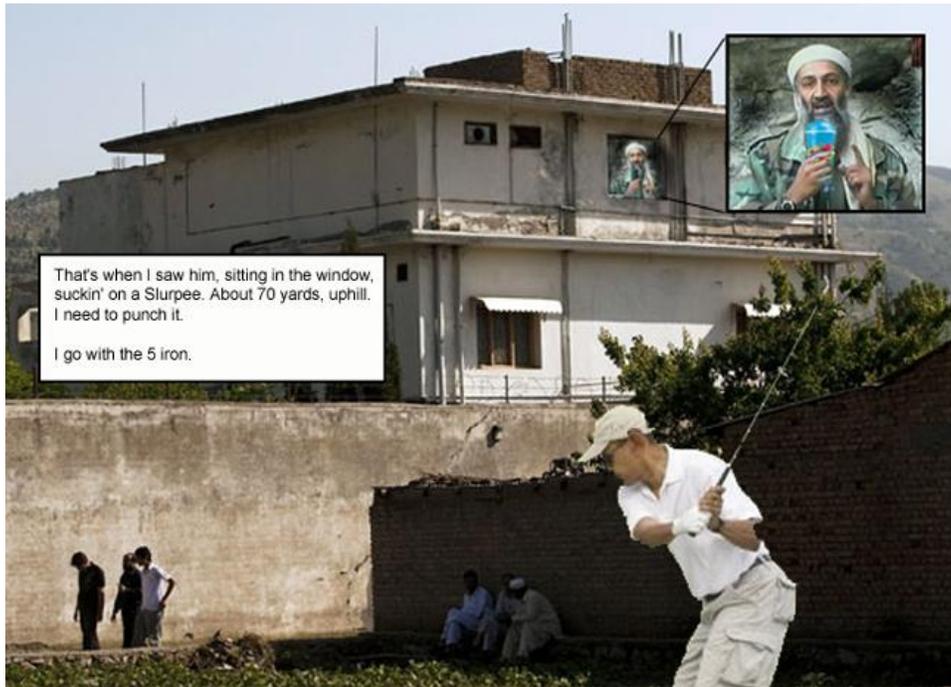
[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

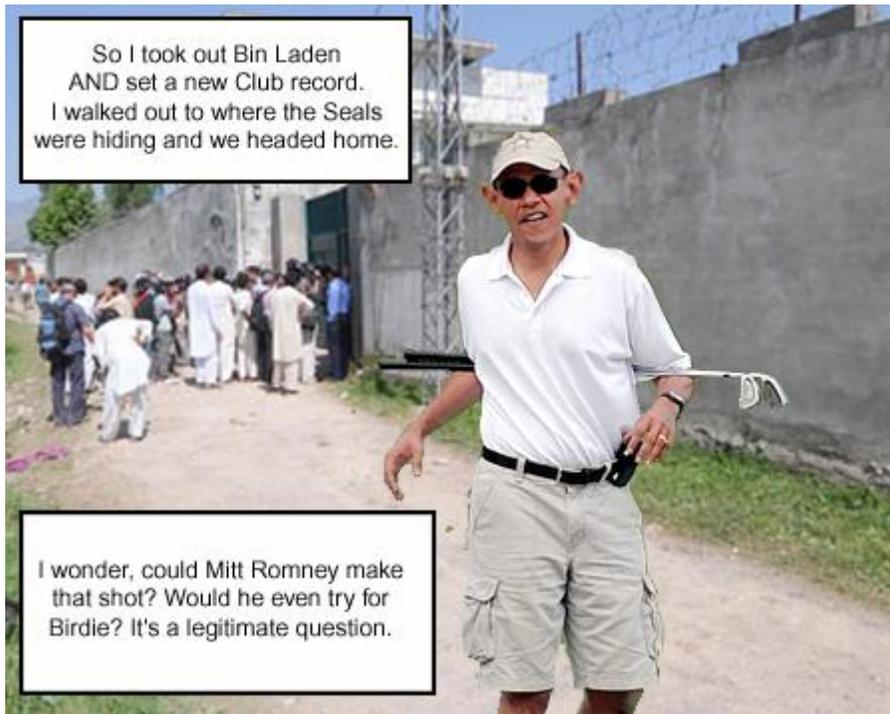
How It Really Happened.....

The real story as it came down.....Now you know!









[Good going, Mr. President. I knew you could do it! Actually, I don't think Romney would have the balls to set foot in either Afghanistan or Pakistan. In his life, has he ever? –SteveB]

20120523-07 15:17 Art Re: Golf with President Obama (reply to Dennis, above)

I love it but you know most of the Tea Party bozos will think the President really put this together as a campaign ad.

Now if we could just weave a basketball into this?????????

20120523-08 15:51 SteveB From the Right: "Keeping Business Honest"

This guy is just so wrong on so many levels, but worth a read. I think he needs to study a little history. You would also think reading a recent newspaper about Goldman Sachs or JP Morgan would be enough. What about Jon Corzine and Bernie Madoff? Read the fricking papers, Stossel! Do you think just saying BS makes it true?

"Keeping Business Honest" by John Stossel, *Human Events*

May 23, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51678>)

Instinctively, we look for people's motives. We need to know whom we can trust and whom we can't. We're especially skeptical of business because we know business wants our money.

It took me too long to understand that business's desire for profit is a good thing. To get our money, businesses -- if they can't look to the government for favors -- need to give us what we want. Then they must make continuous improvements and do it better than the competition does.

That competition is enough to protect consumers. But that's not intuitive. It's intuitive to assume that competition isn't really consumer protection and that experts at the FDA, FTC, DEA, FCC, CPSC, OSHA and so on must protect us. These experts consult "responsible" businessmen for advice on creating rules to make sure businesses meets minimum "standards."

Unfortunately, this standardization stops innovation.

We are imprinted to be wary of newcomers, strangers. Newcomers by definition are less experienced. Maybe they'll do something unsafe or dishonest! We don't want government to stop them from doing business -- we just want consumers protected! Governments claim to do that by licensing businesses.

People like the idea of licensing. We license drivers. We license dogs. It seems prudent. People naively think this government seal of approval makes us safer.

This naivete is used to justify all sorts of rules that kill competition.

Las Vegas regulators require anyone who wants to start a limousine business to prove his new business is needed and, worse, will not "adversely affect other carriers." But every new business intends to beat its competitors. That's the point. Competition is good for us. Las Vegas' anticompetitive licensing rules mean limo customers pay more.

In Nashville, Tenn., regulators ruled it illegal for a limo to charge less than \$45 a ride. One entrepreneur had won customers by charging half that, but the new regulations mean the established car service businesses no longer have to worry about him.

Perhaps Nashville's and Vegas' regulators really believe "this is an area where the free market doesn't work," as the manager of the Nevada Transportation Services Authority put it. But it's fishy that charging big fees for licenses just happens to be a very effective shakedown operation. Vegas cab and limousine businesses give "substantial" donations to Vegas-area political candidates, according to the *Las Vegas Sun*.

Our big government has justified its existence (at least since the Progressive Era) by claiming it is a "countervailing influence" to corporate power -- when it is, in fact, incestuously entwined with corporations.

The list of business activities that government insists on licensing, supposedly for our sake, includes hair braiders in Mississippi, wooden-casket makers and florists in Louisiana and even yoga instructors in Virginia.

Established businesses always try to use government to handcuff competition. When margarine was first developed, the dairy industry got Wisconsin legislators to pass a law making margarine illegal. Several states ruled that margarine was "deceptive," since it might be mistaken for butter. Some required a bright pink dye be added to make margarine look different. An "oleomargarine bootlegger" was thrown in the U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth.

When supermarkets were invented, small grocers tried to ban them. "A&P will dominate the grocery business and destroy Main Street," the grocers claimed. Minnesota legislators responded by passing a law that forbade supermarkets to put food "on sale."

Established capitalists are often capitalism's biggest enemies.

I used to believe that licensing doctors and lawyers protected consumers, but now I realize that licensing is always an expensive restraint of trade. It certainly hasn't barred quacks and shysters.

Licensing is unnecessary. It creates a false sense of security, raises costs, stifles innovation and takes away consumer choice.

I don't deny that there is fraud in business. I won Emmys for exposing it. Fraud is one of three crimes that must be policed and punished for the market to function (theft and physical assault are the others). Once that's done, however, as long as there is open competition, honesty pretty much takes care of itself.

Free competition -- the striving for a good reputation -- protects consumers better than government ever will.

[Comments \(from the article\)](#)

Jacob Steelman: Who is being naive? Read *Triumph of Conservatism* by Gabriel Kolko, a left leaning if not socialist economist. The whole rationale of government is to intervene in favor of the politically connected at the expense of the voluntary marketplace. Why? Because as any business man or woman knows all too well consumers in a free market are much more demanding than any regulator. Fail to satisfy consumer demands and your business will be gone. Unless you are GM, Chrysler, AIG etc and have politically connected friends.

deeme: I trust any business in America and my own judgement ,over anything Uncle Sam wants to give me or take from me.

justinwachin: The government has a regulatory role over business. Trusting business to do the right thing is usually misplaced trust. Most businesses will find it more profitable to cut corners.

Based on Mr. Stossel's premise, big tobacco would have rushed to develop safer cigarettes once the medical community began to notice links between smoking and health problems. As we learned in the tobacco company trials of the 1980s and 90s, these companies were working on ways to make their products more addictive rather than safer. They used advertising and promotions to replace the customers which died as a result of using their products.

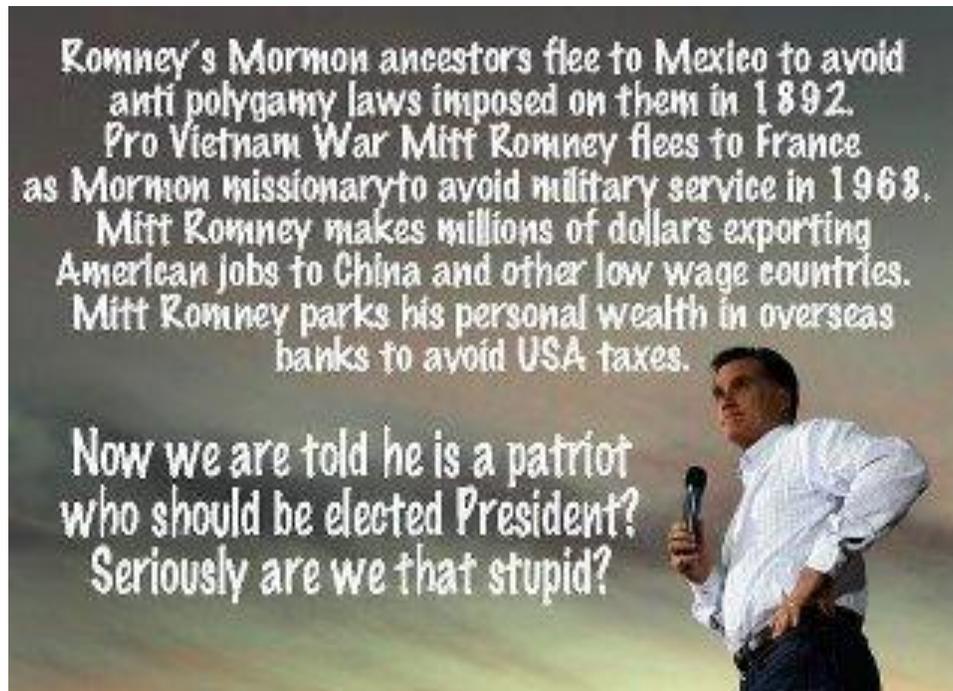
I will agree that government has a way of overreaching when they start creating legislation, but many times the legislation addresses abuses which free enterprise is incapable of curbing on their own.

I kind of like knowing that medicine matches what the label says and that it was tested for safety and accuracy of claims before I bought it. I like the fact that food and drug acts have curbed the employee abuses and adulterated products which ravished our nation 100 years ago.

Ed_USA: "That competition is enough to protect consumers."

Your childlike naivete is so charming, and I hate to be the one to spoil your innocence, but you need to learn sometime. As a gentle introduction, google "ADM lysine" and read about a typical price fixing conspiracy. Then read about some of the practices of Microsoft when they were trying to kill Netscape. Finally, have a look at the history of the NYSE before the SEC.

Left to themselves, businesses will often choose the route of zero risk and high profit instead of relentless competition. It's far easier and more profitable. That's why market capitalism requires regulation. If you look to F. A. Hayek instead of Ayn Rand for your economics then you'll learn that. Even Hayek's popular writing is harder going than Rand's romance novels, (and fewer steamy sex scenes, I'm afraid), but the economics isn't a cartoon caricature like it is with Rand.



"Tall Tales About Private Equity" by Steven Rattner, *The New York Times*

May 22, 2012, (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/opinion/creating-jobs-wasnt-romneys-job.html?_r=2)

President Obama started his general election campaign by taking aim at Mitt Romney's job creation record at Bain, setting off a lively debate over the fairness of the attacks.

I am among those who have been drawn into the argument — there was even a snippet of me defending private equity in a Romney campaign ad.

As a former Obama administration official, I was uncomfortable about being used in a Romney ad in support of his position.

However, I was also concerned that the Obama ads, while narrowly accurate, might be seen to portray Bain Capital (and implicitly, private equity) in an ugly light because a few of the companies the firm invested in went bankrupt while Bain Capital still made money

On Monday, Mr. Obama struck the right balance, emphasizing that he wasn't attacking private equity but was questioning Mitt Romney's Bain Capital credentials to be the job creator in chief.

That's fair, particularly because Mr. Romney himself has been foolishly reweaving history to claim, as recently as last week, that he helped create 100,000 jobs during his time at Bain.

In fact, Bain Capital — like other private equity firms — was founded and managed for profit: ideally, huge amounts of gain earned legally and legitimately. Any job creation was a welcome but secondary byproduct.

The language in one prospectus seeking Bain Capital investors was clear: "The objective of the Fund is to achieve an annual rate of return on invested capital in excess of the returns generated" by other investments. Any job creation was accidental.

In Mr. Romney's case, his jobs assertion rests heavily on just a few early investments.

Originally hatched to provide venture capital to young enterprises, Bain Capital notched a few such successes, notably Staples and Sports Authority. These were small stakes in companies — about \$2.5 million in Staples — over which Bain had little influence.

While I defend the role financiers play in making our economy work, I also concede that Mark Zuckerberg was far more central to the success of Facebook and its 3,200 jobs than the venture capitalists who invested early.

Although Bain Capital sold off those early investments years ago, Mr. Romney takes credit for every job ever created at every company Bain Capital invested in during his tenure — while ignoring jobs eliminated after his departure.

"The steel factory closed down two years after I left Bain Capital," he said last week about GST Steel, the Kansas City, Mo., company that went bankrupt in 2001. "I was no longer there, so that's hardly something which is on my watch."

Meanwhile, when Staples went public in 1989, it had 1,100 employees; at the end of 1998, right before Mr. Romney exited Bain, it had 42,000 workers. Yet Mr. Romney takes credit for the 89,000 employed at the close of 2010.

As the years clicked by, Bain Capital and Mr. Romney smelled the chance to make more money by raising larger amounts. That, in turn, led them toward classic leveraged buyouts — the purchase, often heavily financed by debt, of more established companies.

These enterprises were often what Wall Street describes as "undermanaged," which means the Bain Capital team could take "aggressive action" that often included cutting costs — read: jobs — to increase profitability.

That's not wrong; it's part of capitalism. Whatever its flaws, private equity has made a material contribution to sharpening management. But don't confuse a leveraged buyout with job creation.

Under Mr. Romney's leadership, Bain Capital engaged in the less attractive practice of putting more debt on seemingly successful investments in order to take dividends out. In at least four instances of Bain Capital investments during Romney's tenure, these "recapped" companies, of which two were featured in the Obama ads, subsequently went bankrupt, costing thousands their jobs.

To be sure, some of Bain's large leveraged buyouts — notably, Domino's Pizza — added jobs. But Mr. Romney left Bain Capital two months after the Domino's investment (7,900 new jobs claimed) was finalized.

Aware of private equity's reputation, Mr. Romney still trots around the country erroneously calling himself a "venture capitalist."

And in a further effort to deflect attention from the Bain Capital debate, Mr. Romney last week argued that President Obama was responsible for the loss of 100,000 jobs in the auto industry over the past three years.

That's both ridiculously false (auto industry and dealership jobs have increased by about 50,000 since January 2009) and a remarkable comment from a man who said that the companies should have been allowed to go bankrupt and that the industry would have been better off without President Obama's involvement.

Adding jobs was never Mitt Romney's private sector agenda, and it's appropriate to question his ability to do so.

Other good, related articles:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/22/cbo-report-deficit-reduction-recession_n_1537774.html?ref=elections-2012

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-lux/mitt-romney-bain-capital_b_1536631.html?ref=elections-2012

20120523-12 23:59 SteveB Painting: "Tranquility" by Ruthie Ashenhurst

http://www.ashenhurst.com/product.php?id_product=17



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #146 — MAY 25, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Canadian Protests: Silence in the U.S.

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 25, 2012)

The powers that be don't want you to know about this. Interesting how readily governments are willing to eliminate freedoms. But, of course, not in the U.S., right?



"Unreported! Media Malfeasance as 400,000 March in Montreal" OpEdNews

May 23, 2012, (http://www.opednews.com/Quicklink/Unreported-Media-Malfeasance-in-General_News-120523-668.html)

Recognizing the 100th day of mobilization against a proposed 80% tuition hike in Quebec, the largest crowd in Canadian history assembled March 22. Responding to hasty passage of a 'special law', students supporters topped the impressive turnouts of March 22 with 200,000-250,000 reported and another 310,000 reported the following day. Following the resignation of the Education Minister, Parliament enacted an unprecedented provincial law suspending civil liberties by restricting gatherings of 50 or more and imposing fines on anyone vaguely involved. The law was immediately challenged on Constitutional grounds, prompting defiance Tuesday with the wearing of newly banned masks and banging pots and pans. The government agreed to 'conditional' talks only after 100 were arrested in what me a showdown on the new law. Tellingly, US media saw no urgency in reporting this developing story.

"Biggest Act of Civil Disobedience in Canadian History" Common Dreams

May 23, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/populum/linkframe.php?linkid=150753>)

(Marchers defy Bill 78; Neighborhoods fill with sound of banging pots and pans.)

"The single biggest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history."

That's how yesterday's Montreal protest is being described today. Hundreds of thousands of red-shirted demonstrators defied Quebec's new "anti-protest" law and marched through the streets of downtown Montreal filling the city with "rivers of red."

Tuesday marked the 100th day of the growing student protests against austerity measures and tuition increases. In response to the spreading protests, the conservative Charest government passed a new "emergency" law last Friday -- Bill 78.

Since Bill 78 passed, people in Montreal neighborhoods have appeared on their balconies and in front of their houses to defiantly bang pots and pans in a clanging protest every night at 8 p.m. Bill 78 mandates:

Fines of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 for any individual who prevents someone from entering an educational institution or who participate in an illegal demonstration.

Penalties climb to between \$7,000 and \$35,000 for protest leaders and to between \$25,000 and \$125,000 for unions or student federations.

All fines DOUBLE for repeat offenders.

Public demonstrations involving more than 50 people have to be flagged to authorities eight hours in advance, include itinerary, duration and time at which they are being held. The police may alter any of these elements and non-compliance would render the protest illegal.

Offering encouragement for someone to protest at a school, either tacitly or otherwise, is subject to punishment. The Minister of Education has said that this would include things like 'tweeting', 'facebooking', and has she has implied that wearing the student protest insignia (a red flag-pin) could also be subject to punishment.

No demonstration can be held within 50 meters of any school campus.

Bill 78 not only "enraged civil libertarians and legal experts but also seems to have galvanized ordinary Quebecers." Since the law passed Friday, people in Montreal neighborhoods have appeared on their balconies and in front of their houses to defiantly bang pots and pans in a clanging protest every night at 8 p.m.

The CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) reports:

CLASSE spearheaded Tuesday's march, aided by Quebec's largest labor federations. The province's two other main student groups, FEUQ and FECQ, also rallied their supporters.

CLASSE said Monday it would direct members to defy Bill 78, Quebec's emergency legislation.

The special law was adopted last Friday, suspending the winter semester and imposing strict limits on student protests. Organizers have to submit their itinerary to authorities in advance, or face heavy fines.

CLASSE spokesman Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois said the special legislation goes beyond students and their tuition-hike conflict.

"We want to make the point that there are tens of thousands of citizens who are against this law who think that protesting without asking for a permit is a fundamental right," he said, walking side by side with other protesters behind a large purple banner.

"If the government wants to apply its law, it will have a lot of work to do. That is part of the objective of the protest today, to underline the fact that this law is absurd and inapplicable."

Time-Lapse Video: <http://www.cbc.ca/video/#/ID=2238312603>.

The Montreal Gazette reports:

A protest organizers described as the single biggest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history choked the streets of downtown Montreal in the middle of Tuesday's afternoon rush hour as tens of thousands of demonstrators expressed outrage over a provincial law aimed at containing the very sort of march they staged.

Ostensibly Tuesday's march was to commemorate the 100th day of a strike by Quebec college and university students over the issue of tuition increases. But a decision last Friday by the Charest government to pass Bill 78 - emergency legislation requiring protest organizers to provide police with an itinerary of their march eight hours in advance - not only enraged civil libertarians and legal experts but also seems to have galvanized ordinary Quebecers into marching through the streets of a city that has seen protests staged here nightly for the past seven weeks.

"I didn't really have a stand when it came to the tuition hikes," said Montrealer Gilles Marcotte, a 32-year-old office worker who used a vacation day to attend the event. "But when I saw what the law does, not just to students but to everybody, I felt I had to do something. This is all going too far."

Tuesday's march was billed as being two demonstrations taking place at the same time. One, organized by the federations representing Quebec college and university students and attended by contingents from the province's labor movement, abided by the provisions of the law and provided a route. The other, overseen by CLASSE, an umbrella group of students associations, deliberately did not.

By 3: 30 p.m., a little more than 90 minutes after the marches began to snake their way through downtown, CLASSE, which estimated the crowd at 250,000, described the march as "the single biggest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history."

Other crowd estimates varied between 75,000 and 150,000 protesters. Montreal police do not give official crowd estimates but the Place des festivals, which demonstrators easily filled before the march began, holds roughly 100,000 people.

The Canadian Press reports:

Shortly before the evening demonstration commenced, supporters in central Montreal districts came out onto their balconies and in front of their homes to bang pots and pans in a seeming call-to-arms.

As well, the powerful Montreal transit union also gave protesters a boost when it called on its members to avoid driving police squads around on city buses during the crowd control operations. Montreal police have for several years used city buses as well as their cruisers to shuttle riot squad officers around to demonstration hotspots and as places to detain prisoners.

The daytime march was considered to be one of the biggest protests held in the city and related events were held in New York, Paris, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver.

Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, co-spokesman for the hardline CLASSE group, described Tuesday's march as a historic act of civil disobedience and said he was ready to face any legal consequences.

"So personally I will be ready to face justice, if I need to."

[20120524-01](#) 11:13 Phil Fw: Memorial Day Reminder



[20120524-02](#) 11:59 Pam Re: From the Right: "Leftists Continue to Misuse & Undermine American Exceptionalism" (FotM Newsletter #144)

If I keep reading interesting articles in FotM, I'm afraid I'm just going to keep writing responses to them. If you choose to read them, I thank you. If not, that's OK too.

The piece by Jerrett Steadman on American exceptionalism certainly caught my attention. First of all, I am a self-proclaimed liberal, not a socialist, and to me that is a crucial distinction, though it doesn't appear to be to be to Steadman.

"These American values are antithetical to the left-wing agenda, something educated liberals are keenly aware of. That is why they must discredit and subvert them at every opportunity, hence the attempted connection of American exceptionalism to Stalin."

What is this "liberal agenda?" No liberal I know wants an infringement of individual liberty or central planning. What we do want is fairness, compassion, and common sense. (I should probably not speak for all liberals, but just for myself.) The "American values" Steadman describes are ones I ascribe to as well.

"American exceptionalism is based on traditional characteristics embraced by American culture and described by Tocqueville: liberty, equality of opportunity, individualism, popular government and laissez-faire economics. It runs counter to collectivism, top-down government control, a massive and unaccountable bureaucratic-administrative state and equality of outcome.

These are the collectivist and statist ideologies that America resisted and defeated in the 20th century. It is why liberals must claw and scratch at every opportunity to undermine America's very old, yet radically different values."

Except for "laissez-faire economics." I find nothing to quarrel with in Tocqueville's description of American culture. I would, however, substitute a well-regulated free-market economy that provides opportunity to the majority, rather than a no-holds-barred competitive arena where the winner takes all. Individualism, popular government, opportunity, personal freedom--what liberals object to those? I'd like to see just one example of one of these clawing, scratching liberals at work. It certainly isn't Obama.

I do appreciate Steadman's effort to explain a conservative viewpoint about American exceptionalism, a phrase that sets my teeth on edge. One can be a patriot without being a jingoist, and asserting that America and Americans are "better" than anyone else on earth is pure hubris, and we can see where overweening pride got the ancient Athenians. It would be polite, if nothing else, if we would stop crowing about how great we are and let our actions speak for us. I agree with ideals of freedom and opportunity and all the rest of it, but I am not naive enough to suppose that having ideals is enough to ensure good outcomes. We have an advantage over countries like Somalia or even Italy by virtue of our democracy, but we are not immune from error, corruption, greed, and the will to power.

The most disturbing aspect of our present political climate, to me, is the obliteration of tolerance. Disparate interest groups administer litmus tests to determine who is in and who is out. They ask, "Did you sign our pledge?" Not, "Give us your opinion."

Despite the fact that I don't understand the logic of the conservative stance a lot of the time, I am not displeased when I find points of congruence with my own thinking. I am willing to give the benefit of the doubt to conservatives who act in good faith for what they perceive to be the greater good. I do not automatically assume they have an "agenda" that is monolithic and restrictive (counter to abundant examples of same). Nor do liberals have a plan or a desire to subvert our democracy, our religious toleration, or our reliance on competition. To assert such nonsense, as Steadman does, is to distort both the truth and the integrity of free and open discussion.

[20120524-06](#)

13:37 SteveB

Re: From the Right: "Leftists Continue to Misuse & Undermine American Exceptionalism" (reply to Pam, above)

I like what President Obama said about the alleged American exceptionalism:

I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.

It might have been well to mention the ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, the leaders of the Ottoman Empire, Joseph Smith, Jr., Chiang Kai-shek, Stalin, Hitler, etc., etc. All those who have fallen as much because they thought they were exceptional as any other reason.

But Republicans don't care to know about history.

"What Do Corporations Want?" by William Astore, NationofChange

May 24, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/what-do-corporations-want-1337864442>)



(Generally speaking, major corporations prefer minimal pay and benefits for workers, a largely uncritical and powerless workforce and minimal taxes, as well as unlimited power for themselves, which they can then employ to influence elections and maximize profits.)

In the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision from January 2010, we learned that corporations are citizens, entitled to the freedoms and rights we as ordinary American citizens enjoy. "Corporations are people, my friend," insisted Mitt Romney to a group of hecklers on the campaign trail.

So, if corporations are people (a special class of people with lots and lots of money and influence and power), it's fair to ask what they want. Do they want the same things as the average citizen? Do they want decent pay for all, adequate health care for all, a solid education for all, and democratic structures that foster individual creativity, informed dissent and equitable power-sharing?

To ask these questions is to answer them. Generally speaking, major corporations prefer minimal pay and benefits for workers, a largely uncritical and powerless workforce and minimal taxes, as well as unlimited power for themselves, which they can then employ to influence elections and maximize profits.

In a word, they want control.

A largely unsung movie that captures this dream of corporate control is *Rollerball* (the original version with James Caan). It depicts a future in which there are no nations -- only major corporations like Energy, Housing, Transport, and Food. And these "majors," explains an executive played memorably by John Houseman, make "decisions on a global basis for the common good." They provide. And all they ask of ordinary folk, Houseman intones, is gratitude in the form of silent compliance, a tacit agreement "not to interfere with management decisions."

But James Caan refuses to play along. Confronted by his ex-wife Ella, now married to a member of the executive class, Caan thinks back to a dim past when people had a choice between "nice things or freedom; of course, they

chose comfort." "But comfort is freedom," Ella objects. Corporations are providers who merely want "a kind of incidental control over just a part of our lives," she concludes.

Refusing to be bought off, Caan triumphs in a violent sport whose rules are specifically designed to maim or kill him. (Think of this year's Hunger Games.) And we leave the theater celebrating his defiance.

Americans admire plucky individuals, those who cry "Give me liberty or give me death." But how much liberty do we truly have when we cede so much power to corporations? When the supreme court of our land essentially empowers corporations to thwart democracy and to buy elections?

In the spirit of Orwell, we recognize the tyranny implicit in the phrase, "All citizens are equal -- but some are (much) more equal than others." Yet despite this we've made it the law of the land. How much longer, then, until we're singing, like the crazed spectators in *Rollerball*, our very own corporate anthems?

20120524-04	13:19	SteveB	From the Right: "Cocooned Liberals Are Unprepared for Political Debate"
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Wishful thinking? Read this and maybe you will understand why Friends of the Middle seeks to draw the Right out of their hiding places, whenever possible.

"Cocooned Liberals Are Unprepared for Political Debate" by Michael Barone, *Human Events*

May 24, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51700>)

It's comfortable living in a cocoon -- associating only with those who share your views, reading journalism and watching news that only reinforces them, avoiding those on the other side of the cultural divide.

Liberals have been doing this for a long time. In 1972, the movie critic Pauline Kael said it was odd that Richard Nixon was winning the election, because everyone she knew was for George McGovern.

Kael wasn't clueless about the rest of America. She was just observing that her own social circle was politically parochial.

The rest of us have increasingly sought out comfortable cocoons, too. Journalist Bill Bishop, who lives in an Austin, Texas, neighborhood whose politics resemble Kael's, started looking at national data.

It inspired him to write his 2009 book *The Big Sort*, which describes how Americans since the 1970s have increasingly sorted themselves out, moving to places where almost everybody shares their cultural orientation and political preference -- and the others keep quiet about theirs.

Thus professionals with a choice of where to make their livings head for the San Francisco Bay Area if they're liberal and for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex (they really do call it that) if they're conservative. Over the years the Bay Area becomes more liberal and the Metroplex more conservative.

But cocooning has an asymmetrical effect on liberals and conservatives. Even in a cocoon, conservatives cannot avoid liberal mainstream media, liberal Hollywood entertainment and, these days, the liberal Obama administration.

They're made uncomfortably aware of the arguments of those on the other side. Which gives them an advantage in fashioning their own responses.

Liberals can protect themselves better against assaults from outside their cocoon. They can stay out of megachurches and make sure their remote controls never click on Fox News. They can stay off the AM radio dial so they will never hear Rush Limbaugh.

The problem is that this leaves them unprepared to make the best case for their side in public debate. They are too often not aware of holes in arguments that sound plausible when bandied between confreres entirely disposed to agree.

We have seen how this works on some issues this year.

Take the arguments developed by professor Randy Barnett of Georgetown Law that Obamacare's mandate to buy health insurance is unconstitutional. Some liberal scholars like Jack Balkin of Yale have addressed them with counterarguments of their own.

But liberal politicians and Eric Holder's Justice Department remained clueless about them. Speaker Nancy Pelosi, asked whether Obamacare was unconstitutional, could only gasp: "Are you serious? Are you serious?"

In March, after the Supreme Court heard extended oral argument on the case, CNN's Jeffrey Toobin was clearly flabbergasted that a majority of justices seemed to take the case against Obamacare's constitutionality very seriously indeed.

Liberals better informed about the other side's case might have drafted the legislation in a way to avoid this controversy. But nothing they heard in their cocoon alerted them to the danger.

Another case in point is Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's law restricting the bargaining powers of public employee unions. The unions and the crowds in Madison, which is both the state capital and a university town and which with surrounding Dane County voted 73 to 26 percent for Barack Obama, egged each other on with cries that this would destroy the working class. No one they knew found this implausible.

The unions had an economic motive to oppose the laws and seek to recall first Republican legislators and then Walker himself. The law ended the automatic checkoff of union dues, which operated as an involuntary transfer of money from taxpayers to union leaders.

But voters declined to recall enough Republicans to give Democrats a majority in the Senate, and Walker currently leads Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett in polls on the June 5 recall election.

The Madison mob seemed unaware that there were attractive arguments on Walker's side.

Why should public employee union members pay less for health insurance and get fatter pensions than the taxpayers who pay their salaries? Why is it a bad thing for property taxes to be held down and for school districts to cut perks for union members enough to hire more teachers?

Beyond the Madison cocoon, in Wisconsin's other 71 counties, which voted 55 to 44 percent for Walker in 2010, such arguments are evidently proving persuasive. Maybe liberals should listen to Rush every so often.

[20120524-05](#)

13:28

SteveB

Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Thank the 23 Attorneys General for Standing Against *Citizens United*!

from Daily Kos:

Please sign the petition thanking the attorneys general from 23 states and D.C. who are taking part in a lawsuit challenging the authority of Citizens United to override laws that limit corporate spending in state elections. Click here to sign the petition from Daily Kos and Democracy for America:

<http://democracyforamerica.com/activities/782?t=dk1>.

Late last year, the Montana Supreme Court made the first crack in *Citizens United* by upholding a century-old state law banning direct corporate spending for or against candidates in state elections. Not long afterward, a right-wing group asked the U.S. Supreme Court to overrule that decision. Now, as the U.S. Supreme Court considers the case,

the attorneys general from 22 states and D.C. have filed an amicus brief supporting Montana Attorney General Steve Bullock's bid to maintain limits on corporate spending in state elections.

With nearly half of all states on board, this is the largest coordinated legal effort against *Citizens United* yet. Winning this lawsuit would immediately curtail the corrosive effect that unlimited corporate dollars are having on our democracy at the state level, and also be a major step toward overturning *Citizens United* nationwide.

Please join with Daily Kos and Democracy for America by signing our petition thanking all of the attorneys general who are fighting against *Citizens United*. We will send them the signatures.

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers, Campaign Director, Daily Kos

20120524-07	23:44	Dale	"USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad"
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I'm sure all of you are as outraged with this administration as I am. We gotta get rid of Obama.

"USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" by Ruth Simon, *The Wall Street Journal*

May 24, 2012, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304371504577406002591760584.html>)

Charles Ward fell behind on his mortgage in September, just as his late wife began a losing battle with lung cancer and her medical costs soared.

His lender seized his \$2,958 federal tax refund and has taken a \$131 bite from each of his last four monthly Social Security checks.

"What little money I had saved up has just disappeared," says Mr. Ward, a 71-year-old former truck driver who bought his \$128,000 home in Nelsonville, Ohio, in 2008. He receives about \$200 a month in food stamps and takes on odd jobs to make ends meet.

Mr. Ward's lender isn't a bank. It is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service, which provides mortgage loans to rural homeowners and guarantees loans made by banks. It accounted for at least a third of all mortgages issued in 2010 in sparsely populated areas such as Morton County, Kan., and Sioux County, Neb., according to data reported under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act.

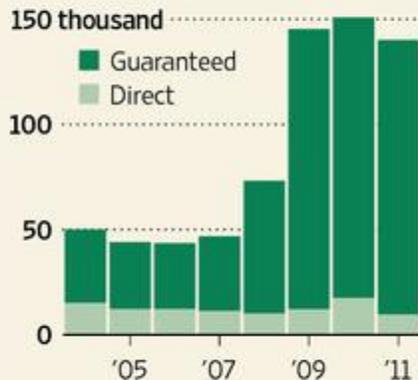
Unlike private firms, the USDA doesn't need permission from a court to start collecting on unpaid debts. It can in some cases seize government benefits and tax refunds before a foreclosure is completed. After foreclosure, the USDA can go after unpaid balances, even in states that limit such actions by private lenders.

A USDA spokesman says the agency follows all federal and state laws.

The Treasury Department collected \$45 million in delinquent USDA mortgage debt from borrowers in the last fiscal year, up from \$23 million in fiscal 2007. At the end of fiscal 2011, \$779.2 million in delinquent USDA mortgage debt was awaiting collection, up from \$420.7 million in 2007.

A Growing Player

U.S. Department of Agriculture
home mortgage loan originations



Source: USDA

The Wall Street Journal

The USDA is wielding its special powers even as the Obama administration is forcing private banks to give strapped homeowners a break. Under a \$25 billion settlement over questionable foreclosure practices announced in February, five large banks agreed to slash loan balances and forgive the debt of borrowers who lost homes to foreclosure.

