



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #133 — MAY 8, 2012

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

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20120507-01	10:20	SteveM	"Unemployment Explained: Obama's Disability Scammers"
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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 a 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"

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)
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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
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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>.

20120507-11	20:07	SteveG	"4 High-Tech Ways the Federal Government Is Spying on Private Citizens"
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"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 rights 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 began 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.

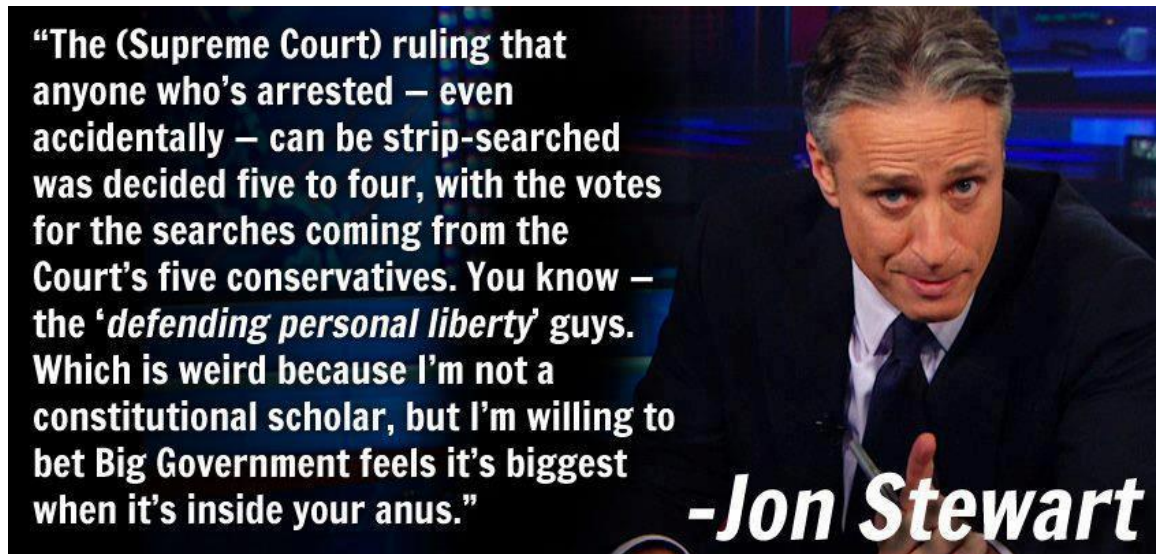
LaPook asked Reid if he had any power as a one of the leaders to move the legislation along faster.

"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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