



## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #134 — MAY 9, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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### Index to Friends of the Middle Newsletter #134 — May 9, 2012

## 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](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 Armedariz 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 biostitutes 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.)

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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)

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 fans better. Outside the stadium would be one hell of a Latino tailgate party with free fans 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

<a href="#">20120508-09</a>	11:50	SteveB	Re: "Former Navy Seal Rebukes [President] Obama" (reply to SteveM, above)
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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?

<a href="#">20120508-10</a>	12:05	SteveG	Fw: Consumers Union Action: Help Stop Mad Cow Disease
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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=wz1076751.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"
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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.

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.

Murdock, 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](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.



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[facebook.com/OzzyAmosFRO](https://www.facebook.com/OzzyAmosFRO)

“Freedom isn’t free. It shouldn’t be a bragging point that “Oh, I don’t get involved in politics,” as if that makes you somehow cleaner. No, that makes you derelict of duty in a republic. Liars and panderers in government would have a much harder time of it if so many people didn’t insist on their right to remain ignorant and blindly agreeable.”

<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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