



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #147 — MAY 28, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

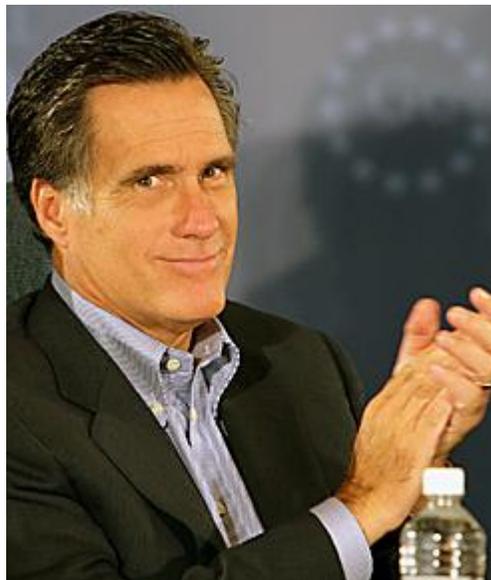
My 2012 Election Poem

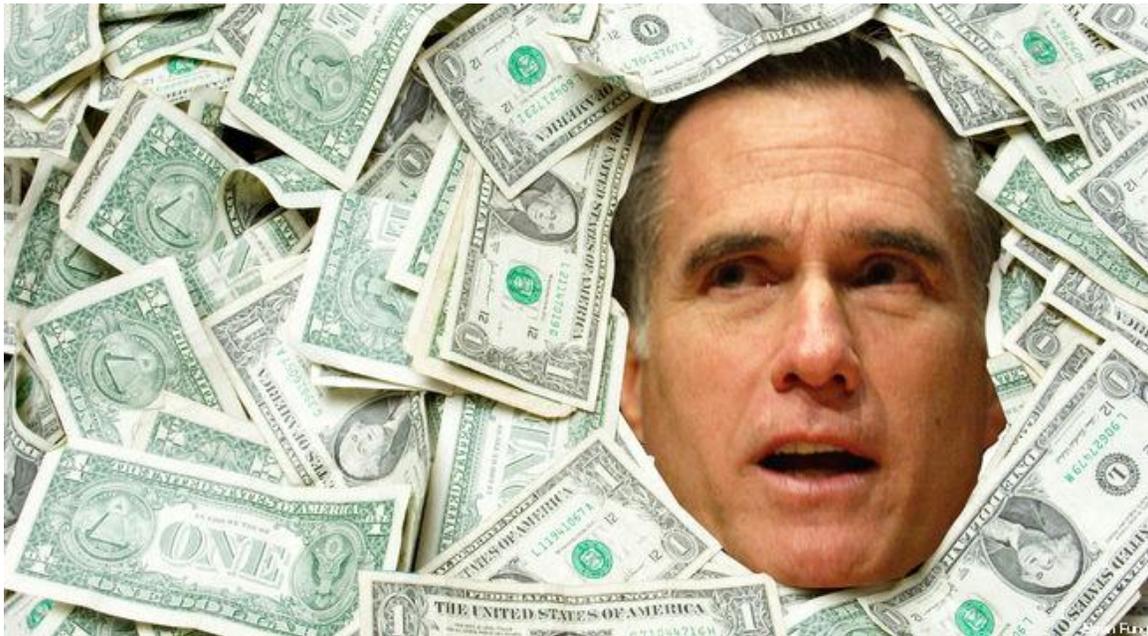
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 28, 2012)

My 2012 Election Poem

Money is important to Mitt Romney.
He says he was a "venture capitalist".
He says those experiences prepared him, qualified him.
But, surely, we are a nation of people?
I want a leader to whom people are more important than money.
That person will come closer to the right decisions.
It's really just that beautifully simple.

©2012 Steven W. Baker





"How to Forget on Memorial Day" by Tom Engelhardt, NationofChange

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-forget-memorial-day-1337950610>)

("It's a weekend for which the police tend to predict rising fatalities and news reports tend to celebrate any declines in deaths on our roads and highways.")

Into the Memory Hole

May is the official month of remembrance when it comes to our war dead, ending as it does on the long Memorial Day weekend when Americans typically take to the road and kill themselves and each other in far greater numbers than will die in Afghanistan. It's a weekend for which the police tend to predict rising fatalities and news reports tend to celebrate any declines in deaths on our roads and highways.

Quiz Americans and a surprising number undoubtedly won't have thought about the "memorial" in Memorial Day at all -- especially now that it's largely a marker of the start of summer and an excuse for cookouts.

How many today are aware that, as Decoration Day, it began in 1865 in a nation still torn by grief over the loss of -- we now know -- up to 750,000 dead in the first modern war, a wrenching civil catastrophe in a then-smaller and still under-populated country? How many know that the first Decoration Day was held in 1865 with 10,000 freed slaves and some Union soldiers parading on a Charleston, South Carolina, racetrack previously frequented by planters and transformed in wartime into a grim outdoor prison? The former slaves were honoring Union prisoners who had died there and been hastily buried in unmarked graves, but as historian Kenneth Jackson has written, they were also offering "a declaration of the meaning of the war and of their own freedom."

Those ceremonies migrated north in 1866, became official at national cemeteries in 1868, and grew into ever more elaborate civic remembrances over the years. Even the South, which had previously marked its grief separately, began to take part after World War I as the ceremonies were extended to the remembrance of all American war dead. Only in 1968, in the midst of another deeply unpopular war, did Congress make it official as Memorial Day, creating the now traditional long holiday weekend.

And yet, when it comes to the major war the United States is still fighting, now in its 11th year, the word remembrance is surely inappropriate, as is the "Memorial" in Memorial Day. It's not just that the dead of the Afghan War have largely been tossed down the memory hole of history (even if they do get official attention on

Memorial Day itself). Even the fact that Americans are still dying in Afghanistan seems largely to have been forgotten, along with the war itself.

As the endlessly plummeting opinion polls indicate, the Afghan War is one Americans would clearly prefer to forget - yesterday, not tomorrow. It was, in fact, regularly classified as "the forgotten war" almost from the moment that the Bush administration turned its attention to the invasion of Iraq in 2002 and so declared its urge to create a *Pax Americana* in the Greater Middle East. Despite the massive "surge" of troops, special operations forces, CIA agents, and civilian personnel sent to Afghanistan by President Obama in 2009-2010, and the ending of the military part of the Iraq debacle in 2011, the Afghan War has never made it out of the grave of forgetfulness to which it was so early consigned.

Count on one thing: there will be no Afghan version of Maya Lin, no Afghan Wall on the National Mall. Unlike the Vietnam conflict, tens of thousands of books won't be pouring out for decades to come arguing passionately about the conflict. There may not even be a "who lost Afghanistan" debate in its aftermath.

Few Afghan veterans are likely to return from the war to infuse with new energy an antiwar movement that remains small indeed, nor will they worry about being "spit upon." There will be little controversy. They -- their traumas and their wounds -- will, like so many bureaucratic notices, disappear into the American ether, leaving behind only an emptiness and misery, here and in Afghanistan, as perhaps befits a bankrupting, never-ending imperial war on the global frontiers.

Whistling Past the Graveyard of Empires

If nothing else, the path to American amnesia is worth recalling on this Memorial Day.

Though few here remember it that way, the invasion of Afghanistan was launched on a cult of the dead. These were the dead civilians from the Twin Towers in New York City. It was to their memory that the only "Wall" of this era -- the 9/11 Memorial at Ground Zero in lower Manhattan -- has been built. Theirs are the biographies that are still remembered in annual rites nationwide. They are, and remain, the dead of the Afghan War, even though they died before it began.

On the other hand, from the moment the invasion of Afghanistan was launched, how to deal with the actual American war dead was always considered a problematic matter. The Bush administration and the military high command, with the Vietnam War still etched in their collective memories, feared those uniformed bodies coming home (as they banished the "body count" of enemy dead in the field). They remembered the return of the "body bags" of the Vietnam era as a kind of nightmare, stoking a fierce antiwar movement, which they were determined not to see repeated.

As a result, in the early years of the Afghan and then Iraq wars, the Bush administration took relatively draconian steps to cut the media off from any images of the returning war dead. They strictly enforced a Pentagon ban, in existence since the first Gulf War, on media coverage and images of the coffins arriving from the war fronts at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. At the same time, much publicity was given to the way President Bush met privately and emotionally -- theoretically beyond the view of the media -- with the families of the dead.

And yet, banned or not, for a period the war dead proliferated. In those early years of Washington's two increasingly catastrophic wars on the Eurasian mainland, newspapers regularly produced full-page or double-page "walls of heroes" with tiny images of the faces of the American dead, while their names were repeatedly read in somber tones on television. In a similar fashion, the antiwar movement toured the country with little "cemeteries" or displays of combat representing the war dead.

The Pentagon ban ended with the arrival of the Obama administration. In October 2009, six months after the Pentagon rescinded it, in an obvious rebuke to his predecessor, President Obama traveled to Dover Air Base. There, inside a plane bringing the bodies of the dead home, he reportedly prayed over the coffins and was later photographed offering a salute as one of them was carried off the plane. But by the time the arrival of the dead could be covered, few seemed to care.

The Bush administration, it turns out, needn't have worried. In an America largely detached from war, the Iraq War would end without fanfare or anyone here visibly giving much of a damn. Similarly, the Afghan War would continue to limp from one disaster to the next, from an American "kill team" murdering Afghan civilians "for sport" to troops urinating on Afghan corpses (and videotaping the event), or mugging for the camera with enemy body parts, or an American sergeant running amok, or the burning of Korans, or the raising of an SS banner. And, of course, ever more regularly, ever more unnervingly, Afghan "allies" would turn their guns on American and NATO troops and blow them away. It's a phenomenon almost unheard of in such wars, but so common in Afghanistan these days that it's gotten its own label: "green-on-blue violence."

This has been the road to oblivion and it's paved with forgotten bodies. Forgetfulness, of course, comes at a price, which includes the escalating long-term costs of paying for the American war-wounded and war-traumatized. On this Memorial Day, there will undoubtedly be much cant in the form of tributes to "our heroes" and then, Tuesday morning, when the mangled cars have been towed away, the barbeque grills cleaned, and the "heroes" set aside, the forgetting will continue. If the Obama administration has its way and American special operations forces, trainers, and advisors in reduced but still significant numbers remain in Afghanistan until perhaps 2024, we have more than another decade of forgetting ahead of us in a tragedy that will, by then, be beyond all comprehension.

Afghanistan has often enough been called "the graveyard of empires." Americans have made it a habit to whistle past that graveyard, looking the other way -- a form of obliviousness much aided by the fact that the American war dead conveniently come from the less well known or forgotten places in our country. They are so much easier to ignore thanks to that.

Except in their hometowns, how easy the war dead are to forget in an era when corporations go to war but Americans largely don't. So far, 1,980 American military personnel (and significant but largely unacknowledged numbers of private contractors) have died in Afghanistan, as have 1,028 NATO and allied troops, and (despite U.N. efforts to count them) unknown but staggering numbers of Afghans.

So far in the month of May, 22 American dead have been listed in those Pentagon announcements. If you want a little memorial to a war that shouldn't be, check out their hometowns and you'll experience a kind of modern graveyard poetry. Consider it an elegy to the dead of second- or third-tier cities, suburbs, and small towns whose names are resonant exactly because they are part of your country, but seldom or never heard by you.