USDA Rural Housing Administrator Tammy Treviño says the agency strives to work with borrowers "to offer a path back to sustainability."

"Where these efforts aren't successful and the homeowner goes into foreclosure," she says, "we actually have a process that we are required by statute to follow to collect on the debts owed."

USDA officials say their actions are required by the federal Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, enacted well before the housing bust produced a wave of delinquencies. They say the agency came under pressure from its own Inspector General in 1999 and from the Government Accountability Office a few years later for being too soft on delinquent borrowers.

The USDA started making loans to farmers in 1949, then expanded its programs to other rural residents. A 1990 law allows it to guarantee bank loans issued by banks.

The agency is a small player in the overall mortgage market, holding or backing about 944,000 loans totaling \$84.4 billion. That is less than 1% of the \$9.4 trillion in U.S. mortgage debt outstanding.

But since the mortgage crisis began in 2007, the USDA's loan volumes have tripled. The agency guaranteed \$16.9 billion in loans in fiscal 2011, and issued \$1.1 billion in direct loans.

Critics say the USDA's collection practices are troubling because the federal agency lends to low- and moderate-income homeowners, many of whom have been hurt by job losses and falling home prices. The USDA lets borrowers finance up to 102% of a home's value. About 12% of its guaranteed loans and 17% of direct loans are delinquent or in foreclosure.

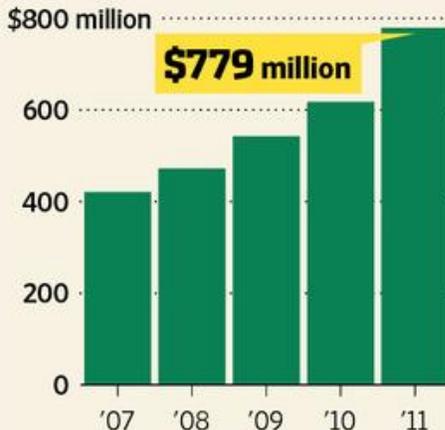
Cracking Down on Borrowers

The amount of delinquent USDA mortgage debt subject to collection has climbed since the start of the financial crisis.

Delinquent USDA mortgage debt collected by the Treasury Department



Delinquent USDA mortgage debt referred to Treasury for collection



Note: Figures include debt referred to Treasury in the current fiscal year plus debt referred in prior years that is still eligible for collection.

Source: Treasury Department, based on USDA filings

The Wall Street Journal

The agency is "pulling blood out of a stone," says Gideon Anders, an attorney with the National Housing Law Project who has sued the USDA on behalf of borrowers seeking loan workouts.

The USDA says guaranteed loans are generally not referred to collection until the foreclosed home has been sold and the lender has been paid. A spokesman said borrowers with loans issued directly by the USDA have "multiple opportunities" to avoid collection by working with the agency. He said USDA often negotiates settlements that reduce the debt amount or cancel it entirely—if the borrower shows no ability to pay.

While several federal agencies help consumers get mortgages, their collection standards vary greatly.

Since 2003, the USDA has required borrowers who take out a guaranteed loan to sign a form acknowledging the agency "will use all remedies available" to collect unpaid debt.

The Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration, which also guarantee mortgage loans issued by private lenders, say they generally don't pursue borrowers for debt left after foreclosure. "We'd gain nothing by placing an even greater debt burden on the borrower," an FHA spokeswoman says.

The VA says Congress in late 1989 enacted legislation preventing it from collecting deficiencies, except in cases of "fraud, misrepresentation or bad faith on the part of the veteran."

Some borrowers now say they didn't know what they agreed to when they signed the USDA form. "It was a shock when I got the note that they were going to garnish my Social Security check," says Jeanne Marie Andersen, a 74-year-old widow who lives in Lake Crystal, Minn., and took out a USDA loan in 2007.

Ms. Andersen lost her home to foreclosure in 2010, after she lost her job as a cook at a local restaurant. She now receives food stamps and lives in low-income housing.

She filed for bankruptcy protection in February to block the USDA from taking \$113 a month from her \$863 Social Security check to repay some of the roughly \$50,000 she owes the government.

USDA officials declined to comment on specific examples for reasons of borrower privacy, but said that agency staff inform borrowers seeking direct loans of their repayment obligations before the loan is completed. They say lenders making guaranteed loans are responsible for making sure borrowers understand their responsibilities.

The Treasury Department handles USDA collections of delinquent debt. Its arsenal includes taking tax refunds, seizing up to 15% of Social Security payments and garnishing up to 15% of a borrower's take-home pay. It can also tack on up to 28% to cover collection costs.

On guaranteed loans, the USDA's ability to pursue collections often turns on whether the borrower has signed a single piece of paper tucked in a pile of mortgage closing documents.

Antonio Ponce, 40, and Alicia Arambula, 34, got a USDA-guaranteed mortgage from a broker in 2005. The couple lost their jobs at chicken farms in July 2009, and J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., which had purchased the loan from the mortgage broker, foreclosed on their Albertville, Ala., home later that year. The USDA in August 2011 began garnishing the wages Mr. Ponce now earns as a construction worker to collect a \$48,300 debt, including fees.

During a hearing before an administrative law judge in October 2011, the couple said they never signed the form obligating them to reimburse the government for any losses. A USDA attorney acknowledged the signature didn't match Mr. Ponce's signatures on other documents, according to a hearing transcript. The agency dropped the claim. A spokeswoman for J.P. Morgan declined to comment.

The USDA says that of the 984 borrowers who appealed USDA collections and other adverse actions in fiscal 2011, the agency's position was upheld roughly 90% of the time. A spokesman said the agency "seeks to ensure that all paperwork is correctly and properly executed" prior to guaranteeing the loan.

The USDA has the power to collect on debts owed after a foreclosure, even in states where similar actions by private lenders would violate the law.

Matthew Earl, a maintenance worker, took out a \$74,000 USDA-backed loan in 2006 to buy a three-bedroom home in Chickasha, Okla. Mr. Earl, 28, lost the home to foreclosure in 2009. J.P. Morgan Chase sold the home in April 2010 for \$55,500, according to an administrative order filed in the case. After making J.P. Morgan whole, the USDA began garnishing Mr. Earl's wages and seized his roughly \$7,000 tax refund.

Under Oklahoma law, lenders must go to court within 90 days of a completed foreclosure to secure the right to collect leftover debt, says Mr. Earl's attorney, Mark T. Hamby, adding that J.P. Morgan didn't do so. But in a February decision, an administrative law judge found the guarantee form Mr. Earl signed gave the USDA a separate right to garnish his wages. A J.P. Morgan spokeswoman declined to comment.

In this case, the government collected more from Mr. Earl than the 15% permitted by federal law, according to the administrative order. The judge ordered the USDA to repay Mr. Earl and allowed the government to garnish only 5% of his disposable pay until March 2013 to repay the \$42,200 debt, including collection costs. A higher amount would cause "financial hardship," according to the order, which noted that Mr. Earl couldn't afford to pay for his wife's health insurance and had pulled his daughter out of prekindergarten.

Both the USDA and Treasury Department declined to comment on individual cases, but Ronda Kent, a Treasury official overseeing the debt-collection program, said garnishment calculations are done by the employer using a Treasury Department form.

The USDA's policies are restrictive when it comes to modifications by lenders of guaranteed loans and the agency has been less flexible than banks in reworking direct loans, says Dan Williams, program director for LSS Financial Counseling Service in Duluth, Minn.

For the private loans the USDA guarantees, the agency since late 2010 has had its own version of the Obama administration's Home Affordable Modification Program, which aims to make troubled loans more affordable. Through March, 10 such modifications had been completed. Overall, lenders completed about 354,000 modifications under the Obama program last year, according to Hope Now, an industry group.

The USDA says it has approved 215 modifications under the program, with 67 canceled by the lenders and 138 awaiting completed paperwork.

For loans made directly to borrowers, the agency sometimes cuts the interest rate or suspends payments for up to two years. A seven-month payment holiday helped Mary Beall avoid falling behind on her \$142,000 USDA mortgage after she was seriously injured in a car wreck in 2009.

"They took care of me until I went back to work," says Ms. Beall, who couldn't return to work for more than four months because of her injuries.

About 4,000 borrowers are currently on payment holidays, according to USDA officials. Roughly 8,900 borrowers are on repayment plans, the USDA says. Banks last year completed more than one million modifications, according to Hope Now.

There is another difference: While the government has pressed private banks to reduce homeowners' monthly payments, USDA borrowers who receive payment holidays often end up with even higher payments later.

That is because the USDA adds unpaid amounts onto the loan balances—and then raises the monthly payment so the loan can be repaid in the same time. A USDA spokesman says the agency is required to take such actions.

Roger Beebe, a 56-year-old factory worker, took out a \$42,500 USDA direct loan to buy his home in Marietta, Ohio, in 1982 and another \$4,280 loan in 1995 to fix it up. When Mr. Beebe was laid off in 2009, the USDA gave him a two-year payment holiday. But when the term expired, the government raised his payments to \$669 from about \$150 so the larger mortgage could be repaid on time.

Mr. Beebe says he can't afford the higher payments. The USDA sent him a foreclosure notice last summer and this year seized his \$945 tax refund. "It's hard for me to understand what they were trying to achieve," says Mr. Beebe, who now earns \$8.50 an hour and expects to file for bankruptcy.

(Rob Barry contributed to this article.)

[20120524-08](#) 23:58 SteveG Graphic: Feeding vs. Bombing

**HOW EXPENSIVE
WOULD IT BE TO
FEED THE WORLD?
NOT AS EXPENSIVE
AS BOMBING IT!**

<http://www.thespec.com/news/canada/article/729364--video-thousands-clog-montreal-streets-again>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #147 — MAY 28, 2012

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

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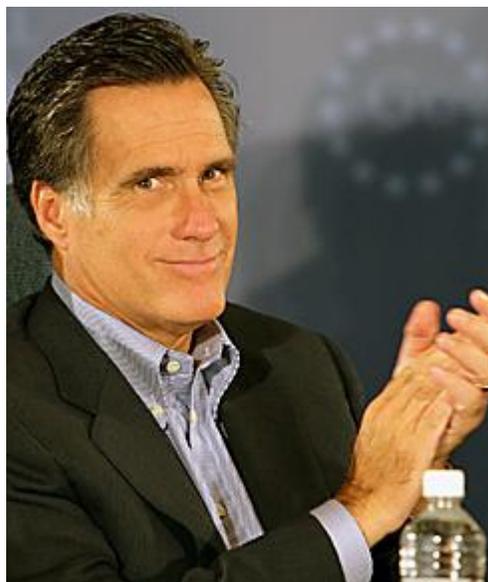
My 2012 Election Poem

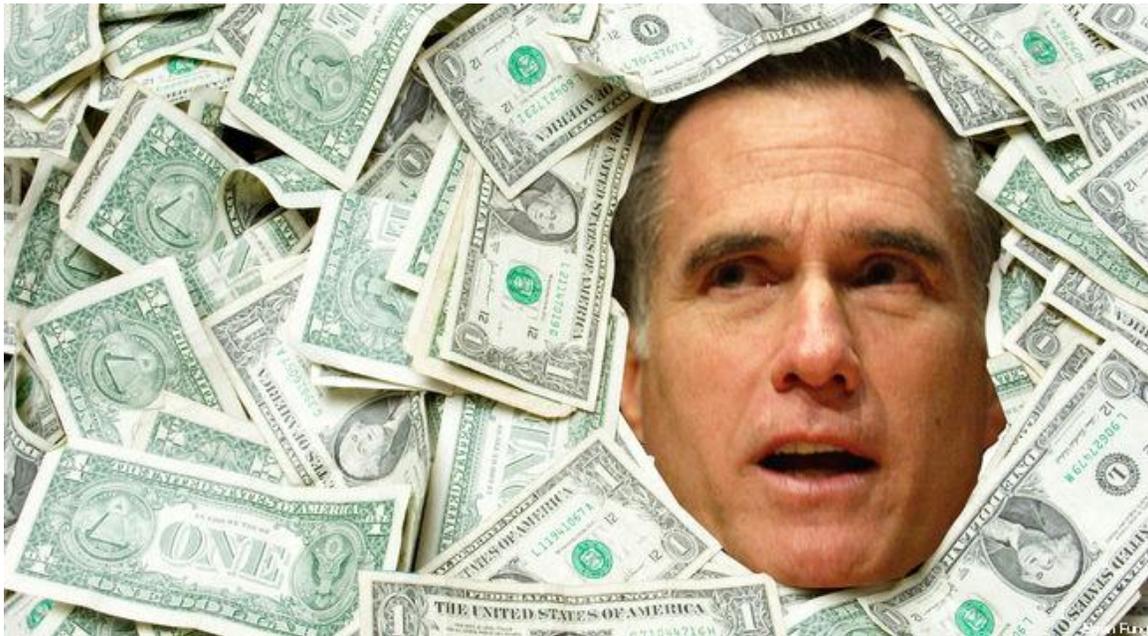
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 28, 2012)

My 2012 Election Poem

Money is important to Mitt Romney.
He says he was a "venture capitalist".
He says those experiences prepared him, qualified him.
But, surely, we are a nation of people?
I want a leader to whom people are more important than money.
That person will come closer to the right decisions.
It's really just that beautifully simple.

©2012 Steven W. Baker





"How to Forget on Memorial Day" by Tom Engelhardt, NationofChange

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-forget-memorial-day-1337950610>)

("It's a weekend for which the police tend to predict rising fatalities and news reports tend to celebrate any declines in deaths on our roads and highways.")

Into the Memory Hole

May is the official month of remembrance when it comes to our war dead, ending as it does on the long Memorial Day weekend when Americans typically take to the road and kill themselves and each other in far greater numbers than will die in Afghanistan. It's a weekend for which the police tend to predict rising fatalities and news reports tend to celebrate any declines in deaths on our roads and highways.

Quiz Americans and a surprising number undoubtedly won't have thought about the "memorial" in Memorial Day at all -- especially now that it's largely a marker of the start of summer and an excuse for cookouts.

How many today are aware that, as Decoration Day, it began in 1865 in a nation still torn by grief over the loss of -- we now know -- up to 750,000 dead in the first modern war, a wrenching civil catastrophe in a then-smaller and still under-populated country? How many know that the first Decoration Day was held in 1865 with 10,000 freed slaves and some Union soldiers parading on a Charleston, South Carolina, racetrack previously frequented by planters and transformed in wartime into a grim outdoor prison? The former slaves were honoring Union prisoners who had died there and been hastily buried in unmarked graves, but as historian Kenneth Jackson has written, they were also offering "a declaration of the meaning of the war and of their own freedom."

Those ceremonies migrated north in 1866, became official at national cemeteries in 1868, and grew into ever more elaborate civic remembrances over the years. Even the South, which had previously marked its grief separately, began to take part after World War I as the ceremonies were extended to the remembrance of all American war dead. Only in 1968, in the midst of another deeply unpopular war, did Congress make it official as Memorial Day, creating the now traditional long holiday weekend.

And yet, when it comes to the major war the United States is still fighting, now in its 11th year, the word remembrance is surely inappropriate, as is the "Memorial" in Memorial Day. It's not just that the dead of the Afghan War have largely been tossed down the memory hole of history (even if they do get official attention on

Memorial Day itself). Even the fact that Americans are still dying in Afghanistan seems largely to have been forgotten, along with the war itself.

As the endlessly plummeting opinion polls indicate, the Afghan War is one Americans would clearly prefer to forget - yesterday, not tomorrow. It was, in fact, regularly classified as "the forgotten war" almost from the moment that the Bush administration turned its attention to the invasion of Iraq in 2002 and so declared its urge to create a *Pax Americana* in the Greater Middle East. Despite the massive "surge" of troops, special operations forces, CIA agents, and civilian personnel sent to Afghanistan by President Obama in 2009-2010, and the ending of the military part of the Iraq debacle in 2011, the Afghan War has never made it out of the grave of forgetfulness to which it was so early consigned.

Count on one thing: there will be no Afghan version of Maya Lin, no Afghan Wall on the National Mall. Unlike the Vietnam conflict, tens of thousands of books won't be pouring out for decades to come arguing passionately about the conflict. There may not even be a "who lost Afghanistan" debate in its aftermath.

Few Afghan veterans are likely to return from the war to infuse with new energy an antiwar movement that remains small indeed, nor will they worry about being "spit upon." There will be little controversy. They -- their traumas and their wounds -- will, like so many bureaucratic notices, disappear into the American ether, leaving behind only an emptiness and misery, here and in Afghanistan, as perhaps befits a bankrupting, never-ending imperial war on the global frontiers.

Whistling Past the Graveyard of Empires

If nothing else, the path to American amnesia is worth recalling on this Memorial Day.

Though few here remember it that way, the invasion of Afghanistan was launched on a cult of the dead. These were the dead civilians from the Twin Towers in New York City. It was to their memory that the only "Wall" of this era -- the 9/11 Memorial at Ground Zero in lower Manhattan -- has been built. Theirs are the biographies that are still remembered in annual rites nationwide. They are, and remain, the dead of the Afghan War, even though they died before it began.

On the other hand, from the moment the invasion of Afghanistan was launched, how to deal with the actual American war dead was always considered a problematic matter. The Bush administration and the military high command, with the Vietnam War still etched in their collective memories, feared those uniformed bodies coming home (as they banished the "body count" of enemy dead in the field). They remembered the return of the "body bags" of the Vietnam era as a kind of nightmare, stoking a fierce antiwar movement, which they were determined not to see repeated.

As a result, in the early years of the Afghan and then Iraq wars, the Bush administration took relatively draconian steps to cut the media off from any images of the returning war dead. They strictly enforced a Pentagon ban, in existence since the first Gulf War, on media coverage and images of the coffins arriving from the war fronts at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. At the same time, much publicity was given to the way President Bush met privately and emotionally -- theoretically beyond the view of the media -- with the families of the dead.

And yet, banned or not, for a period the war dead proliferated. In those early years of Washington's two increasingly catastrophic wars on the Eurasian mainland, newspapers regularly produced full-page or double-page "walls of heroes" with tiny images of the faces of the American dead, while their names were repeatedly read in somber tones on television. In a similar fashion, the antiwar movement toured the country with little "cemeteries" or displays of combat representing the war dead.

The Pentagon ban ended with the arrival of the Obama administration. In October 2009, six months after the Pentagon rescinded it, in an obvious rebuke to his predecessor, President Obama traveled to Dover Air Base. There, inside a plane bringing the bodies of the dead home, he reportedly prayed over the coffins and was later photographed offering a salute as one of them was carried off the plane. But by the time the arrival of the dead could be covered, few seemed to care.

The Bush administration, it turns out, needn't have worried. In an America largely detached from war, the Iraq War would end without fanfare or anyone here visibly giving much of a damn. Similarly, the Afghan War would continue to limp from one disaster to the next, from an American "kill team" murdering Afghan civilians "for sport" to troops urinating on Afghan corpses (and videotaping the event), or mugging for the camera with enemy body parts, or an American sergeant running amok, or the burning of Korans, or the raising of an SS banner. And, of course, ever more regularly, ever more unnervingly, Afghan "allies" would turn their guns on American and NATO troops and blow them away. It's a phenomenon almost unheard of in such wars, but so common in Afghanistan these days that it's gotten its own label: "green-on-blue violence."

This has been the road to oblivion and it's paved with forgotten bodies. Forgetfulness, of course, comes at a price, which includes the escalating long-term costs of paying for the American war-wounded and war-traumatized. On this Memorial Day, there will undoubtedly be much cant in the form of tributes to "our heroes" and then, Tuesday morning, when the mangled cars have been towed away, the barbeque grills cleaned, and the "heroes" set aside, the forgetting will continue. If the Obama administration has its way and American special operations forces, trainers, and advisors in reduced but still significant numbers remain in Afghanistan until perhaps 2024, we have more than another decade of forgetting ahead of us in a tragedy that will, by then, be beyond all comprehension.

Afghanistan has often enough been called "the graveyard of empires." Americans have made it a habit to whistle past that graveyard, looking the other way -- a form of obliviousness much aided by the fact that the American war dead conveniently come from the less well known or forgotten places in our country. They are so much easier to ignore thanks to that.

Except in their hometowns, how easy the war dead are to forget in an era when corporations go to war but Americans largely don't. So far, 1,980 American military personnel (and significant but largely unacknowledged numbers of private contractors) have died in Afghanistan, as have 1,028 NATO and allied troops, and (despite U.N. efforts to count them) unknown but staggering numbers of Afghans.

So far in the month of May, 22 American dead have been listed in those Pentagon announcements. If you want a little memorial to a war that shouldn't be, check out their hometowns and you'll experience a kind of modern graveyard poetry. Consider it an elegy to the dead of second- or third-tier cities, suburbs, and small towns whose names are resonant exactly because they are part of your country, but seldom or never heard by you.

Here, then, on this Memorial Day, are not the names of the May dead, but of their hometowns, announcement by announcement, placed at the graveside of a war that we can't bear to remember and that simply won't go away. If it's the undead of wars, the deaths from it remain a quiet crime against American humanity:

Spencerport, New York; Wichita, Kansas; Warren, Arkansas; West Chester, Ohio; Alameda, California; Charlotte, North Carolina; Stow, Ohio; Clarksville, Tennessee; Chico, California; Jeffersonville, Kentucky; Yuma, Arizona; Normangee, Texas; Round Rock, Texas; Rolla, Missouri; Lucerne Valley, California; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Overland Park, Kansas; Wheaton, Illinois; Lawton, Oklahoma; Prince George, Virginia; Terre Haute, Indiana.



As long as the hometowns pile up, no one should rest in peace.

[20120525-01](#) 06:24 MarthaH Fw: This Week on FlackCheck.org

This week on: <http://www.flackcheck.org/>:

- The McClellan campaign's newest attack ad dismisses the Homestead Act, signed by President Lincoln, as an un-American redistribution of wealth.
- Find out who called Rep. Kristi Noem (R., S.D.), the Tea Party and "D.C. insiders" horses' asses; who smashed a piñata with South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley's face on it, and who accused Bain Capital of "raping companies."
- See if you can spot the difference in a photo used in two campaign mailers sent out by Rep. Brad Sherman (D., Calif.), then decide whether this is a case of media manipulation.
- Takedowns of two Crossroads GPS ads containing misleading attacks against President Obama.
- Learn how some deceptive super PACs hope TV stations will treat their ads (then contact your local stations urging them to stand by their ads).
- View our video highlighting a fact check by Calvin Woodward of the Associated Press on Vice President Biden ("audacious" acts).
- Orchids go to CNN's John King for questioning South Carolina AFL-CIO president Donna Dewitt's piñata-bashing behavior and to CNN's Candy Crowley for challenging top Obama campaign adviser David Axelrod on the content of an anti-Romney ad.
- See our Tuesday May 22 panel on fact checking the 2012 election.

[20120525-02](#) 06:47 SteveB Re: This Week on FlackCheck.org (reply to MarthaH, above)

Referring to the first one (McClellan)...I'm sure the Republicans would attack the Homestead Act, which benefited ordinary people. But the GOP loves all the unmentioned (and more substantial) subsidies in land and money that were given to the railroad barons in the 19th Century. Somehow, that's not an "un-American redistribution of

wealth". Because in their vision of America, wealth is only properly redistributed when it is from the bottom to the top. In fact, they don't even call that "redistribution", they call it the Land of the Free! Love It or Leave It!

That's the GOP in a nutshell! It's time to get rid of them and find a less radicalized replacement.

[20120525-03](#)

09:06

Pam/Dale

Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (discussion of Dale post in FotM Newsletter #146)

Dale: I'm sure all of you are as outraged with this administration as I am. We gotta get rid of Obama.

Pam: Not me, Dale. Obama isn't perfect, but no President could be. At least he's trying to do the right things. He's trying to fix the country, not bankrupt it like the Republicans did under Bush. Don't blame him for what he didn't do. What exactly has he done that disturbs you so? I'd like specifics.

Dale: Why not blame him for what he didn't do? I don't get that thinking. He promised a lot and delivered little good while acting as a place holder. He misread the need to act on the economy and chose to focus selfishly on creating his own legacy with an ill conceived health plan. His administration still doesn't have a clue about how to create jobs and legitimately stimulate the economy. I'm not going to regurgitate the tired, losing monetary policies which O has tried and only serve to kick the can down the road.

Pam: All politicians promise more than they can deliver: Gingrich and his moon-state to cite one of the more ridiculous examples. Obama did not misread the need for economic action: he prevented a deeper depression than the one we got; he kept the auto industry on life support until it could recover; he passed a jobs bill that Republicans obstructed at every turn; he restored respect for the U.S. abroad; he didn't close Guantanamo, but he did oversee the first judicial reviews of prisoners, which resulted in the release of hundreds of detainees who were not prosecutable under law; he achieved what no President before him has ever done: he passed a health-care reform bill that will greatly benefit young adults (stay on parents' insurance until age 26), those with pre-existing conditions, those without insurance (upwards of 40 million people), and much more. The pity is that he couldn't do more, but given the phobias of Americans about "socialized medicine" it's a wonder he did as much as he managed to do. More needs to be done, and Obama is the only man standing who has even a remote chance. Romney has promised to eliminate Obamacare on day one, a prospect I find frightening. He has called for investment in infrastructure, sustainable energy, and bringing American jobs back to the U.S. by using incentives like tax breaks and tariffs, even as he made concessions to big oil because it was politic to do so. He tried to stop Keystone because it will raise gas prices for Americans, while increasing revenues for foreign companies, to say nothing of the environmental damage this dirty source of oil will do--unlike Boehner, who owns a substantial number of shares in Keystone and stands to gain personally by its implementation. I'm not thrilled that he chose the very individuals largely responsible for our economic crisis to lead us out of it, but he knew they had the best understanding of what went wrong (at least, I give him the benefit of the doubt on that), and the Fed. has kept interest rates low--to encourage investment and encourage borrowing by companies large and small--and inflation minimal. He can't spin jobs out of straw, but he has done a lot to create a friendly business climate while protecting the consumer and seen the jobless rate decline. He admits it's not enough, but it took a while to dig this hole, and it's going to take a while to fill it back up. Massive job loss, the hemorrhaging of funds for social programs like the one my daughter works for (her job is being eliminated in December, leaving dozens of families with severely disabled children without life-sustaining services), the ridiculous No Child Left Behind initiative, and the failure of many businesses (thank you, Mr. Romney)--these are the result of Bush W. policies, to name just a few. What is your "clue" to creating jobs? Yes, we need to have a stable business environment so employers know what to expect, but a return to economics as usual is not the answer. I sort of agree that "what's good for GM is good for America," but not at the expense of Americans who want to drive safe, fuel-efficient cars. Regulation is not the problem (well, maybe it is--all that paperwork!); predictability is.

Pam wrote above: All politicians promise more than they can deliver: Gingrich and his moon-state to cite one of the more ridiculous examples.

Dale: Step one, attack somebody else.

Pam: *Since when did quoting someone become an attack? Gingrich said it, not me.*

Pam wrote above: Obama did not misread the need for economic action.

Dale: He acted reluctantly and late in the running, while preoccupied with lobbying for Obamacare. Then, his admin totally botched the TARP program...anyone remember the "shovel ready" projects that weren't there? In reality, he either lied or didn't know what he was talking about.

Pam: And Goldman Sachs told the truth when they claimed that mortgage-backed securities were a safe bet? Obama did not botch TARP. He carried out what Bush had already begun and would have done more if he could. Many economists believe Obama didn't go far enough, but Republicans weren't about to let him go further. As for "shovel ready" projects, why doesn't private industry step in to get them off the ground? Corporations are the entities with the money, and they're sitting on it while government spending declines. I don't care who funds bridge repairs, hospital construction, or computer labs in schools, but I don't for a minute blame Obama for not spending money that isn't there. If you don't want government-supported jobs, then why don't you get your rich friends to pony up the money to hire people?

Pam wrote above: He prevented a deeper depression than the one we got; he kept the auto industry on life support until it could recover.

Dale: Let's call it what it was. He paid back a campaign debt to the auto unions who donated money and time to get him elected. A pure special interest payoff. He strong-armed them onto the boards of the companies he virtually nationalized and he use our money to do it. He picked a group he wanted to favor at the expense of everyone else in the US.

Pam: I was sort of hoping he would nationalize the banks, actually. I don't doubt the unions contributed to his election, but I suppose Republicans never do that sort of thing. How is preventing Medicare from negotiating drug prices not a payoff to big pharma? How is subsidizing corn for the production of high-fructose corn syrup and bio-fuels not a payoff to big agriculture? And finally, why on earth would Obama want to throw Americans "under a bus?" What's in that for him? He's a Democrat, for Christ's sake, the party of the little guy. It's nothing but a smear for Republicans to call him an elitist. You want elitism? Look to the cadre of CEOs who are flying high. And he did rescue the auto industry; look at this year's bottom line. He used our money to do it? Sadly, true, perhaps, but he's not the one who took this country from a surplus to an all-time record deficit. Please.

Pam wrote above: He passed a jobs bill that Republicans obstructed at every turn; he restored respect for the U.S. abroad.

Dale: What part of "all the Islamic countries that hated us before, hate us just as much now" don't you get? Time will tell about the wisdom of his pull-out timing. Maybe it was good, maybe not. I'm not judging yet, but what makes you think the British, French, Germans, Italians, Spanish, Greek, Russians or any other countries respect him?

Pam: Oh, I get that they hate us, and I'm not surprised. Islamic countries where we build schools and contribute something worthwhile don't hate us; it's the ones we bomb to smithereens. I can't speak definitively to European leaders' opinion of Obama, but at least they don't think he's a fool, like our last President. I know, I know. I'm attacking poor Mr. Bush. Silly me.

Pam wrote above: He didn't close Guantanamo, but he did oversee the first judicial reviews of prisoners, which resulted in the release of hundreds of detainees who were not prosecutable under law; he achieved what no President before him has ever done: he passed a health-care reform bill that will greatly benefit young adults (stay on parents' insurance until age 26), those with pre-existing conditions, those without insurance (upwards of 40

million people), and much more. The pity is that he couldn't do more, but given the phobias of Americans about "socialized medicine" it's a wonder he did as much as he managed to do. More needs to be done, and Obama is the only man standing who has even a remote chance.

Dale: The law is so flawed, it will not even get past judicial review, thankfully. Fortunately, when it is gone by rule of law or by repeal, a valid health care reform law, hopefully bi-partisan or at least inclusive of the input from both parties, will be passed.

Pam: Now here we come close to agreeing. The ACA Act is indeed flawed, rather as if a committee had tried to come up with a horse and designed an elephant instead. I say again, what we need is universal coverage and a single payer. I quote Marcia Angell of Harvard Medical School: "...the fact that Congress lags behind public opinion [you will quibble with this, I know] is surely partly due to liberals accepting the premise that a single-payer system is off the table, while what is truly unrealistic is imagining that we can provide universal and affordable health care in a market-based system." (NYRB, June 7, 2012) If public opinion doesn't want a single payer (too much like socialism), it's not because the public doesn't want affordable care for all. They've been frightened by the bogeyman of socialism and sold a bill of goods about other countries' successes (Sweden, France, Germany, etc.) No, we're not Europe. But most European countries have done more to eliminate discrepancies in their health-care systems than we supposedly egalitarian Americans have. When did "egalitarianism" (all men are created equal) become the pejorative term it is today? Why is wanting to cover the poor and underinsured "income redistribution?" Why is it "class warfare" to want the best for EVERY American citizen, not just those with trust funds? Why don't Republicans propose alternatives that have popular support? I'm willing to listen.

Pam wrote above: Romney has promised to eliminate Obamacare on day one, a prospect I find frightening. He has called for investment in infrastructure, sustainable energy, and bringing American jobs back to the U.S. by using incentives like tax breaks and tariffs, even as he made concessions to big oil because it was politic to do so. He tried to stop Keystone because it will raise gas prices for Americans, while increasing revenues for foreign companies, to say nothing of the environmental damage this dirty source of oil will do--unlike Boehner, who owns a substantial number of shares in Keystone and stands to gain personally by its implementation.

Dale: I sensed an attack was coming soon. To be charitable by assuming good intent, it is unfortunate that Obama has chosen the misguided policy of throwing all Americans under the bus while we are in an extremely difficult economic situation, so he could live up to his campaign promises (selfish again) around alternative energy sources. If he were not so worried about his own image and agenda, or is it that lack of experience thing again, he would have the patience/wisdom of using American natural resources and technology to rebuild our manufacturing base using US natural gas and oil. While restoring our economy and using lower cost energy sources to do so, we could be funding research for viable non-petro sources and energy conservation technology. What dunce would add an unnecessary stress on the system now? Oh yeah, Obama would. When it was obvious that the technology is not ready, instead of accepting it, he doubled down and threw money and favoritism to certain companies at the problem. Now he has to live with the egg on his face.

Pam: Use dirty oil to fund development of clean energy? Where's the incentive for oil to want to do anything but continue to promote their own interests? The climate is changing, or hadn't you noticed. It's 90 degrees where I live. Ten years ago we'd have been happy to reach 75. As the tropics expand into temperate zones, disease and crop failure will follow, just for starters. The fact is, the technology for green energy is already available--from the Chinese. The Chinese produce over half the solar panels in the world; the U.S. produces nearly none. I wonder why that is? The egg is on your face, my friend. In fifty years, your defense of oil and natural gas (don't get me started on fracking) will seem as retrograde as a defense of slavery. Our economy depends on oil. The Confederate economy depended on slavery. Same difference?

Pam wrote above: I'm not thrilled that he chose the very individuals largely responsible for our economic crisis to lead us out of it, but he knew they had the best understanding of what went wrong (at least, I give him the benefit of the doubt on that), and the Fed. has kept interest rates low--to encourage investment and encourage borrowing by companies large and small--and inflation minimal.

Dale: I am currently coming out of three days of meetings in Washington DC where the lunacy of what the Fed is doing was documented. They are setting up a major crisis by artificially tinkering with the economy and fixing the rates on the long bond. Put in simple terms they are DISCOURAGING loans, because what lender wants to be sitting on 20-year and 30-year bonds when the interest rates eventually go up. You realize, the rates ARE going to go up sometime, don't you? When it happens, the lenders are stuck with debt obligations that go down in value. Once again, this policy is short term thinking with a goal of quickly restoring the housing market to make the Obama administration look good for the upcoming election. The longer term consequences are horrible, but we have a rookie in the White House. The worst case my mean BOTH short term no improvement in housing and long term pain from forced interest rate increases.

Pam: I admit, I don't know a whole lot about the Fed., but I find it hard to believe that in these perilous times the Fed. would deliberately propose destructive policies. My understanding is that the Fed. is trying to manage a delicate balancing act, and so far it seems to be doing better than the Eurozone. What are they supposed to do if not "tinker?"

Pam wrote above: He can't spin jobs out of straw, but he has done a lot to create a friendly business climate while protecting the consumer and seen the jobless rate decline.

Dale: I can't imagine what business person you've talked to who says Obama has created a friendly business climate. That is just plain false. He took an anti-business stance upon arriving in office, playing publicly to his base, then attempted to look neutral while his policies piled on one additional regulation after another on businesses. When people give up looking for work, it is a nifty spin to claim the jobless rate declined. All the people out of work, whether they are still trying to find work or have given up will tell you it isn't any better.

Pam: Obama is not anti-business, any more than I am. I have nothing but respect for entrepreneurs and am grateful for the standard of living we enjoy, thanks to big business. But business unfettered by regulation smacks of the old 19th c. laissez-faire capitalism that was so destructive. I'd have to look at regulations case by case to determine which are truly helpful (clean air and water, safe food supply, effective drugs) are which are bureaucratic busywork. I know there's a lot of that in education, and it's doing no one any good. I know folks who are out of work and have been, in one case, for three years. His school teacher wife supports the family, and his kids, fortunately, qualify for scholarships. I know he's still looking, but he's in his mid-fifties. What chances do you suppose he has? Who do you count as Obama's "base?" I tried earlier to describe what I thought the conservative base is. Will you do the same?

Pam wrote above: He admits it's not enough, but it took a while to dig this hole, and it's going to take a while to fill it back up. Massive job loss, the hemorrhaging of funds for social programs like the one my daughter works for (her job is being eliminated in December, leaving dozens of families with severely disabled children without life-sustaining services), the ridiculous No Child Left Behind initiative, and the failure of many businesses (thank you, Mr. Romney)--these are the result of Bush W. policies, to name just a few. What is your "clue" to creating jobs? Yes, we need to have a stable business environment so employers know what to expect, but a return to economics as usual is not the answer. I sort of agree that "what's good for GM is good for America," but not at the expense of Americans who want to drive safe, fuel-efficient cars. Regulation is not the problem (well, maybe it is--all that paperwork!); predictability is.