Here, then, on this Memorial Day, are not the names of the May dead, but of their hometowns, announcement by announcement, placed at the graveside of a war that we can't bear to remember and that simply won't go away. If it's the undead of wars, the deaths from it remain a quiet crime against American humanity:

Spencerport, New York; Wichita, Kansas; Warren, Arkansas; West Chester, Ohio; Alameda, California; Charlotte, North Carolina; Stow, Ohio; Clarksville, Tennessee; Chico, California; Jeffersonville, Kentucky; Yuma, Arizona; Normangee, Texas; Round Rock, Texas; Rolla, Missouri; Lucerne Valley, California; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Overland Park, Kansas; Wheaton, Illinois; Lawton, Oklahoma; Prince George, Virginia; Terre Haute, Indiana.



As long as the hometowns pile up, no one should rest in peace.

FotM NEWSLETTER #147 (May 28, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<u>20120528-00</u>		SteveB	My 2012 Election Poem by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("How to Forget on Memorial Day")
<u>20120525-01</u>	06:24	MarthaH	Fw: This Week on FlackCheck.org
<u>20120525-02</u>	06:47	SteveB	Re: This Week on FlackCheck.org (reply to MarthaH, above)
<u>20120525-03</u>	09:06	Pam/Dale	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (discussion of Dale post in FotM Newsletter #146)
<u>20120525-04</u>	11:34	Dale	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Pam, above)
<u>20120525-06</u>	12:00	Pam	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Dale, above)
<u>20120525-08</u>	14:12	Dale	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Pam, above)
<u>20120525-19</u>	16:55	Pam	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Dale, above)
<u>20120525-20</u>	18:03	Art	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad"
<u>20120525-05</u>	11:41	SteveB	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Dale, above)
<u>20120525-07</u>	13:09	Pam	Re: From the Right: "Cocooned Liberals Are Unprepared for Political Debate" & Canadian Protests: Silence in the U.S. (reply to SteveB)
<u>20120525-09</u>	14:13	Dennis	"Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, Or Corrupt?"
<u>20120525-11</u>	15:18	Art	Re: "Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, Or Corrupt?" (reply to Dennis, above)
<u>20120525-10</u>	14:33	SteveB	"Obama Has to Explain Why Fairness Is Essential to Growth (And Why Some Democrats Have to Stop Believing Otherwise)"
<u>20120525-12</u>	15:29	Dennis	"My Break with the Extreme Right"
<u>20120525-17</u>	15:47	Pam	Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)
<u>20120525-23</u>	18:26	Art	Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)
<u>20120525-24</u>	18:58	Beth	Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)
<u>20120525-13</u>	15:32	Dennis	Fw: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (from Alan Gayson)
<u>20120525-14</u>	15:35	Pam	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis, above)
<u>20120525-15</u>	15:36	Art	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis, above)
<u>20120525-16</u>	15:41	Dennis	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Art, above)
<u>20120525-18</u>	15:56	Pam	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis & Art, above)
<u>20120525-21</u>	18:10	Art	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to all, above)
<u>20120526-03</u>	08:23	Pam	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to all, above)
<u>20120525-22</u>	18:18	Art	"18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election"
<u>20120526-04</u>	08:31	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)
<u>20120526-08</u>	17:52	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (to Dale)
<u>20120526-09</u>	18:26	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)
<u>20120526-13</u>	23:54	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Pam & Art, above) & "Employment Debate Requires Closer Look"
<u>20120527-01</u>	09:55	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
<u>20120527-06</u>	14:36	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120527-04	12:17	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above) & "Governor Walker: The Facts Are the Facts" & "Education for the 21st Century"
20120527-07	14:41	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
20120527-08	15:42	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above) & Happy Memorial Day
20120527-09	17:10	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to all, above) & Happy Memorial Day
20120525-25	21:34	SteveB	"Obama Pot-Smoking Details Revealed in David Maraniss Book"
20120526-01	01:58	SteveM	Photo: I Have a Dream
20120526-02	07:25	MarthaH	"GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes"
20120526-05	08:46	Pam	Re: "GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120526-06	09:51	Dale	"Why We Lie"
20120526-12	19:25	SteveB	Re: "Why We Lie" (reply to Dale, above)
20120526-07	15:23	SteveB	"Fox Mangles Data to Claim 'The Poor' are Getting 'Richer'"
20120526-10	19:05	SteveB	"Romney Messes Up, Tells the Truth About Austerity"
20120526-11	19:15	SteveB	An HONEST Game of 'Life'
20120527-02	10:58	Art	Memorial Day
20120527-03	11:39	SteveG	"Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills"
20120527-05	12:53	SteveB	"Memorial Day Thoughts on National Defense"
20120527-10	21:54	SteveG	"Reckoning with Torture: Memos & Testimonies from the 'War on Terror'"
20120527-11	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Wisconsin Cheese & Cheesehead Hats

20120525-01	06:24	MarthaH	Fw: This Week on FlackCheck.org
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---------------------------------

This week on: <http://www.flackcheck.org/>:

- The McClellan campaign's newest attack ad dismisses the Homestead Act, signed by President Lincoln, as an un-American redistribution of wealth.
- Find out who called Rep. Kristi Noem (R., S.D.), the Tea Party and "D.C. insiders" horses' asses; who smashed a piñata with South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley's face on it, and who accused Bain Capital of "raping companies."
- See if you can spot the difference in a photo used in two campaign mailers sent out by Rep. Brad Sherman (D., Calif.), then decide whether this is a case of media manipulation.
- Takedowns of two Crossroads GPS ads containing misleading attacks against President Obama.
- Learn how some deceptive super PACs hope TV stations will treat their ads (then contact your local stations urging them to stand by their ads).
- View our video highlighting a fact check by Calvin Woodward of the Associated Press on Vice President Biden ("audacious" acts).
- Orchids go to CNN's John King for questioning South Carolina AFL-CIO president Donna Dewitt's piñata-bashing behavior and to CNN's Candy Crowley for challenging top Obama campaign adviser David Axelrod on the content of an anti-Romney ad.
- See our Tuesday May 22 panel on fact checking the 2012 election.

[20120525-02](#) 06:47 SteveB Re: This Week on FlackCheck.org (reply to MarthaH, above)

Referring to the first one (McClellan)...I'm sure the Republicans would attack the Homestead Act, which benefited ordinary people. But the GOP loves all the unmentioned (and more substantial) subsidies in land and money that were given to the railroad barons in the 19th Century. Somehow, that's not an "un-American redistribution of wealth". Because in their vision of America, wealth is only properly redistributed when it is from the bottom to the top. In fact, they don't even call that "redistribution", they call it the Land of the Free! Love It or Leave It!

That's the GOP in a nutshell! It's time to get rid of them and find a less radicalized replacement.

[20120525-03](#) 09:06 Pam/Dale Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (discussion of Dale post in FotM Newsletter #146)

Dale: I'm sure all of you are as outraged with this administration as I am. We gotta get rid of Obama.

Pam: Not me, Dale. Obama isn't perfect, but no President could be. At least he's trying to do the right things. He's trying to fix the country, not bankrupt it like the Republicans did under Bush. Don't blame him for what he didn't do. What exactly has he done that disturbs you so? I'd like specifics.

Dale: Why not blame him for what he didn't do? I don't get that thinking. He promised a lot and delivered little good while acting as a place holder. He misread the need to act on the economy and chose to focus selfishly on creating his own legacy with an ill conceived health plan. His administration still doesn't have a clue about how to create jobs and legitimately stimulate the economy. I'm not going to regurgitate the tired, losing monetary policies which O has tried and only serve to kick the can down the road.

Pam: All politicians promise more than they can deliver: Gingrich and his moon-state to cite one of the more ridiculous examples. Obama did not misread the need for economic action: he prevented a deeper depression than the one we got; he kept the auto industry on life support until it could recover; he passed a jobs bill that Republicans obstructed at every turn; he restored respect for the U.S. abroad; he didn't close Guantanamo, but he did oversee the first judicial reviews of prisoners, which resulted in the release of hundreds of detainees who were not prosecutable under law; he achieved what no President before him has ever done: he passed a health-care reform bill that will greatly benefit young adults (stay on parents' insurance until age 26), those with pre-existing conditions, those without insurance (upwards of 40 million people), and much more. The pity is that he couldn't do more, but given the phobias of Americans about "socialized medicine" it's a wonder he did as much as he managed to do. More needs to be done, and Obama is the only man standing who has even a remote chance. Romney has promised to eliminate Obamacare on day one, a prospect I find frightening. He has called for investment in infrastructure, sustainable energy, and bringing American jobs back to the U.S. by using incentives like tax breaks and tariffs, even as he made concessions to big oil because it was politic to do so. He tried to stop Keystone because it will raise gas prices for Americans, while increasing revenues for foreign companies, to say nothing of the environmental damage this dirty source of oil will do--unlike Boehner, who owns a substantial number of shares in Keystone and stands to gain personally by its implementation. I'm not thrilled that he chose the very individuals largely responsible for our economic crisis to lead us out of it, but he knew they had the best understanding of what went wrong (at least, I give him the benefit of the doubt on that), and the Fed. has kept interest rates low--to encourage investment and encourage borrowing by companies large and small--and inflation minimal. He can't spin jobs out of straw, but he has done a lot to create a friendly business climate while protecting the consumer and seen the jobless rate decline. He admits it's not enough, but it took a while to dig this hole, and it's going to take a while to fill it back up. Massive job loss, the hemorrhaging of funds for social programs like the one my daughter works for (her job is being eliminated in December, leaving dozens of families with severely disabled children without life-sustaining services), the ridiculous No Child Left Behind initiative, and the failure of many businesses (thank you, Mr. Romney)--these are the result of Bush W. policies, to name just a few. What is your "clue" to creating jobs? Yes, we need to have a stable business environment so employers know what to expect, but a return to economics as usual is not the answer. I sort of agree that "what's good for GM is good for America," but

not at the expense of Americans who want to drive safe, fuel-efficient cars. Regulation is not the problem (well, maybe it is--all that paperwork!); predictability is.

Pam wrote above: All politicians promise more than they can deliver: Gingrich and his moon-state to cite one of the more ridiculous examples.

Dale: Step one, attack somebody else.

Pam: Since when did quoting someone become an attack? Gingrich said it, not me.

Pam wrote above: Obama did not misread the need for economic action.

Dale: He acted reluctantly and late in the running, while preoccupied with lobbying for Obamacare. Then, his admin totally botched the TARP program...anyone remember the "shovel ready" projects that weren't there? In reality, he either lied or didn't know what he was talking about.

Pam: And Goldman Sachs told the truth when they claimed that mortgage-backed securities were a safe bet? Obama did not botch TARP. He carried out what Bush had already begun and would have done more if he could. Many economists believe Obama didn't go far enough, but Republicans weren't about to let him go further. As for "shovel ready" projects, why doesn't private industry step in to get them off the ground? Corporations are the entities with the money, and they're sitting on it while government spending declines. I don't care who funds bridge repairs, hospital construction, or computer labs in schools, but I don't for a minute blame Obama for not spending money that isn't there. If you don't want government-supported jobs, then why don't you get your rich friends to pony up the money to hire people?

Pam wrote above: He prevented a deeper depression than the one we got; he kept the auto industry on life support until it could recover.

Dale: Let's call it what it was. He paid back a campaign debt to the auto unions who donated money and time to get him elected. A pure special interest payoff. He strong-armed them onto the boards of the companies he virtually nationalized and he use our money to do it. He picked a group he wanted to favor at the expense of everyone else in the US.

Pam: I was sort of hoping he would nationalize the banks, actually. I don't doubt the unions contributed to his election, but I suppose Republicans never do that sort of thing. How is preventing Medicare from negotiating drug prices not a payoff to big pharma? How is subsidizing corn for the production of high-fructose corn syrup and bio-fuels not a payoff to big agriculture? And finally, why on earth would Obama want to throw Americans "under a bus?" What's in that for him? He's a Democrat, for Christ's sake, the party of the little guy. It's nothing but a smear for Republicans to call him an elitist. You want elitism? Look to the cadre of CEOs who are flying high. And he did rescue the auto industry; look at this year's bottom line. He used our money to do it? Sadly, true, perhaps, but he's not the one who took this country from a surplus to an all-time record deficit. Please.

Pam wrote above: He passed a jobs bill that Republicans obstructed at every turn; he restored respect for the U.S. abroad.

Dale: What part of "all the Islamic countries that hated us before, hate us just as much now" don't you get? Time will tell about the wisdom of his pull-out timing. Maybe it was good, maybe not. I'm not judging yet, but what makes you think the British, French, Germans, Italians, Spanish, Greek, Russians or any other countries respect him?

Pam: Oh, I get that they hate us, and I'm not surprised. Islamic countries where we build schools and contribute something worthwhile don't hate us; it's the ones we bomb to smithereens. I can't speak definitively to European

leaders' opinion of Obama, but at least they don't think he's a fool, like our last President. I know, I know. I'm attacking poor Mr. Bush. Silly me.

Pam wrote above: He didn't close Guantanamo, but he did oversee the first judicial reviews of prisoners, which resulted in the release of hundreds of detainees who were not prosecutable under law; he achieved what no President before him has ever done: he passed a health-care reform bill that will greatly benefit young adults (stay on parents' insurance until age 26), those with pre-existing conditions, those without insurance (upwards of 40 million people), and much more. The pity is that he couldn't do more, but given the phobias of Americans about "socialized medicine" it's a wonder he did as much as he managed to do. More needs to be done, and Obama is the only man standing who has even a remote chance.

Dale: The law is so flawed, it will not even get past judicial review, thankfully. Fortunately, when it is gone by rule of law or by repeal, a valid health care reform law, hopefully bi-partisan or at least inclusive of the input from both parties, will be passed.

Pam: Now here we come close to agreeing. The ACA Act is indeed flawed, rather as if a committee had tried to come up with a horse and designed an elephant instead. I say again, what we need is universal coverage and a single payer. I quote Marcia Angell of Harvard Medical School: "...the fact that Congress lags behind public opinion [you will quibble with this, I know] is surely partly due to liberals accepting the premise that a single-payer system is off the table, while what is truly unrealistic is imagining that we can provide universal and affordable health care in a market-based system." (NYRB, June 7, 2012) If public opinion doesn't want a single payer (too much like socialism), it's not because the public doesn't want affordable care for all. They've been frightened by the bogeyman of socialism and sold a bill of goods about other countries' successes (Sweden, France, Germany, etc.) No, we're not Europe. But most European countries have done more to eliminate discrepancies in their health-care systems than we supposedly egalitarian Americans have. When did "egalitarianism" (all men are created equal) become the pejorative term it is today? Why is wanting to cover the poor and underinsured "income redistribution?" Why is it "class warfare" to want the best for EVERY American citizen, not just those with trust funds? Why don't Republicans propose alternatives that have popular support? I'm willing to listen.

Pam wrote above: Romney has promised to eliminate Obamacare on day one, a prospect I find frightening. He has called for investment in infrastructure, sustainable energy, and bringing American jobs back to the U.S. by using incentives like tax breaks and tariffs, even as he made concessions to big oil because it was politic to do so. He tried to stop Keystone because it will raise gas prices for Americans, while increasing revenues for foreign companies, to say nothing of the environmental damage this dirty source of oil will do--unlike Boehner, who owns a substantial number of shares in Keystone and stands to gain personally by its implementation.

Dale: I sensed an attack was coming soon. To be charitable by assuming good intent, it is unfortunate that Obama has chosen the misguided policy of throwing all Americans under the bus while we are in an extremely difficult economic situation, so he could live up to his campaign promises (selfish again) around alternative energy sources. If he were not so worried about his own image and agenda, or is it that lack of experience thing again, he would have the patience/wisdom of using American natural resources and technology to rebuild our manufacturing base using US natural gas and oil. While restoring our economy and using lower cost energy sources to do so, we could be funding research for viable non-petro sources and energy conservation technology. What dunces would add an unnecessary stress on the system now? Oh yeah, Obama would. When it was obvious that the technology is not ready, instead of accepting it, he doubled down and threw money and favoritism to certain companies at the problem. Now he has to live with the egg on his face.

Pam: Use dirty oil to fund development of clean energy? Where's the incentive for oil to want to do anything but continue to promote their own interests? The climate is changing, or hadn't you noticed. It's 90 degrees where I live. Ten years ago we'd have been happy to reach 75. As the tropics expand into temperate zones, disease and crop failure will follow, just for starters. The fact is, the technology for green energy is already available--from the Chinese. The Chinese produce over half the solar panels in the world; the U.S. produces nearly none. I wonder why that is? The egg is on your face, my friend. In fifty years, your defense of oil and natural gas (don't get me

started on fracking) will seem as retrograde as a defense of slavery. Our economy depends on oil. The Confederate economy depended on slavery. Same difference?

Pam wrote above: I'm not thrilled that he chose the very individuals largely responsible for our economic crisis to lead us out of it, but he knew they had the best understanding of what went wrong (at least, I give him the benefit of the doubt on that), and the Fed. has kept interest rates low--to encourage investment and encourage borrowing by companies large and small--and inflation minimal.

Dale: I am currently coming out of three days of meetings in Washington DC where the lunacy of what the Fed is doing was documented. They are setting up a major crisis by artificially tinkering with the economy and fixing the rates on the long bond. Put in simple terms they are DISCOURAGING loans, because what lender wants to be sitting on 20-year and 30-year bonds when the interest rates eventually go up. You realize, the rates ARE going to go up sometime, don't you? When it happens, the lenders are stuck with debt obligations that go down in value. Once again, this policy is short term thinking with a goal of quickly restoring the housing market to make the Obama administration look good for the upcoming election. The longer term consequences are horrible, but we have a rookie in the White House. The worst case my mean BOTH short term no improvement in housing and long term pain from forced interest rate increases.

Pam: I admit, I don't know a whole lot about the Fed., but I find it hard to believe that in these perilous times the Fed. would deliberately propose destructive policies. My understanding is that the Fed. is trying to manage a delicate balancing act, and so far it seems to be doing better than the Eurozone. What are they supposed to do if not "tinker?"

Pam wrote above: He can't spin jobs out of straw, but he has done a lot to create a friendly business climate while protecting the consumer and seen the jobless rate decline.

Dale: I can't imagine what business person you've talked to who says Obama has created a friendly business climate. That is just plain false. He took an anti-business stance upon arriving in office, playing publicly to his base, then attempted to look neutral while his policies piled on one additional regulation after another on businesses. When people give up looking for work, it is a nifty spin to claim the jobless rate declined. All the people out of work, whether they are still trying to find work or have given up will tell you it isn't any better.

Pam: Obama is not anti-business, any more than I am. I have nothing but respect for entrepreneurs and am grateful for the standard of living we enjoy, thanks to big business. But business unfettered by regulation smacks of the old 19th c. laissez-faire capitalism that was so destructive. I'd have to look at regulations case by case to determine which are truly helpful (clean air and water, safe food supply, effective drugs) are which are bureaucratic busywork. I know there's a lot of that in education, and it's doing no one any good. I know folks who are out of work and have been, in one case, for three years. His school teacher wife supports the family, and his kids, fortunately, qualify for scholarships. I know he's still looking, but he's in his mid-fifties. What chances do you suppose he has? Who do you count as Obama's "base?" I tried earlier to describe what I thought the conservative base is. Will you do the same?

Pam wrote above: He admits it's not enough, but it took a while to dig this hole, and it's going to take a while to fill it back up. Massive job loss, the hemorrhaging of funds for social programs like the one my daughter works for (her job is being eliminated in December, leaving dozens of families with severely disabled children without life-sustaining services), the ridiculous No Child Left Behind initiative, and the failure of many businesses (thank you, Mr. Romney)--these are the result of Bush W. policies, to name just a few. What is your "clue" to creating jobs? Yes, we need to have a stable business environment so employers know what to expect, but a return to economics as usual is not the answer. I sort of agree that "what's good for GM is good for America," but not at the expense of Americans who want to drive safe, fuel-efficient cars. Regulation is not the problem (well, maybe it is--all that paperwork!); predictability is.

Dale: BTW, when was the last time the Senate passed a budget? Where is the leadership in either the Democratically controlled Senate or the White House? Finally, I am still looking for a coherent statement of how Obama will make things better if elected. They are without ideas, without direction, and without a plan. There is no Hope for improvement by reelecting failed approaches.

Pam: A plague on both their houses, I say. But if push comes to shove, as it certainly has, I'll go with the Dems. Economists disagree about the relative dangers of the deficit and joblessness. I agree with Robert Reich that we need to create jobs and stimulate growth in the short term, and deal with the deficit in the long-term. A shrinking middle class is a graver danger than some red ink.

Dale wrote above: Finally, I am still looking for a coherent statement of how Obama will make things better if elected. They are without ideas, without direction, and without a plan. There is no Hope for improvement by reelecting failed approaches.

Pam: And the Republican plan is? Cut taxes and starve government even more (for "government" you could substitute "ordinary Americans" who depend on government-supported programs, like Head Start, Food Stamps, Medicare, etc. etc.) The middle class is being taxed unfairly in comparison to those whose income derives from investments, trusts, and capital gains. John Dillinger was asked why he robbed banks. His answer, "That's where the money is."

Dale: Now, it's your turn. Give me the specifics on how an Obama reelection will improve the economy? What is their plan? What are they going to do differently? The "trust me, I know best," with no specifics didn't work for the last four years, so why should anyone think it will for the next four? There is no confidence in Obama and the Hope has faded. His lack of experience and leadership has revealed itself so why reward lack of production with reelection.

Pam: See my comments above. I agree that "trust me, I know best" is insufficient. I also know that politicians all speak in platitudes and generalities. If Obama hasn't accomplished everything he and his supporters would have liked, it's because of Republican obstructionism. Republicans are on record saying they will say NO to everything Obama proposes, even policies they once supported themselves. We can't live on hope. Hope is good for a day, good for a slogan, good for helping you get up in the morning. We do need concrete action that addresses the needs we have today with solutions tailored for today. We do NOT need to turn back and undo all the progress--social, racial, environmental, in workplace safety--that has been hard-won in the past 60 years. The world ahead is one increasingly without borders, where the internet has changed everything and will continue to change the ways we live and think. I won't be part of that world (except to see its beginnings), and that's probably just as well, as I still can't figure out how to do Skype. But the world will not stop for me, nor should it. Obama is a man of the future. He has a vision that includes fairness, growth, peace, and innovation, and he is realist enough to understand that change will come slowly and through compromise. True believers (like me, I suppose) don't much like compromise. (The South isn't ready for integration. Gays don't deserve equal rights. You can't be a true American without being Christian.) Obama has the energy of the true believer and the intelligence not to give the game away through intransigence. The Bush years were a disaster, full stop. Obama has moved us beyond them, thank God.