Dale: BTW, when was the last time the Senate passed a budget? Where is the leadership in either the Democratically controlled Senate or the White House? Finally, I am still looking for a coherent statement of how Obama will make things better if elected. They are without ideas, without direction, and without a plan. There is no Hope for improvement by reelecting failed approaches.

Pam: A plague on both their houses, I say. But if push comes to shove, as it certainly has, I'll go with the Dems. Economists disagree about the relative dangers of the deficit and joblessness. I agree with Robert Reich that we need to create jobs and stimulate growth in the short term, and deal with the deficit in the long-term. A shrinking middle class is a graver danger than some red ink.

Dale wrote above: Finally, I am still looking for a coherent statement of how Obama will make things better if elected. They are without ideas, without direction, and without a plan. There is no Hope for improvement by reelecting failed approaches.

Pam: And the Republican plan is? Cut taxes and starve government even more (for "government" you could substitute "ordinary Americans" who depend on government-supported programs, like Head Start, Food Stamps, Medicare, etc. etc.) The middle class is being taxed unfairly in comparison to those whose income derives from investments, trusts, and capital gains. John Dillinger was asked why he robbed banks. His answer, "That's where the money is."

Dale: Now, it's your turn. Give me the specifics on how an Obama reelection will improve the economy? What is their plan? What are they going to do differently? The "trust me, I know best," with no specifics didn't work for the last four years, so why should anyone think it will for the next four? There is no confidence in Obama and the Hope has faded. His lack of experience and leadership has revealed itself so why reward lack of production with reelection.

Pam: See my comments above. I agree that "trust me, I know best" is insufficient. I also know that politicians all speak in platitudes and generalities. If Obama hasn't accomplished everything he and his supporters would have liked, it's because of Republican obstructionism. Republicans are on record saying they will say NO to everything Obama proposes, even policies they once supported themselves. We can't live on hope. Hope is good for a day, good for a slogan, good for helping you get up in the morning. We do need concrete action that addresses the needs we have today with solutions tailored for today. We do NOT need to turn back and undo all the progress--social, racial, environmental, in workplace safety--that has been hard-won in the past 60 years. The world ahead is one increasingly without borders, where the internet has changed everything and will continue to change the ways we live and think. I won't be part of that world (except to see its beginnings), and that's probably just as well, as I still can't figure out how to do Skype. But the world will not stop for me, nor should it. Obama is a man of the future. He has a vision that includes fairness, growth, peace, and innovation, and he is realist enough to understand that change will come slowly and through compromise. True believers (like me, I suppose) don't much like compromise. (The South isn't ready for integration. Gays don't deserve equal rights. You can't be a true American without being Christian.) Obama has the energy of the true believer and the intelligence not to give the game away through intransigence. The Bush years were a disaster, full stop. Obama has moved us beyond them, thank God.

Pam: Obama has had a sharp learning curve, to be sure. But he is a quick study. I truly believe that in his second term, he will be able to achieve at least some of his goals. He is getting us out of two wars started by Republicans. He is not pushing us into a deeper depression, and there are signs of growth. He doesn't want to wage pre-emptive war on Iran, a disaster waiting to happen. He is doing more to thwart terrorism than Bush did with his "Mission Accomplished" banners and gullibility about WMD in Iraq. Even I was sceptical that Iraq had such a capacity, and what do I know? Bush wanted war, and his pulling out the inspectors prematurely proves that. In short, Obama is cleaning up Bush's and Cheney's mess, and he's doing it without bad-mouthing his predecessors, which in his place I would be sorely tempted to do. All I've heard Republicans say is "NO." And that, for me at least, just isn't good enough. Piffle!

Dale: If you are afraid of the alternative, I get that. I don't agree with it, but I understand. I understand why the approach is a constant barrage of character assassination of the opponent(s), which is what is see day after day in this forum. Tellingly, there is no positive energy or enthusiasm for what Obama brings to the future. I get why this incumbent President cannot run on his record, because his record sucks. I get why the strategy is to attack nitpicking potential flaws in Romney. Its an effort to divert attention from the facts around our sorry situation, which O has done little to improve. I get how dividing our country into segments and creating a class war mentality is all he can do, because there is nothing positive to propel voters in his direction.

Pam: Ah, the "class war" issue. Whose war is it? And who's winning? I don't feel sorry for millionaires and the increasing number of billionaires who feel so beleaguered. It must be tough living in all those homes, maintaining all those staffs, buying all those Cadillacs (buy American!), and it must be nice to be able to avoid taxes by stashing

your loot offshore. The only suffering I see among the wealthy (aside from the personal s--t that comes to all of us) is when one of them has to go to jail. Let me see if I can describe the "class" you think is responsible for this "war." Families earning less than \$50,000 a year who would like to send their kids to college. The disabled who would die without daily help. The sick who would get sicker and perhaps die because they can't afford the care they need. Students trying to prepare themselves for a meaningful life. Poor children who need stimulating day care. Single mothers who can barely get by from one day to the next. Fathers who are embarrassed in front of their children because they've lost their job. Retirees who worry that the retirement they planned for won't be secure, and younger adults who expect never to be able to afford to retire at all (like my own children). Latinos who are struggling to give a leg up to the next generation, African-Americans in poor communities that have no grocery or drug stores, displaced auto workers who have been forced to leave homes and jobs that have been in their families for generations, PhDs who can't find a teaching job because of all the budget cuts. Would you not include these in your bellicose "class?" The rich get richer, and they want to get richer still. Without a strong middle class, no nation can survive long, at least not as a democracy with prosperity and civil rights for everyone. Hemingway was right when he said, "The rich are different from you and me." I've got nothing personal against Romney. I see him as an entitled little rich kid who's grown up to be a patriarchal, ruthless-in-business, rigid-in-religion individual who wears blue jeans when everyone else is in a suit because he believes it makes him look more "real." He is free to live his country club life, and more power to him. But to imagine for one minute that he has any inkling what it is like to be "ordinary" is fanciful. America has always been the land of "ordinary" people, who distrust kings, hierarchies, and great wealth. My assumption is that all those English folks who tour those great country estates that used to belong to the aristocracy would like, in their heart of hearts, to live like that too. When I tour the mansions in Newport (summer homes though they were), I am appalled by the excessive display of wealth enjoyed by the Robber Barons of an earlier age. Henry James left the U.S. for England because he felt America lacked a history, an aristocracy, and monumental architecture--what he called "culture." He was a snob, better suited to a continental sensibility. Nathaniel Hawthorne, who wrote about "ordinary people" is more quintessentially American, and he's the one who gets my vote--and my time.

Dale: My posting of the WSJ article is really kind of a cheap shot, which was more intended to interrupt the pace of Romney bashing. Is the information accurate? I think so, but is it all that relevant, probably not. Every administration will have embarrassing gaffs like this USDA incident and like the prostitution thing in Columbia. I don't think O deserves any more abuse for having these particular screw ups come to the surface during his watch, but I do hold him accountable for the significant deficiencies like not addressing the economy, manipulating the markets by favoring segments and specific companies and hypocritically pandering to his political self interests while bulk of the citizens suffer.

Pam: I wasn't able to see the whole article you posted (computer wouldn't cooperate), but I'm glad to see you don't blame Obama for the Secret Service snafu. But to blame him for all our economic woes is to ignore the facts. And what are the "segments" and "specific companies" you see him pandering to? Do you mean green energy advocates and solar-panel companies? Do you mean patients whose medical bills send them into bankruptcy (most bankruptcies of private citizens are related to overwhelming medical costs)? Do you mean teachers and policemen? Soldiers? If the "bulk of the citizens suffer," which I agree they do, you would do better to look to the Bush-Cheney years for reasons that to the past two years under Obama.

Dale: I DO blame him for what he didn't do and I think you should too.

Pam: I regret what Obama hasn't been able to accomplish, but it's not him I blame.

I suspect that if our dialogue goes any further, I'm going to have to start doing research and finding facts and figures, which I'm not much in the mood to do, preferring instead to rely on secondary sources I trust. But most people don't argue politics with a cadre of researchers at their backs; they argue like we do--from their hearts and possibly their minds. So, unless you can substantially undermine the basic ideas I've laid out, I remain unpersuaded by your "logic." Please. Feel free to respond.

p.s. A little taste of Marx (gasp!) might not be amiss here. His theory of history was based on dialectic:

thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Our country is mired in the thesis-antithesis stage, with potentially dreadful consequences. We will never live in a country where everyone, or even perhaps a majority, have everything the way they want it, but I would settle for an America that is "pretty good overall." You don't get there by going to extremes, despite what ol' Barry Goldwater said.

20120525-20	18:03	Art	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad"
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I couldn't find one fact in Dale's response. Somebody help me out.

20120525-05	11:41	SteveB	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Dale, above)
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Just one point, Dale. How can you blame President Obama for what your side says is impossible for government to do—"His administration still doesn't have a clue about how to create jobs and legitimately stimulate the economy."

Don't you agree with SteveBA that there has never been a good government program? What can government do if it can do nothing? You just can't have it both ways.

IF PRESIDENT OBAMA HAS DONE NOTHING, THEN HE SHOULD BE THE ULTIMATE HERO OF CONSERVATIVES!!!!
But I guess he wouldn't prove their cockeyed dogma, huh?

What have the Republicans (or the Democrats) let him do? Congress is a mess because they are bought and sold. Maybe the President is too, but I hope not. Romney? That guy would sell out his own mother for money, let alone me and you and our grandkids. Ain't it obvious?

You never mention our dysfunctional Congress, you only spout anti-Obama sentiment. Which is perfectly OK. It's because of all the birther and fake economic attacks, all the lies about President Obama and others (debunked in the FotM Newsletter) that I feel Romney is fair game. When have I hit below the belt? (As the Right does nearly all the time?) When is there lack of concern for whether a candidate has the character to lead us? I see all of this as legitimate fodder for research and discussion, though it is a subject that, frankly, Republicans don't seem very interested in.

Let me give you one example. Your side says President Obama is a socialist who is destroying the country. You seem to agree. You say spending and deficits are out of control. You say the government has gotten too big. You say "entitlements" (what an ugly lie of a word, it should be shot!) are bankrupting us. But the Republican wars aren't. Yet these are all lies from the Right-wing Puppet-Masters. It has recently been proven in our pages that Obama has done no such things as these lies nebulously portent. Government has seemingly become amazingly efficient under the big guy. LOL!

That is the truth, my friend.

Here it is in a nutshell: Republicans have it ALL their way! Taxes, especially on the rich are very low (a la Mitt). The wars are raging. Free trade is expanding. Interest rates are 0% or very near. Cheap labor floods across the border unchecked. Corporations are "people" with all the power of same and a lot more; they are able to buy elections, politicians, anything. The cross borders and manipulate markets and currencies with impunity and entirely selfish motives. It's a veritable Republican Utopia created by Reagan through Bush II.

AND YOU WANT GOVERNMENT TO SAVE AMERICA?

WHY HAVEN'T BUSINESSES AND CORPORATIONS CREATED THE JOBS? WHERE IS CAPITALISM IN THIS IDEAL ENVIRONMENT THEY CREATED FOR THEMSELVES?

I do not consider this a facetious question! I consider it a challenge. Your dogma is under attack!

It's just like the problem of the poor. If the rich don't need government's help to contribute to charity, then why haven't they solved the problem even WITH government's help? Where are all those charitable contributions that would be required? They will never show up, will they? Ya, they never did in the past either, even when the nation was being carved up and given away for free to the Robber barons. That's OK. That's human nature. That's why we need government intervention in so many things. Or maybe you prefer the Old West of the 19th Century, with Rush Limbaugh the local gunslinger?

Have a great weekend, all.

20120525-07	13:09	Pam	Re: From the Right: "Cocooned Liberals Are Unprepared for Political Debate" & Canadian Protests: Silence in the U.S. (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #146)
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I think Michael Barone makes a good point when he chides both left and right for shutting out the other side and sticking with their own kind. That is why FotM is so important. It tries to get solid arguments from all sides so we can form sound judgments. If we can't refute our opponents' reasonable arguments, then we're no better than they are. I support unions generally, for instance, but I concede that sometimes they exercise unnecessary, arbitrary control. People should have a choice about whether to join one or not. Factory workers undoubtedly need strong unions for their protection. I'm not so sure about teachers' unions. When I was a high school teacher back in the Dark Ages, I declined to join one. I wasn't prepared to go out on strike, if it came to that, so I felt disingenuous if I signed on. I'm not sure I'd make that same decision today, but my point is, sometimes the other side does have reasonable arguments. We should debate them on their merits, not because they get us all riled up. I get riled up plenty, but that's because I'm human. If I want to have a hope of being convincing, I know I need to be respectful, not irrationally outraged. Don't expect me to be perfect about this.

What really gets me is the protests in Canada. Whoo-hoo! What a travesty! I am appalled by the law forbidding public demonstrations, a clear infringement of free speech and freedom of association. I thought Canada was better than that.

Sometimes, I think our only difference might be our attitude toward immigration. I know it's a problem, but I figure, immigrants wouldn't come here if they didn't expect to find opportunity, which must mean there's a need for their labor. Who would pick our strawberries if not them? I also sympathize with people who are pushed to the wall. Of course, it's horrible when illegals get tax refunds and that sort of thing, but what we need there is, perhaps, a different method for admitting people. I don't know. It's complicated, and I don't live in Arizona, so I probably don't know what I'm talking about. What's your stance on legalizing marijuana? I've never smoked pot in my life, but I support legalization. We've got a practically failed state on our border, and that concerns me.

20120525-09	14:13	Dennis	"Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, or Corrupt?"
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Spilled tea...

"Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, or Corrupt?" by Don Hamel

May 22, 2012, (<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/05/22/patriots/>)

The Tea Party came into this world the same way a baby does; screaming and crying. Mainly they screamed and cried about the deficit, taxes and fiscal responsibility. It turns out, when it comes to spending, they're still babes in the woods. Their latest IRS filing shows the Tea Party Patriots took in more than \$12 million in fundraising, so how did only \$3.4 million of that go to their actual 'mission' programs?

Mother Jones obtained the Tea Party Patriots' full IRS filing:

https://www.motherjones.com/files/tpp_2010_form_990.pdf.

And it's an abject lesson in how fools and their money part. The most damning evidence is found on page 20, shown here:

SCHEDULE G
(Form 990 or 990-EZ)

Supplemental Information Regarding Fundraising or Gaming Activities

OMB No. 1545-0047

2010

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" to Form 990, Part IV, lines 17, 18, or 19,
or if the organization entered more than \$15,000 on Form 990-EZ, line 6a.
▶ Attach to Form 990 or Form 990-EZ. ▶ See separate instructions.

Open To Public Inspection

Name of the organization

Tea Party Patriots, Inc.

Employer identification number

27-0470227

Part I Fundraising Activities. Complete if the organization answered "Yes" to Form 990, Part IV, line 17. Form 990-EZ filers are not required to complete this part.

1 Indicate whether the organization raised funds through any of the following activities. Check all that apply.

- a Mail solicitations
- b Internet and email solicitations
- c Phone solicitations
- d In-person solicitations
- e Solicitation of non-government grants
- f Solicitation of government grants
- g Special fundraising events

2 a Did the organization have a written or oral agreement with any individual (including officers, directors, trustees or key employees listed in Form 990, Part VII) or entity in connection with professional fundraising services? Yes No

b If "Yes," list the ten highest paid individuals or entities (fundraisers) pursuant to agreements under which the fundraiser is to be compensated at least \$5,000 by the organization.

(i) Name and address of individual or entity (fundraiser)	(ii) Activity	(iii) Did fundraiser have custody or control of contributions?		(iv) Gross receipts from activity	(v) Amount paid to (or retained by) fundraiser listed in col. (i)	(vi) Amount paid to (or retained by) organization
		Yes	No			
MDS Communications - 545 W Juanita Ave, Mesa, AZ 85210	Telemarketing		X	680,581.	665,581.	15,000.
Capital Resource, Inc. - PO Box 257, Brooklyn, IA 52211	Telemarketing		X	195,300.	239,345.	<44,045.>
Case Consulting Service - 700 Miller Ave, Great Falls, VA	Solicitation		X	60,000.	60,000.	0.
Jody Thomas - 5434 Chieftain Ct, Alexandria, VA 22312	Solicitation		X	48,125.	48,125.	0.
The Richard Norman Company - 44084 Riverside Parkway,	Fundraising counsel		X	0.	1,450,512.	<1,450,512.>
Total				984,006.	2,463,563.	<1,479,557.>

3 List all states in which the organization is registered or licensed to solicit contributions or has been notified it is exempt from registration or licensing.

AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, KS, IL, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NH, NJ, NM, NY
NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, UT, VA, WA, WV, WI

Here you find MDS Communications, a telemarketing firm that took in on behalf of the TPP \$680,581.00 , a tidy sum. Sadly for the cause, they charged \$665,581 for their services, leaving the fiscally hawkish TPP, \$15k. Then there's the \$1.4 million that was given to the Richard Norman Company, for "fundraising counsel," a figure made more remarkable when you learn Richard Norman, is now TPP's national finance chair.

You'd think he could have given them a discount.

20120525-11	15:18	Art	Re: "Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, Or Corrupt?" (reply to Dennis, above)
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Crooked as they come. Surprise, surprise!

20120525-10	14:33	SteveB	"Obama Has to Explain Why Fairness Is Essential to Growth (And Why Some Democrats Have to Stop Believing Otherwise)"
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"Obama Has to Explain Why Fairness Is Essential to Growth (And Why Some Democrats Have to Stop Believing Otherwise)" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/obama-has-explain-why-fairness-essential-growth-and-why-some-democrats-have-stop-believing-otherwise>)

The Cory Booker imbrogio has ignited a silly but potentially pernicious debate in the Democratic Party between so-called "pro-growth centrists" who want the President to focus on how well he's done getting the economy back on its feet after the Bush administration almost knocked it out, and "pro-fairness populists" who want him to focus on the nation's widening inequality and Wall Street's (and Romney's) continuing role in generating profits for a few at the expense of almost everyone else.

According to the *National Journal's* Josh Kraushaar, for example:

Conversations with liberal activists and labor officials reveal an unmistakable hostility toward the pro-business, free-trade, free-market philosophy that was in vogue during the second half of the Clinton administration... Moderate Democratic groups and officials, meanwhile, privately fret about the party's leftward drift and the Obama campaign's embrace of an aggressively populist message... They wish the administration's focus was on growth over fairness.

This is pure bunk – or should be.

Fairness isn't inconsistent with growth; it's essential to it. The only way the economy can grow and create more jobs is if prosperity is more widely shared.

The key reason why the recovery is so anemic is so much income and wealth are now concentrated at the top is America's the vast middle class no longer has the purchasing power necessary to boost the economy.

The richest 1 percent of Americans save about half their incomes, while most of the rest of us save between 6 and 10 percent. That shouldn't be surprising. Being rich means you already have most of what you want and need. That second yacht isn't nearly as exciting as was the first.

It follows that when, as now, the top 1 percent rakes in more than 20 percent of total income — at least twice the share it had 30 years ago — there's insufficient demand for all the goods and services the economy is capable of producing at or near full employment. And without demand, the economy doesn't grow or generate nearly enough jobs.

Wall Street is part of the problem because it's responsible for so much of the concentration of income and wealth at the very top – and for much of the distress still felt in the rest of the economy after the Street nearly melted down in 2008.

The Street has turned a significant part of the economy into a giant casino involving mammoth bets with other peoples' money. When the bets go well, the rich owners of the casino (Wall Street executives, traders, hedge-fund managers, private-equity managers) become even richer. When the bets go sour, the rest of us bear the costs.

The casino also requires continuous transfers of wealth from ordinary taxpayers. Some are built into the tax code. One is the preference of debt over equity (interest on debt is tax deductible), which awards Wall Street banks like JPMorgan for risky lending and awards private-equity firms like Bain Capital for piling debt on the firms it buys.

Another is the "carried interest" rule that, absurdly, allows private-equity managers (like Mitt Romney) to treat their income as capital gains even when they haven't risked any of their money.

The biggest of all is the invisible guarantee that if the biggest banks get into trouble, taxpayers will bail them out. This subsidy reduces the big banks' cost of capital relative to other banks and fuels even more risky lending.

None of this is fair. It's also bad for economic growth and jobs – as we've so painfully witnessed.

Translated into presidential politics, all this means the President should be talking about fairness and growth ***and*** jobs, and explaining why we can't have the latter without the former.

It also means he should be attacking Mitt Romney because Romney is part of the system of casino capitalism that has harmed America and held back growth — and Romney wants even less regulation of Wall Street (he's vowed to repeal Dodd-Frank).

And because the budget Romney has put forth would gut public services vital to the middle class and poor, while cutting taxes on the rich and on corporations even more than they've already been cut.

In other words, Romney epitomizes the unfairness of the American economy in this new Gilded Age. For that same reason, Romney is the quintessence of an economic approach shown to be anti-growth and anti-jobs.

20120525-12 15:29 Dennis "My Break with the Extreme Right"
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"My Break with the Extreme Right" by Michael Fumento, Salon

May 24, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/writer/michael_fumento/)

(I worked for Reagan and wrote for National Review. But the new hysterical right cares nothing for truth or dignity.)

Gosh! When did I end up in bed with Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber? Could it be because I did specialize in blowing things up while serving my country for four years as an airborne combat engineer? I also watched human beings blown up. I had friends and Navy SEALs I was in battle with blown up. My own intestines exploded on the first of my four combat embeds, three in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. Took seven operations to fix the plumbing. I later suffered other permanent injuries.

Yet now I find myself linked not only with the Unabomber, but also Charles Manson and Fidel Castro. Or so says the Chicago-based think tank the Heartland Institute, for which I've done work. Heartland erected billboards depicting the above three declaring: "I still believe in Global Warming. Do you?" Climate scientists now, evidently, share something in common with dictators and mass murderers. Reportedly bin Laden was scheduled to make such an appearance, too.

You see, I've published articles saying I do "believe in global warming." Yes, I've also questioned the extent to which man-made gases have contributed to that warming and concluded that expenditures to reduce those emissions would be as worthless as they'd be horrifically expensive. No matter; just call me "Ted." Or "Charlie." Or "Fidel."

This is nuts! Literally. As in "mass hysteria." That's a phenomenon I wrote about for a quarter-century, from the heterosexual AIDS "epidemic" to the swine flu "pandemic" that killed vastly fewer people than seasonal flu, to "runaway Toyotas." Mass hysteria is when a large segment of society loses touch with reality, or goes bonkers, if

you will, on a given issue – like believing that an incredibly mild strain of flu could kill eight times as many Americans as normal seasonal flu. (It killed about a third as many.)

I was always way ahead of the curve. And my exposés primarily appeared in right-wing publications. Back when they were interested in serious research. I also founded a conservative college newspaper, held positions in the Reagan administration and at several conservative think tanks, and published five books that conservatives applauded. I've written for umpteen major conservative publications – *National Review*, the *Weekly Standard*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes*, among them.

But no longer. That was the old right. The last thing hysteria promoters want is calm, reasoned argument backed by facts. And I'm horrified that these people have co-opted the name "conservative" to scream their messages of hate and anger.

Extremism in the defense of nothing

Nothing the new right does is evidently outrageous enough to receive more than a peep of indignation from the new right. Heartland pulled its billboards because of funder withdrawals, not because any conservatives spoke up and said it had crossed a line.

Last month U.S. Rep. Allen West, a Florida Republican recently considered by some as vice-president material, insisted that there are "78 to 81" Democrats in Congress who are members of the Communist Party, again with little condemnation from the new right.

Mitt Romney took a question at a town hall meeting this month from a woman who insisted President Obama be "tried for treason," without challenging, demurring from or even commenting on her assertion.

And then there's the late Andrew Breitbart (assassinated on the orders of Obama, natch). A video from February shows him shrieking at peaceful protesters: "You're freaks and animals! Stop raping people! Stop raping people! You freaks! You filthy freaks! You filthy, filthy, filthy raping, murdering freaks!" He went on for a minute-and-a-half like that. Speak not ill of the dead? Sen. Ted Kennedy's body was barely cold when Breitbart labeled him "a big ass motherf@#\$er," a "duplicitous bastard" a "prick" and "a special pile of human excrement."

The new right loved it! Upon his own death shortly after, Breitbart was immediately sanctified and sent to lead the Seraphim. He was repeatedly eulogized as "the most important conservative of our time never to hold office," skipping right past William F. What's-his-name Jr.

There was nothing "conservative" about Breitbart. Ever-consummate gentlemen like Buckley and Ronald Reagan would have been mortified by such behavior as Breitbart's – or West's or Heartland's. "There you go again," the Gipper would have said in his soft but powerful voice.

Civility and respect for order – nay, demand for order – have always been tenets of conservatism. The most prominent work of history's most prominent conservative, Edmund Burke, was a reaction to the anger and hatred that swept France during the revolution. It would eventually rip the country apart and plunge all of Europe into decades of war. Such is the rotted fruit of mass-produced hate and rage. Burke, not incidentally, was a true Tea Party supporter, risking everything as a member of Parliament to support the rebellion in the United States.

All of today's right-wing darlings got there by mastering what Burke feared most: screaming "*J'accuse! J'accuse!*" Turning people against each other. Taking seeds of fear, anger and hatred and planting them to grow a new crop.

Conservatism has also historically emphasized empiricism. Joe Friday of "Dragnet" must have been a conservative: "All we want are the facts, Ma'am." When President Reagan famously said, "Facts are stupid things," he meant to quote President John Adams' observation that "Facts are stubborn things." But how much fact was there in Heartland's billboards, whose shock purpose has been likened to tactics of the hard-left animal activist group PETA, with whom I've repeatedly locked horns. Or in West's assertion? Or Breitbart's tirades? Rush Limbaugh compared Breitbart, who never wrote a single investigative report, to Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the dynamic duo who

brought down the thoroughly corrupt presidency of Richard Nixon. He actually said Breitbart's work was superior. Oh, dear!

I know these words coming from somebody identified with the right are heresy – as defined by this new right. And invited to a marshmallow roast with you as guest of honor. Or worse. It's to be labeled with the ultimate epithet: RINO. Republican in name only. GOP Sen. Scott Brown bears that mark of Cain. Coming from super-liberal Massachusetts, he only has a 74 percent American Conservative Union rating. There you go, then!

So there's an auto-da-fé out there right now with my name on it. Torquemada is holding the torch; the wieners and s'mores are flying off the shelves. Truth be known, though, I haven't considered myself a Republican since 1982. Why? That was the year of the massive Reagan tax hike. I figured that's what liberal Democrats are for. Tore up my donor card and never gave again. By being a conservative at that time, I was a RINO. By being one now, I'm also a RINO. A very curious animal, that.

The hate, anger and fear machine

A single author, Ann Coulter, has published best-selling books accusing liberals, in the titles, of being demonic, godless and treasonous. Michelle Malkin, ranked by the Internet search company PeekYou as having the most traffic of any political blogger, routinely dismisses them as "moonbats, morons and idiots." Limbaugh infamously dispatched a young woman who expressed her opinion that the government should provide free birth control as a "slut" and a "prostitute."

As a conservative, I disagree with the political opinions of liberals. But to me, a verbal assault indicates insecurity and weakness on the part of the assaulter, as in "Is that the best they can do?" This playground bullying – the name-calling, the screaming, the horrible accusations – all are intended to stifle debate, the very lifeblood of a democracy.

Meanwhile, these people who practice shutting down the opposition through shouts and smears accuse President Obama of having dictatorial dreams? A recent email I received, based on accusations from umpteen right-wing groups, blared in caps-lock fury: "BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA HAS SIGNED A MARTIAL LAW EXECUTIVE ORDER!" This specific message, from a group calling itself RightMarch.org, goes on: "THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! BARACK OBAMA IS TRYING TO VIOLATE THE CONSTITUTION, BECOME A DICTATOR, AND TAKE AWAY OUR RIGHTS!"

Outrageous, indeed. Obama's order updated a National Defense Resource Preparedness act, which was essentially identical to one signed 19 years earlier and actually originated in 1950. It granted no authority to Obama that he did not already have under existing laws.

President Obama is regularly referred to as a Marxist/Socialist, Nazi, tyrant, Muslim terrorist supporter and – let me look this up, but I'll bet probably the antichrist, too. Yup, there it is! Over 5 million Google references. There should be a contest to see if there's anything for which Obama hasn't been accused. Athlete's foot? The "killer bees"? Maybe. In any case, the very people who coined and promoted such terms as "Bush Derangement Syndrome, Cheney Derangement Syndrome and Palin Derangement Syndrome" have been promoting hysterical attitudes toward Obama since before he was even sworn in.

No, I'm not cherry-picking. When I say "regularly referred to," interpret literally. Polls show that about half of voting Republican buy into the birther nonsense (one of the more prominent hysterias within the hysteria). Only about a fourth seem truly sure that Obama was actually born here. In her nationally syndicated column Michelle Malkin wrote regarding Limbaugh's slut remarks, that "I'm sorry the civility police now have an opening to demonize the entire right based on one radio comment." In a stroke she's expressed her disdain for civility and declared the new right's sins can be dispatched as an itchy-bitsy little single faux pas, "one radio comment."

No, Michelle, incivility – nay, outright meanness and puerility – rears its ugly head daily on your blog, which as I write this on May 23 has one item referring in the headline to "Pig Maher's boy [Bill Maher]" and another to "Jaczko the Jerk," [former U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Gregory Jaczko]. She calls Limbaugh target Sandra Fluke a "femme-agogue" and her supporters "[George] Soros monkeys." Pigs? Monkeys? Moonbats? It's literal dehumanization.

Sure, there are enough hate-and-anger mongers on the left to go around. Among the worst was Keith Olbermann, who once called Malkin a "mashed up bag of meat with lipstick on it." Very edifying, Keith! But as the Christian Science Monitor reported, his ratings recently collapsed from an average of 354,000 viewers a night when he debuted on Current TV, to 58,000 viewers by the first quarter of 2012. He was recently fired. Again. Air America was intended to counter right-wing talk radio, especially Rush Limbaugh. I was on Al Franken's show while he made fun of a soldier from my first battle who is now permanently paralyzed. Touché, Al! But Air America also failed.

Malkin, who revels in playing the victim, says that she's been called all sorts of horrible things, many based on her Filipina heritage. But most of what she cites come from email or anonymous comments on blog sites. It wasn't usually from paid professionals with large audiences, like her, aimed at paid professionals like her. It's thus hard to compare with the host of the most popular talk show host in history taking shots at an unknown 22-year-old woman. (She's hardly that now; Limbaugh himself promoted her to a national spokeswoman.)

Incivility is hardly the domain of the new right. American society grows ever coarser. But this is cold comfort. Conservative ideology demands civility of conservatives; demands, yes, self-policing. Let others act as they will, bearing evidence of the shallowness of their positions. It also demands respect for official offices, such as the presidency. When our guy is in office, you give him that modicum of respect – and when your guy is in office, we do the same. The other party is to be referred to as "the loyal opposition," not with words the FCC forbids on the air.

Muckraking becometh buckraking

In the grief-fest at Breitbart's death, forgiven (and indeed practically forgotten) was his crucial role in building the single most popular liberal website, the Huffington Post. Some of Breitbart's friends admitted he was absent of ideology. "I don't recall Andrew Breitbart ever mentioning electoral politics," wrote Tucker Carlson. "It bored him." Breitbart's inspiration, then? George Washington through Benjamin Franklin – printed in primarily green ink on cotton stock.

Limbaugh pulls down a stunning \$38 million annual salary. Leaked Heartland Institute documents revealed it's gotten over \$14 million in the past six years from a single individual. RightMarch.com accompanied the Obama-cum-tyrant message with an offer to "Blast Fax" every member of Congress for \$139 – for a profit of about \$139. Surely these people have their fingers crossed that President Obama is reelected.

I personally know a lot of the leaders of this new rabid right. Most are very nice on a personal basis. Honestly, you'd be shocked. Unlike Breitbart, some began as real conservatives. One called me her mentor in her first book and attended my wedding. Many once sang my praises. Again, unlike Breitbart, Malkin was once a true investigative reporter. You can still see elements of actual research in Ann Coulter's work, too.

But when times changed, and it became profitable to move from honorable advocacy to shrill name-calling, they changed too. They cashed in their reputations, as well as their ideology, for lucre. Those who didn't – because conservatism runs against screaming, extremism and sensationalism – began disappearing from the talk shows, magazines and store shelves. They were replaced by pod people.

Conservatism, R.I.P.

You cannot be identified by what you oppose, only by what you stand for. But this curious creature's main claim to the title of "conservative" is that it hates liberals – as do liberals and lots of others on many points of the political spectrum. Obama is routinely bashed in such places as the Nation. The right-wing Nation?

Indeed in any violent anti-democratic revolution – Jacobite, Bolshevik, National Socialist – the first goal is to eliminate the real competition, those with ideals. The guys who really believed in liberty, fraternity and equality or rule by the proletariat were identified, isolated and eliminated early on to leave only two extremes to choose from. "It's us or the Bourbons! It's us or the Romanovs!" In Germany, the conservatives and liberals were dispatched to the labor camps before the Nazis felt safe to send the Jews to the death camps.

The new right cannot advance a conservative agenda precisely because, other than a few small holdouts like the *American Conservative* magazine or that battleship that refuses to become a museum, George Will, it is not itself conservative. Pod people are running the show. It has no such capability; no such desire. I find that disturbing for obvious reasons. But, based on my own conversations with liberals, I think – nay, I know – that if more of these allegedly godless, treasonous people understood real conservatism a lot would embrace many conservative positions.

Thus everybody realizes government spending has lost its airbrakes. But while the new right screams the most about big government, it nonetheless supported President George W. Bush as he presided over the largest expansion of government spending since uber-liberal FDR and left us with a massive debt before President Obama was sworn in. Why? Silly rabbit! Because the left opposed him.

The same has been said for the right's otherwise seemingly unfathomable enchantment with Sarah Palin; it's a defense of their damsel in distress. The veracity of the left's claims about her are irrelevant. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Or so thought that uber-liberal FDR about good ol' "Uncle Joe" right to the end, even as conservative Winston Churchill tried desperately to convince him otherwise. And so fell the Iron Curtain.

Eating its own

Obsessed with attacking, the new right will carpet-bomb positions of the old right if the left comes around to it.

Thus the right has traditionally opposed government subsidies. My first cover story was in Buckley's *National Review*, arguing against ethanol subsidies that ultimately grew to \$6 billion annually. But when the Senate sought to repeal the subsidy last year, right-wing guru and Jack Abramoff henchman Grover Norquist fought it – with the stunning argument that cutting a government subsidy is actually a tax hike in disguise!

And how ironic that for decades liberals unfairly accused conservatives of "McCarthyism" to shut down debate. (Oh, how I remember!) Yet now the right countenances a prominent congressman who has literally outdone "Tailgunner Joe."

McCarthy's infamous list comprised only 57 Communists who were merely State Department employees, not "78 to 81" of the nation's top elected officials.

Pity the poor *Onion*; there's nothing left to satirize.

Gridlock

Apart from gaining fame and fortune for a select few, all the new right is accomplishing is turning Bismarck's words upside down, making politics the art of the impossible. It demonizes the opposition even as it brutally enforces "team loyalty." So nothing gets done, and bad trends just get worse.

Drastic action is required now, nay yesterday, to start bringing expenditures in line with income. About half our government spending is fueled by borrowing, and that spending accounts for a fourth of GDP. Without borrowing, then, our GDP would drop 12 percent or more – well into depression range.

Entitlement spending, that which requires no new legislation, is en route to consuming all tax revenue.

Excluding the very top earners, household incomes have been declining for a decade.

The real employment level has been trending downward since the mid-1980s. Unemployment for a year or more, the kind that just sucks the heart and soul out of people, is about double what it was in late 2009 – and yet in the 1960s it was essentially nonexistent.

Income inequality is the highest since before the Great Depression, understandably fostering resentment. For many, the American dream became a nightmare long ago. It's little wonder that Americans are afraid and angry.

One member of the new right seemed to acknowledge that reckless character assassination was merely stalemating the system. "Let's come back to the issues," he told NPR in an interview last year. "Let's come back to talking about how do we set the conditions here in Washington, D.C., for long-term sustainable economic and job growth." Unfortunately, that was congressman Allen West.