Pam: Obama has had a sharp learning curve, to be sure. But he is a quick study. I truly believe that in his second term, he will be able to achieve at least some of his goals. He is getting us out of two wars started by Republicans. He is not pushing us into a deeper depression, and there are signs of growth. He doesn't want to wage pre-emptive war on Iran, a disaster waiting to happen. He is doing more to thwart terrorism than Bush did with his "Mission Accomplished" banners and gullibility about WMD in Iraq. Even I was sceptical that Iraq had such a capacity, and what do I know? Bush wanted war, and his pulling out the inspectors prematurely proves that. In short, Obama is cleaning up Bush's and Cheney's mess, and he's doing it without bad-mouthing his predecessors, which in his place I would be sorely tempted to do. All I've heard Republicans say is "NO." And that, for me at least, just isn't good enough. Piffle!

Dale: If you are afraid of the alternative, I get that. I don't agree with it, but I understand. I understand why the approach is a constant barrage of character assassination of the opponent(s), which is what is seen day after day in this forum. Tellingly, there is no positive energy or enthusiasm for what Obama brings to the future. I get why this incumbent President cannot run on his record, because his record sucks. I get why the strategy is to attack nitpicking potential flaws in Romney. It's an effort to divert attention from the facts around our sorry situation, which Obama has done little to improve. I get how dividing our country into segments and creating a class war mentality is all he can do, because there is nothing positive to propel voters in his direction.

Pam: Ah, the "class war" issue. Whose war is it? And who's winning? I don't feel sorry for millionaires and the increasing number of billionaires who feel so beleaguered. It must be tough living in all those homes, maintaining all those staffs, buying all those Cadillacs (buy American!), and it must be nice to be able to avoid taxes by stashing your loot offshore. The only suffering I see among the wealthy (aside from the personal stuff that comes to all of us) is when one of them has to go to jail. Let me see if I can describe the "class" you think is responsible for this "war." Families earning less than \$50,000 a year who would like to send their kids to college. The disabled who would die without daily help. The sick who would get sicker and perhaps die because they can't afford the care they need. Students trying to prepare themselves for a meaningful life. Poor children who need stimulating day care. Single mothers who can barely get by from one day to the next. Fathers who are embarrassed in front of their children because they've lost their job. Retirees who worry that the retirement they planned for won't be secure, and younger adults who expect never to be able to afford to retire at all (like my own children). Latinos who are struggling to give a leg up to the next generation, African-Americans in poor communities that have no grocery or drug stores, displaced auto workers who have been forced to leave homes and jobs that have been in their families for generations, PhDs who can't find a teaching job because of all the budget cuts. Would you not include these in your bellicose "class?" The rich get richer, and they want to get richer still. Without a strong middle class, no nation can survive long, at least not as a democracy with prosperity and civil rights for everyone. Hemingway was right when he said, "The rich are different from you and me." I've got nothing personal against Romney. I see him as an entitled little rich kid who's grown up to be a patriarchal, ruthless-in-business, rigid-in-religion individual who wears blue jeans when everyone else is in a suit because he believes it makes him look more "real." He is free to live his country club life, and more power to him. But to imagine for one minute that he has any inkling what it is like to be "ordinary" is fanciful. America has always been the land of "ordinary" people, who distrust kings, hierarchies, and great wealth. My assumption is that all those English folks who tour those great country estates that used to belong to the aristocracy would like, in their heart of hearts, to live like that too. When I tour the mansions in Newport (summer homes though they were), I am appalled by the excessive display of wealth enjoyed by the Robber Barons of an earlier age. Henry James left the U.S. for England because he felt America lacked a history, an aristocracy, and monumental architecture--what he called "culture." He was a snob, better suited to a continental sensibility. Nathaniel Hawthorne, who wrote about "ordinary people" is more quintessentially American, and he's the one who gets my vote--and my time.

Dale: My posting of the WSJ article is really kind of a cheap shot, which was more intended to interrupt the pace of Romney bashing. Is the information accurate? I think so, but is it all that relevant, probably not. Every administration will have embarrassing gaffs like this USDA incident and like the prostitution thing in Columbia. I don't think Obama deserves any more abuse for having these particular screw ups come to the surface during his watch, but I do hold him accountable for the significant deficiencies like not addressing the economy, manipulating the markets by favoring segments and specific companies and hypocritically pandering to his political self interests while the bulk of the citizens suffer.

Pam: I wasn't able to see the whole article you posted (computer wouldn't cooperate), but I'm glad to see you don't blame Obama for the Secret Service snafu. But to blame him for all our economic woes is to ignore the facts. And what are the "segments" and "specific companies" you see him pandering to? Do you mean green energy advocates and solar-panel companies? Do you mean patients whose medical bills send them into bankruptcy (most bankruptcies of private citizens are related to overwhelming medical costs)? Do you mean teachers and policemen? Soldiers? If the "bulk of the citizens suffer," which I agree they do, you would do better to look to the Bush-Cheney years for reasons that to the past two years under Obama.

Dale: I DO blame him for what he didn't do and I think you should too.

Pam: I regret what Obama hasn't been able to accomplish, but it's not him I blame.

I suspect that if our dialogue goes any further, I'm going to have to start doing research and finding facts and figures, which I'm not much in the mood to do, preferring instead to rely on secondary sources I trust. But most people don't argue politics with a cadre of researchers at their backs; they argue like we do--from their hearts and possibly their minds. So, unless you can substantially undermine the basic ideas I've laid out, I remain unpersuaded by your "logic." Please. Feel free to respond.

p.s. A little taste of Marx (gasp!) might not be amiss here. His theory of history was based on dialectic: thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Our country is mired in the thesis-antithesis stage, with potentially dreadful consequences. We will never live in a country where everyone, or even perhaps a majority, have everything the way they want it, but I would settle for an America that is "pretty good overall." You don't get there by going to extremes, despite what ol' Barry Goldwater said.

20120525-20	18:03	Art	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad"
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I couldn't find one fact in Dale's response. Somebody help me out.

20120525-05	11:41	SteveB	Re: "USDA Is a Tough Collector When Mortgages Go Bad" (reply to Dale, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Just one point, Dale. How can you blame President Obama for what your side says is impossible for government to do—"His administration still doesn't have a clue about how to create jobs and legitimately stimulate the economy."

Don't you agree with SteveBA that there has never been a good government program? What can government do if it can do nothing? You just can't have it both ways.

IF PRESIDENT OBAMA HAS DONE NOTHING, THEN HE SHOULD BE THE ULTIMATE HERO OF CONSERVATIVES!!!!
But I guess he wouldn't prove their cockeyed dogma, huh?

What have the Republicans (or the Democrats) let him do? Congress is a mess because they are bought and sold. Maybe the President is too, but I hope not. R0mney? That guy would sell out his own mother for money, let alone me and you and our grandkids. Ain't it obvious?

You never mention our dysfunctional Congress, you only spout anti-Obama sentiment. Which is perfectly OK. It's because of all the birther and fake economic attacks, all the lies about President Obama and others (debunked in the FotM Newsletter) that I feel Romney is fair game. When have I hit below the belt? (As the Right does nearly all the time?) When is there lack of concern for whether a candidate has the character to lead us? I see all of this as legitimate fodder for research and discussion, though it is a subject that, frankly, Republicans don't seem very interested in.

Let me give you one example. Your side says President Obama is a socialist who is destroying the country. You seem to agree. You say spending and deficits are out of control. You say the government has gotten too big. You say "entitlements" (what an ugly lie of a word, it should be shot!) are bankrupting us. But the Republican wars aren't. Yet these are all lies from the Right-wing Puppet-Masters. It has recently been proven in our pages that Obama has done no such things as these lies nebulously portent. Government has seemingly become amazingly efficient under the big guy. LOL!

That is the truth, my friend.

Here it is in a nutshell: Republicans have it ALL their way! Taxes, especially on the rich are very low (a la Mitt). The wars are raging. Free trade is expanding. Interest rates are 0% or very near. Cheap labor floods across the border

unchecked. Corporations are "people" with all the power of same and a lot more; they are able to buy elections, politicians, anything. The cross borders and manipulate markets and currencies with impunity and entirely selfish motives. It's a veritable Republican Utopia created by Reagan through Bush II.

AND YOU WANT GOVERNMENT TO SAVE AMERICA?

WHY HAVEN'T BUSINESSES AND CORPORATIONS CREATED THE JOBS? WHERE IS CAPITALISM IN THIS IDEAL ENVIRONMENT THEY CREATED FOR THEMSELVES?

I do not consider this a facetious question! I consider it a challenge. Your dogma is under attack!

It's just like the problem of the poor. If the rich don't need government's help to contribute to charity, then why haven't they solved the problem even WITH government's help? Where are all those charitable contributions that would be required? They will never show up, will they? Ya, they never did in the past either, even when the nation was being carved up and given away for free to the Robber barons. That's OK. That's human nature. That's why we need government intervention in so many things. Or maybe you prefer the Old West of the 19th Century, with Rush Limbaugh the local gunslinger?

Have a great weekend, all.

[20120525-07](#)

13:09

Pam

Re: From the Right: "Cocooned Liberals Are Unprepared for Political Debate" & Canadian Protests: Silence in the U.S. (reply to SteveB)

I think Michael Barone makes a good point when he chides both left and right for shutting out the other side and sticking with their own kind. That is why FotM is so important. It tries to get solid arguments from all sides so we can form sound judgments. If we can't refute our opponents' reasonable arguments, then we're no better than they are. I support unions generally, for instance, but I concede that sometimes they exercise unnecessary, arbitrary control. People should have a choice about whether to join one or not. Factory workers undoubtedly need strong unions for their protection. I'm not so sure about teachers' unions. When I was a high school teacher back in the Dark Ages, I declined to join one. I wasn't prepared to go out on strike, if it came to that, so I felt disingenuous if I signed on. I'm not sure I'd make that same decision today, but my point is, sometimes the other side does have reasonable arguments. We should debate them on their merits, not because they get us all riled up. I get riled up plenty, but that's because I'm human. If I want to have a hope of being convincing, I know I need to be respectful, not irrationally outraged. Don't expect me to be perfect about this.

What really gets me is the protests in Canada. Whoo-hoo! What a travesty! I am appalled by the law forbidding public demonstrations, a clear infringement of free speech and freedom of association. I thought Canada was better than that.

Sometimes, I think our only difference might be our attitude toward immigration. I know it's a problem, but I figure, immigrants wouldn't come here if they didn't expect to find opportunity, which must mean there's a need for their labor. Who would pick our strawberries if not them? I also sympathize with people who are pushed to the wall. Of course, it's horrible when illegals get tax refunds and that sort of thing, but what we need there is, perhaps, a different method for admitting people. I don't know. It's complicated, and I don't live in Arizona, so I probably don't know what I'm talking about. What's your stance on legalizing marijuana? I've never smoked pot in my life, but I support legalization. We've got a practically failed state on our border, and that concerns me.

[20120525-09](#)

14:13

Dennis

"Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, or Corrupt?"

Spilled tea...

"Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, or Corrupt?" by Don Hamel

May 22, 2012, (<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/05/22/patriots/>)

The Tea Party came into this world the same way a baby does; screaming and crying. Mainly they screamed and cried about the deficit, taxes and fiscal responsibility. It turns out, when it comes to spending, they're still babes in the woods. Their latest IRS filing shows the Tea Party Patriots took in more than \$12 million in fundraising, so how did only \$3.4 million of that go to their actual 'mission' programs?

Mother Jones obtained the Tea Party Patriots' full IRS filing:

https://www.motherjones.com/files/tpp_2010_form_990.pdf.

And it's an abject lesson in how fools and their money part. The most damning evidence is found on page 20, shown here:

SCHEDULE G
(Form 990 or 990-EZ)

Supplemental Information Regarding Fundraising or Gaming Activities

OMB No. 1545-0047

2010

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" to Form 990, Part IV, lines 17, 18, or 19,
or if the organization entered more than \$15,000 on Form 990-EZ, line 6a.
▶ Attach to Form 990 or Form 990-EZ. ▶ See separate instructions.

Open To Public Inspection

Name of the organization

Tea Party Patriots, Inc.

Employer identification number

27-0470227

Part I Fundraising Activities. Complete if the organization answered "Yes" to Form 990, Part IV, line 17. Form 990-EZ filers are not required to complete this part.

1 Indicate whether the organization raised funds through any of the following activities. Check all that apply.

- a Mail solicitations
- b Internet and email solicitations
- c Phone solicitations
- d In-person solicitations
- e Solicitation of non-government grants
- f Solicitation of government grants
- g Special fundraising events

2 a Did the organization have a written or oral agreement with any individual (including officers, directors, trustees or key employees listed in Form 990, Part VII) or entity in connection with professional fundraising services? Yes No

b If "Yes," list the ten highest paid individuals or entities (fundraisers) pursuant to agreements under which the fundraiser is to be compensated at least \$5,000 by the organization.

(i) Name and address of individual or entity (fundraiser)	(ii) Activity	(iii) Did fundraiser have custody or control of contributions?		(iv) Gross receipts from activity	(v) Amount paid to (or retained by) fundraiser listed in col. (i)	(vi) Amount paid to (or retained by) organization
		Yes	No			
MDS Communications - 545 W Juanita Ave, Mesa, AZ 85210	Telemarketing		X	680,581.	665,581.	15,000.
Capital Resource, Inc. - PO Box 257, Brooklyn, IA 52211	Telemarketing		X	195,300.	239,345.	<44,045.>
Case Consulting Service - 700 Miller Ave, Great Falls, VA	Solicitation		X	60,000.	60,000.	0.
Jody Thomas - 5434 Chieftain Ct, Alexandria, VA 22312	Solicitation		X	48,125.	48,125.	0.
The Richard Norman Company - 44084 Riverside Parkway,	Fundraising counsel		X	0.	1,450,512.	<1,450,512.>
Total				984,006.	2,463,563.	<1,479,557.>

3 List all states in which the organization is registered or licensed to solicit contributions or has been notified it is exempt from registration or licensing.

AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, KS, IL, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NH, NJ, NM, NY
NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, UT, VA, WA, WV, WI

Here you find MDS Communications, a telemarketing firm that took in on behalf of the TPP \$680,581.00 , a tidy sum. Sadly for the cause, they charged \$665,581 for their services, leaving the fiscally hawkish TPP, \$15k. Then there's the \$1.4 million that was given to the Richard Norman Company, for "fundraising counsel," a figure made more remarkable when you learn Richard Norman, is now TPP's national finance chair.

You'd think he could have given them a discount.

20120525-11	15:18	Art	Re: "Tea Party Patriots: Stupid, Or Corrupt?" (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Crooked as they come. Surprise, surprise!

20120525-10	14:33	SteveB	"Obama Has to Explain Why Fairness Is Essential to Growth (And Why Some Democrats Have to Stop Believing Otherwise)"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

"Obama Has to Explain Why Fairness Is Essential to Growth (And Why Some Democrats Have to Stop Believing Otherwise)" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/obama-has-explain-why-fairness-essential-growth-and-why-some-democrats-have-stop-believing-otherwise>)

The Cory Booker imbrogio has ignited a silly but potentially pernicious debate in the Democratic Party between so-called "pro-growth centrists" who want the President to focus on how well he's done getting the economy back on its feet after the Bush administration almost knocked it out, and "pro-fairness populists" who want him to focus on the nation's widening inequality and Wall Street's (and Romney's) continuing role in generating profits for a few at the expense of almost everyone else.

According to the *National Journal's* Josh Kraushaar, for example:

Conversations with liberal activists and labor officials reveal an unmistakable hostility toward the pro-business, free-trade, free-market philosophy that was in vogue during the second half of the Clinton administration... Moderate Democratic groups and officials, meanwhile, privately fret about the party's leftward drift and the Obama campaign's embrace of an aggressively populist message... They wish the administration's focus was on growth over fairness.

This is pure bunk – or should be.

Fairness isn't inconsistent with growth; it's essential to it. The only way the economy can grow and create more jobs is if prosperity is more widely shared.

The key reason why the recovery is so anemic is so much income and wealth are now concentrated at the top is America's the vast middle class no longer has the purchasing power necessary to boost the economy.

The richest 1 percent of Americans save about half their incomes, while most of the rest of us save between 6 and 10 percent. That shouldn't be surprising. Being rich means you already have most of what you want and need. That second yacht isn't nearly as exciting as was the first.

It follows that when, as now, the top 1 percent rakes in more than 20 percent of total income — at least twice the share it had 30 years ago — there's insufficient demand for all the goods and services the economy is capable of producing at or near full employment. And without demand, the economy doesn't grow or generate nearly enough jobs.

Wall Street is part of the problem because it's responsible for so much of the concentration of income and wealth at the very top – and for much of the distress still felt in the rest of the economy after the Street nearly melted down in 2008.

The Street has turned a significant part of the economy into a giant casino involving mammoth bets with other peoples' money. When the bets go well, the rich owners of the casino (Wall Street executives, traders, hedge-fund managers, private-equity managers) become even richer. When the bets go sour, the rest of us bear the costs.

The casino also requires continuous transfers of wealth from ordinary taxpayers. Some are built into the tax code. One is the preference of debt over equity (interest on debt is tax deductible), which awards Wall Street banks like JPMorgan for risky lending and awards private-equity firms like Bain Capital for piling debt on the firms it buys.

Another is the "carried interest" rule that, absurdly, allows private-equity managers (like Mitt Romney) to treat their income as capital gains even when they haven't risked any of their money.

The biggest of all is the invisible guarantee that if the biggest banks get into trouble, taxpayers will bail them out. This subsidy reduces the big banks' cost of capital relative to other banks and fuels even more risky lending.

None of this is fair. It's also bad for economic growth and jobs – as we've so painfully witnessed.

Translated into presidential politics, all this means the President should be talking about fairness and growth ***and*** jobs, and explaining why we can't have the latter without the former.

It also means he should be attacking Mitt Romney because Romney is part of the system of casino capitalism that has harmed America and held back growth — and Romney wants even less regulation of Wall Street (he's vowed to repeal Dodd-Frank).

And because the budget Romney has put forth would gut public services vital to the middle class and poor, while cutting taxes on the rich and on corporations even more than they've already been cut.

In other words, Romney epitomizes the unfairness of the American economy in this new Gilded Age. For that same reason, Romney is the quintessence of an economic approach shown to be anti-growth and anti-jobs.

20120525-12 15:29 Dennis "My Break with the Extreme Right"
--

"My Break with the Extreme Right" by Michael Fumento, Salon

May 24, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/writer/michael_fumento/)

(I worked for Reagan and wrote for National Review. But the new hysterical right cares nothing for truth or dignity.)

Gosh! When did I end up in bed with Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber? Could it be because I did specialize in blowing things up while serving my country for four years as an airborne combat engineer? I also watched human beings blown up. I had friends and Navy SEALs I was in battle with blown up. My own intestines exploded on the first of my four combat embeds, three in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. Took seven operations to fix the plumbing. I later suffered other permanent injuries.

Yet now I find myself linked not only with the Unabomber, but also Charles Manson and Fidel Castro. Or so says the Chicago-based think tank the Heartland Institute, for which I've done work. Heartland erected billboards depicting the above three declaring: "I still believe in Global Warming. Do you?" Climate scientists now, evidently, share something in common with dictators and mass murderers. Reportedly bin Laden was scheduled to make such an appearance, too.

You see, I've published articles saying I do "believe in global warming." Yes, I've also questioned the extent to which man-made gases have contributed to that warming and concluded that expenditures to reduce those emissions would be as worthless as they'd be horrifically expensive. No matter; just call me "Ted." Or "Charlie." Or "Fidel."

This is nuts! Literally. As in "mass hysteria." That's a phenomenon I wrote about for a quarter-century, from the heterosexual AIDS "epidemic" to the swine flu "pandemic" that killed vastly fewer people than seasonal flu, to "runaway Toyotas." Mass hysteria is when a large segment of society loses touch with reality, or goes bonkers, if

you will, on a given issue – like believing that an incredibly mild strain of flu could kill eight times as many Americans as normal seasonal flu. (It killed about a third as many.)

I was always way ahead of the curve. And my exposés primarily appeared in right-wing publications. Back when they were interested in serious research. I also founded a conservative college newspaper, held positions in the Reagan administration and at several conservative think tanks, and published five books that conservatives applauded. I've written for umpteen major conservative publications – *National Review*, the *Weekly Standard*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes*, among them.

But no longer. That was the old right. The last thing hysteria promoters want is calm, reasoned argument backed by facts. And I'm horrified that these people have co-opted the name "conservative" to scream their messages of hate and anger.

Extremism in the defense of nothing

Nothing the new right does is evidently outrageous enough to receive more than a peep of indignation from the new right. Heartland pulled its billboards because of funder withdrawals, not because any conservatives spoke up and said it had crossed a line.

Last month U.S. Rep. Allen West, a Florida Republican recently considered by some as vice-president material, insisted that there are "78 to 81" Democrats in Congress who are members of the Communist Party, again with little condemnation from the new right.

Mitt Romney took a question at a town hall meeting this month from a woman who insisted President Obama be "tried for treason," without challenging, demurring from or even commenting on her assertion.

And then there's the late Andrew Breitbart (assassinated on the orders of Obama, natch). A video from February shows him shrieking at peaceful protesters: "You're freaks and animals! Stop raping people! Stop raping people! You freaks! You filthy freaks! You filthy, filthy, filthy raping, murdering freaks!" He went on for a minute-and-a-half like that. Speak not ill of the dead? Sen. Ted Kennedy's body was barely cold when Breitbart labeled him "a big ass motherf@#\$er," a "duplicitous bastard" a "prick" and "a special pile of human excrement."

The new right loved it! Upon his own death shortly after, Breitbart was immediately sanctified and sent to lead the Seraphim. He was repeatedly eulogized as "the most important conservative of our time never to hold office," skipping right past William F. What's-his-name Jr.

There was nothing "conservative" about Breitbart. Ever-consummate gentlemen like Buckley and Ronald Reagan would have been mortified by such behavior as Breitbart's – or West's or Heartland's. "There you go again," the Gipper would have said in his soft but powerful voice.

Civility and respect for order – nay, demand for order – have always been tenets of conservatism. The most prominent work of history's most prominent conservative, Edmund Burke, was a reaction to the anger and hatred that swept France during the revolution. It would eventually rip the country apart and plunge all of Europe into decades of war. Such is the rotted fruit of mass-produced hate and rage. Burke, not incidentally, was a true Tea Party supporter, risking everything as a member of Parliament to support the rebellion in the United States.