The right didn't create this reservoir of fear, anger and hate. But it has both tapped into it and roiled it. Indeed, the right-wing mass hysteria is what sociologists call a "moral panic." It occurs when a society is undergoing a wrenching transformation. Somebody then comes along and creates a "folk devil" both to provide an explanation for bad conditions, real or imagined, and a target. Kill the devil; eliminate the bad conditions. But the right has no serious incentive to help solve or ameliorate these problems. Indeed, as with the reelection of Obama, it will benefit from their continuation or worsening.

So animosity has now reached levels both hysterical and historical. The last time anything like this occurred was during World War II, when at least it was aimed outward. Before that? Just before the Civil War.

Back then a tall bearded Republican declared, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Just another one of those idiot, moron, "duplicitous bastard" RINOs.

(Michael Fumento is an attorney, author, journalist and former paratrooper who has written for *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, *Commentary*, *The American Spectator*, *Human Events*, *Forbes*, *Forbes.com*, *Reason*, *Policy Review*, *The Spectator* (London), *The Sunday Times of London*, *The Wall Street Journal* op-ed page and many other publications. His web site is www.fumento.com.)

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[20120525-17](#) 15:47 Pam Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)

Thanks, Dennis. This is wonderful. I knew there was a sensible conservative out there somewhere.

[20120525-23](#) 18:26 Art Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)

This a bit long but worth a read and a moment of thought. For me, this pretty much describes exactly what I have gone through in my thought process.

[20120525-24](#) 18:58 Beth Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)

That is actually thought provoking and thoughtful.

[20120525-13](#) 15:32 Dennis Fw: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (from Alan Grayson)

Here's one that has always baffled me. Don't Republicans know how to invest?

from Alan Grayson:

If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart?

A few weeks ago, it was reported that some right-wing rich guys' club had pledged \$100 million to defeat President Obama. The Koch Brothers led the way, pledging \$60 mil. Which is pocket change, when your net worth is \$50,000,000,000.00.

Leaving aside the obvious issue – the estate tax – I'm puzzled as to why all those right-wing rich folks feel that way. The foundation of their wealth – the stock market – has performed vastly better when Democrats have been in charge.

In 2008, the New York Times reported that since 1929, \$10,000 invested in the stock market under Democratic Presidents (over 40 years) had become \$300,671. Meanwhile, \$10,000 invested in the stock market under Republican Presidents (over 35 years) had become only \$11,733.

Well, at least the affluent caste didn't lose money during Republican regimes, right? Wrong. The value of the dollar dropped by 92% during that period. So in real value, \$10,000 invested in the stock market under Republican Presidents actually became just \$955. And forty-six cents. In economic terms, roughly the same effect as some foreign enemy blowing up 90% of our factories, warehouses, farms, malls, office buildings, apartment buildings, and every other productive asset.

Poor rich people. All the money gone. Those darned Republicans.

And under President Obama, the difference actually has increased, dramatically. On the day that President Obama was sworn into office, the S&P 500 index closed at 805. Today, it's at 1321. Under President Obama, the stock market is up 64%, in less than four years.

That brings the Democratic average annual stock market performance up to 10%. The Republican figure is 0.4%. No wonder Republicans hate government – they're so bad at it. Particularly when it comes preserving national wealth.

And despite the incessant whining of the corporate rich, by no stretch of the imagination are they suffering under the Obama Administration. Just today, it was reported that pay for CEOs has reached an all-time high, just short of \$10 million a year. Or roughly \$5,000 an hour. Good work, if you can get it.

So why are all these right-wing deep pockets going after Obama and the Democrats? Even if you're some selfish rich guy, that's just dumb. That's cutting your wallet to spite your pants. Maybe the rich need to develop a little class consciousness.

Honestly, when you look at the facts, these robber barons spending huge wads of cash to get rid of the Democrats are like lemmings. They're all jumping off the money cliff, and they're taking everyone else with them.

Most of us have heard the question, "If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?" But a better question would be, "If you're so rich, why aren't you smart?"

[https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/graysonforcongress?refcode=nationalMay25&amount=\\$50](https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/graysonforcongress?refcode=nationalMay25&amount=$50)

Courage, Alan Grayson

20120525-14 15:35 Pam Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis, above)

Yaaay, Dennis. I adore Alan Grayson.

[Plus he's got the greatest chin in the business. Jay Leno has got nothin' on him! –SteveB]

20120525-15 15:36 Art Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis, above)

You know you may really have something here. More and more the discussion seems to clearly indicate the a healthy vibrant middle class buys more, spends more money and therefore makes companies profitable. Under

Democratic leadership we have policies that encourage and benefit the middle class and the result is a better business environment that results in these nice increases for the owners of business, the rich.

Yet still they whine. I have watched with interest the IPO release of Facebook stock. I looked at it and decided it was not a great buy. Advertisement on Facebook only nets about a 5% return and many companies don't consider it worth the investment. In time it may come back but the stock value is now below the initial IPO offer and already the rich investors are screaming their heads off, crying foul and suing. What I don't get is how come a simple foot soldier like me was able to read all this stuff and make a decision but these bozos apparently were not. Even when they make a bad decision the paragons of free enterprise apparently can't wait to ask the government and courts to bail them out.

My disgust level rises.

[20120525-16](#) 15:41 Dennis Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Art, above)

from Art:

I have watched with interest the IPO release of Facebook stock. I looked at it and decided it was not a great buy.

All my investment letter gurus said to pass it up. Per today's *NY Times* the stock is estimated to be worth only \$7.50 per share. Anyone who bought it was "zucked," or should that be "zuckered?"

[20120525-18](#) 15:56 Pam Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis & Art, above)

I know very little about investing, but in this area I am definitely a conservative. I'd rather be sure of keeping a little rather than risking everything for a lot. I understand that investment drives business, the economy, innovation, lots of good things, but when buying stock becomes for the small investor akin to playing the lottery, I begin to wonder. I always thought a sound investment meant putting your money into a business you believe in, that has a likelihood of sustained growth, that will result in modest returns, not overnight riches. I know investing is a lot like gambling, but, as in 1929, a lot of folks are losing their shirts on enterprises that "cannot fail." Recklessness is encouraged, and risk is ignored. It seems crazy to me.

[20120525-21](#) 18:10 Art Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to all, above)

Just in case we missed the point, what I find outrageous is the day following the IPO dozens of these investor bozos come out of the woodwork suing because they lost money. So the great independents who stand foursquare for freedom and independence (you know they are all Romney supporters) need the government and the courts to protect them from their own stupidity.

[20120526-03](#) 08:23 Pam Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to all, above)

Yeah. I thought there was something in the fine print about "invest at your own risk."

[20120525-22](#) 18:18 Art "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election"

Might want to send this one to brother Dale. Plenty of specifics in here. Note Wisconsin has the highest job loss in the nation. Following Dale's logic, I think he would have to agree, time for Walker to hit the road.

"18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" by Stephen D. Foster Jr., Addicting Info

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/05/25/walker/>)

There is an extremely pivotal statewide election coming up on June 5, 2012 in Wisconsin. After turning in nearly one million signatures, the people of Wisconsin have a chance to end Governor Scott Walker's oppressive regime and replace him with someone more attuned to the needs of Wisconsinites. More than likely, there are voters in Wisconsin who are undecided, but if they need to be convinced to vote against Scott Walker in June, here are 18 reasons why Walker should be kicked out of office in shame.

1. Repeal of Equal Pay for Women

In April, Scott Walker signed SB 202, which effectively repealed an equal pay law that has protected women from pay discrimination since 2009. For three years, women had the ability to take legal action against their employer at any time it was discovered that they were being paid less than a male colleague for doing the same work. The repeal of this law is just a piece of the Republican war on women and gives employers the freedom to pay women less money, weakening women's ability to have purchasing power in the economy.

2. Anti-Abortion Laws

Speaking of the war on women, three days after repealing the equal pay law, Scott Walker signed three anti-abortion bills into law. One bill bans insurance policies offered through the state health insurance exchange program of the Affordable Care Act from including abortion coverage, which could also ban coverage of some contraceptives.

Another bill signed by Walker basically repeals a law requiring educators to teach about contraception as a birth control method. The new law allows teachers to not discuss contraception at all and forces teachers to promote abstinence as the ONLY way to prevent disease and pregnancy.

The third bill forces women to be alone in the doctor's office when seeking an abortion so that the doctor can interrogate her about why she wants an abortion. Scott Walker is certainly not an ally of women's health.

3. Relationship with Koch Brothers

It was a prank phone call that revealed a lot about Scott Walker and his allegiance to Koch Industries. When a David Koch impersonator called to congratulate Scott Walker on his 2010 Election victory, he was immediately connected directly to the new Governor with little to no investigation. The caller of course was revealed to be a fake, but just the fact that Walker rushed to talk to the billionaire right-winger showed who was important to him. Since that day two years ago, Walker has worked hard to turn Wisconsin into the national testing ground of the Koch agenda. Working closely with Koch funded group Americans for Prosperity, Walker has gutted Wisconsin's labor unions, killing collective bargaining, and supporting bills that kill environmental legislation. The Kochs have poured millions of dollars into Wisconsin to keep Walker from being recalled. All of this should be worrying to any voter in Wisconsin, because if any politician in America is a puppet of the Koch brothers, it's Scott Walker.

4. Wisconsin's Terrible Jobs Record

Dead last. That defines Walker's record on jobs. In his second year as Governor, Wisconsin lost over 20,000 jobs. That's way worse than the second worst jobs record in the nation: Rhode Island with only 4,000 jobs lost. And no one can really say there is any bias in those numbers either because Wisconsin's neighboring states of Iowa and Michigan, both Republican controlled, have job gains. That's embarrassing for Walker, considering he touted his policies as being a blueprint for job creation.

5. Union Busting

Walker's tenure as Governor will forever be marked by his decision to mercilessly attack labor unions and collective bargaining. Following the commands of his Koch donors, Walker signed a bill in March 2011 that ended most union rights in the state of Wisconsin, including the right to collectively bargain for pay and benefits. Walker said the law would grow popular over time, but what it actually did is get him recalled, which is why an election is taking place in June. Under the law, police, firefighters, teachers, nurses, and many other public employees will no longer get to negotiate their pay. Ending collective bargaining changed nothing in the budget but Walker gleefully threw these workers under the bus to please the Kochs. But he also did it to purposefully divide the people of Wisconsin. In a damning caught on tape moment, Walker described to big campaign donor Diane Hendricks how he was going to turn Wisconsin into a 'right to work for less' state. His plan? Divide and conquer:

Well, we're going to start in a couple weeks with our budget adjustment bill. The first step is we're going to deal with collective bargaining for all public employee unions, because you use divide and conquer.

This quote alone should infuriate the people of Wisconsin enough to want to end Walker's career.

6. Killed High Speed Rail Funding

Upon winning election in 2010, Scott Walker vowed to kill high speed rail funding. And he did exactly that. Walker gave back over \$800 million in federal assistance to build a high-speed train between Milwaukee and Madison, which cost the people of Wisconsin thousands of jobs. The high speed rail would not only have created thousands of jobs, it would have created a greener mass transit system that would have helped alleviate America's dependence on oil, and would have helped America catch up to the rest of the developed world. Europe and Asia have invested heavily in high speed rail, which makes transportation much faster and cheaper across land. The people had a chance to help get America moving again, but Scott Walker took away the money and the jobs that would have made it possible.

7. Signed the Grover Norquist Taxpayer Protection Pledge Against Raising Taxes

Republicans hate taxes. Most Republicans in the US House and Senate are beholden to one man in Washington who isn't even an elected official. Grover Norquist has this anti-tax pledge that he gets Republicans to sign, forcing them to promise that they won't raise taxes under any circumstance, even if the fiscal health of the nation is at stake. This pledge has prevented a compromise that would both cut spending and raise taxes on the wealthy to deal with the national debt. Governors are not immune from this pledge. They sign it as well. And Scott Walker signed it too.

Walker has remained true to his allegiance to the non-Wisconsinite Norquist, signing tax cuts into law that benefit corporations and the wealthy while cutting everything from health care to education. Walker touted the tax cuts as being great for business and jobs, but the only thing Walker has gotten from the massive cuts is the worst jobs record in the nation.

8. Chris Christie Backs Him

Only a bully would endorse another bully, and since Chris Christie has endorsed Scott Walker and supports everything he has done to the people of Wisconsin, I'd say Walker's connection to the bully-in-chief of New Jersey is also a good reason to kick Scott Walker to the curb.

Christie has bullied everyone from teachers, to police officers, to firefighters, and nurses, the very same groups of people Scott Walker has targeted since taking office. So it's really no surprise that Christie is campaigning for Walker in this recall election. I'm just wondering how many people in Wisconsin Christie will threaten to secure his fellow bully's political survival.

9. Voter Suppression Laws

Wisconsin's new GOP backed voter suppression laws won't be in effect during this recall. A judge made sure of that. But the laws could be in play during every election thereafter, which is a threat to democracy and the right to vote. If higher conservative courts rule the measure constitutional, the voter ID law will require every person of voting age in Wisconsin to show an ID at the polls before proceeding to vote. Those without IDs don't get to vote, even if you're a registered voter. Among the groups most affected by this law include college students, women, senior citizens, and minorities. Thousands of people in Wisconsin live on a fixed low income and therefore may not be able to afford to get a state issued ID. The law also restricts voter registration by requiring those who register other voters to have a license to do so. In other words, Walker wants to charge American citizens money for democracy. If Walker isn't defeated in June, the people of Wisconsin should prepare to have their right to vote further restricted to the benefit of Republicans.

10. Over Half of Campaign Cash Is from Out-of-State Sources

Money in politics has become a real problem and nowhere is this more evident than in Wisconsin, where Scott Walker has taken in millions of dollars from the Koch brothers and Americans for Prosperity among other outside sources. Because of this out-of-state money and a law that gives a recalled governor the ability to take in unlimited amounts of cash to defeat their opponent and limits the money raising ability of the opponent, Walker has been able to raise and spend \$21 million to the Democrat's \$2 million as of May 2012. Two-thirds of Walker's campaign cash has come from donors outside of Wisconsin.

Because of this outside money, the people of Wisconsin can't really be certain that their governor is beholden to them or the outside entities who are basically buying the election for Walker. That should any citizen in Wisconsin, since it is clear that outside forces want Wisconsin under their thumb.

11. Mitt Romney Endorses Him

Mitt Romney is the presumed Republican Presidential nominee, and he too supports Scott Walker. This alone is a huge red flag since Romney has called for a budget that gut Medicare, Social Security, veteran's care, food stamps, Medicaid, education, infrastructure and just about any and every program that benefits American citizens. That kind of budget will most certainly affect Wisconsin, which has already been gutted by Scott Walker. The last thing Wisconsinites need is a Governor and President who will work together to burn the state down. Besides, Romney supports Scott Walker's agenda and that agenda can only get worse if both are in office at the same time.

12. Veterans Funds Scandal

During his time as Milwaukee County Executive and his run for the governorship, Scott Walker's aides were stealing money out of a Veterans fund that is supposed to be used to help the families of fallen soldiers who were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq and to help care for wounded vets and their families. Tens of thousands of dollars were stolen and used for personal expenses such as trips to Hawaii. So in addition to being a corrupt governor, Scott Walker surrounds himself with corrupt people. If there is one thing Walker and other Republicans like to trumpet about, it's the troops. But apparently, the troops don't matter much when money can be made.

13. Gutted Public Education Funding to Pay for Tax Breaks for Corporations

How are people in Wisconsin supposed to compete for jobs if they can't get a top notch education? That's a question Scott Walker failed to ask when he slashed aid to public schools by almost \$800 million to fund his tax cuts for the rich and corporations. It was by far the largest reduction in Wisconsin history and the second biggest cut to education in the country. Walker says he wants to bring jobs into the state by enticing businesses with tax relief, but what kind of business would want to hire people who don't have a decent education? And that's exactly the point. To compete in today's global economy, education is the key to getting a job. But that kind of logic is apparently lost on Walker who has been waging war on teachers and students since taking office. Teachers have been laid off, students are being forced to learn in bigger

classes sizes, and money is so tight that many programs such as art and music have had to be scrapped to save cash. That significantly harms the overall education of our kids. Education cuts do not create jobs, cuts only take away the tools that help create jobs.

14. War Against the Environment

Wisconsin has always been a caretaker of the environment. In fact, Wisconsin boasts of some of the most beautiful waterways and scenery in the country. It's a paradise for people who love the great outdoors. From hunters to fisherman to hikers and campers, people in Wisconsin love nature. But Scott Walker doesn't.

During his time as Governor, Walker has weakened environmental standards for water and mining and is trying to sell public lands to the highest bidders. He has also made deep cuts to energy conservation programs and eliminated energy independence efforts.

According to the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, Walker has waged war against recycling, wind power, Wisconsin's wetlands and rivers, and regulations that prevent pollution.

When Walker tried to kill a popular recycling program in Wisconsin, even the Republican controlled legislature refused to go along with the plan. Walker's plan to eliminate the recycling program would have cost Wisconsin 97,000 jobs and over \$5.4 billion in economic activity. Companies across the state that depend on recycled materials like landscaping firms, electronics recyclers, plastic and paper mills, and metal producers would have been forced to close their doors and lay off employees."

Walker also cost the state thousands of jobs by being hostile towards wind energy companies who wanted to bring wind power to Wisconsin. The companies felt Walker was so hostile that they refused to bring their business and jobs into the state. The wind development was two years in the making before Walker killed it.

Walker also tried to make it easier for corporations and developers to destroy wetlands by attempting to weaken regulations that protect the fragile and extremely important environment. He also made an attempt to weaken anti-pollution rules and is still lax on punishing those who violate pollution laws.

Clearly, Walker is no friend of the environment and the WLCV has a well documented record of this. Wisconsin simply would not be the same without it's environment.

15. Opposes [Affordable] Health Care

Walker has voiced his opposition to the Affordable Care Act, which prevents insurance companies from discriminating against people with pre-existing conditions, allows kids to stay on their parent's insurance until the age of 26, and covers 30 million Americans who don't have insurance.

As Governor, Walker has eliminated funding for women's health programs that provide preventive care for over 50,000 women a year. That means less money for things like breast cancer screenings and other services. Walker has also proposed kicking 65,000 people, including nearly 30,000 children, off of BadgerCare, a popular program paid for by Medicaid and created by a former Republican governor.

Scott Walker doesn't care about the health of people in Wisconsin. He only cares about how many lives he can destroy before he exits office.

16. Supports Arizona Immigration Law

Arizona's SB 1070 is by far the most discriminatory and restrictive anti-immigration law in the nation. It allows police to question anyone who they think might not be an American citizen. So Americans living in Arizona now have to carry identifying documents that prove they are citizens. The law especially affects minority populations since police are less likely to ask white people for their papers. Scott Walker supports this law and wants a similar law like it in Wisconsin, which would likely be as bad for business there as the law is in Arizona.

"I am disappointed by the federal judge's ruling to block Arizona's right to enforce the rule of law without interference from the federal government. As governor, I will sign similar legislation to the Arizona Law to ensure the taxpayers of Wisconsin are not paying for benefits like Badger Care and in state college tuition for people who are here illegally."

Do the people of Wisconsin really want a governor who supports legal discrimination?

17. Tax Breaks for the Rich and Corporations

While demanding sacrifices from the workers of Wisconsin, Walker was busy handing tax breaks to the rich and corporations.

Walker signed "tax breaks and new loopholes for the wealthy and big corporations that cost over \$200 million in this budget and a staggering \$2.3 billion over the next ten years," and "actually increased taxes on working families by \$56 million by cutting the Earned Income Tax Credit."

These tax gifts "will reduce taxes by 95% for some of the state's largest corporations and his biggest campaign donors. Because of Walker's actions, many middle income Wisconsin families will pay a tax rate more than 10 times higher than that paid by some of the state's largest and most profitable companies."

18. Relationship with ALEC

Scott Walker was an active member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) when he was a Wisconsin state legislator in the years from 1993-2002, even listing his ALEC membership in his Wisconsin Blue Book profile.

ALEC is a Koch Industries backed pay for play conservative organization that gives corporate leaders the chance to write model legislation for state legislators to introduce across the country. ALEC has pushed everything from tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy, to ending environmental regulations, to voter suppression laws, to Stand Your Ground laws such as the one in Florida that led to the killing of Trayvon Martin. Scott Walker has pushed much of the same kinds of legislation as you have already read. He's also pushed other ALEC bills.

As a young legislator in the 1990s, Walker worked with then Wisconsin Republican Governor Tommy Thompson in a successful effort to pass ALEC's Truth in Sentencing bill. The bill benefited the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), which housed overflow Wisconsin inmates out of state for many years. CCA is a private prison corporation that profits off of imprisoning people. As a result, their business is to make sure as many people as possible are incarcerated, which could pressure and has pressured the justice system to send more people to prison, even if they are innocent.

Scott Walker should be thrown out of office by the people of Wisconsin. Based on Walker's record, it would be foolish for Wisconsinites not to do so, especially when they are already so close to getting their state back. The result of this recall election will be felt for many years to come. Wisconsin can either be the state that fires the first shot against the dangerous Republican agenda that is sweeping the country like a plague, or they can keep Walker in office and encourage Republicans to keep destroying America without consequence. The people of Wisconsin have been on the front lines fighting against this destructive agenda longer than anyone else. A Walker victory on June 5th would be devastating to Wisconsin and the nation. Scott Walker stands against everything that the American people support, jobs, education, health care, the environment, clean energy, women's rights, civil rights, our veterans, etc... This election is going to help decide whether or not America still has a soul. The people of Wisconsin need to be ready to cast their votes while they still can.

20120526-04

08:31

Pam

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)

Dale should be forced to read this, then take a quiz on it to be sure he absorbed everything. If Wisconsinites allow themselves to be bought by Koch et. al., they are beyond belief. I always thought Wisconsin was a liberal state. How did this bozo ever get elected?

[20120526-08](#)

17:52 Art

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (to Dale)

Hi Dale, Following your logic on President Obama, is it time for Walker to go?

4. Wisconsin's Terrible Jobs Record

Dead last. That defines Walker's record on jobs. In his second year as Governor, Wisconsin lost over 20,000 jobs. That's way worse than the second worst jobs record in the nation: Rhode Island with only 4,000 jobs lost. And no one can really say there is any bias in those numbers either because Wisconsin's neighboring states of Iowa and Michigan, both Republican controlled, have job gains. That's embarrassing for Walker, considering he touted his policies as being a blueprint for job creation.

[20120526-09](#)

18:26 Dale

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)

I think the fundamentals are the same. When Walker has completed his term, if he hadn't performed well enough he should not be reelected. Perhaps all the facts should be cited. Teachers didn't lose their jobs, like they would have because of the massive debt from Democrat Govs and union leader cronyism. Taxes didn't go up. Workers have a choice whether they join an expensive and abusive union. The vast majority of the citizens of the state are not carrying the few public workers load to such a great degree. Now there is a start to balancing the distribution of health expenses. Walker's stance on many public law enforcement matters has resulted in firefighters and police union endorsement. Now how about all the money wasted on a midterm recall by union leaders who have been thrown off the gravy train? Millions of dollars wasted. In the private sector they might be liable for nuisance law suits but in the public sector, read government, the waste just keeps rolling along.

[20120526-13](#)

23:54 Dale

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Pam & Art, above) & "Employment Debate Requires Closer Look"

I appreciate your interest, Pam, but you are woefully uninformed and over influenced by Art's post. I have a residence in Milwaukee and have lived there at least part time since 1978. We raised two children there and participated in PTA's etc. The Village I live in is slightly biased Conservatively, but only about 55/45.

The article, below, is from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the primary newspaper in Southeast Wisconsin ("Employment Debate Requires Closer Look").

It is a coincidence that one of the writers, Rick Rommell, is a friend I've played basketball with over the last 20 years. I like the balance of the writing. I happen to know his political leaning, but I don't think it shows up at all. It's odd he was asked to write on this subject, since he is in the Business dept. of the paper.

While this piece only addresses the job growth section, Art's clip and paste "party line" talking points are not facts.....they are opinions dished out from an ideology. I think you share many of the same positions, so I'm not surprised you liked what he put out there. I come from a different perspective, so while I agree with the topic statement, I draw a different conclusion about whether it is a good thing or a bad thing.

For instance {from Art's article}...

"Anti-Abortion Laws: Speaking of the war on women, three days after repealing the equal pay law, Scott Walker signed three anti-abortion bills into law. One bill bans insurance policies offered through the state health insurance exchange program of the Affordable Care Act from including abortion coverage, which could also ban coverage of some contraceptives."

Cute labels -- this "anti-abortion" and a war on women. Slick political positioning but not correct. It is "anti forced funding" for abortions and contraceptives. You don't like it. That's ok, you can have your opinion. Wisconsin voters don't agree.

"Since that day two years ago, Walker has worked hard to turn Wisconsin into the national testing ground of the Koch agenda. Working closely with Koch funded group Americans for Prosperity, Walker has gutted Wisconsin's labor unions, killing collective bargaining, and supporting bills that kill environmental legislation. The Kochs have poured millions of dollars into Wisconsin to keep Walker from being recalled. All of this should be worrying to any voter in Wisconsin, because if any politician in America is a puppet of the Koch brothers, it's Scott Walker."

You and Art don't like Koch's political agenda...that's your opinion. Believe me, Walker is no one's puppet. He has started, not finished yet, to restore balance to a totally distorted public workers' union situation. Most residents are happy to see the changes, especially compared to what they would have faced without the changes. The alternatives to having public employees pay their fair share were: higher property taxes, layoffs of teachers and emergency responders, higher unemployment. Or, continued deficits, work rules that make it virtually impossible to remove public employees who don't perform, and a continuing exit of businesses.

"Killed High Speed Rail Funding"

You and Art don't like it, but the people in Wisconsin (and other states who killed this waste of money) are happy. Are you aware that studies on this particular high speed line from Milwaukee to Madison show users would have had to pay 4 times what it costs to drive the 90 miles. Then they would have had to pay for local transportation to their destination. To top it off, the "high speed" would have been only marginally faster than standard Rail and slower than auto. The cost? Out of sight for years. Obama loves it. The state doesn't want to be saddled for the sake of his legacy.

You and Art don't like Norquist and Christie....that's your opinion and your problem. Apparently the state of New Jersey does not agree. Mitt Romney likes him...November will tell if the US doesn't agree, but the race appears to be a near toss up now, so there are a whole lot of people who disagree with a knee jerk reaction that Walker should be tossed out for being liked by the Republican leadership.

I could take every one of the rest of the claims and individually debunk them as inaccurate or simply statements of preference. In Wisconsin we DO want to get rid of ridiculously burdensome environmental restrictions and administrative rules that kill jobs. We DO want to dump Obamacare and replace it with a simpler more realistic reform, like most Americans. We DO want to encourage businesses to invest and grow, not penalize them...or the people who take risks with their own money. We DO support having a rational immigration policy, not an ever changing mish mash of random enforcement based on the whims of an administration who is more interested in building a voter base than protecting our borders. To be honest, I have never read anything Walker has said about immigration, even though Wisconsin has international borders. He has demonstrated more interest in fostering International business growth and exchange and less interest in enabling illegal aliens to vote and soak up resources from citizens who are working and paying taxes.

Finally, even the national Democratic Party leadership has admitted the recall maneuver was a bad idea. Obama is keeping his distance and doesn't want to be linked to the inevitable failure of the movement. A falsely proud teachers union is poring union dues down the drain in a lost cause. The opposing candidate, Milwaukee mayor Barrett wasn't initially supported by the largest unions. He has not provided one piece of information on what he

would have done differently or what he will do differently if elected. It is a 100% anti-Walker campaign with 0% explanation of what will happen except restoration of bargaining procedures for public employees.

End of quiz.

"Employment Debate Requires Closer Look" by Rick Romell and Jason Stein, *Journal Sentinel*

May 26, 2012 (<http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/employment-debate-requires-closer-look-kc5i8b3-154560275.html>)

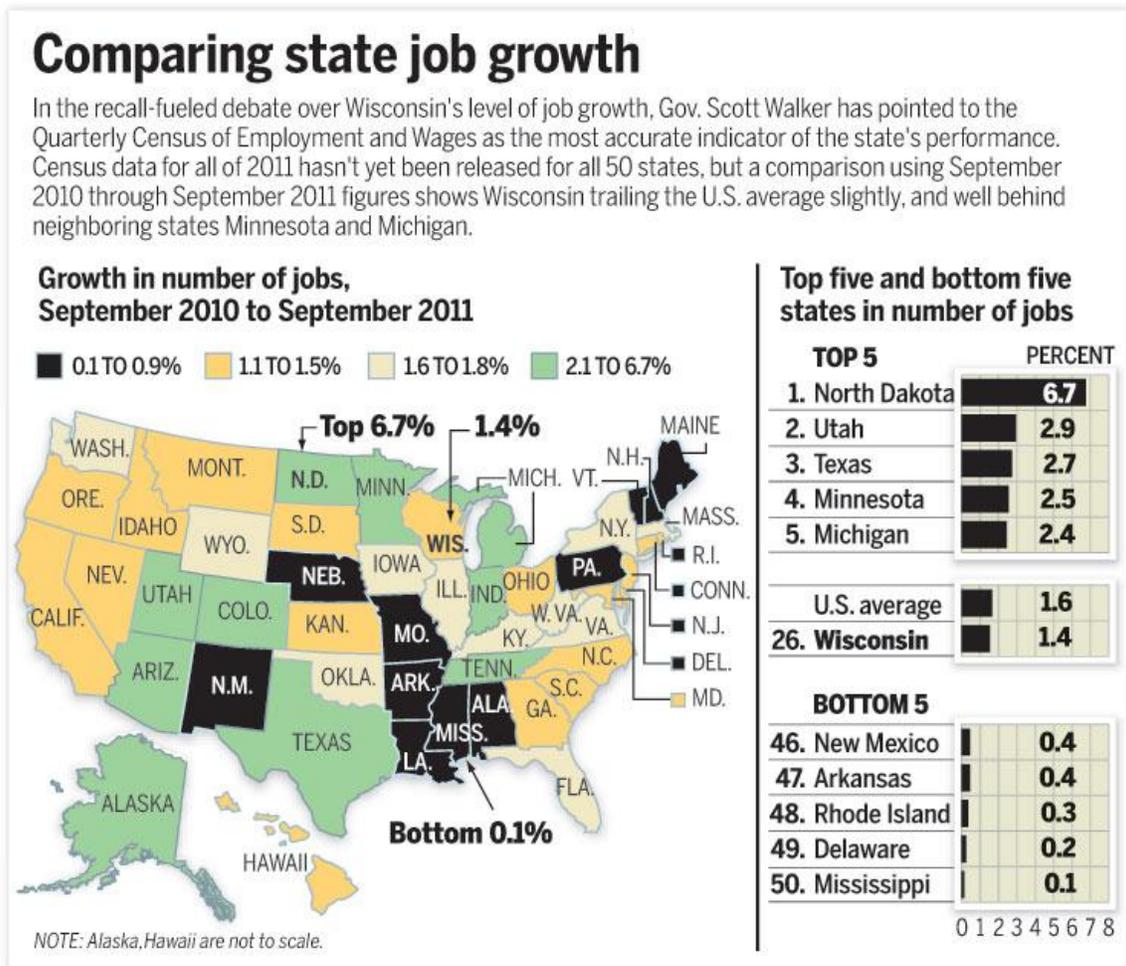
Scott Walker has it all figured out. Tom Barrett does too.

The rest of us can only duck and cover as the gubernatorial candidates lay down a cross-fire of conflicting economic data and carpet bomb the state with political rhetoric.

But at its heart, the Great War of the Jobs Numbers is essentially about this: Has Wisconsin's recent employment performance been abysmal, or merely mediocre?

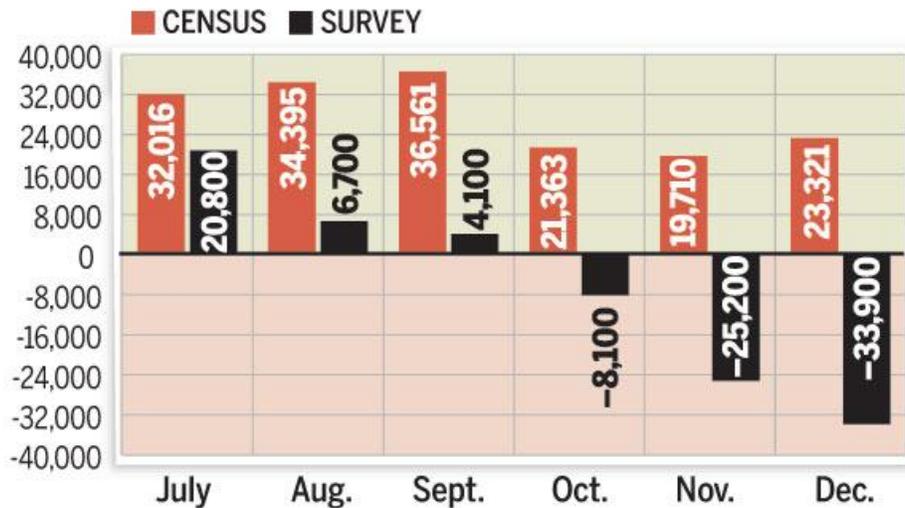
Barrett, the Milwaukee mayor seeking to toss Walker out of the governor's mansion in the upcoming recall election, waves survey data suggesting that Wisconsin trails every state in job growth. Walker touts another data set that shows Wisconsin gaining jobs since he took office.

Unless you're a hard-shell political partisan who sees everything in black and white, it's difficult to say why the two sets of jobs numbers are at such great odds with each other, and where the truth lies. But at a time when jobs and economic development are so critical in the recall election, it's worth another, deeper look.



2011's job data divergence

Two different methods of counting jobs, the **Current Employment Statistics survey** and the **Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages**, usually yield results within several thousand of each other. But in what remains a statistical mystery, the two diverged sharply in the second half of 2011.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Journal Sentinel

The data that shows Wisconsin dead last and actually losing jobs - the data Barrett points to - comes from the Current Employment Statistics survey. The survey is done every month and is widely reported. It's rough but important data, one of the major economic indicators on the national level and, although less reliable, traditionally a bellwether at the state level. In this case, Barrett used monthly survey data from March 2011 to March 2012.

The data that shows Wisconsin gaining jobs - the data Walker points to - comes from unemployment insurance reports by employers that ultimately become part of the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Compared with the monthly survey, the quarterly census seldom gets attention. The figures typically are six months old by the time they're released.

In this case, Walker is using census data - released early, before the last three months were vetted by federal officials - from December 2010 to December 2011.

While it is less timely, the census is more precise - it's essentially a nose count of jobs. In fact, statisticians use the census to correct the survey numbers months after the monthly figures have been released.

But even when measured by the census, the instrument Walker favors, Wisconsin's recent economic performance, while better, is far from stellar. For September 2010 through September 2011 - the most recent year-over-year census data comparison available with all 50 states - Wisconsin ranks 26th, in the middle of the country as a whole and lagging behind its Midwestern neighbors.

For the period, which includes the last four months of former Gov. Jim Doyle's administration, the figures show Wisconsin added 36,561 jobs. During the same 12 months, Minnesota, with a labor force similar in size to Wisconsin, added more than 64,000.

In relative terms, Wisconsin employment grew by not quite 1.4%. Nationwide jobs, meanwhile, grew by 1.6%. Minnesota and Michigan added 2.5% and 2.4% respectively. Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and Ohio also outstripped Wisconsin.

"Even using his numbers," Barrett said of Walker, "we're at the bottom of the Big Ten."

Walker campaign spokeswoman Ciara Matthews, meanwhile, said, "Governor Walker in just 15 short months has helped create an economic climate which allowed for the creation of more than 35,000 new jobs since he has taken office and Wisconsin's unemployment rate to fall to 6.7%, the lowest it has been in since 2008."

Data usually in sync

The question of why there is such a large variance between the monthly survey and quarterly census job numbers, meanwhile, may remain unanswered until both sets of data are fully vetted and adjusted.

Since at least 2008, the year-over-year changes in the monthly survey typically have moved in sync with the year-over-year changes in the quarterly census. The average monthly difference has been about 10,000 jobs. But the census and survey drifted apart in the last half of 2011 - by 57,000 jobs as of December - even though the survey numbers had gone through an annual revision using the census numbers in a process the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls benchmarking.

One possible factor in the recent dramatic deviation of the monthly jobs survey from the quarterly census: The federal bureau took over the responsibility from the states of putting out the monthly numbers, beginning with the March 2011 figures.