All of today's right-wing darlings got there by mastering what Burke feared most: screaming "*J'accuse! J'accuse!*" Turning people against each other. Taking seeds of fear, anger and hatred and planting them to grow a new crop.

Conservatism has also historically emphasized empiricism. Joe Friday of "Dragnet" must have been a conservative: "All we want are the facts, Ma'am." When President Reagan famously said, "Facts are stupid things," he meant to quote President John Adams' observation that "Facts are stubborn things." But how much fact was there in Heartland's billboards, whose shock purpose has been likened to tactics of the hard-left animal activist group PETA, with whom I've repeatedly locked horns. Or in West's assertion? Or Breitbart's tirades? Rush Limbaugh compared Breitbart, who never wrote a single investigative report, to Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the dynamic duo who

brought down the thoroughly corrupt presidency of Richard Nixon. He actually said Breitbart's work was superior. Oh, dear!

I know these words coming from somebody identified with the right are heresy – as defined by this new right. And invited to a marshmallow roast with you as guest of honor. Or worse. It's to be labeled with the ultimate epithet: RINO. Republican in name only. GOP Sen. Scott Brown bears that mark of Cain. Coming from super-liberal Massachusetts, he only has a 74 percent American Conservative Union rating. There you go, then!

So there's an auto-da-fé out there right now with my name on it. Torquemada is holding the torch; the wieners and s'mores are flying off the shelves. Truth be known, though, I haven't considered myself a Republican since 1982. Why? That was the year of the massive Reagan tax hike. I figured that's what liberal Democrats are for. Tore up my donor card and never gave again. By being a conservative at that time, I was a RINO. By being one now, I'm also a RINO. A very curious animal, that.

The hate, anger and fear machine

A single author, Ann Coulter, has published best-selling books accusing liberals, in the titles, of being demonic, godless and treasonous. Michelle Malkin, ranked by the Internet search company PeekYou as having the most traffic of any political blogger, routinely dismisses them as "moonbats, morons and idiots." Limbaugh infamously dispatched a young woman who expressed her opinion that the government should provide free birth control as a "slut" and a "prostitute."

As a conservative, I disagree with the political opinions of liberals. But to me, a verbal assault indicates insecurity and weakness on the part of the assaulter, as in "Is that the best they can do?" This playground bullying – the name-calling, the screaming, the horrible accusations – all are intended to stifle debate, the very lifeblood of a democracy.

Meanwhile, these people who practice shutting down the opposition through shouts and smears accuse President Obama of having dictatorial dreams? A recent email I received, based on accusations from umpteen right-wing groups, blared in caps-lock fury: "BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA HAS SIGNED A MARTIAL LAW EXECUTIVE ORDER!" This specific message, from a group calling itself RightMarch.org, goes on: "THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! BARACK OBAMA IS TRYING TO VIOLATE THE CONSTITUTION, BECOME A DICTATOR, AND TAKE AWAY OUR RIGHTS!"

Outrageous, indeed. Obama's order updated a National Defense Resource Preparedness act, which was essentially identical to one signed 19 years earlier and actually originated in 1950. It granted no authority to Obama that he did not already have under existing laws.

President Obama is regularly referred to as a Marxist/Socialist, Nazi, tyrant, Muslim terrorist supporter and – let me look this up, but I'll bet probably the antichrist, too. Yup, there it is! Over 5 million Google references. There should be a contest to see if there's anything for which Obama hasn't been accused. Athlete's foot? The "killer bees"? Maybe. In any case, the very people who coined and promoted such terms as "Bush Derangement Syndrome, Cheney Derangement Syndrome and Palin Derangement Syndrome" have been promoting hysterical attitudes toward Obama since before he was even sworn in.

No, I'm not cherry-picking. When I say "regularly referred to," interpret literally. Polls show that about half of voting Republican buy into the birther nonsense (one of the more prominent hysterias within the hysteria). Only about a fourth seem truly sure that Obama was actually born here. In her nationally syndicated column Michelle Malkin wrote regarding Limbaugh's slut remarks, that "I'm sorry the civility police now have an opening to demonize the entire right based on one radio comment." In a stroke she's expressed her disdain for civility and declared the new right's sins can be dispatched as an itchy-bitsy little single faux pas, "one radio comment."

No, Michelle, incivility – nay, outright meanness and puerility – rears its ugly head daily on your blog, which as I write this on May 23 has one item referring in the headline to "Pig Maher's boy [Bill Maher]" and another to "Jaczko the Jerk," [former U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Gregory Jaczko]. She calls Limbaugh target Sandra Fluke a "femme-agogue" and her supporters "[George] Soros monkeys." Pigs? Monkeys? Moonbats? It's literal dehumanization.

Sure, there are enough hate-and-anger mongers on the left to go around. Among the worst was Keith Olbermann, who once called Malkin a "mashed up bag of meat with lipstick on it." Very edifying, Keith! But as the Christian Science Monitor reported, his ratings recently collapsed from an average of 354,000 viewers a night when he debuted on Current TV, to 58,000 viewers by the first quarter of 2012. He was recently fired. Again. Air America was intended to counter right-wing talk radio, especially Rush Limbaugh. I was on Al Franken's show while he made fun of a soldier from my first battle who is now permanently paralyzed. Touché, Al! But Air America also failed.

Malkin, who revels in playing the victim, says that she's been called all sorts of horrible things, many based on her Filipina heritage. But most of what she cites come from email or anonymous comments on blog sites. It wasn't usually from paid professionals with large audiences, like her, aimed at paid professionals like her. It's thus hard to compare with the host of the most popular talk show host in history taking shots at an unknown 22-year-old woman. (She's hardly that now; Limbaugh himself promoted her to a national spokeswoman.)

Incivility is hardly the domain of the new right. American society grows ever coarser. But this is cold comfort. Conservative ideology demands civility of conservatives; demands, yes, self-policing. Let others act as they will, bearing evidence of the shallowness of their positions. It also demands respect for official offices, such as the presidency. When our guy is in office, you give him that modicum of respect – and when your guy is in office, we do the same. The other party is to be referred to as "the loyal opposition," not with words the FCC forbids on the air.

Muckraking becometh buckraking

In the grief-fest at Breitbart's death, forgiven (and indeed practically forgotten) was his crucial role in building the single most popular liberal website, the Huffington Post. Some of Breitbart's friends admitted he was absent of ideology. "I don't recall Andrew Breitbart ever mentioning electoral politics," wrote Tucker Carlson. "It bored him." Breitbart's inspiration, then? George Washington through Benjamin Franklin – printed in primarily green ink on cotton stock.

Limbaugh pulls down a stunning \$38 million annual salary. Leaked Heartland Institute documents revealed it's gotten over \$14 million in the past six years from a single individual. RightMarch.com accompanied the Obama-cum-tyrant message with an offer to "Blast Fax" every member of Congress for \$139 – for a profit of about \$139. Surely these people have their fingers crossed that President Obama is reelected.

I personally know a lot of the leaders of this new rabid right. Most are very nice on a personal basis. Honestly, you'd be shocked. Unlike Breitbart, some began as real conservatives. One called me her mentor in her first book and attended my wedding. Many once sang my praises. Again, unlike Breitbart, Malkin was once a true investigative reporter. You can still see elements of actual research in Ann Coulter's work, too.

But when times changed, and it became profitable to move from honorable advocacy to shrill name-calling, they changed too. They cashed in their reputations, as well as their ideology, for lucre. Those who didn't – because conservatism runs against screaming, extremism and sensationalism – began disappearing from the talk shows, magazines and store shelves. They were replaced by pod people.

Conservatism, R.I.P.

You cannot be identified by what you oppose, only by what you stand for. But this curious creature's main claim to the title of "conservative" is that it hates liberals – as do liberals and lots of others on many points of the political spectrum. Obama is routinely bashed in such places as the Nation. The right-wing Nation?

Indeed in any violent anti-democratic revolution – Jacobite, Bolshevik, National Socialist – the first goal is to eliminate the real competition, those with ideals. The guys who really believed in liberty, fraternity and equality or rule by the proletariat were identified, isolated and eliminated early on to leave only two extremes to choose from. "It's us or the Bourbons! It's us or the Romanovs!" In Germany, the conservatives and liberals were dispatched to the labor camps before the Nazis felt safe to send the Jews to the death camps.

The new right cannot advance a conservative agenda precisely because, other than a few small holdouts like the *American Conservative* magazine or that battleship that refuses to become a museum, George Will, it is not itself conservative. Pod people are running the show. It has no such capability; no such desire. I find that disturbing for obvious reasons. But, based on my own conversations with liberals, I think – nay, I know – that if more of these allegedly godless, treasonous people understood real conservatism a lot would embrace many conservative positions.

Thus everybody realizes government spending has lost its airbrakes. But while the new right screams the most about big government, it nonetheless supported President George W. Bush as he presided over the largest expansion of government spending since uber-liberal FDR and left us with a massive debt before President Obama was sworn in. Why? Silly rabbit! Because the left opposed him.

The same has been said for the right's otherwise seemingly unfathomable enchantment with Sarah Palin; it's a defense of their damsel in distress. The veracity of the left's claims about her are irrelevant. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Or so thought that uber-liberal FDR about good ol' "Uncle Joe" right to the end, even as conservative Winston Churchill tried desperately to convince him otherwise. And so fell the Iron Curtain.

Eating its own

Obsessed with attacking, the new right will carpet-bomb positions of the old right if the left comes around to it.

Thus the right has traditionally opposed government subsidies. My first cover story was in Buckley's *National Review*, arguing against ethanol subsidies that ultimately grew to \$6 billion annually. But when the Senate sought to repeal the subsidy last year, right-wing guru and Jack Abramoff henchman Grover Norquist fought it – with the stunning argument that cutting a government subsidy is actually a tax hike in disguise!

And how ironic that for decades liberals unfairly accused conservatives of "McCarthyism" to shut down debate. (Oh, how I remember!) Yet now the right countenances a prominent congressman who has literally outdone "Tailgunner Joe."

McCarthy's infamous list comprised only 57 Communists who were merely State Department employees, not "78 to 81" of the nation's top elected officials.

Pity the poor *Onion*; there's nothing left to satirize.

Gridlock

Apart from gaining fame and fortune for a select few, all the new right is accomplishing is turning Bismarck's words upside down, making politics the art of the impossible. It demonizes the opposition even as it brutally enforces "team loyalty." So nothing gets done, and bad trends just get worse.

Drastic action is required now, nay yesterday, to start bringing expenditures in line with income. About half our government spending is fueled by borrowing, and that spending accounts for a fourth of GDP. Without borrowing, then, our GDP would drop 12 percent or more – well into depression range.

Entitlement spending, that which requires no new legislation, is en route to consuming all tax revenue.

Excluding the very top earners, household incomes have been declining for a decade.

The real employment level has been trending downward since the mid-1980s. Unemployment for a year or more, the kind that just sucks the heart and soul out of people, is about double what it was in late 2009 – and yet in the 1960s it was essentially nonexistent.

Income inequality is the highest since before the Great Depression, understandably fostering resentment. For many, the American dream became a nightmare long ago. It's little wonder that Americans are afraid and angry.

One member of the new right seemed to acknowledge that reckless character assassination was merely stalemating the system. "Let's come back to the issues," he told NPR in an interview last year. "Let's come back to talking about how do we set the conditions here in Washington, D.C., for long-term sustainable economic and job growth." Unfortunately, that was congressman Allen West.