"That was the last of our opportunity to have any real say in these estimates," said Steve Hine, Minnesota's director of the Labor Market Information.

Like officials in Wisconsin and some other states, Hine questions whether the loss of local responsibility for the jobs figures has harmed their accuracy. The monthly employment numbers, he said, show Minnesota roughly 40,000 jobs behind where he knows the state actually is because of the more accurate unemployment-insurance counts.

In a statement, federal officials have said that the consolidation of the data collection has saved money and that it should improve accuracy. They said that state agencies can still provide federal officials with information about local events such as plant closings, but also acknowledged that part of reason for the change was to rely "less on individual analyst judgment and more on the use of standard statistical" models.

John Koskinen, chief economist for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, said it appears that northern states like Minnesota and Wisconsin have been the most affected by the problems in the jobs data, but said he couldn't explain why. Neither could Hine.

Koskinen acknowledged that Wisconsin lagged behind its neighbors for the September 2010 to September 2011 period, but said that was in part because Wisconsin didn't lose as many jobs in prior years as other states like Illinois and Indiana did.

Generally speaking, revisions to the survey tend to show a pattern, Jesse Rothstein, an economics professor at the University of California, Berkeley and former chief economist at the U.S. Department of Labor, said via email. Because the survey can only account for the births and deaths of companies by using a model, he said, it tends to miss changes in the pattern of business start-ups and closures.

"That means that it tends to miss turning points - it overstates employment going into a recession (when deaths rise) and understates employment coming out (when births rise)," Rothstein said.

The revisions also point out how difficult it is to compare jobs data when it is most current - and of greatest interest.

Ultimately, the numbers in the survey - in Wisconsin it includes about 5% of employers and has a margin of error of 9,300 jobs in either direction - are revised at least twice, and in some cases three times, as the bureau incorporates firmer data.

In addition, the unemployment insurance job counts for the end of 2011, which Walker's administration released last week to support the case that Wisconsin has been gaining jobs, also are likely to change to some degree before they get the bureau's stamp of approval and become the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

In other words, even in the smoothest of circumstances, there are multiple versions of "the jobs numbers," based on both the collection process and the time frame.

With so many iterations, it's not hard for politicians to find versions that glorify themselves or vilify their opponents.

20120527-01	09:55	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
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Again, interesting response. One question, do you think your response is not ideology? I'm still looking for any facts.

20120527-06	14:36	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
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Happy Memorial Day, Dale,

I have to say I enjoy our back-and-forth, and if I can learn something that helps me clarify my thinking, that will be great. I'm not wedded to any "ideology," or maybe I am, but not in a knee-jerk way.

At any rate, you can peruse my comments below if you wish. I appreciate your responses always.

Dale wrote above: Cute labels -- this "anti-abortion" and a war on women. Slick political positioning but not correct. It is "anti forced funding" for abortions and contraceptives. You don't like it. That's ok, you can have your opinion. Wisconsin voters don't agree.

Pam: I am concerned about women's health, and abortion and contraception both fall in that category. Anything that is "legal" should be unrestricted, certainly when it serves the public. If Catholic hospitals don't want to perform abortions, fine. I wouldn't force them. If an employer hires people of a different religion (a Jew working in a Catholic hospital, for instance), then those people should not have their benefits curtailed just because the employer takes exception to them. Let the Catholic employees forgo insurance that provides that coverage, if they so choose. I doubt very many Catholics would make that choice. This issue is a distraction. We settled these issues a long time ago. As with gay marriage, no one is forced to have an abortion who doesn't want one. Keep legislators and judges out of the doctor-patient relationship. I have a hard time believing Wis. voters want to roll back Roe v. Wade or accessible birth control. Show me statistics on this specific issue, or I just don't buy it.

Dale wrote above: You and Art don't like Koch's political agenda...that's your opinion. Believe me, Walker is no one's puppet. He has started, not finished yet, to restore balance to a totally distorted public workers' union situation. Most residents are happy to see the changes, especially compared to what they would have faced without the changes. The alternatives to having public employees pay their fair share were: higher property taxes, layoffs of teachers and emergency responders, higher unemployment. Or, continued deficits, work rules that make it virtually impossible to remove public employees who don't perform, and a continuing exit of businesses.

Pam: In general, I support labor unions. I do not support unions that are dictatorial, intransigent, or out of touch with the realities of the day. Workers nearly always come up short when they have no bargaining body to represent them. Maybe they always do; I wouldn't be surprised. You say, Walker went after public employee unions because the unions caused teacher layoffs. I thought it was the unions that protected teachers' jobs. This doesn't compute. Everyone should pay their fair share. Rather than eliminating unions, maybe negotiating in good faith (on both sides) would be less draconian and would garner more public support than chopping unions off at the

knees. I simply do not believe that unions cause unemployment. If they need to be improved, improve them, but don't throw workers under a bus. BTW, I am not following in Art's footsteps. If we agree on some things, that's because we have each come to our conclusions independently. I'm sure there are plenty of things he and I disagree on, not that it matters.

Dale wrote above: You and Art don't like it, but the people in Wisconsin (and other states who killed this waste of money) are happy. Are you aware that studies on this particular high speed line from Milwaukee to Madison show users would have had to pay 4 times what it costs to drive the 90 miles. Then they would have had to pay for local transportation to their destination. To top it off, the "high speed" would have been only marginally faster than standard Rail and slower than auto. The cost? Out of sight for years. Obama loves it. The state doesn't want to be saddled for the sake of his legacy.

Pam: Other nations are way ahead of us on high-speed rail and public transportation. We are falling behind, and it will do us no good in the long term, hell, in the medium term. We MUST reduce our carbon footprint, and this is at least one way to begin doing that. Talk about waste! What is more wasteful than hundreds of thousands of cars wearing out our highways, with each car usually containing one person. We are going to have to change our way of life--a difficult challenge, I know--but continuing the way we are will destroy the planet and make life as we know it impossible. I see in architecture magazines that more and more people are adding on to their homes by building underground. I see this as a growing trend. Come the millennium, underground (sorry about the underline, don't know where that came from) life will be the norm--for those who can afford it. We need more bicycles and more attractive public transportation and fewer private automobiles. This will probably never happen, because the car industry is so powerful, but we're all going to pay a very heavy price if we don't wake up and smell the coffee. My guess is that in 50 years hybrids will be the norm. I hope so.

Dale wrote above: You and Art don't like Norquist and Christie....that's your opinion and your problem. Apparently the state of New Jersey does not agree. Mitt Romney likes him...November will tell if the US doesn't agree, but the race appears to be a near toss up now, so there are a whole lot of people who disagree with a knee jerk reaction that Walker should be tossed out for being liked by the Republican leadership.

Pam: I don't know all that much about Christie. He seems likeable enough, but that's about all I can say. I think Norquist is a public menace. It is totally preposterous for someone who isn't even in government to demand that all Republican Senators and Representatives sign a pledge to do, or not do, anything. And what weenies those Republicans are to allow themselves to be put in that corner. Talk about fascism! I see that many of the Rep. candidates running for office now have disavowed or refused to sign Norquist's stupid pledge. I find that slightly encouraging.

[Note: I don't believe Gov. Christie has ever been mentioned by anyone here before now. --SteveB]

Dale wrote above: I could take every one of the rest of the claims and individually debunk them as inaccurate or simply statements of preference. In Wisconsin we DO want to get rid of ridiculously burdensome environmental restrictions and administrative rules that kill jobs. We DO want to dump Obamacare and replace it with a simpler more realistic reform, like most Americans. We DO want to encourage businesses to invest and grow, not penalize them...or the people who take risks with their own money. We DO support having a rational immigration policy, not an ever changing mish mash of random enforcement based on the whims of an administration who is more interested in building a voter base than protecting our borders. To be honest, I have never read anything Walker has said about immigration, even though Wisconsin has international borders. He has demonstrated more interest in fostering International business growth and exchange and less interest in enabling illegal aliens to vote and soak up resources from citizens who are working and paying taxes.

Pam: It's those "burdensome environmental restrictions" that keep our water and air clean and slow down the environmental depredations of coal mining. It is OSHA that watches out for workers' safety. I find it absurd that Republicans want to "drill, Baby, drill," and erect ugly, humongous oil rigs off our beaches yet balk at a row of sleek windmills, which I find far more attractive, if beauty is what we're going for, and I don't think we should discount it.

We ALL want business to invest and grow. If the rich want to risk million dollars in a risky venture, well and good. But don't drag the ordinary citizen with a pension plan or a mutual fund into treacherous waters, as has been and still is happening. We need to encourage saving, as well as investing. What we do not need is a nation of naifs betting money they either don't have or can't afford to lose. Privatize Social Security??? One of the more insane ideas W. came up with. Rational immigration policy, fine. No argument there. I just don't want us to become a country where you can get arrested if you don't have "your papers" on your person. Enforce, don't persecute. Finally, the only thing wrong with Obamacare is that it doesn't go far enough. My mantra hasn't changed: universal coverage, single payer. Rationing? We already have it, and we probably will need more as our generation ages and begins to soak up more of the nation's health dollars. We need to get the middleman, i.e., the insurance companies and HMOs, out of the way, cut down on redundancy, reduce paperwork, and learn a lesson from other countries who spend less of their GDP on medical care and get better results than we do. Obama did what no other President has managed to do, Republican ones included. That he didn't have carte blanche to propose a vastly better system is not his fault. I have a good friend who has been a pediatrician for forty years. He is so discouraged with the way things are going that he can't wait to retire. I don't know any doctors who are happy with all the bullshit the insurance companies keep adding to their already heavy loads.

Dale wrote above: Finally, even the national Democratic Party leadership has admitted the recall maneuver was a bad idea. Obama is keeping his distance and doesn't want to be linked to the inevitable failure of the movement. A falsely proud teachers union is pouring union dues down the drain in a lost cause. The opposing candidate, Milwaukee mayor Barrett wasn't initially supported by the largest unions. He has not provided one piece of information on what he would have done differently or what he will do differently if elected. It is a 100% anti-Walker campaign with 0% explanation of what will happen except restoration of bargaining procedures for public employees.

Pam: I'm not from Wisconsin, so I am not as informed about Walker as you. I am a teacher (retired), and if teachers don't like him, then I tend to listen to what they have to say. I do think it matters that the Koch brothers have poured so much money into his lap, just as I think Citizens United is just about the worst decision the Supreme Court has ever made, and it's made some bad ones. The marketplace of ideas doesn't function when money rules. It becomes a question of "might makes right." Unfortunately, that's often how it goes, hence my continued pessimism.

Dale wrote above: End of quiz.

Pam: What I wish we could do is find common ground somewhere and build on that. My goal is not merely to change your mind but to become better informed myself, while defending my positions until I see something better. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it appears to me that just about everything Republicans say is negative: no to health care reform, no to campaign finance reform, no to development of clean energy, no to gay marriage, no to religious tolerance, no to concern for the unemployed (cutting off unemployment benefits), no to Head Start, no to keeping interest rates low on Pell Grants (they seem to have given a little on this one, but not because they wanted to), no to regulation (I'm sure there are some regulations that are onerous; I would like to see specific ones and their effects. "Regulations" by itself doesn't mean much.)

Democrats aren't perfect by any means, but they have always been the party of the working man, the common man, the minorities (racial and gender), and a fairer shake for all citizens. Democrats pushed for legalized abortion and contraception, the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act, desegregation, Social Security and Medicare. It was Republicans who pushed back and still do. We all know that the Republican party attracts more of the wealthy than the Democratic. It's the factory owners, the corporate board members, the country-club joiners, the private jet owners, whose kids go to elite schools that cost the earth and do, in fact, provide a top-notch education. Mitt Romney looks ridiculous in his blue jeans fresh out of the box, and it's no wonder. If you're born poor, you have a greater understanding of the struggles most people face, and I include past Republican Presidents like Reagan and Nixon, as well as Johnson and Truman. If you're born rich, like FDR or JFK, then you need to have a capacious conscience. Say what you will about Carter and Clinton, but look at what they've done with their lives post-Presidency. Then look at W. Don't even get me started. I do not believe in "trickle down" anything, unless is the

great pissing on the small. I do believe in building from the ground up so as to have a strong foundation, rather than financial bubbles that float into the stratosphere for a time, but always burst.

Keep pushing, Dale. I feel like I'm getting stronger from this workout.

[20120527-04](#)

12:17 Dale

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above) & "Governor Walker: The Facts Are the Facts" & "Education for the 21st Century"

You are right, my response is rife with ideology. I'll list some facts for you, but following those bullets, please take the time to read the material on Education Reforms in Wisconsin under Walker leadership. I will not hide that it comes from his website and I would expect some skepticism on your part; however, the bipartisan approach, involving parents, teachers, and education academics he is taking is such a different one from the union's efforts to maintain the status quo that after you get past the negative rhetoric about collective bargaining, the emphasis on STUDENTS, not job protection is obvious.

"Governor Walker: The Facts Are the Facts" Press Release by Friends of Scott Walker

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.scottwalker.org/press-releases/2012/05/governor-walker-facts-are-facts>)

The facts show that Wisconsin is moving forward under Scott Walker:

Governor Walker Eliminated The Historic \$3.6 Billion Deficit Without Raising Taxes. The Department of Administration also predicted that the state would have a 154.5 million at the end of fiscal year 2013. (2011 Wisconsin Act 32; Todd Richmond, "Walker projects state will have \$154.5 million budget surplus by 2013," State Journal 5/10/12)

Governor Walker Signed A True Property Tax Freeze And Reduced The Property Tax Bill For The Median Valued Homeowner For The First Time In 12 Years. School property taxes also went down by \$47 million, the first reduction in six years. (2011 Wisconsin Act 32; Steven Walters, "Breaking down the property tax dip," Journal Sentinel, 4/21/12; Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, <http://wistax.org>, accessed 3/22/12)

Taxpayers Have Saved Over A Billion Dollars Due To Governor Walker Fundamental Reforms. The savings achieved by state and local governments and school districts exceeded \$1,046,369,388 in health and pension contributions and health plan design changes. (Office of the Governor, "Reforms and Results," <http://reforms.wi.gov>, accessed 5/16/12)

Wisconsin Added 23,321 Jobs In 2011. The actual data derived directly from Wisconsin employers show a net change from the original estimates to this reliable census of over 57,000 jobs. The data obtained directly from over 96 percent, or about 160,000 Wisconsin employers show that Wisconsin added 23,321 jobs in 2011, not the 33,900 loss that was previously believed. (Craig Gilbert, "Walker speeds release of positive jobs data," Journal Sentinel, 5/15/12)

Wisconsin Has Created 10,100 Private Sector Jobs In 2012 Under Governor Walker. (Bureau Of Labor Statistics Website, www.bls.gov, accessed 5/17/12)

Wisconsin Has Created 13,400 Manufacturing Jobs Since Governor Walker Took Office. Wisconsin ranked in the top ten states (8) for creation of manufacturing jobs in 2011 and 2012. (Bureau Of Labor Statistics Website, www.bls.gov, accessed 5/25/12)

Wisconsin Unemployment Rate Is 6.7 Percent In April of 2012, The Lowest Since 2008. (BLS, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, accessed 5/15/12)

Initial Unemployment Claims Lowest In Past 5 Years. (Dept. Of Revenue, "Changing the spot of the ball," PowerPoint, March 2012)

The Continued Unemployment Insurance Claims Are Below 2011, 2010 and 2009 Levels. The number of people that continue on unemployment has dropped to 10.86 percent below 2011 levels, consistent with the falling unemployment rate and the quarterly jobs data. (Dept. Of Revenue, "Changing the spot of the ball," PowerPoint, March 2012)

Wisconsin Per Capita Income Growth In 2011 Was In Top 25 Percent Of Entire Nation. Wisconsin's per capita income is growing, now 11th in the nation. (US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, "State Personal Income 2011," Press Release, 3/28/11)

In Fiscal Year 2012, Tax Collection Are Exceeding Estimates In All Three Major Categories- Income Taxes, Corporate Taxes And Sales Taxes. (Dept. Of Revenue, "Changing the spot of the ball," PowerPoint, March 2012)

The Number Of New Businesses Entities Formed In Wisconsin Was 13,006. This is an increase of 11.9 percent compared to the first four months of 2011. (Dept. of Financial Institutions, "New Business Formation in Wisconsin Up 11.9% over Prior Year," Press Release, 5/14/12)

"Education for the 21st Century" by Friends of Scott Walker

undated, 2012, (<http://www.scottwalker.org/content/education-21st-century-0>)

Focus on Fundamentals

Today, roughly one-third of Wisconsin fourth graders cannot read at even a basic level – proof that Wisconsin's educational system is failing our children. In fourth grade, reading becomes the primary tool for gaining knowledge in every other subject. To borrow a phrase used by others, fourth graders are no longer "learning to read," they are using "reading to learn."

Other states have worked to set high standards, measure progress, and intervening at the first sign of difficulty. By replicating their success and continuing to innovate, we can put children on the path to reading well before they reach third grade.

This is why we put together the Read to Lead Task Force, a bipartisan group of teachers, reading specialists, parents, and others from across the state to create a plan for improving the reading skills of our students.

The Read to Lead Task Force has put together a comprehensive list of recommendations including:

- Funding a literacy screener to assess the skill level of each child entering kindergarten.
- Adopting a more rigorous licensure test that ensures teachers have the tools they need to succeed.
- Creating a public-private partnership dedicated to improving reading.
- To further assist future teachers, we are working with our colleges and universities to help them better prepare our next generation of outstanding educators.

A recent study showed that children who fall behind on reading comprehension are at least four times more likely to drop out of high school. These students are 13 times more likely to drop out if they come from a low income household. We cannot afford to let our future leaders down and, as Governor, I am working to ensure they have every opportunity to succeed through my Read to Lead plan.

Across all subjects, we have also adopted rigorous and comprehensive learning standards that are future-focused.

We are in the process of discontinuing the use of outdated and ineffective tests, and have funded a 21st Century data system focused on the following necessities:

- Improving transparency.
- Improving accountability.
- Highlighting the ability to differentiate instruction.
- This new comprehensive data system will allow teachers and parents to track student progress and identify learning challenges early on so they can be corrected before it's too late.

We shouldn't be micromanaging school districts, but rather setting high standards and giving districts the flexibility to meet them.

To ensure our education system remains focused on teaching, not pushing paperwork, we've identified and removed many one-size-fits-all or unfunded school mandates. Today we are looking for more ways to help principals and administrators focus on serving teachers and students first.

Once this is accomplished, schools can focus on teaching marketable skills such as those offered in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education programs.

That's why I've worked with Democrats and Republicans alike to allow school districts to offer courses that can lead to nationally recognized certifications in everything from welding to computer programming. These reforms will allow students from across our state to earn real life job skills and even college credits before leaving high school.

More Choices for Parents

We've dramatically increased parental choice since I took office. We reformed open enrollment and expanded the application window from a few weeks to a few months so more parents and kids can take advantage of the options available to them.

My budget also removed the arbitrary caps on online learning and the Milwaukee choice program. We even expanded the program to Racine and allowed more schools to participate.

Parents should have control over their child's education, not the government. The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program and charter schools around Wisconsin have been successfully serving students for over a decade. That is why we are working to expand Milwaukee's successful independent charter school program to more communities.

But choice alone is not enough. Parents must have the ability to choose the best possible education for their kids. In order for this to be effective we must not allow any Wisconsin school to fail our children and their future. It is not only bad public policy, but a bad idea in general to let a school fail year after year and continue to serve children. That is why, for the first time we will be instituting real accountability for all schools, including choice and charter. By holding all levels of public instruction accountable to a higher standard we can find the gaps and weaknesses that need to be addressed, and in doing so better serve our kids and the future of Wisconsin.

Reform Failing Schools

I campaigned on a pledge to turn around failing schools, and with the help of the Department of Public Instruction, convened a School Accountability Design Team to develop the criteria to accomplish this necessary goal.

We cannot begin putting meaningful reforms in place until we know which schools are failing and why. After months of work, our Task Force released its proposed system for rating all schools, including public, choice, and charter. This spring we applied for a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind Act, this will allow Wisconsin teachers and parents, not Washington bureaucrats, can decide how best to educate our kids.

Schools will receive a public report card and be graded on an accountability index of 0 to 100. Among other criteria, schools will be judged on the following:

- Student performance.
- Drop-out rates.
- Third-grade reading levels.

- College readiness.

By establishing a statewide system of accountability and with the help of teachers, parents and the legislature, we will find real solutions to help those schools that are failing. Additionally, we will now be able to replicate the efforts of our best schools and allow families to see which districts throughout the state are providing the highest level of education.

Keeping the Best and Brightest in the Classroom

My fundamental reforms have improved classroom education throughout Wisconsin, allowing school districts to manage their budgets and staffing creates opportunity for each child to grow in the classroom.

Prior to my reforms, school districts were required to layoff the newest employees first. In 2010, the educator named Wisconsin's Outstanding First Year Teacher was laid off due to collective bargaining and the archaic, last in first out, mentality of the tenure system. These outrageous provisions harmed our students and my reforms changed this. Now, school districts can staff based on merit and pay based on performance. The teacher to student ratio in the classroom is well below the national average and the vast majority of districts have the same or smaller elementary school class sizes than before the reforms. For example, the Kaukauna School District reduced class sizes, hired additional teachers and instituted a merit pay system. In doing so, they also eliminated a \$400,000 budget shortfall and created a \$1.5 million surplus.

Finding Efficiencies

School districts were given the tools to manage their budgets effectively. By doing this, schools were able to reduce the property tax burden on Wisconsin families by \$47 million, the first overall reduction in school property taxes in six years.

By our ground breaking reforms to the collective bargaining process, school districts can now focus on curriculum and not union grievances.

As identified by my bipartisan Waste, Fraud and Abuse Commission, school districts should pool their resources to buy in bulk. District can also work together by instituting the following reforms:

- Sharing resources.
- Contracting for services.
- Expanding the use of technology - like online learning.
- Potentially voluntarily merging, when appropriate.

Meanwhile, parents should have the ability to scrutinize spending decisions which is why I will continue to work towards facilitating local efforts to post expenditures online just as I am doing through my Department of Administration for state agencies.

[20120527-07](#)

14:41 Pam

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)

I'll look at this more closely later. I want to go work in the yard for a while. But first, let me say, I know there is a LOT that is wrong in education these days. I do NOT defend the status quo. I chose not to join a teachers' union years ago, even though, as an underpaid graduate student without benefits, I wish we'd had one. If the unions are the problem, then let them thrash it out. God knows, a lot needs to be done. Between the unions and government mandates, teachers are in a tight place. This is too big a subject for right now. Later.....

[20120527-08](#) 15:42 Art Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above) & Happy Memorial Day

Dale, Good stuff but, of course, perhaps a wee bit biased coming from the Governor's website. I'll do a little research on this and get back to you. Some of the numbers leap out at you as very contradictory. They can't both be right. Personally I think our public school system is not doing well at all. Not sure who exactly at fault but the results are discouraging. So, the outcome laid out below has my full support. Question, as always, is how to get there.

We are currently away from home up (as we think of it) in our non air conditioned cabin in WV with 90 degree temperatures. (Discouraging article about that today in the *Washington Post*. The door is about to close on a 2 degree Centigrade increase which is happening as we write. Six (6) degrees by the end of the century. Won't be much of humanity left by then.) The good news is we have bats in our bat house. Always a good sign and supposed to be good luck. We're all going to need it.

Happy Memorial Day.

[20120527-09](#) 17:10 Dale Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to all, above) & Happy Memorial Day

Have a Great Memorial Day Holiday.

A year ago while spending my first winter in ten years in Wisconsin, I experienced my first ever true blizzard. The morning I crawled out a window because there was five feet of snow blocking the front door, I would have decided the global warming story was a fairy tale. Of course we know there are local cycles and anomalies that have nothing to do with "global" changes, but it messes with your common sense view of what is real.

I suppose it also speaks for a philosophy of "living in the moment" for we don't really know what will happen next. Today, my wife and I will enjoy playing with our grand children. Hope your day is as blessed.

[20120527-11](#) 22:50 Pam Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above) & Happy Memorial Day

Oh, Dale. You are incorrigible. :-) It's not a blizzard here or a heat wave there; it's the overall global shift toward higher temps. Glaciers are melting; the ocean is warming; deserts are encroaching. We don't want it to be true--I certainly don't--but I'm afraid it is. Don't be left like Chamberlain, underestimating the evil right under your nose.

I had my grandsons here today, and they are the light of my life, so I understand what a good day you had with yours. In the end, that's what we all want: a good future for these children we love. Wishful thinking won't assure that for them, I'm afraid.

Happy Memorial Day, everyone!

[20120525-25](#) 21:34 SteveB "Obama Pot-Smoking Details Revealed in David Maraniss Book" (reply to Pam)

from Pam:

I think our only difference might be our attitude toward immigration. I know it's a problem, but I figure, immigrants wouldn't come here if they didn't expect to find opportunity, which must mean there's a need for their labor. Who would pick our strawberries if not them? I also sympathize with people who are

pushed to the wall. Of course, it's horrible when illegals get tax refunds and that sort of thing, but what we need there is, perhaps, a different method for admitting people. I don't know. It's complicated, and I don't live in Arizona, so I probably don't know what I'm talking about. What's your stance on legalizing marijuana? I've never smoked pot in my life, but I support legalization. We've got a practically failed state on our border, and that concerns me.

Those darned wetbacks!

Just kidding. But I think individual cases can get in the way of national interest. I say, enforce the law or change it (fat chance).

The drug laws and the War on Drugs are ridiculous idiocy and have been from the start. Prohibition taught us nothing. 1,000,000 people are needlessly in prison, not contributing to society. Law enforcement has been corrupted. Taxes are not being collected. Addicts are dying. Children are dying. Let's be practical.

And it turns out Barry was a big pot head and then was coming down hard on medical marijuana. Go figure. His bosses told him to? Now, that's a scary thought.

I guess Bill Clinton got into a little trouble again with same. A real news pic taken in Monaco with three porno stars (oops!) a couple of days ago. No word from Hillary yet.



Back to the War on Drugs, remember when GaryC couldn't understand why President Obama's government was raiding medical marijuana clinics in California? Considering what a pot-head Barry was in part of his youth, it's hard to believe he was behind those efforts against his favorite drug. That appears to me like a normal cigarette in the photo, but the POTUS still looks like a pretty cool dude...not a blood-sucking, money-grubbing robot like...well...you know who. Are you Right-wingers completely sure the President is a Muslim? Doesn't look like one here.



"Obama Pot-Smoking Details Revealed in David Maraniss Book" by Luke Johnson, Huffington Post

May 25, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/25/obama-pot-smoking-details_n_1545904.html)

The meticulous biographer David Maraniss revealed President Barack Obama's early girlfriends in an excerpt of his forthcoming biography, and now the Internet is seizing upon new details of the president smoking marijuana with his buddies at the Punahou School in Hawaii.

Politico's Playbook teased the following excerpt from *Barack Obama: The Story*, which will be published in June but is already viewable on Google Books. "When a joint was making the rounds, he often elbowed his way in, out of turn, shouted 'Intercepted!' and took an extra hit," Maraniss writes. But Obama's buddies, who called themselves the "Choom Gang," didn't mind him messing up the rotation. (After all, this was Hawaii.)

That's not all. Maraniss writes that Obama was known for starting a trend called "TA," short for "total absorption."

When you were with Barry and his pals, if you exhaled precious pakalolo (Hawaiian slang for marijuana, meaning "numbing tobacco") instead of absorbing it fully into your lungs, you were assessed a penalty and your turn was skipped the next time the joint came around.

Maraniss also describes Obama's technique of "roof hits" while hot-boxing cars. "When the pot was gone, they tilted their heads back and sucked in the last bit of smoke from the ceiling," he writes.

The fate of their dealer, Ray, was far more tragic than those of Obama and his largely privileged pals. In a scene that could've been in a Quentin Tarantino movie, a "scorned gay lover" later killed Ray with a ball-peen hammer.

The Huffington Post can't independently verify the claims of Maraniss, who won a Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting in 1993.

Obama has been less than shy about his drug use in the past, writing about the topic in *Dreams from My Father*. "Pot had helped, and booze; maybe a little blow when you could afford it," he writes in the memoir.

Obama's tone grows darker, and drugs are an escape for the young Obama, who is facing questions about his own identity:

Junkie. Pothead. That's where I'd been headed: the final, fatal role of the young would-be black man. Except the highs hadn't been about that, me trying to prove what a down brother I was. Not by them, anyway. I got high for just the opposite effect, something that could push questions of who I was out of my mind, something that could flatten out the landscape of my heart, blur the edges of my memory. I had discovered that it didn't make any difference whether you smoked reefer in the white classmate's sparkling new van, or in the dorm room of some brother you'd met down at the gym, or on the beach with a couple of Hawaiian kids who had dropped out of school and now spent most of their time looking for an excuse to brawl.

As Obama moved to higher stage, he's also been forthcoming about drug use. On Bill Clinton's personal triangulation that he had tried marijuana but "didn't inhale," Obama said smiling in 2006, "That was the point, wasn't it?"

Later in *Dreams from My Father*, one of Obama's friends was arrested for drug possession and his mother, home from Indonesia, confronted him about it in his room, and he walked out.

The fun continued for Obama at Occidental College in Los Angeles, but he became much more serious after transferring to Columbia University after his sophomore year, when he lived, in his words, "like a monk."

[20120526-01](#) 01:58 SteveM Photo: I Have a Dream



[Boy! This is a low blow! This really pi*sces me off! LOL! They forgot your favorites—the horrible, dreaded Nancy and Harry. Surely they deserve a place in the cavity search line too? And what about all those communists in Congress? Why aren't they headed for prison? How much destruction does one country have to endure before people want to change the change and still get a little change back? I'm beginning to wonder myself. (And I'm also still pi*sed that those "shovel-ready" projects weren't "shovel-ready", they were more like ready-for-a-do-nothing-Congress-to-appropriate funds to assist in the nation's economic recovery.) –SteveB]

[20120526-02](#) 07:25 MarthaH "GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes"

"GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes" by Rosalind S. Helderman, *The Washington Post*

May 25, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/gop-showing-small-shifts-on-taxes/2012/05/25/qJQAQ5I0pU_story.html)

In GOP activist circles it is known simply as "the pledge," and over the past generation it has become the essential conservative credential for Republicans seeking elective office. Of the 242 Republicans in the House today, all but six have signed the pledge.

But now, an increasing number of GOP candidates for Congress are declining to sign the promise to oppose any tax increase, a small sign that could signal a big shift in Republican politics on taxes.

Of the 25 candidates this year promoted by the National Republican Congressional Committee as "Young Guns" and "Contenders" — the top rungs of a program that highlights promising candidates who are challenging Democrats or running in open seats — at least a third have indicated they do not plan to sign the pledge authored by anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist.

Two of the seven candidates promoted by the NRCC as the "Young Gun Vanguard" — candidates competing in open seats that are considered Republican-leaning — also have declined to sign.

The pledge pushed by Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, compels candidates to "resist any effort" to raise tax rates for individuals and businesses. Signers also pledge to oppose the elimination of tax credits and deductions unless they are matched dollar-for-dollar with tax cuts.

Norquist insists ATR, the powerful group he founded in 1986, is ahead of schedule in collecting pledge signatures from congressional candidates for the year. He points out that the likely GOP nominee for president, Mitt Romney, has signed the pledge. But there have been defections.

Republican candidates declining to sign generally indicate that they nevertheless oppose tax hikes. But some chafe against the constraint on eliminating tax loopholes, believing those restrictions limit Republicans' ability to negotiate seriously with Democrats on a deal to tackle the nation's mounting debt.

In Pennsylvania, Republican state Rep. Scott Perry said he was disappointed to see his party's presidential candidates — all but one of whom signed the pledge — uniformly indicate in a debate last year that they would reject a deficit reduction deal that paired \$1 in revenue increases for every \$10 in spending cuts.

"I just think it's imprudent to hem yourself in where you can't make a good agreement that overall supports the things you want to do," said Perry, who said he generally opposes tax increases but recently won a Republican primary in a conservative district over candidates who had signed the pledge. "I just don't see what the point of signing would be for me. . . . I've got a record, and everyone who wants to know where I've been and where I'm at can look to that."

Others insist they can make promises to voters without signing a pledge circulated by a Washington lobbying group. That indicates Democrats might be having some success at painting Norquist as a D.C. insider instead of the anti-establishment rebel he portrays himself to be.

"I don't want to get tied up in knots," said Richard Tisei, an NRCC Young Gun and former Republican state senator in Massachusetts who is running against Democratic Rep. John F. Tierney. "If there's a loophole that can be closed that ends up generating additional revenue that can be used specifically to pay down the national debt, I'm not going to lose sleep. And I don't want to be bound by the pledge not to close it."

The refusals among some new candidates come as a handful of incumbent Republicans who signed the pledge when they first ran for office also are publicly rejecting it.

Freshman Rep. Scott Rigell (R-Va.), who signed the pledge in 2010, recently posted an open letter to constituents indicating that he would not renew the promise as he runs for reelection. He said he fears it could stand in the way of an everything-on-the-table approach to tackling the mounting debt.

"Averting bankruptcy requires us to grasp the severity of our fiscal condition and summon the courage to speak boldly about the difficult steps needed to increase revenues and sharply decrease spending," he wrote.

An erosion of support among candidates would be especially significant because Norquist has long aimed to collect signatures from Republicans before they take office. He encourages candidates to use their pledges to help to define their tax stance for voters.

Once the pledge is signed, Norquist considers it binding for the remainder of the candidate's career in public service if he or she wins office.

In an interview, Norquist said the pledge is as strong as ever. He noted that in the pressure-cooker days of the debt-ceiling debate last summer, Republicans held firm against tax increases and wrested a deal from Democrats to lower deficits through spending cuts alone.

"That was when the pledge was tested and the commitment of Republicans not to raise taxes was really pushed hard. And Obama and the spending interests failed, and Republicans and the taxpayers won," he said.

He cited several recent examples of Republican primaries in which ATR-backed candidates defeated Republicans considered less fiscally conservative. This month, ATR helped Indiana state Treasurer Richard Mourdock defeat six-term Sen. Richard G. Lugar in a Republican primary. And this week, Tom Cotton won a Republican primary in Arkansas after ATR called voters to let them know his opponent had not signed the pledge. Cotton is seeking a seat held by retiring Democrat Rep. Mike Ross.

Norquist said the ATR pledge remains the best way to signal to wary voters that a candidate will not change his mind on taxes once in office. "The pledge isn't what keeps them from raising taxes," he said. "It's what confirms to voters that they won't raise taxes. Because they're competing with several hundreds of years of politicians lying about this."

But a new test looms: a colossal fight over spending and taxes at the end of the year, when the Bush-era tax cuts expire at the same time a series of deep cuts to defense and domestic programs is set to take effect.

Democrats have said they will not agree to renew some of the tax breaks or avert the defense cuts, as Republicans want, unless Republicans agree to impose higher taxes on the wealthy. Any wiggle room for Republicans on taxes could dramatically reshape that debate.

Because of the GOP's sweeping successes in the 2010 election, the NRCC's targeted Young Gun races include some districts where Republicans have little chance of winning in November. It is unclear how many of the new pledge refuseniks will make it to Washington.

But after months of Democratic attacks on ATR and Norquist as obstacles to a debt deal, some Republican candidates report that they are hearing from more voters who want them to reject the pledge than the opposite.

Gary DeLong, a member of the Long Beach City Council who is labeled a "contender" for a House seat by the NRCC, said he is routinely encouraged on doorsteps and at town halls and candidate coffees to avoid the pledge.

Voters "want me to represent them and not special interests," said DeLong, who will compete next month in California's unusual mixed-party primary for one of two spots on the November ballot in a newly drawn district.

Two Republicans vying to challenge Democratic Rep. Dave Loebsack in Iowa have indicated they will not sign. In Indiana, former U.S. attorney Susan Brooks won the GOP nomination for a solidly Republican seat, defeating three Republicans who had signed the pledge.

"She's committed to lowering taxes," said Dollyne Sherman, a spokeswoman for Brooks. "She thinks that's a key ingredient in restoring the nation's economy. But she doesn't need to sign a tax pledge to do that."

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), a fiscal conservative who has tangled with Norquist, said he believes candidates are starting to understand that the ATR pledge's power has been exaggerated by Norquist and the media and that Norquist is wrong when he asserts that it is nearly impossible to win a Republican primary without signing the pledge.

"That's him patting himself on the back," Coburn said. "And I think it's bull crap."

20120526-05	08:46	Pam	Re: "GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Finally, a little backbone is showing. What a bunch of weenies to sign the stupid pledge in the first place. I guess it's easy to bully a bully, which is essentially what Norquist did, the Richlieu of the the Republican party.

20120526-06	09:51	Dale	"Why We Lie"
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I am not sending this with any particular mission in mind. I just thought you would be interested in it.

"Why We Lie" by Dan Ariely, *The Wall Street Journal*

May 26, 2012, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304840904577422090013997320.html>)

(We like to believe that a few bad apples spoil the virtuous bunch. But research shows that everyone cheats a little—right up to the point where they lose their sense of integrity.)

Not too long ago, one of my students, named Peter, told me a story that captures rather nicely our society's misguided efforts to deal with dishonesty. One day, Peter locked himself out of his house. After a spell, the locksmith pulled up in his truck and picked the lock in about a minute.

"I was amazed at how quickly and easily this guy was able to open the door," Peter said. The locksmith told him that locks are on doors only to keep honest people honest. One percent of people will always be honest and never steal. Another 1% will always be dishonest and always try to pick your lock and steal your television; locks won't do much to protect you from the hardened thieves, who can get into your house if they really want to. The purpose of locks, the locksmith said, is to protect you from the 98% of mostly honest people who might be tempted to try your door if it had no lock.

We tend to think that people are either honest or dishonest. In the age of Bernie Madoff and Mark McGwire, James Frey and John Edwards, we like to believe that most people are virtuous, but a few bad apples spoil the bunch. If this were true, society might easily remedy its problems with cheating and dishonesty. Human-resources departments could screen for cheaters when hiring. Dishonest financial advisers or building contractors could be flagged quickly and shunned. Cheaters in sports and other arenas would be easy to spot before they rose to the tops of their professions.

But that is not how dishonesty works. Over the past decade or so, my colleagues and I have taken a close look at why people cheat, using a variety of experiments and looking at a panoply of unique data sets—from insurance claims to employment histories to the treatment records of doctors and dentists. What we have found, in a nutshell: Everybody has the capacity to be dishonest, and almost everybody cheats—just by a little. Except for a few outliers at the top and bottom, the behavior of almost everyone is driven by two opposing motivations. On the one hand, we want to benefit from cheating and get as much money and glory as possible; on the other hand, we want to view ourselves as honest, honorable people. Sadly, it is this kind of small-scale mass cheating, not the high-profile cases, that is most corrosive to society.

1.69	1.82	2.91
4.67	4.81	3.05
5.82	5.06	4.28
6.36	5.19	4.57

Which two numbers in this matrix add up to 10? Asked to solve a batch of these problems, most people cheated (claiming to have solved more of them than they had) when given the chance.

Much of what we have learned about the causes of dishonesty comes from a simple little experiment that we call the "matrix task," which we have been using in many variations. It has shown rather conclusively that cheating does not correspond to the traditional, rational model of human behavior—that is, the idea that people simply weigh the benefits (say, money) against the costs (the possibility of getting caught and punished) and act accordingly.

The basic matrix task goes as follows: Test subjects (usually college students) are given a sheet of paper containing a series of 20 different matrices (structured like the example you can see above) and are told to find in each of the matrices two numbers that add up to 10. They have five minutes to solve as many of the matrices as possible, and they get paid based on how many they solve correctly. When we want to make it possible for subjects to cheat on the matrix task, we introduce what we call the "shredder condition." The subjects are told to count their correct answers on their own and then put their work sheets through a paper shredder at the back of the room. They then tell us how many matrices they solved correctly and get paid accordingly.

View Interactive ("The Forces That Shape Dishonesty"):

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304840904577422090013997320.html#>.

In a variety of experiments, Dan Ariely and his colleague have identified many factors that can make people behave in a more or less honest fashion.

What happens when we put people through the control condition and the shredder condition and then compare their scores? In the control condition, it turns out that most people can solve about four matrices in five minutes. But in the shredder condition, something funny happens: Everyone suddenly and miraculously gets a little smarter. Participants in the shredder condition claim to solve an average of six matrices—two more than in the control condition. This overall increase results not from a few individuals who claim to solve a lot more matrices but from lots of people who cheat just by a little.

Would putting more money on the line make people cheat more? We tried varying the amount that we paid for a solved matrix, from 50 cents to \$10, but more money did not lead to more cheating. In fact, the amount of cheating was slightly lower when we promised our participants the highest amount for each correct answer. (Why? I suspect that at \$10 per solved matrix, it was harder for participants to cheat and still feel good about their own sense of integrity.)

Would a higher probability of getting caught cause people to cheat less? We tried conditions for the experiment in which people shredded only half their answer sheet, in which they paid themselves money from a bowl in the hallway, even one in which a noticeably blind research assistant administered the experiment. Once again, lots of people cheated, though just by a bit. But the level of cheating was unaffected by the probability of getting caught.

Knowing that most people cheat—but just by a little—the next logical question is what makes us cheat more or less.

One thing that increased cheating in our experiments was making the prospect of a monetary payoff more "distant," in psychological terms. In one variation of the matrix task, we tempted students to cheat for tokens (which would immediately be traded in for cash). Subjects in this token condition cheated twice as much as those lying directly for money.

Another thing that boosted cheating: Having another student in the room who was clearly cheating. In this version of the matrix task, we had an acting student named David get up about a minute into the experiment (the participants in the study didn't know he was an actor) and implausibly claim that he had solved all the matrices. Watching this mini-Madoff clearly cheat—and waltz away with a wad of cash—the remaining students claimed they had solved double the number of matrices as the control group. Cheating, it seems, is infectious.

Other factors that increased the dishonesty of our test subjects included knowingly wearing knockoff fashions, being drained from the demands of a mentally difficult task and thinking that "teammates" would benefit from one's cheating in a group version of the matrix task. These factors have little to do with cost-benefit analysis and everything to do with the balancing act that we are constantly performing in our heads. If I am already wearing fake Gucci sunglasses, then maybe I am more comfortable pushing some other ethical limits (we call this the "What the hell" effect). If I am mentally depleted from sticking to a tough diet, how can you expect me to be scrupulously honest? (It's a lot of effort!) If it is my teammates who benefit from my fudging the numbers, surely that makes me a virtuous person!

The results of these experiments should leave you wondering about the ways that we currently try to keep people honest. Does the prospect of heavy fines or increased enforcement really make someone less likely to cheat on their taxes, to fill out a fraudulent insurance claim, to recommend a bum investment or to steal from his or her company? It may have a small effect on our behavior, but it is probably going to be of little consequence when it comes up against the brute psychological force of "I'm only fudging a little" or "Everyone does it" or "It's for a greater good."

What, then—if anything—pushes people toward greater honesty?

There's a joke about a man who loses his bike outside his synagogue and goes to his rabbi for advice. "Next week come to services, sit in the front row," the rabbi tells the man, "and when we recite the Ten Commandments, turn around and look at the people behind you. When we get to 'Thou shalt not steal,' see who can't look you in the eyes. That's your guy." After the next service, the rabbi is curious to learn whether his advice panned out. "So, did it work?" he asks the man. "Like a charm," the man answers. "The moment we got to 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' I remembered where I left my bike."

What this little joke suggests is that simply being reminded of moral codes has a significant effect on how we view our own behavior.

Inspired by the thought, my colleagues and I ran an experiment at the University of California, Los Angeles. We took a group of 450 participants, split them into two groups and set them loose on our usual matrix task. We asked half of them to recall the Ten Commandments and the other half to recall 10 books that they had read in high school. Among the group who recalled the 10 books, we saw the typical widespread but moderate cheating. But in the group that was asked to recall the Ten Commandments, we observed no cheating whatsoever. We reran the experiment, reminding students of their schools' honor codes instead of the Ten Commandments, and we got the same result. We even reran the experiment on a group of self-declared atheists, asking them to swear on a Bible, and got the same no-cheating results yet again.

This experiment has obvious implications for the real world. While ethics lectures and training seem to have little to no effect on people, reminders of morality—right at the point where people are making a decision—appear to have an outside effect on behavior.

Another set of our experiments, conducted with mock tax forms, convinced us that it would be better to have people put their signature at the top of the forms (before they filled in false information) rather than at the bottom

(after the lying was done). Unable to get the IRS to give our theory a go in the real world, we tested it out with automobile-insurance forms. An insurance company gave us 20,000 forms with which to play. For half of them, we kept the usual arrangement, with the signature line at the bottom of the page along with the statement: "I promise that the information I am providing is true." For the other half, we moved the statement and signature line to the top. We mailed the forms to 20,000 customers, and when we got the forms back, we compared the amount of driving reported on the two types of forms.

People filling out such forms have an incentive to underreport how many miles they drive, so as to be charged a lower premium. What did we find? Those who signed the form at the top said, on average, that they had driven 26,100 miles, while those who signed at the bottom said, on average, that they had driven 23,700 miles—a difference of about 2,400 miles. We don't know, of course, how much those who signed at the top really drove, so we don't know if they were perfectly honest—but we do know that they cheated a good deal less than our control group.

Such tricks aren't going to save us from the next big Ponzi scheme or doping athlete or thieving politician. But they could rein in the vast majority of people who cheat "just by a little." Across all of our experiments, we have tested thousands of people, and from time to time, we did see aggressive cheaters who kept as much money as possible. In the matrix experiments, for example, we have never seen anyone claim to solve 18 or 19 out of the 20 matrices. But once in a while, a participant claimed to have solved all 20. Fortunately, we did not encounter many of these people, and because they seemed to be the exception and not the rule, we lost only a few hundred dollars to these big cheaters. At the same time, we had thousands and thousands of participants who cheated by "just" a few matrices, but because there were so many of them, we lost thousands and thousands of dollars to them.

In short, very few people steal to a maximal degree, but many good people cheat just a little here and there. We fib to round up our billable hours, claim higher losses on our insurance claims, recommend unnecessary treatments and so on.

Companies also find many ways to game the system just a little. Think about credit-card companies that raise interest rates ever so slightly for no apparent reason and invent all kinds of hidden fees and penalties (which are often referred to, within companies, as "revenue enhancements"). Think about banks that slow down check processing so that they can hold on to our money for an extra day or two or charge exorbitant fees for overdraft protection and for using ATMs.

All of this means that, although it is obviously important to pay attention to flagrant misbehaviors, it is probably even more important to discourage the small and more ubiquitous forms of dishonesty—the misbehavior that affects all of us, as both perpetrators and victims. This is especially true given what we know about the contagious nature of cheating and the way that small transgressions can grease the psychological skids to larger ones.

We want to install locks to stop the next Bernie Madoff, the next Enron, the next steroid-enhanced all-star, the next serial plagiarist, the next self-dealing political miscreant. But locking our doors against the dishonest monsters will not keep them out; they will always cheat their way in. It is the woman down the hallway—the sweet one who could not even carry away your flat-screen TV if she wanted to—who needs to be reminded constantly that, even if the door is open, she cannot just walk in and "borrow" a cup of sugar without asking.

(Mr. Ariely is the James B. Duke Professor of Behavior Economics at Duke University. This piece is adapted from his forthcoming book, *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone—Especially Ourselves*, to be published by HarperCollins on June 5.)

20120526-12	19:25	SteveB	Re: "Why We Lie" (reply to Dale, above)
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Very interesting, Dale. Thanks. Monday's FotM Newsletter will be a good one.

20120526-07	15:23	SteveB	"Fox Mangles Data to Claim 'The Poor' are Getting 'Richer'"
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"Fox Mangles Data to Claim 'The Poor' are Getting 'Richer'" by Media Matter/NationofChange

May 26, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/fox-mangles-data-claim-poor-are-getting-richer-1338045893>)

("Empirical Studies Show 'A Strong Positive Relationship' Between 'Parent And Child Income In The United States.' From a report by the Congressional Research Service titled, 'The U.S. Income Distribution And Mobility: Trends and International Comparisons.'")

Fox's John Stossel claimed that it's a "myth" that "the poor are getting poorer" and that they are actually getting "richer." In fact, incomes for the bottom fifth have shown almost no growth in recent decades, and the numbers Stossel used to support his argument were cherry-picked.

Incomes At The Bottom Have Shown Almost No Growth In Decades; Stossel Calls It "Getting Richer"
Stossel: "The Rich Have Gotten Richer, But So Have The Poor." From Fox News' *Fox & Friends*.

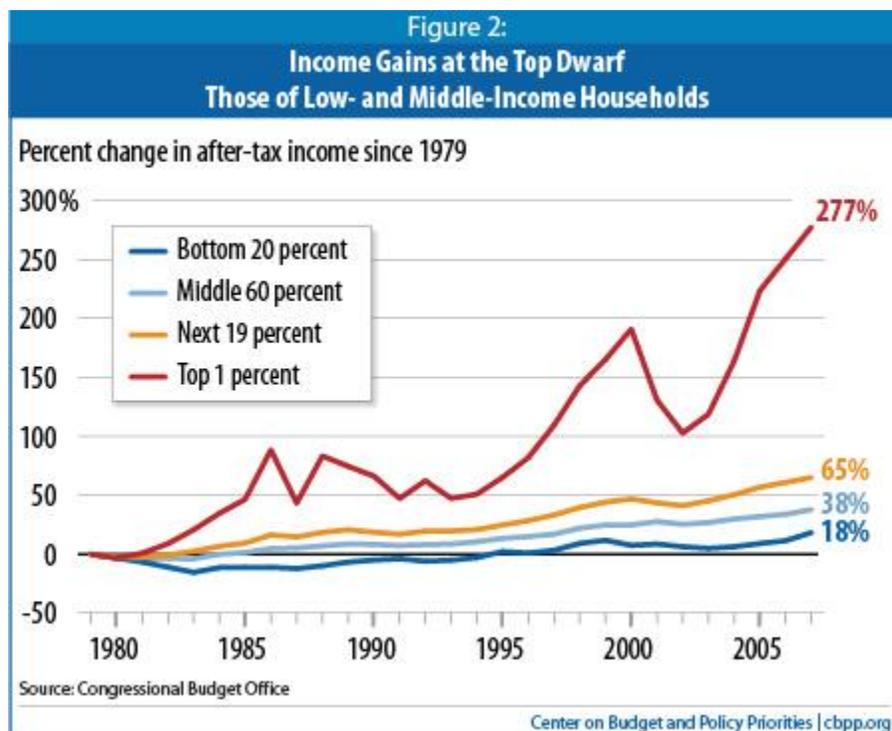
STOSSEL: There are just two myths. One is that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. And the truth is yes, over time the rich have gotten richer, but so have the poor -- 20 percent richer since I was in college. (Fox News, *Fox & Friends*, 5/24/12)

CBPP: "The Era Of Shared Prosperity Ended In The 1970s." From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report:

Census family income data show that the era of shared prosperity ended in the 1970s and illustrate the divergence in income that has emerged since that time. CBO data allow us to look at what has happened to comprehensive income since 1979 -- both before and after taxes -- and offer a better view of what has happened at the top of the distribution.

As Figure 2 shows, between 1979 and 2007, average income after taxes in the top 1 percent of the distribution rose 277 percent, meaning that it nearly quadrupled. That compares with increases of about 40 percent in the middle 60 percent of the distribution and 18 percent in the bottom fifth.

The report included this graph:

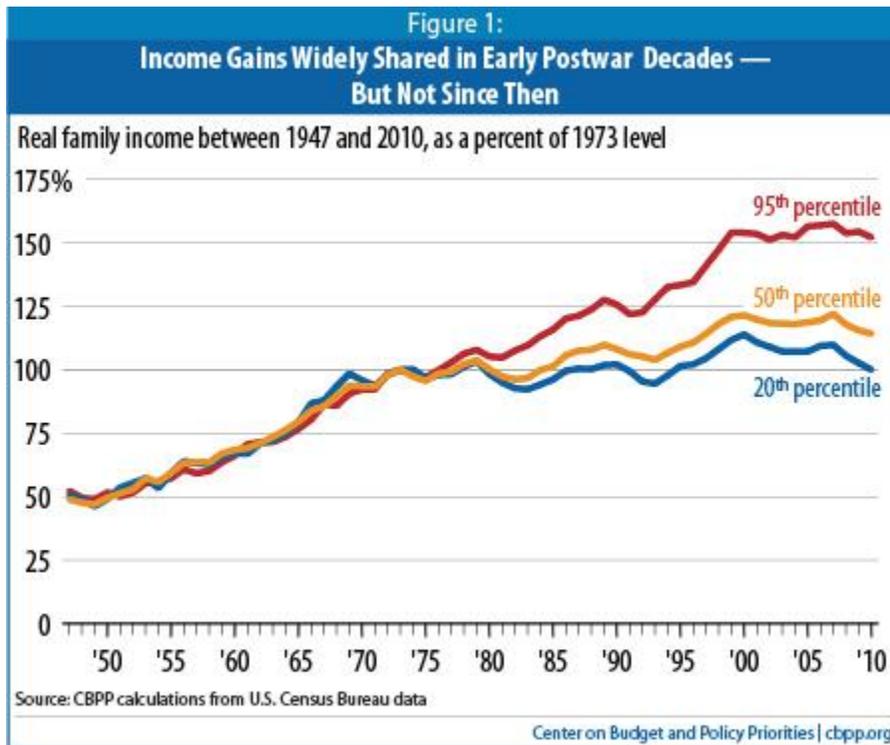


(Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 3/5/12) (<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3629>)

CBPP: In The 1970s, "Income Disparities Began To Widen, With Income Growing Much Faster At The Top Of The Ladder Than In The Middle Or Bottom." From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

Census family income data show that from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, incomes across the income distribution grew at nearly the same pace. Figure 1 indexes the level of income at several points on the distribution to its 1973 level. It shows that real (inflation-adjusted) family income roughly doubled over that period at the 95th percentile (the level of income separating the 5 percent of families with the highest income from the remaining 95 percent), the median (the level of income separating the richer half of families from the poorer half), and the 20th percentile (the level of income separating the poorest fifth of families from the remaining 80 percent). Beginning in the 1970s, income disparities began to widen, with income growing much faster at the top of the ladder than in the middle or bottom.

The report included this graph:



[Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [3/5/12](#)]

Fox Graphic Cherry-Picks Numbers To Mislead About Change In Incomes At The Bottom
Graphic: "Poorest Fifth Now 17% Richer." From Fox News' *Fox & Friends*:



(Fox News, *Fox & Friends*, 5/24/12)

Fox's Numbers Are Deceptive; Average Income In Bottom Fifth Was Actually \$11,034 In 2010. The figures in Fox's on-screen graphic represent income earned by a household at the 20th percentile of the income distribution, meaning that almost every household in the bottom fifth actually made less than \$20,000 in 2010. At no point during the segment did Fox make clear that its figures represented the top income in the bottom 20 percent. (Census Bureau, September 2011)

Fox Cherry-Picked Its Data -- Income At The 20th Percentile Peaked In 2000 And Has Fallen By More Than 10 Percent. In 2000, a household at the 20th percentile of the income distribution earned \$22,689. From the Census Bureau's "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010":

Table A-3.

Selected Measures of Household Income Dispersion: 1967 to 2010

(Income in 2010 CPI-U-RS adjusted dollars. For further explanation of income inequality measures, see Current Population Reports, Series P60-204, *The Changing Shape of the Nation's Income Distribution: 1947-1998*. Standard errors presented in this table were calculated using general variance formula parameters and may differ from the standard errors in text tables that were calculated using replicate weights. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/apds/techdoc/cps/cpsmar11.pdf)

Measures of income dispersion	2010	2009 ¹	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004 ²	2003	2002	2001	2000 ³
MEASURE											
Household Income at Selected Percentiles											
10th percentile limit	11,904	12,320	12,315	12,789	12,977	12,607	12,589	12,490	12,871	13,160	13,398
20th percentile limit	20,000	20,791	20,974	21,337	21,666	21,419	21,338	21,320	21,713	22,131	22,689
50th (median)	49,445	50,599	50,939	52,823	52,124	51,739	51,174	51,353	51,398	52,005	53,164
80th percentile limit	100,065	101,651	101,508	105,156	104,930	102,420	101,580	102,980	101,824	102,833	103,525
90th percentile limit	138,923	139,904	140,050	143,012	143,825	140,823	139,514	140,125	138,299	139,937	141,805
95th percentile limit	180,810	182,972	182,277	186,126	188,175	185,397	181,399	182,707	181,797	185,345	183,865

(Census Bureau, September 2011) (<http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-239.pdf#page=49>)

Stossel Ignores Problems With Income Mobility In U.S.

Stossel: "The Poor Are Not The Same People" Because "There Still Is Income Mobility In America."

From the show:

STOSSEL: There's this myth that the poor have gotten poorer; it's not true. Also, the poor are not the same people. Oprah Winfrey was once on welfare, and now she's one of the richest people in the world. There still is income mobility in America. (Fox News, *Fox & Friends*, 5/24/12)

CRS: Empirical Studies Show "A Strong Positive Relationship" Between "Parent And Child Income In The United States." From a report by the Congressional Research Service titled, "The U.S. Income Distribution And Mobility: Trends and International Comparisons":

Intergenerational elasticity (IGE) measures how persistent position in the income distribution is from one generation to the next. IGE is a single number that indicates the extent to which parents' position in the income distribution explains their adult children's relative income. The lower the elasticity, the less likely inequality is to be perpetuated from one generation to the next; that is, the more mobile the society.

Empirical analyses have estimated a strong positive relationship -- about 0.5 -- between parent and adult child income in the United States. An IGE of 0.5 suggests that if the income of a child's parents was 30% higher than the average income of families in the parents' generation, then the child's income will be 15% above the average for his/her generation. In other words, in the United States, about 50% of the (dis)advantage of growing up in a (low) high income family may be inherited. (Congressional Research Service, 3/7/12)

CRS: Children Born Into Low Income Families "May Have Become Less Likely To Surpass Their Parents' Position At The Bottom Of The Income Distribution." From the CRS report:

It is difficult to precisely answer the question of whether the importance of parents' relative income to adult children's relative income changed over the period that inequality has been increasing in the United States. This is partly the case because few sources cover multiple generations of adults for which data are available on family income at the time they were children. As described more fully below, empirical analyses suggest that children born into low-income families have not become more likely and may have become less likely to surpass their parents' position at the bottom of the income distribution. Put differently, mobility in the United States does not appear to have offset the increase in cross-sectional inequality in recent decades. (Congressional Research Service, 3/7/12)

CRS: "The United States Typically Is Found To Be Among The Least Mobile Of The Advanced Economies."

The CRS report notes that "although the rank of the United States differs somewhat from one study to the next, as discussed below, the United States typically is found to be among the least mobile of the advanced economies." (Congressional Research Service, 3/7/12)

CRS: United States "Has Less Upward Mobility From The Bottom [Fifth] And More Low-Income Persistence" Than U.K. And Nordic Countries. From the report:

Jantti et al. developed comparable intergenerational samples for six countries from which they derived estimates of intergenerational mobility at different points in the joint distribution of father and son earnings. The estimation of transition matrices allowed them to compare mobility rates from one quintile to another in the distribution. The researchers found that the United States has less upward mobility from the bottom quintile and more low-income persistence than the United Kingdom and Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) included in their analysis.

The authors suggest that, despite these results, Americans have been able to maintain the perception of living in a mobile society because transition rates of the middle three quintiles are similar in the United States and other advanced economies. "In the U.S., such middle class moves are associated with fairly substantial changes in real living standards (i.e., measured in actual dollars earned) ... [that] are experienced or witnessed by a substantial fraction of the U.S. population." (Congressional Research Service, 3/7/12)

NY Times: "42 Percent Of American Men" Born Into Bottom Fifth "Stay There As Adults." From *The New York Times*:

At least five large studies in recent years have found the United States to be less mobile than comparable nations. A project led by Markus Jantti, an economist at a Swedish university, found that 42 percent of American men raised in the bottom fifth of incomes stay there as adults. That shows a level of persistent

disadvantage much higher than in Denmark (25 percent) and Britain (30 percent) -- a country famous for its class constraints.

Meanwhile, just 8 percent of American men at the bottom rose to the top fifth. That compares with 12 percent of the British and 14 percent of the Danes. (*The New York Times*, 1/5/12)

NY Times: 65 Percent Of Americans "Born In The Bottom Fifth Stay In The Bottom Two-Fifths." From the *Times*:

Despite frequent references to the United States as a classless society, about 62 percent of Americans (male and female) raised in the top fifth of incomes stay in the top two-fifths, according to research by the Economic Mobility Project of the Pew Charitable Trusts. Similarly, 65 percent born in the bottom fifth stay in the bottom two-fifths. (*The New York Times*, 1/5/12)

Stossel Disappears Tens Of Millions Of Americans Shielded From Poverty By Federal Safety Net
Stossel: Idea That Government Can Alleviate Poverty "Is Just A Lie." From the show:

STOSSEL: I'm not -- if you are mentally ill, if you're in a shelter, you can have a really tough life. I don't mean to make light of that. But this idea that government can fix it, and it's a horrible growing crisis, is just a lie. (Fox News, *Fox & Friends*, 5/24/12)

CBPP: Stimulus Programs Kept Nearly 7 Million People Out Of Poverty. From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

Six temporary federal initiatives enacted in 2009 and 2010 to bolster the economy by lifting consumers' incomes and purchases kept nearly 7 million Americans out of poverty in 2010, under an alternative measure of poverty that takes into account the impact of government benefit programs and taxes. These initiatives -- three new or expanded tax credits, two enhancements of unemployment insurance, and an expansion of benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called food stamps) -- were part of the 2009 Recovery Act. Congress subsequently extended or expanded some of them.

To gauge the impacts of these initiatives on poverty, analysts cannot use the official poverty measure because it counts only cash income and does not take refundable tax credits, SNAP benefits, and other non-cash assistance into account. Therefore, we use a poverty measure that adopts recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), and that most experts prefer to the traditional poverty measure. Using the NAS measure to analyze newly released Census data for 2010, we find that the six Recovery Act initiatives kept 6.9 million people above the poverty line in 2010:

- Expansions in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) kept 1.6 million people out of poverty.
- The Making Work Pay tax credit, which expired at the end of 2010, kept another 1.5 million people out of poverty.
- Expansions in the duration and level of unemployment insurance benefits kept 3.4 million people out of poverty.
- Expansions in SNAP benefits kept 1.0 million people out of poverty.

These initiatives had a wide reach across the population, reaching a majority of American households. The 6.9 million people kept above the poverty line in 2010 included an estimated 2.5 million children, 200,000 seniors, 3.1 million non-Latino whites, 1.3 million non-Latino blacks, and 2.0 million Latinos. (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 11/7/11)

CBPP: Social Security Keeps Nearly 20 Million Americans -- Including More Than 1 Million Children -- Out Of Poverty. From a Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report titled, "Social Security Keeps 20 Million Americans Out of Poverty: A State-By-State Analysis":

Almost 90 percent of people aged 65 and older receive some of their family income from Social Security. Without Social Security benefits, 45.2 percent of elderly Americans would have incomes below the poverty line, all else being equal. With Social Security benefits, only 9.7 percent are poor. Some 13.2 million elderly Americans are lifted out of poverty by Social Security.

Social Security is important for children and their families as well as for the elderly. About 6 million children under age 18 (8 percent of all U.S. children) lived in families that received income from Social Security in 2008, according to Census data. Over 3 million children received their own benefits as dependents of retired, disabled, or deceased workers. Others lived with parents or relatives who received Social Security benefits. In all, 1.1 million children are lifted out of poverty by Social Security. (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 8/11/10)

20120526-10	19:05	SteveB	"Romney Messes Up, Tells the Truth About Austerity"
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It is not the job of business to take care of the people, though meeting the needs of people can result in profits. It is the government's job to see to the welfare of its people, or it is doomed to failure. History documents these failures over and over again.

"Romney Messes Up, Tells the Truth About Austerity" by William K. Black, Huffington Post

May 25, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/william-k-black/romney-austerity_b_1545454.html)

Mitt Romney has periodic breakdowns when asked questions about the economy because he sometimes forgets the need to lie. He forgets that he is supposed to treat austerity as the epitome of economic wisdom. When he responds quickly to questions about austerity he slips into default mode and speaks the truth -- adopting austerity during the recovery from a Great Recession would (as in Europe) throw the nation back into recession or depression. The latest example is his May 23, 2012 interview with Mark Halperin in *Time* magazine.

Halperin: Why not in the first year, if you're elected -- why not in 2013, go all the way and propose the kind of budget with spending restraints, that you'd like to see after four years in office? Why not do it more quickly?

Romney: Well because, if you take a trillion dollars for instance, out of the first year of the federal budget, that would shrink GDP over 5%. That is by definition throwing us into recession or depression. So I'm not going to do that, of course.

Romney explains that austerity, during the recovery from a Great Recession, would cause catastrophic damage to our nation. The problem, of course, is that the Republican congressional leadership is committed to imposing austerity on the nation and Speaker Boehner has just threatened that Republicans will block the renewal of the debt ceiling in order to extort Democrats to agree to austerity -- severe cuts to social programs. Romney knows this could "throw us into recession or depression" and says he would never follow such a policy.

Romney, however, has not opposed Boehner's threat to use extortion to force austerity on the nation. Romney has the nomination sown up, but I predict that he will stand by and let Boehner try to throw us into a Great Depression rather than upset the Tea Party-wing of the Republican Party. Indeed, Romney will attack Democrats who have the political courage to defend our nation against his Party's demands for austerity that would throw us into recession or depression.

What does one call a politician who, solely to advance his personal political ambition, supports his Party's efforts to coerce austerity even though he knows that the austerity would cause a national economic catastrophe and states that he, "of course," would never adopt such self-destructive austerity if he were president? Romney is failing the tests of courage, integrity, and loyalty to our nation and people.

Later in the interview, Romney claims that federal budgetary deficits are "immoral." But he has just explained that using austerity for the purported purpose of ending a deficit would cause a recession or depression. A recession or depression would make the deficit far larger. That means that Romney should be denouncing austerity as "immoral" (as well as suicidal) because it will not simply increase the deficit (which he claims to find "immoral" because of its impact on children) but also dramatically increase unemployment, poverty, child poverty and hunger, and harm their education by causing more teachers to lose their jobs and more school programs to be cut. Fewer children will be able to get college degrees. Austerity is the great enemy of children -- it is the epitome of a self-destructive, immoral economic policy.

Listen for the sounds of silence from Romney in coming months. I predict that he will not act to protect our children or our economy from the suicidal and "immoral" austerity his Republican allies are trying to coerce the Democrats to inflict on our economy and our children.

[20120526-11](#) 19:15 SteveB An HONEST Game of 'Life'

http://www.collegehumor.com/article/6774819/honest-game-of-life?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+collegehumor%2Farticles+%28CollegeHumor+Articles%29

[20120527-02](#) 10:58 Art Memorial Day



[20120527-03](#) 11:39 SteveG "Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills"

A must read about medical care that republicans, democrats, independents, left, right, moderate, and all Americans should be aware of and collectively fight to correct.

"Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills" by Chad Terhune, *Los Angeles Times*

May 27, 2012, (<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-medical-prices-20120527,0,4627745.story>)

(The lowest price is usually available only if patients don't use their health insurance. In one case, blood tests that cost an insured patient \$415 would have been \$95 in cash.)

A Long Beach hospital charged Jo Ann Snyder \$6,707 for a CT scan of her abdomen and pelvis after colon surgery. But because she had health insurance with Blue Shield of California, her share was much less: \$2,336.

Then Snyder tripped across one of the little-known secrets of healthcare: If she hadn't used her insurance, her bill would have been even lower, just \$1,054.

"I couldn't believe it," said Snyder, a 57-year-old hair salon manager. "I was really upset that I got charged so much and Blue Shield allowed that. You expect them to work harder for you and negotiate a better deal."

Here's what eight hospitals charge for a CT scan of the abdomen if paid in cash, compared with an insurer's negotiated rate and the full price reported to the state in 2011:

Hospital	Cash	Average insurance price	Average 2011 charge
Los Alamitos Medical Center	\$250	\$2,400	\$4,423
Long Beach Memorial	527*	2,400	3,525
Cedars-Sinai	623	2,400	4,995
Lakewood Regional	779	3,200	4,197
Downey Regional	847	2,400	3,691
Keck, USC	882*	2,400	3,651
Hoag, Newport Beach	1,294*	1,600	1,896
St. Francis, Lynwood	N/A**	2,400	3,816

*Excludes physician fees

**Required a doctor's faxed order and patient's annual income

Sources: The hospitals, Blue Shield of California, Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development. Graphics reporting by **CHAD TERHUNE**

Los Angeles Times

Unknown to most consumers, many hospitals and physicians offer steep discounts for cash-paying patients regardless of income. But there's a catch: Typically you can get the lowest price only if you don't use your health insurance.

That disparity in pricing is coming under fire from people like Snyder, who say it's unfair for patients who pay hefty insurance premiums and deductibles to be penalized with higher rates for treatment.

The difference in price can be stunning. Los Alamitos Medical Center, for instance, lists a CT scan of the abdomen on a state website for \$4,423. Blue Shield says its negotiated rate at the hospital is about \$2,400.

When *The Times* called for a cash price, the hospital said it was \$250.

"It frustrates people because there's no correlation between what things cost and what is charged," said Paul Keckley, executive director of the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions, a research arm of the accounting firm. "It changes the game when healthcare's secrets aren't so secret."

Snyder's experience is hardly unique. In addition to Los Alamitos, The Times contacted seven other hospitals across Southern California, and nearly all had similar disparities between what a patient would pay through an insurer and the cash price offered for a common CT, or computed tomography, scan, which provides a more detailed image than an X-ray.

Health insurance still offers substantial value for consumers by providing preventive care at no cost and offering protection from major medical bills that could bankrupt most families.

But cash prices — typically available for hundreds of common outpatient services and tests — have a real appeal to millions of consumers who are on the hook for a growing share of their medical costs as employers and insurers cut back on coverage and push more high-deductible plans.

Some doctors are trying to spread the word about cash prices and they're urging patients to pressure hospitals and insurers to offer a better deal.

David Belk, an internist in Alameda, launched a website about medical costs and speaks to community groups about the huge markups compared with the prevailing cash price.

Belk recently told a group gathered at a seniors center about the vast price difference when he requested routine blood work for a patient last year. A local hospital charged her \$782. Her insurer said that with its discount, she owed only \$415.

"She could have gotten it for \$95 in cash. How does that make sense?" Belk said. "The last thing the insurance companies want you to know is how inexpensive this stuff really is."

For those patients who have insurance, getting the lower price would typically mean withholding that information from the hospital or clinic. Experts warn that doing so, however, means any payments don't apply to customers' annual insurance limits for out-of-pocket spending.

The decision on whether to pay cash or apply the fee toward the deductible will depend on a variety of factors, including the amount of the deductible and whether the person expects to incur more medical bills that year.

The cash discounts evolved over time after hospitals were criticized in recent years for charging the uninsured their highest rates and then hounding them at times with overzealous collection efforts.

New government rules ensued limiting in many cases what hospitals could charge lower-income patients who were footing their own bills. Meantime, hospitals have been trying to boost revenue by encouraging more patients to pay upfront so they can avoid a lengthy and uncertain collections process.

The California Hospital Assn. says that discounted cash prices are intended for the uninsured, not those who have coverage. Jan Emerson-Shea, a vice president at the industry group, said most hospitals offer a separate discount to insured patients who are willing to pay their portion upfront.

"If you have insurance, you are under that insurance plan's negotiated rate with the hospital," she said.

In the view of Robert Berenson, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute and vice chairman of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, big hospitals are exerting their market power to charge ever-increasing rates and major insurers go along with it because they can pass along the costs to employers and consumers. Insurance industry officials say that health plans negotiate the lowest prices they can, but that they also need to include prominent hospitals favored by customers in the network, and those institutions can command higher prices.

Hospital executives say they don't like to charge insured patients more, but say that's a result of the country's broken healthcare system.

At Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, where Snyder got her CT scan, the hospital's chief financial officer said insured patients like her pay more to subsidize the uncompensated care given to the uninsured and low reimbursements for Medicaid patients.

"We end up being forced to charge a premium to health plans to make the books balance," said John Bishop, the hospital's finance chief. "It's a backdoor tax on employers and consumers."

Those higher prices charged by hospitals and other medical providers drove up healthcare spending at double the rate of inflation during the recession even as patients used less medical care, according to a new study by the Health Care Cost Institute.

Snyder, the salon manager, stumbled across the two-tier system accidentally. She has filed suit against her insurer, saying she hopes her case will lead to more disclosure of the price options, and ultimately lower treatment costs for patients.