The right didn't create this reservoir of fear, anger and hate. But it has both tapped into it and roiled it. Indeed, the right-wing mass hysteria is what sociologists call a "moral panic." It occurs when a society is undergoing a wrenching transformation. Somebody then comes along and creates a "folk devil" both to provide an explanation for bad conditions, real or imagined, and a target. Kill the devil; eliminate the bad conditions. But the right has no serious incentive to help solve or ameliorate these problems. Indeed, as with the reelection of Obama, it will benefit from their continuation or worsening.

So animosity has now reached levels both hysterical and historical. The last time anything like this occurred was during World War II, when at least it was aimed outward. Before that? Just before the Civil War.

Back then a tall bearded Republican declared, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Just another one of those idiot, moron, "duplicitous bastard" RINOs.

(Michael Fumento is an attorney, author, journalist and former paratrooper who has written for *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, *Commentary*, *The American Spectator*, *Human Events*, *Forbes*, *Forbes.com*, *Reason*, *Policy Review*, *The Spectator* (London), *The Sunday Times of London*, *The Wall Street Journal* op-ed page and many other publications. His web site is www.fumento.com.)

© 2012 Salon All rights reserved.

View this story online at: <http://www.alternet.org/story/155592/>

[20120525-17](#) 15:47 Pam Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)

Thanks, Dennis. This is wonderful. I knew there was a sensible conservative out there somewhere.

[20120525-23](#) 18:26 Art Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)

This a bit long but worth a read and a moment of thought. For me, this pretty much describes exactly what I have gone through in my thought process.

[20120525-24](#) 18:58 Beth Re: "My Break with the Extreme Right" (reply to Dennis, above)

That is actually thought provoking and thoughtful.

[20120525-13](#) 15:32 Dennis Fw: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (from Alan Grayson)

Here's one that has always baffled me. Don't Republicans know how to invest?

from Alan Grayson:

If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart?

A few weeks ago, it was reported that some right-wing rich guys' club had pledged \$100 million to defeat President Obama. The Koch Brothers led the way, pledging \$60 mil. Which is pocket change, when your net worth is \$50,000,000,000.00.

Leaving aside the obvious issue – the estate tax – I'm puzzled as to why all those right-wing rich folks feel that way. The foundation of their wealth – the stock market – has performed vastly better when Democrats have been in charge.

In 2008, the New York Times reported that since 1929, \$10,000 invested in the stock market under Democratic Presidents (over 40 years) had become \$300,671. Meanwhile, \$10,000 invested in the stock market under Republican Presidents (over 35 years) had become only \$11,733.

Well, at least the affluent caste didn't lose money during Republican regimes, right? Wrong. The value of the dollar dropped by 92% during that period. So in real value, \$10,000 invested in the stock market under Republican Presidents actually became just \$955. And forty-six cents. In economic terms, roughly the same effect as some foreign enemy blowing up 90% of our factories, warehouses, farms, malls, office buildings, apartment buildings, and every other productive asset.

Poor rich people. All the money gone. Those darned Republicans.

And under President Obama, the difference actually has increased, dramatically. On the day that President Obama was sworn into office, the S&P 500 index closed at 805. Today, it's at 1321. Under President Obama, the stock market is up 64%, in less than four years.

That brings the Democratic average annual stock market performance up to 10%. The Republican figure is 0.4%. No wonder Republicans hate government – they're so bad at it. Particularly when it comes preserving national wealth.

And despite the incessant whining of the corporate rich, by no stretch of the imagination are they suffering under the Obama Administration. Just today, it was reported that pay for CEOs has reached an all-time high, just short of \$10 million a year. Or roughly \$5,000 an hour. Good work, if you can get it.

So why are all these right-wing deep pockets going after Obama and the Democrats? Even if you're some selfish rich guy, that's just dumb. That's cutting your wallet to spite your pants. Maybe the rich need to develop a little class consciousness.

Honestly, when you look at the facts, these robber barons spending huge wads of cash to get rid of the Democrats are like lemmings. They're all jumping off the money cliff, and they're taking everyone else with them.

Most of us have heard the question, "If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?" But a better question would be, "If you're so rich, why aren't you smart?"

[https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/graysonforcongress?refcode=nationalMay25&amount=\\$50](https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/graysonforcongress?refcode=nationalMay25&amount=$50)

Courage, Alan Grayson

20120525-14	15:35	Pam	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Yaaay, Dennis. I adore Alan Grayson.

[Plus he's got the greatest chin in the business. Jay Leno has got nothin' on him! –SteveB]

20120525-15	15:36	Art	Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

You know you may really have something here. More and more the discussion seems to clearly indicate the a healthy vibrant middle class buys more, spends more money and therefore makes companies profitable. Under

Democratic leadership we have policies that encourage and benefit the middle class and the result is a better business environment that results in these nice increases for the owners of business, the rich.

Yet still they whine. I have watched with interest the IPO release of Facebook stock. I looked at it and decided it was not a great buy. Advertisement on Facebook only nets about a 5% return and many companies don't consider it worth the investment. In time it may come back but the stock value is now below the initial IPO offer and already the rich investors are screaming their heads off, crying foul and suing. What I don't get is how come a simple foot soldier like me was able to read all this stuff and make a decision but these bozos apparently were not. Even when they make a bad decision the paragons of free enterprise apparently can't wait to ask the government and courts to bail them out.

My disgust level rises.

[20120525-16](#) 15:41 Dennis Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Art, above)

from Art:

I have watched with interest the IPO release of Facebook stock. I looked at it and decided it was not a great buy.

All my investment letter gurus said to pass it up. Per today's *NY Times* the stock is estimated to be worth only \$7.50 per share. Anyone who bought it was "zucked," or should that be "zuckered?"

[20120525-18](#) 15:56 Pam Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to Dennis & Art, above)

I know very little about investing, but in this area I am definitely a conservative. I'd rather be sure of keeping a little rather than risking everything for a lot. I understand that investment drives business, the economy, innovation, lots of good things, but when buying stock becomes for the small investor akin to playing the lottery, I begin to wonder. I always thought a sound investment meant putting your money into a business you believe in, that has a likelihood of sustained growth, that will result in modest returns, not overnight riches. I know investing is a lot like gambling, but, as in 1929, a lot of folks are losing their shirts on enterprises that "cannot fail." Recklessness is encouraged, and risk is ignored. It seems crazy to me.

[20120525-21](#) 18:10 Art Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to all, above)

Just in case we missed the point, what I find outrageous is the day following the IPO dozens of these investor bozos come out of the woodwork suing because they lost money. So the great independents who stand foursquare for freedom and independence (you know they are all Romney supporters) need the government and the courts to protect them from their own stupidity.

[20120526-03](#) 08:23 Pam Re: If You're So Rich, Why Aren't You Smart? (reply to all, above)

Yeah. I thought there was something in the fine print about "invest at your own risk."

[20120525-22](#) 18:18 Art "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election"

Might want to send this one to brother Dale. Plenty of specifics in here. Note Wisconsin has the highest job loss in the nation. Following Dale's logic, I think he would have to agree, time for Walker to hit the road.

"18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" by Stephen D. Foster Jr., Addicting Info

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/05/25/walker/>)

There is an extremely pivotal statewide election coming up on June 5, 2012 in Wisconsin. After turning in nearly one million signatures, the people of Wisconsin have a chance to end Governor Scott Walker's oppressive regime and replace him with someone more attuned to the needs of Wisconsinites. More than likely, there are voters in Wisconsin who are undecided, but if they need to be convinced to vote against Scott Walker in June, here are 18 reasons why Walker should be kicked out of office in shame.

1. Repeal of Equal Pay for Women

In April, Scott Walker signed SB 202, which effectively repealed an equal pay law that has protected women from pay discrimination since 2009. For three years, women had the ability to take legal action against their employer at any time it was discovered that they were being paid less than a male colleague for doing the same work. The repeal of this law is just a piece of the Republican war on women and gives employers the freedom to pay women less money, weakening women's ability to have purchasing power in the economy.

2. Anti-Abortion Laws

Speaking of the war on women, three days after repealing the equal pay law, Scott Walker signed three anti-abortion bills into law. One bill bans insurance policies offered through the state health insurance exchange program of the Affordable Care Act from including abortion coverage, which could also ban coverage of some contraceptives.

Another bill signed by Walker basically repeals a law requiring educators to teach about contraception as a birth control method. The new law allows teachers to not discuss contraception at all and forces teachers to promote abstinence as the ONLY way to prevent disease and pregnancy.

The third bill forces women to be alone in the doctor's office when seeking an abortion so that the doctor can interrogate her about why she wants an abortion. Scott Walker is certainly not an ally of women's health.

3. Relationship with Koch Brothers

It was a prank phone call that revealed a lot about Scott Walker and his allegiance to Koch Industries. When a David Koch impersonator called to congratulate Scott Walker on his 2010 Election victory, he was immediately connected directly to the new Governor with little to no investigation. The caller of course was revealed to be a fake, but just the fact that Walker rushed to talk to the billionaire right-winger showed who was important to him. Since that day two years ago, Walker has worked hard to turn Wisconsin into the national testing ground of the Koch agenda. Working closely with Koch funded group Americans for Prosperity, Walker has gutted Wisconsin's labor unions, killing collective bargaining, and supporting bills that kill environmental legislation. The Kochs have poured millions of dollars into Wisconsin to keep Walker from being recalled. All of this should be worrying to any voter in Wisconsin, because if any politician in America is a puppet of the Koch brothers, it's Scott Walker.

4. Wisconsin's Terrible Jobs Record

Dead last. That defines Walker's record on jobs. In his second year as Governor, Wisconsin lost over 20,000 jobs. That's way worse than the second worst jobs record in the nation: Rhode Island with only 4,000 jobs lost. And no one can really say there is any bias in those numbers either because Wisconsin's neighboring states of Iowa and Michigan, both Republican controlled, have job gains. That's embarrassing for Walker, considering he touted his policies as being a blueprint for job creation.

5. Union Busting

Walker's tenure as Governor will forever be marked by his decision to mercilessly attack labor unions and collective bargaining. Following the commands of his Koch donors, Walker signed a bill in March 2011 that ended most union rights in the state of Wisconsin, including the right to collectively bargain for pay and benefits. Walker said the law would grow popular over time, but what it actually did is get him recalled, which is why an election is taking place in June. Under the law, police, firefighters, teachers, nurses, and many other public employees will no longer get to negotiate their pay. Ending collective bargaining changed nothing in the budget but Walker gleefully threw these workers under the bus to please the Kochs. But he also did it to purposefully divide the people of Wisconsin. In a damning caught on tape moment, Walker described to big campaign donor Diane Hendricks how he was going to turn Wisconsin into a 'right to work for less' state. His plan? Divide and conquer:

Well, we're going to start in a couple weeks with our budget adjustment bill. The first step is we're going to deal with collective bargaining for all public employee unions, because you use divide and conquer.

This quote alone should infuriate the people of Wisconsin enough to want to end Walker's career.

6. Killed High Speed Rail Funding

Upon winning election in 2010, Scott Walker vowed to kill high speed rail funding. And he did exactly that. Walker gave back over \$800 million in federal assistance to build a high-speed train between Milwaukee and Madison, which cost the people of Wisconsin thousands of jobs. The high speed rail would not only have created thousands of jobs, it would have created a greener mass transit system that would have helped alleviate America's dependence on oil, and would have helped America catch up to the rest of the developed world. Europe and Asia have invested heavily in high speed rail, which makes transportation much faster and cheaper across land. The people had a chance to help get America moving again, but Scott Walker took away the money and the jobs that would have made it possible.