The Long Beach woman said she sought treatment in 2009 for a pain in her abdomen. First her doctor ordered a CT scan of her abdomen and pelvis at Liberty Pacific Medical Imaging, an independent facility near Long Beach Memorial.

She got approval from Blue Shield, and she paid the negotiated rate of \$660. Snyder underwent surgery on her colon, and her doctor ordered another CT scan in January 2010 because she felt lingering pain.

This time, her surgeon referred her to the hospital's imaging center. Snyder said she assumed her bill would be about the same because it was the identical test. Instead, Blue Shield's rate with Long Beach Memorial was \$3,497 and the insurer told Snyder she owed \$2,336, records show.

Incensed by having to pay nearly four times as much for the second scan, she started searching for an explanation. That's when she discovered that the hospital's cash price was less than half what she owed through her insurance.

In a complaint filed last month in Orange County Superior Court, Snyder accused Blue Shield of unfair business practices, breach of good faith and misrepresentation over her medical bills. The suit seeks class-action status on behalf of other Blue Shield customers.

A spokesman for Blue Shield said the case has no merit and the nonprofit insurer negotiates the most favorable rates it can.

In a court filing, Blue Shield said it "cannot promise or represent that there could not be providers who will charge someone less out-of-pocket cost for a service than she would pay if the Blue Shield contract rate applies."

Snyder said she went back to work last year at a hair salon in Seal Beach, partly to help pay her insurance premiums of \$700 a month.

"It kills me that I'm paying that much in premiums," she said, "and it's better to pay cash out of my own pocket."

Health-policy experts say the growing awareness of cash prices should accelerate the trend toward increased disclosure of all types of medical costs. But entrenched interests are likely to resist.

"The insiders in the healthcare industry don't want to lose control over this information," Keckley said. "But price transparency is inevitable."

"Memorial Day Thoughts on National Defense" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

May 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/memorial-day-thoughts-national-defense-1338127207>)

We can best honor those who have given their lives for this nation in combat by making sure our military might is proportional to what America needs.

The United States spends more on our military than do China, Russia, Britain, France, Japan, and Germany put together.

With the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the cost of fighting wars is projected to drop – but the “base” defense budget (the annual cost of paying troops and buying planes, ships, and tanks – not including the costs of actually fighting wars) is scheduled to rise. The base budget is already about 25 percent higher than it was a decade ago, adjusted for inflation.

One big reason: It’s almost impossible to terminate large defense contracts. Defense contractors have cultivated sponsors on Capitol Hill and located their plants and facilities in politically important congressional districts. Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and others have made spending on national defense into America’s biggest jobs program.

So we keep spending billions on Cold War weapons systems like nuclear attack submarines, aircraft carriers, and manned combat fighters that pump up the bottom lines of defense contractors but have nothing to do with 21st-century combat.

For example, the Pentagon says it wants to buy fewer F-35 joint strike fighter planes than had been planned – the single-engine fighter has been plagued by cost overruns and technical glitches – but the contractors and their friends on Capitol Hill promise a fight.

The absence of a budget deal on Capitol Hill is supposed to trigger an automatic across-the-board ten-year cut in the defense budget of nearly \$500 billion, starting January.

But Republicans have vowed to restore the cuts. The House Republican budget cuts everything else — yet brings defense spending back up. Mitt Romney’s proposed budget does the same.

Yet even if the scheduled cuts occur, the Pentagon is still projected to spend over \$2.7 trillion over the next ten years.

At the very least, hundreds of billions could be saved without jeopardizing the nation’s security by ending weapons systems designed for an age of conventional warfare. We should shrink the F-35 fleet of stealth fighters. Cut the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons, ballistic missile submarines, and intercontinental ballistic missiles. And take a cleaver to the Navy and Air Force budgets. (Most of the action is with the Army, Marines, and Special Forces.)

At a time when Medicare, Medicaid, and non-defense discretionary spending (including most programs for the poor, as well as infrastructure and basic R&D) are in serious jeopardy, Obama and the Democrats should be calling for even more defense cuts.

A reasonable and rational defense budget would be a fitting memorial to those who have given their lives so we may remain free.

[20120527-10](#)

21:54

SteveG

“Reckoning with Torture: Memos & Testimonies from the ‘War on Terror’”

Look around, read some of the declassified documents:

<http://reckoningwithtorture.org/>.

20120527-12 23:59 SteveB Photo: Wisconsin Cheese & Cheesehead Hats

<http://www.thequesoqueen.com/2010/10/cheesy-introduction.html>

(Nicole Buegers)



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #148 — MAY 29, 2012

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

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

A Republican Politician Tells a Truth

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 29, 2012)

This is just about as straight and simple as it can be told. I just hope some of the "rock for brains" Republicans are listening. Alan Simpson says they "shouldn't even be in Congress."

"Alan Simpson Slams Fellow Republicans for Unwillingness to Compromise" by Huffington Post

May 27, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/27/alan-simpson-republicans_n_1549604.html)

Former Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) lashed out at members of his party on Sunday, slamming them for their unwillingness to compromise on proposed tax increases.

In his characteristically colorful style, Simpson told CNN's Fared Zakaria that Republicans' rigid opposition to new tax revenues has hampered productivity and diminished the chances of reaching an agreement with Democrats on debt reduction.

"You can't cut spending your way out of this hole," Simpson, who was appointed as co-chair of President Obama's Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform in 2010, said. "You can't grow your way out of this hole, and you can't tax your way out of this hole. So put that in your pipe and smoke it, we tell these people. This is madness."

Simpson continued: "If you want to be a purist, go somewhere on a mountaintop and praise the east or something. But if you want to be in politics, you learn to compromise. And you learn to compromise on the issue without compromising yourself. Show me a guy who won't compromise and I'll show you a guy with rock for brains."

The former senator, along with debt commission co-chair Erskine Bowles, developed a plan in 2010 for bringing down the top tax rate and lowering the deficit by repealing a number of tax cuts and credits. The initial plan, commonly known as Simpson-Bowles, was mostly ignored by lawmakers. A bipartisan budget modeled after their report was rejected by the House earlier this year.

During the interview Sunday, he expressed frustration with his party's focus on social issues, as well as the ability of outspoken figures like Americans for Tax Reform head Grover Norquist to drive the conversation.

"I guess I'm known as a RINO now, which means a Republican in name only, because, I guess, of social views, perhaps, or common sense would be another one, which seems to escape members of our party," Simpson said. "For heaven's sake, you have Grover Norquist wandering the earth in his white robes saying that if you raise taxes

one penny, he'll defeat you. He can't murder you. He can't burn your house. The only thing he can do to you, as an elected official, is defeat you for reelection. And if that means more to you than your country when we need patriots to come out in a situation when we're in extremity, you shouldn't even be in Congress."

20120528-01 08:51 Art "Typical CEO in U.S. Made \$9.6 Million Last Year"

And here's the problem -- they need a tax break...

"Typical CEO in U.S. Made \$9.6 Million Last Year" by Christina Rexrode and Bernard Condon, AP

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/international-news/typical-ceo-in-us-made-96-million-last-year/article2443297/>)

(Profits at big U.S. companies broke records last year, and so did pay for CEOs.)

The head of a typical public company made \$9.6-million in 2011, according to an analysis by The Associated Press using data from Equilar, an executive pay research firm.

That was up more than 6 per cent from the previous year, and is the second year in a row of increases. The figure is also the highest since the AP began tracking executive compensation in 2006.

Companies trimmed cash bonuses but handed out more in stock awards. For shareholder activists who have long decried chief executive officer pay as exorbitant, that was a victory of sorts.

That's because the stock awards are being tied more often to company performance. In those instances, CEOs can't cash in the shares right away: They have to meet goals first, like boosting profit to a certain level.

The idea is to motivate CEOs to make sure a company does well and to tie their fortunes to the company's for the long term. For too long, activists say, CEOs have been richly rewarded no matter how a company has fared – "pay for pulse," as some critics call it.

To be sure, the companies' motives are pragmatic. The corporate world is under a brighter, more uncomfortable spotlight than it was a few years ago, before the financial crisis struck in the fall of 2008.

Last year, a law gave shareholders the right to vote on whether they approve of the CEO's pay. The vote is nonbinding, but companies are keen to avoid an embarrassing "no."

"I think the boards were more easily shamed than we thought they were," says Stephen Davis, a shareholder expert at Yale University, referring to boards of directors, which set executive pay.

In the past year, he says, "Shareholders found their voice."

The typical CEO got stock awards worth \$3.6-million in 2011, up 11 per cent from the year before. Cash bonuses fell about 7 per cent, to \$2-million.

The value of stock options, as determined by the company, climbed 6 per cent to a median \$1.7-million. Options usually give the CEO the right to buy shares in the future at the price they're trading at when the options are granted, so they're worth something only if the shares go up.

Profit at companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 stock index rose 16 per cent last year, remarkable in an economy that grew more slowly than expected.

CEOs managed to sell more, and squeeze more profit from each sale, despite problems ranging from a downgrade of the U.S. credit rating to an economic slowdown in China and Europe's never-ending debt crisis.

Still, there wasn't much immediate benefit for the shareholders. The S&P 500 ended the year unchanged from where it started. Including dividends, the index returned a slender 2 per cent.

Shareholder activists, while glad that companies are moving a bigger portion of CEO pay into stock awards, caution that the rearranging isn't a cure-all.

For one thing, companies don't have to tie stock awards to performance. Instead, they can make the awards automatically payable on a certain date – meaning all the CEO has to do is stick around.

Other companies do tie stock awards to performance but set easy goals. Sometimes, "they set the bar so low, it would be difficult for an executive not to trip over it," says Patrick McGurn, special counsel at Institutional Shareholder Services, which advises pension funds and other big investors on how to vote.

And for many shareholders, their main concern – that pay is just too much, no matter what the form – has yet to be addressed.

"It's just that total (compensation) is going up, and that's where the problem lies," says Charles Elson, director of the Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance at the University of Delaware.

The typical American worker would have to labor for 244 years to make what the typical boss of a big public company makes in one. The median pay for U.S. workers was about \$39,300 last year. That was up 1 per cent from the year before, not enough to keep pace with inflation.

Since the AP began tracking CEO pay five years ago, the numbers have seesawed. Pay climbed in 2007, fell during the recession in 2008 and 2009 and then jumped again in 2010.

To determine 2011 pay packages, the AP used Equilar data to look at the 322 companies in the S&P 500 that had filed statements with federal regulators through April 30. To make comparisons fair, the sample includes only CEOs in place for at least two years.

Among the AP's other findings: – David Simon, CEO of Simon Property, which operates malls around the country, is on track to be the highest-paid in the AP survey, at \$137-million. That was almost entirely in stock awards that could eventually be worth \$132-million. The company said it wanted to make sure Simon wasn't lured to another company. He has been CEO since 1995; his father and uncle are Simon Property's co-founders.

This month, Simon Property's shareholders rejected Simon's pay package by a large margin: 73 per cent of the votes cast for or against were against.

But the company doesn't appear likely to change the 2011 package. After the shareholder vote, it released a statement saying that "we value our stockholders' input" and would "take their views into consideration as (the board) reviews compensation plans for our management team." But it also said that Simon's performance had been stellar and it needed to pay him enough to keep him in the job.

Simon's paycheck looks paltry compared with that of Apple CEO Tim Cook, whose pay package was valued at \$378-million when he became CEO in August. That was almost entirely in stock awards, some of which won't be redeemable until 2021, so the value could change dramatically. Cook wasn't included in the AP study because he is new to the job.

- Of the five highest-paid CEOs, three were also in the top five the year before. All three are in the TV business: Leslie Moonves of CBS (\$68-million); David Zaslav of Discovery Communications, parent of Animal Planet, TLC and other channels (\$52-million); and Philippe Dauman of Viacom, which owns MTV and other channels (\$43-million).

- About two in three CEOs got raises. For 16 CEOs in the sample, pay more than doubled from a year earlier, including Bank of America's Brian Moynihan (from \$1.3-million to \$7.5-million), Marathon Oil's Clarence Cazalot Jr. (from \$8.8-million to \$29.9-million) and Motorola Mobility's Sanjay Jha (from \$13-million to \$47.2-million).
- CEOs running health-care companies made the most (\$10.8-million). Those running utilities made the least (\$7-million).
- Perks and other personal benefits, such as hired drivers or personal use of company airplanes, rose only slightly, and some companies cut back, saying they wanted to align their pay structure with "best practices."

Military contractor General Dynamics stopped paying for country club memberships for top executives, though it gave them payments equivalent to three years of club fees to ease "transition issues" caused by the change.

The typical pay of \$9.6-million that Equilar calculated is the median value, or the midpoint, of the companies used in the AP analysis. In other words, half the CEOs made more and half less.

To value stock awards and stock options, the AP used numbers supplied by the companies. Those figures are based on formulas the companies use to estimate what the stock and options will eventually be worth when a CEO receives the stock or cashes in the options.

Stock awards are generally valued based on the stock's current price. Stock options are valued using company estimates that take into account the stock's current price, how long until the CEO can cash the options in, how the stock price is expected to move before then, and expected dividends. Estimates don't generally take inflation into account.

The shift to stock awards is at least partly rooted in what is known as the Dodd-Frank law, passed in the wake of the financial crisis, which overhauled how banks and other public companies are regulated.

Beginning last year, Dodd-Frank required public companies to let shareholders vote on whether they approve of the top executives' pay packages. The votes are advisory, so companies don't have to take back even a penny if shareholders give them the thumbs-down. But shame has proved a powerful motivator.

It got Hewlett-Packard to change its ways. After an embarrassing "no" vote last year on the 2010 pay packages, including nearly \$24-million for ousted CEO Mark Hurd, the company huddled with more than 200 investment firms and major shareholders, then threw out its old pay formula. New CEO Meg Whitman is getting \$1 a year in salary and no guaranteed bonus for 2011. Nearly all her pay is in stock options that could be worth \$16-million, but only if the share price goes up.

Other companies took notice, too. Last year, shareholders rejected the CEO pay packages at Janus Capital, home builder Beazer Homes and construction company Jacobs Engineering Group. All won approval this year after the companies made the packages more palatable to shareholders.

To be sure, shareholders aren't voting en masse against executive pay. Instead, they seem to be saving "no" votes for the executives they deem most egregious.

Of more than 3,000 U.S. companies that held votes in 2011, only 43 got rejections, according to ISS. But the mere presence of the "say on pay" vote is triggering change, shareholder activists say.

"Companies that have gone through that trial by fire don't want to go through it again," says Mr. McGurn, the ISS special counsel.

Even Chesapeake Energy, a company perennially in the cross-hairs of corporate-governance activists, is bowing to pressure. The company has drawn fire for showering CEO Aubrey McClendon with assorted goodies. In addition to handing him big pay packages – \$17.9-million for 2011 – Chesapeake in recent years has spent millions sponsoring

the NBA's Oklahoma City Thunder, which he partially owns, paying him for his collection of antique maps and letting him buy stakes in company wells.

Last year, shareholders of the natural gas producer passed the proposed 2010 pay package but by a low margin, 58 per cent. This year, with shareholder pressure mounting, the board has ended some of Mr. McClendon's perks and stripped him of his title as chairman. A lawsuit settlement is forcing him to buy back his \$12-million worth of maps.

After losing the chairman job, Mr. McClendon issued a statement saying the demotion "reflects our determination to uphold strong corporate governance standards." Chesapeake will seek shareholder approval for Mr. McClendon's 2011 pay at its annual meeting in June.

So far, Citigroup is the highest-profile company to have its pay package rejected this year. The bank planned to pay CEO Vikram Pandit about \$15-million for his work last year, noting that he had returned the company to profitability in 2010 and worked for \$1 that year. Shareholders, who watched the stock price plunge 44 per cent in 2011 (after adjusting for a reverse stock split) weren't so forgiving.

It's usually around January that boards decide how much to pay a CEO for the previous year. Then they inform shareholders and ask for their vote in the spring – usually after the cash portion has already been handed out. For Mr. Pandit, that meant he had already received \$7-million in salary and cash bonus by the time shareholders voted against his pay.

In a statement, Citi said it took the vote seriously and planned to "carefully consider" the input of major shareholders. It hasn't given more specifics. Richard Parsons, who retired as Citi's chairman after the April annual meeting, as previously planned, said after the vote that the board should have done a better job explaining to shareholders how it determined CEO pay.

Another big change is that more companies are giving themselves the right to take back a top executive's pay from previous years if they determine that the executive acted inappropriately to inflate the company's financial results.

The Dodd-Frank overhaul will eventually require public companies to include such broad "claw back" provisions, which will expand on narrowly written rules from a decade ago. But companies aren't waiting. In a separate study, Equilar found that 84 per cent of Fortune 100 companies now include claw backs in their executive pay packages, up from 18 per cent in 2006.

Last year, the former CEO of Beazer Homes agreed with regulators, who cited the older claw back rules, to turn over \$6.5-million he had earned when profits were inflated. In February, UBS took back half of the previous year's bonuses awarded to many investment bankers because of subsequent losses in the unit.

Picking the right mix of incentives is partly just guesswork, and sometimes the results are simply a force of serendipity. Stocks can get swept up in rising or falling markets, so the fortunes of CEOs with well-designed pay packages can reflect luck – good or bad – not just managerial skills.

In February 2009, James Rohr, the head of PNC Financial Services, was granted options that allowed him to buy shares in the future at the then-current price, which had fallen 62 per cent in five months on its way to a 17-year low the next month.

The stock has since doubled, and the options, mostly based on hitting certain profit and cost-cutting goals, are worth more than \$20-million in paper profit, according to research by GMI Rating, a corporate governance watchdog. If investors had bought PNC stock just before the financial crisis in 2008, they would still be down more than a fifth.

Luck, of course, can cut both ways. Mr. Rohr is still waiting to cash in options granted in 2007, valued then at \$2.5-million, when the stock was 18 per cent higher than it is today.

Some shareholder groups doubt that ever-higher CEO pay, ingrained as it is in the corporate psyche, will ever be refashioned dramatically enough to satisfy shareholders and consumer groups who see the paycheques as too big,

too disconnected from performance, and set by wealthy directors who are oblivious to the way that most of their shareholders live.

"I hope we have seen the last of this," says Rosanna Weaver of the CtW Investment Group, which works on shareholder issues with union-sponsored pension funds and has lobbied against CEO pay packages at a number of companies. "But I would be very surprised, just given what I know of human nature, let alone what I know of the financial markets."

Still, she's encouraged by the change that has already been stirred.

"It's a very big task," Ms. Weaver says. "I still believe it is worth trying."

20120528-02	14:59	Pam	Re: "Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #147)
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Wow. This is amazing. The insurance companies have us over a barrel. From now on, if I need anything done other than routine maintenance, I'm going to ask for the cash up front price. This outrage has got to stop. I know hospitals charge \$7.00 for an aspirin or something along those lines. Who says we don't need consumer protection?! Elizabeth Warren, we need you.

20120528-03	15:59	Art	Re: "Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #147)
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Wow! This is ridiculous. Interestingly, I also use cash with my primary physician. After I retired from the military I had of course access to TRICARE or military health care. Since I had a good job I opted for BC/BS instead and used that while I worked and did not use TRICARE for almost 20 years. Of course, I paid several hundred a month for that. When I retired for real I had access to MEDICARE. My primary physician does not take MEDICARE or TRICARE, so I just pay him cash and get a 25% discount. So far, as I have run the math, it is far cheaper. I still have MEDICARE and TRICARE as backups but have not used them for the most part.

The downside is I really have no idea what something should cost, so I am still at the mercy of unscrupulous medical businessmen. I'd trust most of them about as far as I'd trust my Golden around an unguarded hamburger. We really need to fix a very broken medical system. All my foreign friends think we are just nuts.

20120528-06	17:05	SteveG	Re: "Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills" (reply to Pam & Art, above)
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Several years ago I was searching for medical insurance and talked with an insurance agent that stated: He had calculated how much he had paid for house insurance, medical insurance, auto insurance and had calculated the medical costs for doctors and medical facilities (including 3 child births) plus any car wrecks and home losses. His calculations showed that if he had paid for everything and had no insurance he would be \$100,000 ahead.

In 2010 I had 2 hospitalizations for a total of 4 days – 3 one time and an overnight. After insurance payments I owed \$4000. I asked the hospital if I could make arrangements and they immediately discounted 50% and offered a bigger discount if I completed some paperwork.

The medical insurance & medical care system are broken and attempts to fix the system are greeted with roadblocks on every corner.

20120528-04	16:27	MarthaH	Fw: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana <i>Banner-Graphic</i> (re: Tea Party: "Staying Together Regardless of Political Differences")
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"Staying Together Regardless of Political Differences" by Kelsey Kauffman, *Greencastle Banner-Graphic*

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.bannergraphic.com/story/1853229.html>)

To the editor:

For the past two years, I've been attending monthly meetings of the Greencastle Defenders of Liberty, the local Tea Party organization. I am generally of a different political persuasion, but I am also pro-life in the broadest sense and fear that the deficit, along with climate change, is among the worst legacies that my generation will leave to our children. Thus, I enjoy both my differences and similarities with speakers and members at the meetings.

I was disappointed, however, when the speaker at the most recent meeting sought to demonize those who disagree with her. Supporters of President Obama were characterized as "fascist, socialist, Marxist pigs." IRS agents were likened to Nazi "brown shirts."

Dire predictions were made that Obama would attempt to take the election by force. Attendees were exhorted to stockpile food and batteries.

Such nonsense! The election in November will involve the same peaceful transfer of power as every other American election. I suspect that the Tea Party's preferred candidate will win this election just as mine won last time. That is the nature -- and the beauty -- of the system.

The speaker claimed that she was "tired of being bullied by the government and the Black Panthers." Since I've not noticed any threatening Black Panthers in the quarter of a century I've lived in Greencastle, I'm betting that she doesn't come from here.

Nor does she seem to appreciate our community's longstanding tradition of neighbors caring about one another -- cheering for our school teams, eating pancakes together at the fire station, gathering for our annual July 4th celebration, pitching in when neighbors are in need -- regardless of any political or religious differences we may have. I hope we stay that way.

20120528-05	16:55	Art	Re: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana <i>Banner-Graphic</i> (reply to MarthaH, above)
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The Party of hate and fear. Surprise, surprise.

20120528-08	18:30	SteveM	Re: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana <i>Banner-Graphic</i>
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While I probably don't share the values of the "speaker" in question, he/she has the same rights to speak as you or Kelsey. Some how the whiny liberal left thinks that is a right reserved only for them. read the the quote below, slowly with out moving your lips,

"Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end." [—Rush??? —SteveB]

20120528-07

18:26 SteveM

Fw: Photos: The Problem Is Not How They Got In, But How to Get Them Out





20120528-09 23:59 SteveB Photo: Fruit of the Kalahari Desert

<http://www.watermelon.org/>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #149 — MAY 30, 2012

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

[INDEX: Click here.](#)

Big Shot Republican War Hero

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

Somehow, I missed this when it came out, but I thought its illustration valuable—of how Republicans distort the truth 180 degrees and think they can get away with it.

Right, Rumsfeld, getting bin Laden was no big deal, it's just that you didn't have the balls to do it yourself! You'd be more of a man now if you'd just keep your lying mouth shut!

"Rumsfeld Scrapped Raid — 6 Years Before Calling Osama bin Laden Kill 'Easy Call'" by Glenn Thrush, Politico

May 2, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/05/rumsfeld-called-off-bin-laden-raid-despite-downplaying-122287.html>)

My colleague Mackenzie Weinger just posted a comment from former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld questioning just how tough a call President Obama made when he gave the kill order to the SEAL team targeting Osama bin Laden.

"You mentioned there was a tough decision," Rumsfeld said on Tuesday night on Fox News. "I don't think it was a tough decision. We've seen a lot of instances where presidents over the years have had to make decisions like that."

But six years ago, Rumsfeld himself called off a major raid in Pakistan, citing many of the same factors that Obama administration officials complicated the OBL mission.

In 2007, Mark Mazetti of the *Times* reported:

A secret military operation in early 2005 to capture senior members of Al Qaeda in Pakistan's tribal areas was aborted at the last minute after top Bush administration officials decided it was too risky and could jeopardize relations with Pakistan, according to intelligence and military officials.

The target was a meeting of Qaeda leaders that intelligence officials thought included Ayman al-Zawahri, Osama bin Laden's top deputy and the man believed to run the terrorist group's operations.

But the mission was called off after Donald H. Rumsfeld, then the defense secretary, rejected an 11th-hour appeal by Porter J. Goss, then the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, officials said. Members of a

Navy Seals unit in parachute gear had already boarded C-130 cargo planes in Afghanistan when the mission was canceled, said a former senior intelligence official involved in the planning.

Mr. Rumsfeld decided that the operation, which had ballooned from a small number of military personnel and C.I.A. operatives to several hundred, was cumbersome and put too many American lives at risk, the current and former officials said. He was also concerned that it could cause a rift with Pakistan, an often reluctant ally that has barred the American military from operating in its tribal areas, the officials said.

The decision to halt the planned "snatch and grab" operation frustrated some top intelligence officials and members of the military's secret Special Operations units, who say the United States missed a significant opportunity to try to capture senior members of Al Qaeda.

20120529-01	07:30	SteveB	"Romney's Mormon Faith in Spotlight"
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"Romney's Mormon Faith in Spotlight" by Edward-Isaac Dove, Politico

May 28, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0512/76776.html>)

Mitt Romney wants voters to see him as the man to save the economy and right the country, the redeeming American hero riding in on the proverbial white horse.

Just not that White Horse.

That's the one in the old Mormon prophecy attributed to Joseph Smith, which predicts that after the banks fail and when the Constitution is nearing collapse, Mormons flush with wealth — the White Horse, in the prophecy's metaphor — will rise and lead America back to greatness.

Now that Romney's essentially secured the Republican nomination, the media attention to his religious beliefs has already kicked off a sort of national Mormonism 101. Deep into his second run for president, Romney's Mormonism remains one of his great mysteries — and obstacles — in many voters' minds. The Senate has more Mormons than Episcopalians or Lutherans, but polls consistently show that Romney's religion has remained a factor.

And with religion flaring up in the 2012 race recently amid revelations about proposed ads linking President Barack Obama to his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright — some Democrats have lashed back with suggestions that discussing Romney's religion is now fair game, too.

The White Horse prophecy itself was discounted by the church almost a hundred years ago but Mormon political figures like Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and even Romney himself still get asked about it from time to time. And even though it's long been discredited by the church, there are pieces of the prophecy that echo with important themes of mainstream Mormonism today: church members believe the Framers were divinely inspired, and Mormons have a special role to play in preserving the Constitution and the nation as a whole.

Yet Romney, for the most part, has steered clear of answering detailed questions about his religious beliefs—referring to "people of different faiths, like yours and mine" in his commencement address to the evangelical Liberty University is about as far as he's gone in the 2012 campaign.

That leaves journalists and other observers searching for clues, and the attention already going to Mormon views of the Constitution, which has percolated up from the blogs to the New York Times, provides a window into how this can play out on the campaign trail.

The idea that one day Mormons will be called upon to save the country when they see the Constitution "hang by a thread" is the controversial prophecy's best-known line, and the source of what Brigham Young University's Encyclopedia of Mormonism refers to as "an important oral tradition."

It is well-known to many church members, and continues to be an active topic of conversation among Mormons today. That sense echoes through the speeches of Mormon leaders and the beliefs of rank-and-file church members, including top LDS leaders in the church and politics. Among them: Romney's father, who said at the outset of his own presidential run that he believed in the special role Mormons had to play in preserving the Constitution.

If Mitt Romney believed that himself, he would be much like most other members of his faith. He's mentioned the divine influence on the Constitution several times on the campaign trail—as when a woman accused Obama of treason and asked whether Romney would “restore our Constitution,” Romney responded, “I happen to believe that the Constitution was not just brilliant, but probably inspired.”

His campaign didn't respond to requests for elaboration.

Of the many things that Romney, a former Mormon bishop, could be asked about if his religion becomes an election issue, the prophecy is one of the most debated, even among believers.

Like jazz and baseball, Mormonism has a distinctively American heartbeat. According to LDS beliefs, the Garden of Eden was located in Missouri. Joseph Smith found the Book of Mormon in upstate New York. And it's up to the Mormons to save America when the country begins to collapse.

After warning signs of trouble in the Middle East and anti-Mormon sentiment pervading the government, “You will see the Constitution of the United States almost destroyed. It will hang like a thread as fine as a silk fiber,” the prophecy has Smith saying.

But “it will be preserved and saved by the efforts of the White Horse,” who will “stand by the Constitution of the United States as it was given by the inspiration of God.” There will be a Black Horse — American blacks, as the text is commonly interpreted — that sides with England and France, but eventually they'll all submit to the White Horse as the religion fulfills its world-conquering destiny in an Armageddon-style war with the Russians—while keeping an eye on the looming threat of China.

The prophecy is apocryphal — it was supposedly said in May 1843, but not recorded anywhere until 50 years later — but Smith's separate, fully documented comments that believers would be “the staff upon which the nation shall lean and they shall bear the Constitution away from the very verge of destruction,” is key to Mormons' mindset, even if they're not sure what to do with the White Horse itself.

“That's a folklore — we've heard it, and I think everybody's heard it. It's been out there for many years,” said Robert McKim, a Republican Wyoming state representative and a Mormon. “The next question some people ask me, ‘Well, you think Mitt Romney's that person?’ I say, ‘I don't have no idea about that.’ I really don't worry about it, because I believe we have prophets at the head of the church, and I think if that time comes, they'll tell us. It's a passing comment that you don't speculate on, because you have no way to prove or disprove it.”

David Campbell, a Mormon himself and professor at Notre Dame who has studied his fellow church members' views on the prophecy, as well as the intersection of the church and politics, said McKim's far from alone.

“If you asked a more general question, ‘Do you believe that one day the Constitution will hang by a thread and it will be a Mormon who saves it?’ we know from data that I've collected that many Mormons actually do endorse that idea, but they would not necessarily know that that came from something known as the White Horse prophecy,” Campbell said. “They just know that there's going to be a time of Constitutional crisis maybe, and it will be a member of the LDS faith who will come and save things.”

McKim and a range of other Mormons interviewed say they have heard congregants at their churches and other friends bring up the prophecy as they talk about Romney's candidacy. No, they don't believe it themselves. Yes, they know people who do. No, they're not thrilled to hear their fellow Mormons bringing up the prophecy, and they're not anxious to have it get the wider exposure they're confident Romney's candidacy will create.

"I hear it from some of my colleagues who happen to be members of the church sometimes, and I choose to focus on the things over which we have control and try to do what I believe," said State Sen. Jerry Lewis, a Republican and also a Mormon.

Romney's only touched upon the issue briefly. In 2007, at the outset of his first White House run, he told the Salt Lake Tribune he hadn't heard his name associated with the White Horse, and pointed out that the prophecy isn't official doctrine. "There are a lot of things that are speculation and discussion by church members and even church leaders that aren't official church doctrine. I don't put that at the heart of my religious belief," he told the paper.

Most people still don't understand the religion — 50 percent surveyed in a November 2011 Pew poll said they know "not very much/nothing" about it. Some think it's unnerving. Those Pew numbers showed 65 percent of people saying Mormonism was very different from their own religion, and nearly a quarter picking words to describe the LDS church like cult, polygamy, restrictive, strange.

That helps explain the undertow of anxiety beneath the wave of favorite-son pride washing through LDS wards around the country: They've already had more than their fill of polygamy jokes and mocking of temple rituals, and worry that the spotlight on Romney's candidacy is about to produce many, many more.

"It is a mix of excitement and a little bit of concern, although I think most Mormons figure in the long run it will be for the good of the church. But with increased visibility will come more scrutiny, and probably more criticism," said LaVarr Webb, a Mormon and former campaign manager for Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt. "Deep down there's still this concern about, 'Will we be accepted? Will we be viewed as strange?'"

The LDS Church distanced itself from the White Horse prophecy almost immediately. "It is simply false: that is all there is to it," then-President Joseph F. Smith (not the original Joseph Smith) declared to a church leadership meeting in 1918.

But 70 years later, Ezra Taft Benson, who became the first Mormon Cabinet secretary when Dwight Eisenhower appointed him head of the Agriculture Department and later rose to be the 13th president of the LDS church, was still talking about the main idea behind the White Horse.

"I have faith that the Constitution will be saved as prophesied by Joseph Smith," Benson said in a 1986 speech at Brigham Young University celebrating the anniversary of the Constitution. "It will be saved by enlightened members of this Church — men and women who will subscribe to and abide by the principles of the Constitution."

The "hang by a thread" idea has been a constant. It made several appearances in the last election cycle, including in a mysterious mailer promoting the Senate candidacy of Mike Lee, and in the end-times rhetoric of Glenn Beck, who converted to Mormonism in 1999.

Hatch didn't get far into his 2000 White House campaign before feeling compelled to deny a White Horse connection. But when he referred to "the Constitution literally hanging by a thread" in a radio interview in the fall of 1999, The Salt Lake Tribune responded with a story headlined, "Did Hatch Allude to LDS Prophecy?"

"It becomes a joke, every time we have a prominent politician, Orrin Hatch or someone else, is going to save the Constitution," Webb lamented.

George Romney got deeper and more direct early in his own run. In August 1967 — eight days before the famous Vietnam "brainwashing" comment that scuttled his campaign — the candidate was asked during an interview with a Mormon magazine for his interpretation of "a time when the Constitution will 'hang by a thread' and about the saving role of LDS leaders in the government during such a time."

"Anyone can look at the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith in this respect," Romney responded. "I have always felt that they meant that sometime the question of whether we are going to proceed on the basis of the Constitution would arise and at this point government leaders who were Mormons would be involved in answering that question."

George Romney explained what he meant: "If that gets wiped out as a result of the state governments becoming dependent upon the federal government — mere appendages — you wipe out a major constitutional means of protecting human freedom and self-government."

Aside from his comments to the Tribune in 2007, Mitt Romney's only public discussion of the prophecy was in 1999, when Hatch was facing questions about the prophecy. Romney told the Tribune he'd heard similar questions during his father's campaign and said his father didn't believe in it.

The Romney campaign didn't respond to questions about whether he puts any stock in the White Horse prophecy, his own take on the idea of the Constitution hanging by a thread or whether he agrees with the interpretation offered by his father.

"Maybe he believes the way I do, but for political reasons, he won't say it," said Rex Rammell, whose comment during his 2010 Idaho gubernatorial run about convening a meeting of church elders for a White Horse discussion drew a rebuke from Salt Lake City that the prophecy is "based on accounts that have not been substantiated by historical research and is not embraced as Church doctrine."

The LDS church is eager to see the White Horse conversations stop.

"The Church perspective is this: It's not our doctrine, it's not taught in our meetings, and as we've said repeatedly, it's not relevant to who we are as a people," church spokesman Michael Purdy said in an email. "We're certainly aware that there is a national (and perhaps international) conversation going on about the Church and its beliefs. We want to answer questions for those who have them but stay out of the politics."

But for rank-and-file Mormons, the discussion about Romney, his place in the church and politics, and the White Horse prophecy is well underway.

"You'll hear people say Romney has a special role to play, but the rhetoric is virtually indistinguishable from general partisan rhetoric," said Joanna Brooks, a Mormon writer and progressive Democrat. She said she's heard the White Horse come up in her San Diego LDS ward and elsewhere but attributes that to most Mormons tilting toward the GOP rather than the prophecy. "Is this special Mormon influence, or is this just the way Republicanism sounds these days?"

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20120529-02	08:33	Pam	Re: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana Banner-Graphic (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #148)
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The Tea Party is the same demographic that made up much of the Nazi party.

20120529-03	08:45	Art	Re: Letter to the Greencastle, Indiana Banner-Graphic (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #148)
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One comment on the "right" of the lady to preach hate and fear. You also may have the right to yell "FIRE" in a crowded theater but it is not right and that has nothing to do with being politically correct.

20120529-04	08:51	Charis	"Bolivian Wildlife Trivia & Animal Facts"
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"Bolivian Wildlife Trivia and Animal Facts" by BoliviaBella

May 29, 2012, (<http://networkedblogs.com/ya5bA>)

This section on Bolivian wildlife trivia is fun and interesting, but I also want you to know that Bolivia is home to thousands of species of birds, animals, fish, reptiles and amphibians, many of which are disappearing at alarming rates. The worldwide scientific community has declared Eastern Bolivia one of the most biologically diverse areas on Earth. More new species are discovered here than almost anywhere else, each year.

Massive efforts are underway to preserve Bolivian wildlife and habitats in view of the swift destruction of irreplaceable ecosystems for agricultural and human use. So enjoy this section and keep in mind that as you read these words, two more endangered species JUST NOW became extinct, never to be seen or heard from again.

We can make learning about wildlife in Bolivia fun while spreading a very serious message about the importance of wildlife conservation in Bolivia and around the world.

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #1: Did you know that flamingos are not born pink? Flamingos are grey. They get their pink and orange tones from the shrimp and plankton they eat. Did you know Bolivia's flamingos are almost extinct? There is a flock of pink flamingos high on the altiplano (15,000 feet above sea level). How they got there no one knows, but when I was younger there were 77,000 of them (1984). More recently (2012) the flock has dwindled to under 5000. It is estimated that this flock, unique in that it is the only one in the world to be found at such an altitude, will be completely gone within the next 10 years. Flamingos lay only one egg per year. People in the rural highland areas steal the eggs for food. But how can you ask a person who barely subsists on a day to day basis to think about flamingo conservation when that person barely has enough food to survive? In addition, flamingos are killed for their wings and feathers which are used to adorn the costumes worn during CARNAVAL in Oruro! Now that could be stopped!

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #2: What is the slowest animal on Earth doing in Bolivia? Hanging upside down from tree branches, mostly. Sloths are the slowest animal, so slow in fact, that in tropical areas like Santa Cruz mold often grows on their fur. There are two-toed sloths and three-toed sloths. They have very long, sharp curved claws. Even though you might find it entertaining to watch them make their way through the trees of the Santa Cruz central plaza you should be careful about getting too close! Those claws are slow, but deadly. It's actually a pity they're in the plaza. People pick them up, tease them, and feed them all the wrong kinds of foods. Being in the city is actually not good for them! Sloths (scientifically categorized as being of the Pilosa family) are related to anteaters and tamanduas.

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #3: Can you name all the bear species in South America? Easy! There is only one! The spectacled bear is the only bear species found on the entire South American continent. It is called a spectacled bear because some members of this species have white rings of fur around their eyes (the rest of the body is blackish) which look like glasses (spectacles). Many spectacled bears, however, have markings on their snouts or have no markings on their faces at all. The species is Tremarctos ornatus. Because they live primarily in warm climates, spectacled bears do not hibernate. There are only about 15,000 of them left in the world and they have been declared an Endangered Species.

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #4: What is the largest flying bird in the world? The Andean Condor. It has a wingspan that can reach 3 meters across – that's 9 feet! Did you know condors are a type of vulture? Or that they are the Bolivian national bird? The following information is credited to the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo: "Considered to be the largest flying bird in the world, the Andean Condor is seen as a symbol of power and health, with their skins commanding prices as high as \$25 apiece. Often times, certain animal species - even endangered ones - are hunted due to false beliefs that their meat or organs offer male virility or some type of cure for physical ailments and diseases in humans. It is a common belief by many villagers that the condor's bones and organs offer many medicinal powers. Even though these beliefs are false, and grounded not in reality, but rather ignorance, the hunting practices threatening the condors existence is very real. Their ground bones are believed to alleviate rheumatism. Many natives eat the stomach of the Andean Condor because they believe it cures breast cancer. The eyes of the Condor are often roasted and eaten to sharpen one's sight, and their feathers are often placed under sleeping blankets to ward off nightmares."

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #5: What do llamas, alpacas and camels have in common? They're cousins! Llamas, alpacas and camels are both from the camelid family, as are the other two types of camelids found in Bolivia: the vicuña and the guanaco. Just like camels, they spit when they get mad! Did you know alpaca fur is so fine and soft that

scientifically it has been classified not as a fur, but as a fiber? It is lighter and softer than cashmere, yet 4 times warmer when woven into clothing. Did you know that the vicuña and guanaco (whose fur is also luxuriously soft) are in danger of extinction? Read more about llamas and alpacas.

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #6: Which Bolivian animal has the finest fur in the world? The chinchilla. A rodent, its fur is considered the softest, finest, most luxurious in the world, moreso even than mink or sable. Their exceedingly soft, dense coat has more fur per square inch than any other known mammal! Their fur is so dense that even lice, fleas and other parasites are unable to live on them. This means they are in high demand from the fur industry. The Bolivian short-tailed chinchilla (*Chinchilla brevicaudata*) is so near extinction it is on the Critically Endangered List. (It should not be confused with the Bolivian chichilla rat (*Abrocoma boliviensis*) which is found only in Bolivia and is considered a "vulnerable" species.)

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #7: What in the world is a Bolivian tree lizard? Well, nothing actually. There is no such thing as a Bolivian tree lizard. You may have heard of them if you like *The Simpsons* enough to still be watching that stupid show 10 years after it started. (OK, OK, don't write me, I apologize, *The Simpsons* is a wonderfully educational show for kids!)

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #8: Huh?? Pink dolphins swimming in the Amazon? The Amazon River Dolphin, a freshwater dolphin also known as the boto and bufeo colorado, is pink in color because capillaries close to the surface of its skin give it a rosy color. Its scientific name is *Inia geoffrensis* ("inia" is the Guarayo word for dolphin). Legend has it that when someone drowns, their spirit enters the boto which later is transformed into a young man. Because of this, Amazon River dolphins are almost never hunted. Even so, this species is considered "vulnerable" (A species is vulnerable when it is not critically endangered or endangered but is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future). They have a ridge on their back instead of a dorsal fin, and the vertebrae in their neck are not fused, so they can turn their heads 180 degrees! In Bolivia, these pink (often grey and sometimes albino) dolphins can be found in the Madeira, Mamoré and Iténez Rivers. Their brain capacity is 40% greater than that of humans! (Photo: Rainforest Alliance). I took the pink river dolphin tour in Beni And guess what! A new species of river dolphin, native to Bolivia, was recently confirmed. Read this on the *Inia boliviensis* by the WWF in Bolivia.

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #9: What is the largest rodent in the world? The capybara, also known in Bolivia as the carpincho, is the world's largest rodent. It is actually related to some of the smaller rodents: chinchillas and guinea pigs! Carpinchos can weigh over 100 pounds! Their teeth, like those of the beaver, never stop growing. They have slightly webbed feet and love the water. They are so aquatic, in fact, that they often sleep in the water with just the tips of their snouts sticking out. They are considered amphibious rodents and in some places of Bolivia people consider them a fish! During lent and Easter in Bolivia (when Catholics do not eat meat, only fish) they eat capybara without hesitation!

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #10: How can blue morpho butterflies protect you? One of the largest and most beautiful butterflies on Earth, the blue morpho (*Morpho menelaus*), has an average wingspan of 6 inches or more! It is not an endangered species and can be found throughout the Bolivian rainforest. Males are very territorial and use their bright blue wings to scare off other males. The microscopic structure of each scale on their wings causes them to shimmer with an iridescent blue color which changes when seen from different angles. Different colors have different wavelengths so the angle at which the light hits the wing and is then reflected to your eye will change the color you see. Some of their scales reflect light and some do not. This gave the financial security industry the idea to use iridescent images on paper currency and credit cards to make them difficult to counterfeit.

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #11: Why do tapirs only have stripes when they are babies? Tapirs are born with a reddish-brown pelt, whitish stripes and rows of dots. Baby tapirs are able to walk the moment they are born, but cannot outrun predators yet, so it is believed their stripes are needed to camouflage them. They fade gradually and are usually gone by the time they are 7 months old, when they are expected to be able to escape from predators on their own. Tapirs may fall prey to anacondas and jaguars but are usually able to outrun or outswim others. The lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) is the most common tapir in Bolivia, needs lots of water, and is usually found in the rainforest and wetlands. However, amazingly there is a large tapir population in the Bolivian Chaco area, one of the driest, most un-inhabitable areas of Bolivia. How any wildlife could survive with so little water is a mystery.

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #12: The wackiest wildlife in Bolivia might actually be a domesticated dog! British explorers discovered a breed of two-nosed dog in a small village called Ojaki in the Bolivian Amazon! Now that's some wacky wildlife trivia!

Bolivian Wildlife Trivia #13: Bolivia is home to the world's largest repository of dinosaur footprints. You can see them if you visit Cal Orck'o, just 20 minutes from Bolivia's capital city of Sucre. This area was declared a UNESCO site but the rock quarry belonging to a cement factory (whose workers found the tracks in 1994) is right next to the site and that is making conservation of this area difficult. There are more than 5000 tracks, made by up to 150 dinosaurs and they are estimated to be nearly 70-million years old, from the Cretaceous era. They were made by both carnivores and herbivores and the largest prints are more than three feet in length. Update: due to heavy rains and vibration from the cement quarry, a large portion of this hillside collapsed in 2011, taking with it some of the dinosaur tracks.

20120529-05	17:25	Dennis	"How the 'Job Creators' REALLY Spend Their Money"
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"How the 'Job Creators' REALLY Spend Their Money" by Paul Buchheit, Common Dreams

May 29, 2012, (<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/05/29-1>)

In his *Gospel of Wealth*, Andrew Carnegie argued that average Americans should welcome the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, because the "superior wisdom, experience, and ability" of the rich would ensure benefits for all of us. More recently, Edward Conard, the author of *Unintended Consequences: Why Everything You've Been Told About the Economy Is Wrong*, said: "As a society, we're not offering our talented few large enough rewards. We're underpaying our 'risk takers.'"

Does wealthy America have a point, that giving them all the money will ensure it's disbursed properly, and that it will create jobs and stimulate small business investment while ultimately benefiting society? Big business CEOs certainly think so, claiming in a letter to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner that an increase in the capital gains tax would reduce investment "when we need capital formation here in America to create jobs and expand our economy."

They don't cite evidence for their claims, because the evidence proves them wrong. Here are the facts:

The Very Rich Don't Like Making Risky Investments

Marketwatch estimates that over 90% of the assets owned by millionaires are held in a combination of low-risk investments (bonds and cash), the stock market, and real estate. According to economist Richard Wolff, about half of the assets of the richest 1% are held in unincorporated business equity (personal business accounts). The Wall Street Journal notes that over three-quarters of individuals worth over \$20 million are invested in hedge funds.

Angel investing (capital provided by affluent individuals for business start-ups) accounted for less than 1% of the investable assets of high net worth individuals in North America in 2011.

The Mendelsohn Affluent Survey confirmed that the very rich spend less than two percent of their money on new business startups. The last thing most of them want, apparently, is the risky business of hiring people for new innovation.

The Very Rich Don't Like Taking On Risky Jobs

CEOs, upper management, and financial professionals made up about 60 percent of the richest 1% of Americans in 2005. Only 3 percent were entrepreneurs. A recent study found that less than 1 percent of all entrepreneurs came from very rich or very poor backgrounds. The biggest investment by corporations is overseas, where they keep 57 percent of their cash and fill their factories with low-wage workers. Commerce Department figures show that U.S. companies cut their work forces by 2.9 million from 2000 to 2009 while increasing overseas employment by 2.4 million.

In fact, the very rich may not care about U.S. jobs in any form. Surveys reveal that 60 percent of investors worth \$25 million or more are investing up to a third of their total assets overseas. Back home, the extra wealth created by the Bush tax cuts led to "worst track record" for jobs in recorded history. The true American job creator, as venture capitalist Nick Hanauer would agree, is the middle-class consumer.

The Very Rich Corporations Don't Like Spending on America

How do corporations spend their money? To a good extent, they don't. According to Moody's, cash holdings for U.S. non-financial firms rose 3 percent to \$1.24 trillion in 2011. The corporate cash-to-assets ratio nearly tripled between 1980 and 2010. It has been estimated that the corporate stash of cash reserves held in America could employ 3.5 million more people for five years at an annual salary of \$40,000.

The top holders of cash, including Apple and Google and Intel and Coca Cola and Chevron, are spending their money on stock buybacks (which increase stock option prices), dividends to investors, and subsidiary acquisitions. According to Bloomberg, share repurchasing is at one of its highest levels in 25 years.

Apple claims to have added 500,000 jobs to the economy, but that includes app-building tech enthusiasts and Fedex drivers delivering iPhones. The company actually has 47,000 U.S. employees, about one-tenth of General Motors' workforce in the 1990s.

The biggest investment by corporations is overseas, where they keep 57 percent of their cash and fill their factories with low-wage workers. Commerce Department figures show that U.S. companies cut their work forces by 2.9 million from 2000 to 2009 while increasing overseas employment by 2.4 million. They also tap into a "brain drain" of foreign entrepreneurs, scientists, and medical professionals rather than supporting education in America.

One last way corporations see fit to spend their money: executive bonuses. Especially at the banks, where the extra stipends are often paid for with zero interest loans from the Federal Reserve.

The richest individuals and corporations are really good at building up fortunes. They're even better at building up their "job creator" myth.

20120529-06	17:50	SteveG	Grades for Congressmen
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https://data.sunlightlabs.com/dataset/Members-And-Grade-Level/iwhe-gaqu?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=cpc&utm_content=sunlightlabst&utm_campaign=capwordsjan12

The first time I ever saw one of these incredible beauties, it was lying on a city sidewalk after being hit by a car. I guess it had lost its way. I thought I was hallucinating! How could anything be that iridescent blue? Yet there it was: some kind of miracle.

<http://wownesia.com/2011/04/the-7-most-amazing-types-of-butterflies-in-the-world/>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #150 — MAY 31, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

'Bust 'Em Up!'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 31, 2012)

"Oh, no-no, cry the banking titans, don't even think of looking behind the curtain! Trust us, say these Wall Street alchemists, for we are essential to juicing the economy with our complex abracadabra investment schemes."

"Who Needs Wall Street Giants?" by Jim Hightower, NationofChange

May 30, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/who-needs-wall-street-giants-1338384110>)



JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Bank of America and the handful of other behemoths of Wall Street that dominate American banking — who needs them?

After enduring years of insatiable greed by the slick-fingered hucksters who run these gambling houses; after watching in dismay as their ineptness and avarice drained more than \$19 trillion from America's household wealth since 2007 and plunged our real economy into the worst financial crisis since the 1930s Depression; after

witnessing their shameful demands for trillions of dollars in taxpayer bailouts to save their banks and their jobs; and now after seeing them return immediately to business as usual, including paying multimillion-dollar bonuses to themselves — we have to ask: Huh!?!

Oh, no-no, cry the banking titans, don't even think of looking behind the curtain! Trust us, say these Wall Street alchemists, for we are essential to juicing the economy with our complex abracadabra investment schemes.

In fact, however, those schemes just move money around, spiraling real investment capital from the grassroots up to superrich global profiteers who create nothing but more wealth for themselves. Shell games at carnival sideshows are more honest than big-bank trading houses, for the hustles of such hucksters as JPMorgan, Goldman, B of A, etc. are based on financial illusions, off-the-books accounting, illegally leveraged borrowing, ridiculous tax subsidies and hide-the-pea secrecy.

The obvious truth is that these high-flying, high-tech, high-speed emporiums of high finance serve themselves, not us — so we have no obligation or need to keep serving them. Of course we need banks — to lend to us consumers and our productive businesses, to handle our commercial transactions, to manage our savings and provide financial advice, etc. But that's not what the leviathans of Wall Street do. Rather than keep protecting them, let's decentralize America's capital, reinvesting our public trust in community banks and credit unions that actually deserve it and serve it.

This month has brought us yet another screaming example of a big-shot Wall Street banker who got too big for his britches — a story revealing the inevitable excess that comes from banks that are simply too big.

In April, Jamie Dimon — the swaggering chief of Wall Street's largest financial conglomerate, JPMorgan Chase — had scoffed at critics who warned that his bank's high-flying investment division was dangerously overextended and risking collapse. "A complete tempest in a teapot," scoffed Dimon. On May 10, however, Jamie's teapot exploded, blowing a \$3 billion hole in the nation's largest bank ... and in Dimon's reputation.

Poor Jamie — why didn't someone tell him?

Some tried. As early as 2009, JPMorgan's own internal risk managers raised concerns that this opaque division was pouring billions of dollars into speculative trades that were too large and too complex even to understand, much less manage. But their caution was dismissed, and Dimon himself pushed for more of these wondrous schemes, hailing them as perpetual profit-machines.

OK, the bank's execs were bedazzled by visions of sugary bonuses, but where were the federal regulators, who're supposed to dog banker excess? Shoved aside by Dimon. While the Federal Reserve and Comptroller of Currency had more than 100 inspectors imbedded in JPMorgan, none were in the reckless investment division. The bank's big-shot boss, who is politically wired to the top leaders of both the Republican and Democratic parties in Washington, had aggressively pushed against having regulators hovering around his hot investment profit center, assuring them that nothing was happening in there worth watching.

Dimon had extra clout, for not only was he a Wall Street star sitting atop the biggest bank, but — get this — he also has a seat on the board of the New York branch of the Federal Reserve, which has regulatory authority over Wall Street and will now conduct the inquiry into JPMorgan's disastrous risk-taking. Yes, Jamie the Fed official will investigate Jamie the banker.

This is proof again that these banks are simply too big — too big for managers, regulators and the public interest. We don't need yet another regulatory Band-Aid, we need Teddy Roosevelt to bust 'em up!

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[20120530-01](#) 09:15 Pam Re: "How the 'Job Creators' REALLY Spend Their Money" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #149)

I'd love to hear what you have to say about this, Dale.

[20120530-02](#) 09:27 Pam Re: "Bolivian Wildlife Trivia & Animal Facts" (reply to Charis, FotM Newsletter #149)

Interesting info. re. Bolivian wildlife, and a lovely photo of the butterfly.

[20120530-03](#) 12:56 SteveB "The Price of Democracy"

"The Price of Democracy" by John Feffer, NationofChange

May 30, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/price-democracy-1338383273>)

We pay a lot of money for health care in the United States, more per capita than anywhere else in the industrialized world. If you point out this inescapable fact to opponents of socialized medicine, they invariably respond that we get high-quality care in return. Exasperated, you might go further and say that spending nearly \$8,000 a year per capita still leaves us with the 8th-lowest average life expectancy among OECD countries, that the Japanese spend \$5,000 less per person per year and live longer. But rich foreigners flock to the United States for operations, your interlocutor insists, so clearly we get what we pay for. The uninsured, alas, would agree with this grim assessment – since they have little to no money, they get little to no care.

Americans also spend more per capita on the military than any other industrialized country (the United Arab Emirates, with a population of only 7 million people, is the only country with a higher rate). The Pentagon and its clients boast that all this money is well spent, that no country comes close to us in terms of quality or quantity of security. Critics, meanwhile, decry the waste, the cost overruns, the systems that work poorly (the F-35) or will never work (missile defense), and of course the enormous opportunity costs.

On health care and the military budget, no one can dispute that the United States spends exorbitantly. Whether we get our money's worth is a matter of considerable debate.

But there is one arena in which the United States is a world-class spender where you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who would argue that we get world-class results for our money. I'm talking about our electoral system, which has produced a legislature that attracted a historic low of 10 percent public approval this year, an administration still beholden to Wall Street and the military industrial complex, and (indirectly) a Supreme Court that tilts so far to the right that I'm surprised the building itself hasn't fallen over.

The presidential candidates spent, for instance, over \$1.3 billion on the 2008 campaign, a record. The election cycle in 2008 cost more than \$5 billion, including congressional races and the primaries. We spent, in other words, about \$17 per capita for our last big elections. Sound like a bargain?

Over the border, Canadians spent about \$12 per capita for the last election. Australians spent about \$7 per person in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Cambodians spent over \$45 per person in their first democratic election in 1993, but had brought the cost down considerably to only \$2 a person by 2003.

These per-capita figures run the risk of apple-orange comparisons, since countries have very different financing for elections. In the United States, as in Australia and the United Kingdom, private donors dominate. In Sweden and Mexico, on the other hand, public financing is the norm.

But the overall point holds: we spend lavishly on elections, much of it on campaign ads. Politics is not a game for the faint of wallet. Nearly half of our members of Congress are millionaires. These elected officials spend 30-70 percent of their time fundraising, and they are highly, shall we say, *responsive* when Big Money talks. Indeed,

lobbying brings in one of the best returns on investment. In a recent *This American Life* episode, a tax professor estimated what one dollar of lobbying netted on the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004, which provided tax breaks to multinational corporations repatriating their profits. Bernie Madoff offered 10-percent return on investment. These lobbyists got 22,000-percent return. The former went to jail, the latter went to the bank, and we the people were taken to the cleaners.

You'd think that the best political minds of our generation would be focused on how to reduce the hold that money has over our democracy. True, we've had various waves of campaign finance reform, culminating in the McCain-Feingold legislation of 2002. But the cost of campaigning continues to rise. It's quite counterintuitive, then, that we recently changed the rules of the game so that we can pump even more hundreds of millions of dollars into politics.

Actually, "we" is a misnomer. As Jeffrey Toobin points out in *The New Yorker*, the decision to overturn campaign finance reform in the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision was largely the work of one man: Chief Justice John Roberts.

The *Citizens United* case should have been focused narrowly on one provision of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law that prohibited private funding of TV and radio ads about candidates within a certain period before elections. *Citizens United* produced a documentary slamming Hillary Clinton and planned to show it in the run-up to the 2008 elections. Blocked from broadcasting the documentary during that defined pre-election period, *Citizens United* took the case to court.

Roberts and his conservative cohort on the Court saw an opportunity to interpret the First Amendment on free speech in such a way to open the floodgates for political contributions. The Court determined in its 5-4 decision that corporations and individuals enjoyed equal rights to free speech and so corporate entities should not be restricted in their campaign contributions. The Bill of Rights doesn't, of course, mention corporations at all. It talks about the "people," about soldiers and "the accused," about the federal government and the states. To argue that the First Amendment's provision that "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press" applies to corporations making campaign contributions is as absurd as asserting that buying a nuclear weapon is protected by the Bill of Rights (I'm just waiting for the NRA to make this argument).

"The Roberts Court," Toobin concludes, "will guarantee moneyed interests the freedom to raise and spend any amount, from any source, at any time, in order to win elections."

As a result of the *Citizens United* decision, political campaigns don't have to disclose the identity of their contributors. "*Citizens United* created an environment in which it is perfectly legal for a shell non-profit corporation to engage in election-related spending on behalf of a hidden interest," writes Lisa Rosenberg of the Sunlight Foundation. "And there is nothing to ensure that the hidden interest is not a foreign national, a foreign company or a foreign government." U.S. subsidiaries of foreign companies can already establish political action committees, and their contribution levels have been rising. Now, foreign entities have additional ways of illegally masking their influence on American politics.

It would be useful to have a watchdog within Congress who represented the public interest against the moneyed elite. But politicians are simply too busy trying to get reelected to scrutinize the money flow.

Imagine, however, if we had 535 William Proxmires in Washington. Proxmire was the legendary skinflint from Wisconsin. In its obituary for the senator when he died in 2005 at the age of 90, The Washington Times wrote that Proxmire "said most senators could get re-elected without spending a penny, but he didn't take the chance — in his last election, he spent \$145.10, down from the \$178.75 he lavished on his previous bid. Much of it went for postage to return campaign contributions, which he did not accept. Proxmire preferred the cheapest kind of politicking: He would shake hands till his hands bled, then start again the next day with bandaged hands."

The *Citizens United* decision ensures that any potential Proxmire will not have the remotest chance of getting elected — not on less than \$200 in campaign funds.

China is rapidly expanding its economy and creating a new middle class to sustain this growth. Or, at least, that's the story we've been reading in the U.S. press. But Foreign Policy In Focus (FPIF) contributor Nan Chen tells a different story, about a China whose growing inequality looks a lot like the 99-to-1 situation in the United States.

"Rather than a middle class of laborers in the manufacturing industry, China has seen disturbing levels of income inequality and the emergence of a new 'elite' class at the same time that the United States is experiencing similar shifts," she writes in *China's Missing Middle Class*. "This has implications not only for China's growth, but also for U.S. exports that stand to benefit from a healthy Chinese middle class of consumers. Moreover, the growing wealth disparity in China suggests that China's embrace of free-market economics and unfettered globalization may result in the same social ills seen in the United States."

Asia, meanwhile, seems to be following our lead as well on military spending. Writes FPIF columnist Conn Hallinan in *Asia's Mad Arms Race*, "The Philippines is spending almost \$1 billion on new aircraft and radar, and recently held joint war games with the United States. South Korea has just successfully tested a long-range cruise missile. Washington is reviving ties with Indonesia's brutal military because the island nation controls the strategic seaways through which pass most of the region's trade and energy supplies. Australia is also re-orienting its defense to face China, and Australian Defense Minister Stephen Smith has urged 'that India play the role it could and should as an emerging great power in the security and stability of the region.'"

Finally, FPIF contributor Anya Barry looks at how the Arab Spring has contributed to the immigration debate in Europe. "Much of the West voiced great support for the Arab Spring," she writes in *Europe's Dilemma: Immigration and the Arab Spring*. "However, the European Union in particular soon curbed its enthusiastic reaction when residents of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) began streaming into Europe after turmoil from the Arab Spring left many MENA civilians unable to remain in the region. Immigration from the Middle East and North Africa to the European Union surged over the past year, causing the leaders of many EU countries to speak out against the growing influx of Arab immigrants seeking refuge within their borders."

20120530-04	13:06	SteveB	"Money Man Pulls Even with Black Guy in Latest Poll"
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"Money Man Pulls Even with Black Guy in Latest Poll" *The Onion*

May 30, 2012, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/money-man-pulls-even-with-black-guy-in-latest-poll,28377/>)

(WASHINGTON) With the election less than six months away, a nationwide Gallup poll released Wednesday found that Money Man has now pulled even with Black Guy in the 2012 presidential race.

Citing Money Man's significant appeal among veterans—as well as his narrow lead in Florida, a crucial swing state that went to Black Guy in 2008—experts said Money Man is closing the gap on a race that, until quite recently, seemed to be firmly under Black Guy's control.

"I have to say, Money Man has really impressed me lately," said poll respondent Mike Hargett, who is among the 45 percent of independent voters planning to cast a ballot for Money Man in November. "I voted for Black Guy in the last election, but I've been fairly disappointed with the job he's done. As much as I admire Black Guy and his historic achievement, it just seems like the time is right for someone new with fresh ideas to come in and shake things up a bit."

"Someone like Money Man," Hargett added.

Still, Money Man's current one-point lead over Black Guy is within the Gallup poll's margin of error, and Washington insiders have pointed to several encouraging signs for Black Guy, who maintains strong ratings on foreign policy and a double-digit lead in favorability among middle-class voters—two areas in which Money Man typically hasn't polled very well.

Further highlighting the closeness of the race, the poll revealed there are a significant number of undecided voters still weighing the merits of a Money Man presidency vs. a Black Guy presidency.

"It's a tough choice, because both Money Man and Black Guy have strong qualities," said 47-year-old voter Albert Dorin, adding that he may not make up his mind until he sees Money Man and Black Guy next to each other on a stage, debating. "I like Money Man's views on the economy and on money. However, you have to hand it to Black Guy for finally tracking down and killing bin Laden. And I like his wife, Black Lady, too."

"I like her more than Money Man's wife, Blonde Lady," Dorin added.

Despite Money Man's rise in the polls, surveys have found that a majority of Republican voters would have preferred to see Food Man from New Jersey on the ballot, had he chosen to run, and that there also would have been strong support for The Woman, especially among the conservative base.

"Food Man from New Jersey or The Woman would have been more in line with my sensibilities, but there's still a good chance Money Man will pick one of the two as his running mate," Ohio voter Margaret Yaster told reporters. "Besides, for me, pretty much any Republican would be better than Black Guy. Even Pizza Black Guy."

"Not Ron Paul, though," Yaster continued. "That guy's out of his goddamn mind."

20120530-05	13:16	SteveB	From the Right: This Intelligent Man Must Be the Stupidest or Most Deluded Person in the World! ("Improving Life for Workers")
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So wrong on so many levels! What do you think?

"Improving Life for Workers" by John Stossel, *Human Events*

May 30, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51814>)

It seems intuitive that a free market would lead to a "race to the bottom." In a global marketplace, profit-chasing employers will cut costs by paying workers less and less, and shipping jobs to China.

It's a reason that progressives say government must step in.

So America now has thousands of rules that outlaw wages below \$7.25 an hour, restrict unpaid internships and compel people to pay union dues. These rules appear to help workers. But they don't.

"Collective bargaining" sounds good. Collective bargaining "rights" even better. Employers are more sophisticated about job negotiations than individual employees, so why shouldn't workers be able to join together to bargain?

They should be. But in 27 states, labor laws force workers to join unions. When CBS offered me a job, I had to join AFTRA, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. I didn't want to. I don't consider myself an artist. I didn't want to pay dues to a union that didn't appear to do much. But I had no choice.

Laws that force workers to join unions treat millions of diverse people, most of whom want very different things, as undifferentiated collectives. That means that good workers get punished.

When I was at ABC and CBS, union culture slowed us down. Sometimes a camera crew took five minutes just to get out of the car.

[How wasteful! How long would Wonder Boy take to unpack his equipment? Maybe an hour, if he could even do it.—SteveB]

But without a minimum wage or union protection, wouldn't employers abuse workers? In a real free market, no, they can't. Because workers have choices. Employers have an incentive to maintain a good relationship with employees -- one that keeps them reasonably loyal -- because workers can quit and go work for a rival.

[This is such total BS and history proves it. In my own life, in the 1970's, I had two separate non-union employers who essentially attempted to have me killed on the job, or at least, did their best to put me into incredibly dangerous situation no union shop would have permitted. They cared not one whit about my "good will". Ya, I had a choice alright and quit, but others couldn't. --SteveB]

If globalism leads to a "race to the bottom," why do 95 percent of American workers make more than minimum wage? It's not because companies are generous, but because competition forces them to offer higher wages to attract good workers. Companies may move jobs overseas to escape high U.S. wages (or U.S. taxes and regulations), but they clearly prefer to keep jobs here, close to their headquarters, suppliers and customers.

[Ya, but the "race to the bottom" is a race to the bottom of the economic scale, while all the money flows to the top. --SteveB]

Unions once helped advance working conditions, but now union rules hurt workers because they stifle growth by making companies less flexible. When I arrived at CBS, I was stunned to discover that I couldn't even watch a video in a tape player without risking a grievance being filed by a union editor, saying I'd encroached on his job. Work ground to a halt while we waited for a union specialist to press the "on" button. ABC and CBS, being private businesses that had to compete, eventually got rid of those rules. But it took years.

Unions eventually hurt union workers because unionized companies atrophy. Non-union Toyota grew, while GM shrank. JetBlue Airlines blossomed, while unionized TWA and Pan Am went out of business. Unions "protect" workers all the way to the unemployment line.

[Maybe, such as in the case of health care, the protections and benefits derived from unions should be simply instituted as the law of the land for all citizens and the middle man eliminated. --SteveB]

When I criticize compulsory unions and regulations, it's not because I want rich employers to get fat off the labor of workers. It's because I've learned that markets are fluid -- and the best way for more workers to find good jobs is to leave everyone free to make any contract they wish.

Outlawing the low-wage job that taught a teenager skills or the internship that gave a kid a foot in the door doesn't insulate people from hardships of the market. It insulates them from knowledge about how to function in an ever-changing economy.

That's not compassion. That's a denial of reality.

Advocates of "kind" central planning overlook the gradual, piecemeal improvement that markets make. Focused on government's promise of once-and-for-all solutions (promises that rarely lead to actual solutions), people miss how free markets gradually help humanity solve problems.

Economic historian Robert Higgs joked that it will always be easier to rally politically inclined people behind unrealistic, revolutionary causes than to rally them around subtle economic progress, because no crowd marches behind a banner proclaiming, "Toward a Marginally Improved Society!"

The best way to help workers is to get the government to butt out and let competitive markets work.

20120530-06	14:10 Art	Fw: Proof That the World Is Nuts
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The one about Bolivia has me just a little concerned. [Ya, we've very reluctantly given that one up! Otherwise, everyone would be moving here instead of Guam. We like it better not that crowded. --SteveB]

[Source of original email unknown. --SteveB]

Proof That The World Is Nuts!

In Lebanon, men are legally allowed to have sex with animals, but the animals must be female. Having sexual relations with a male animal is punishable by death.

(Like THAT makes sense!)

In Bahrain, a male doctor may legally examine a woman's genitals, but is prohibited from looking directly at them during the examination. He may only see their reflection in a mirror.

(Do they look different in reverse?)

Muslims are banned from looking at the genitals of a corpse. This also applies to undertakers. The sex organs of the deceased must be covered with a brick or piece of wood at all times.

(A brick?)

The penalty for masturbation in Indonesia is decapitation.

(Much worse than "going blind!")

There are men in Guam whose full-time job is to travel the countryside and deflower young virgins, who pay them for the privilege of having sex for the first time.

Reason: under Guam law, it is expressly forbidden for virgins to marry.

(Let's just think for a minute; is there any job anywhere else in the world that even comes close to this?)

In Hong Kong, a betrayed wife is legally allowed to kill her adulterous husband, but may only do so with her bare hands.

(No golf clubs....but I hear a 3 iron works well.)

The husband's illicit lover, on the other hand, may be killed in any manner desired.

(Ah! Justice!)

Topless saleswomen are legal in Liverpool, England - but only in tropical fish stores.

(But of course!)

In Cali, Colombia, a woman may only have sex with her husband, and the first time this happens, her mother must be in the room to witness the act.

(Makes one shudder at the thought!)

In Santa Cruz, Bolivia, it is illegal for a man to have sex with a woman and her daughter at the same time.

(I presume this was a big enough problem that they had to pass this law?)

In Maryland, it is illegal to sell condoms from vending machines with one exception: Prophylactics may be dispensed from a vending machine only in places where alcoholic beverages are sold for consumption on the premises.

(Is this a great country or what?)

(Well, not as great as Guam!)

Banging your head against a wall uses 150 calories an hour.

(Who volunteers for these tests?)

The ant can lift 50 times its own weight, can pull 30 times its own weight and always falls over on its right side when intoxicated.

(From drinking little bottles of ???)

(Did our government pay for this research??)

Butterflies taste with their feet.

(Ah, geez.)

An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.

(I know some people like that.)

Starfish don't have brains.

(I know some people like that, too.)

And, the best for last?

Turtles can breathe through their butts.

(And I thought I had bad breath in the morning!)

Thank you all for reading this.

If you need to reach me in the future, I will be in ~~Santa Cruz, Bolivia~~ Guam!!

20120530-07	18:11	Ben	"Sh*t My Students Write"
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[This is just a little sampling of the website. –SteveB]

"Sh*t My Students Write" (<http://shitmystudentswrite.tumblr.com/>)

Hores Should Be Free

Hores should not be tamed. Hores should be kept wild and free. If a hore gets caught she will kick you in the face.

Poster Puppies

How hypocritical is it that PETA's poster woman is former, bosomy showgirl, model and actress, Pamela Anderson. Thankfully, the second most abundant element on earth is silicon, but nonetheless, I still wonder how many animals were harmed in the making of those puppies.

To Thrill a Mockingbird

Aunt Alexandra spends a lot of time in the novel trying to rub her femininity onto Scout.

Intentionality? Check!

For example, stripping is a performance (as it has become more embedded into our society) and it fits all of the requirements of a performance. When one goes to a strip club, we expect stripping (intentionality? Check!).

Mind the Gap

Without writing, we would all hopelessly crumple to the bottom of subway station tracks as we collectively failed to 'Mind the Gap.'

No One Can Make Up Maps!

Take lord of the Rings for example, there's a lot of truth to be found within it's pages. Can anyone honestly tell me that there is history to be found in Tolkien's work? Just look at the maps in the back of the books, NO ONE can make that up!

The Great Fashion War

World War Two could have been started by anything. For all we know, it could have been because Hitler didn't like Winston Churchill's shoes that day.

Bloody Show

When reading this, I automatically thought of menstrual shows and how similar they were. No they weren't dressed in a specific way or making fun of themselves, but what they were doing still provided entertainment for their white audiences. These menstrual groups were formed in the 1840s, and became national popular entertainment. At first, menstrual shows were played by white men in black face. Then, when black men were introduced to these shows, they were forced to make their faces darker and mouths wider.

The Feminist Plague

Feminism is an issue plaguing women everywhere across the world. Some people just speak on the issue; others act upon it. Some take it more serious than others; some just don't care that much at all about the issue.

An F for Effort

As you know I also have not been keeping up with my HW assignments, this is due to the fact of not having the course book.

20120530-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Too Much Snow. Happy Summer!
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<http://www.nuffy.net/misc/pics/too-much-snow-pics.html>



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

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