7. Signed the Grover Norquist Taxpayer Protection Pledge Against Raising Taxes

Republicans hate taxes. Most Republicans in the US House and Senate are beholden to one man in Washington who isn't even an elected official. Grover Norquist has this anti-tax pledge that he gets Republicans to sign, forcing them to promise that they won't raise taxes under any circumstance, even if the fiscal health of the nation is at stake. This pledge has prevented a compromise that would both cut spending and raise taxes on the wealthy to deal with the national debt. Governors are not immune from this pledge. They sign it as well. And Scott Walker signed it too.

Walker has remained true to his allegiance to the non-Wisconsinite Norquist, signing tax cuts into law that benefit corporations and the wealthy while cutting everything from health care to education. Walker touted the tax cuts as being great for business and jobs, but the only thing Walker has gotten from the massive cuts is the worst jobs record in the nation.

8. Chris Christie Backs Him

Only a bully would endorse another bully, and since Chris Christie has endorsed Scott Walker and supports everything he has done to the people of Wisconsin, I'd say Walker's connection to the bully-in-chief of New Jersey is also a good reason to kick Scott Walker to the curb.

Christie has bullied everyone from teachers, to police officers, to firefighters, and nurses, the very same groups of people Scott Walker has targeted since taking office. So it's really no surprise that Christie is campaigning for Walker in this recall election. I'm just wondering how many people in Wisconsin Christie will threaten to secure his fellow bully's political survival.

9. Voter Suppression Laws

Wisconsin's new GOP backed voter suppression laws won't be in effect during this recall. A judge made sure of that. But the laws could be in play during every election thereafter, which is a threat to democracy and the right to vote. If higher conservative courts rule the measure constitutional, the voter ID law will require every person of voting age in Wisconsin to show an ID at the polls before proceeding to vote. Those without IDs don't get to vote, even if you're a registered voter. Among the groups most affected by this law include college students, women, senior citizens, and minorities. Thousands of people in Wisconsin live on a fixed low income and therefore may not be able to afford to get a state issued ID. The law also restricts voter registration by requiring those who register other voters to have a license to do so. In other words, Walker wants to charge American citizens money for democracy. If Walker isn't defeated in June, the people of Wisconsin should prepare to have their right to vote further restricted to the benefit of Republicans.

10. Over Half of Campaign Cash Is from Out-of-State Sources

Money in politics has become a real problem and nowhere is this more evident than in Wisconsin, where Scott Walker has taken in millions of dollars from the Koch brothers and Americans for Prosperity among other outside sources. Because of this out-of-state money and a law that gives a recalled governor the ability to take in unlimited amounts of cash to defeat their opponent and limits the money raising ability of the opponent, Walker has been able to raise and spend \$21 million to the Democrat's \$2 million as of May 2012. Two-thirds of Walker's campaign cash has come from donors outside of Wisconsin.

Because of this outside money, the people of Wisconsin can't really be certain that their governor is beholden to them or the outside entities who are basically buying the election for Walker. That should any citizen in Wisconsin, since it is clear that outside forces want Wisconsin under their thumb.

11. Mitt Romney Endorses Him

Mitt Romney is the presumed Republican Presidential nominee, and he too supports Scott Walker. This alone is a huge red flag since Romney has called for a budget that gut Medicare, Social Security, veteran's care, food stamps, Medicaid, education, infrastructure and just about any and every program that benefits American citizens. That kind of budget will most certainly affect Wisconsin, which has already been gutted by Scott Walker. The last thing Wisconsinites need is a Governor and President who will work together to burn the state down. Besides, Romney supports Scott Walker's agenda and that agenda can only get worse if both are in office at the same time.

12. Veterans Funds Scandal

During his time as Milwaukee County Executive and his run for the governorship, Scott Walker's aides were stealing money out of a Veterans fund that is supposed to be used to help the families of fallen soldiers who were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq and to help care for wounded vets and their families. Tens of thousands of dollars were stolen and used for personal expenses such as trips to Hawaii. So in addition to being a corrupt governor, Scott Walker surrounds himself with corrupt people. If there is one thing Walker and other Republicans like to trumpet about, it's the troops. But apparently, the troops don't matter much when money can be made.

13. Gutted Public Education Funding to Pay for Tax Breaks for Corporations

How are people in Wisconsin supposed to compete for jobs if they can't get a top notch education? That's a question Scott Walker failed to ask when he slashed aid to public schools by almost \$800 million to fund his tax cuts for the rich and corporations. It was by far the largest reduction in Wisconsin history and the second biggest cut to education in the country. Walker says he wants to bring jobs into the state by enticing businesses with tax relief, but what kind of business would want to hire people who don't have a decent education? And that's exactly the point. To compete in today's global economy, education is the key to getting a job. But that kind of logic is apparently lost on Walker who has been waging war on teachers and students since taking office. Teachers have been laid off, students are being forced to learn in bigger

classes sizes, and money is so tight that many programs such as art and music have had to be scrapped to save cash. That significantly harms the overall education of our kids. Education cuts do not create jobs, cuts only take away the tools that help create jobs.

14. War Against the Environment

Wisconsin has always been a caretaker of the environment. In fact, Wisconsin boasts of some of the most beautiful waterways and scenery in the country. It's a paradise for people who love the great outdoors. From hunters to fisherman to hikers and campers, people in Wisconsin love nature. But Scott Walker doesn't.

During his time as Governor, Walker has weakened environmental standards for water and mining and is trying to sell public lands to the highest bidders. He has also made deep cuts to energy conservation programs and eliminated energy independence efforts.

According to the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, Walker has waged war against recycling, wind power, Wisconsin's wetlands and rivers, and regulations that prevent pollution.

When Walker tried to kill a popular recycling program in Wisconsin, even the Republican controlled legislature refused to go along with the plan. Walker's plan to eliminate the recycling program would have cost Wisconsin 97,000 jobs and over \$5.4 billion in economic activity. Companies across the state that depend on recycled materials like landscaping firms, electronics recyclers, plastic and paper mills, and metal producers would have been forced to close their doors and lay off employees."

Walker also cost the state thousands of jobs by being hostile towards wind energy companies who wanted to bring wind power to Wisconsin. The companies felt Walker was so hostile that they refused to bring their business and jobs into the state. The wind development was two years in the making before Walker killed it.

Walker also tried to make it easier for corporations and developers to destroy wetlands by attempting to weaken regulations that protect the fragile and extremely important environment. He also made an attempt to weaken anti-pollution rules and is still lax on punishing those who violate pollution laws.

Clearly, Walker is no friend of the environment and the WLCV has a well documented record of this. Wisconsin simply would not be the same without it's environment.

15. Opposes [Affordable] Health Care

Walker has voiced his opposition to the Affordable Care Act, which prevents insurance companies from discriminating against people with pre-existing conditions, allows kids to stay on their parent's insurance until the age of 26, and covers 30 million Americans who don't have insurance.

As Governor, Walker has eliminated funding for women's health programs that provide preventive care for over 50,000 women a year. That means less money for things like breast cancer screenings and other services. Walker has also proposed kicking 65,000 people, including nearly 30,000 children, off of BadgerCare, a popular program paid for by Medicaid and created by a former Republican governor.

Scott Walker doesn't care about the health of people in Wisconsin. He only cares about how many lives he can destroy before he exits office.

16. Supports Arizona Immigration Law

Arizona's SB 1070 is by far the most discriminatory and restrictive anti-immigration law in the nation. It allows police to question anyone who they think might not be an American citizen. So Americans living in Arizona now have to carry identifying documents that prove they are citizens. The law especially affects minority populations since police are less likely to ask white people for their papers. Scott Walker supports this law and wants a similar law like it in Wisconsin, which would likely be as bad for business there as the law is in Arizona.

"I am disappointed by the federal judge's ruling to block Arizona's right to enforce the rule of law without interference from the federal government. As governor, I will sign similar legislation to the Arizona Law to ensure the taxpayers of Wisconsin are not paying for benefits like Badger Care and in state college tuition for people who are here illegally."

Do the people of Wisconsin really want a governor who supports legal discrimination?

17. Tax Breaks for the Rich and Corporations

While demanding sacrifices from the workers of Wisconsin, Walker was busy handing tax breaks to the rich and corporations.

Walker signed "tax breaks and new loopholes for the wealthy and big corporations that cost over \$200 million in this budget and a staggering \$2.3 billion over the next ten years," and "actually increased taxes on working families by \$56 million by cutting the Earned Income Tax Credit."

These tax gifts "will reduce taxes by 95% for some of the state's largest corporations and his biggest campaign donors. Because of Walker's actions, many middle income Wisconsin families will pay a tax rate more than 10 times higher than that paid by some of the state's largest and most profitable companies."

18. Relationship with ALEC

Scott Walker was an active member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) when he was a Wisconsin state legislator in the years from 1993-2002, even listing his ALEC membership in his Wisconsin Blue Book profile.

ALEC is a Koch Industries backed pay for play conservative organization that gives corporate leaders the chance to write model legislation for state legislators to introduce across the country. ALEC has pushed everything from tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy, to ending environmental regulations, to voter suppression laws, to Stand Your Ground laws such as the one in Florida that led to the killing of Trayvon Martin. Scott Walker has pushed much of the same kinds of legislation as you have already read. He's also pushed other ALEC bills.

As a young legislator in the 1990s, Walker worked with then Wisconsin Republican Governor Tommy Thompson in a successful effort to pass ALEC's Truth in Sentencing bill. The bill benefited the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), which housed overflow Wisconsin inmates out of state for many years. CCA is a private prison corporation that profits off of imprisoning people. As a result, their business is to make sure as many people as possible are incarcerated, which could pressure and has pressured the justice system to send more people to prison, even if they are innocent.

Scott Walker should be thrown out of office by the people of Wisconsin. Based on Walker's record, it would be foolish for Wisconsinites not to do so, especially when they are already so close to getting their state back. The result of this recall election will be felt for many years to come. Wisconsin can either be the state that fires the first shot against the dangerous Republican agenda that is sweeping the country like a plague, or they can keep Walker in office and encourage Republicans to keep destroying America without consequence. The people of Wisconsin have been on the front lines fighting against this destructive agenda longer than anyone else. A Walker victory on June 5th would be devastating to Wisconsin and the nation. Scott Walker stands against everything that the American people support, jobs, education, health care, the environment, clean energy, women's rights, civil rights, our veterans, etc... This election is going to help decide whether or not America still has a soul. The people of Wisconsin need to be ready to cast their votes while they still can.

20120526-04

08:31

Pam

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)

Dale should be forced to read this, then take a quiz on it to be sure he absorbed everything. If Wisconsinites allow themselves to be bought by Koch et. al., they are beyond belief. I always thought Wisconsin was a liberal state. How did this bozo ever get elected?

[20120526-08](#)

17:52 Art

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (to Dale)

Hi Dale, Following your logic on President Obama, is it time for Walker to go?

4. Wisconsin's Terrible Jobs Record

Dead last. That defines Walker's record on jobs. In his second year as Governor, Wisconsin lost over 20,000 jobs. That's way worse than the second worst jobs record in the nation: Rhode Island with only 4,000 jobs lost. And no one can really say there is any bias in those numbers either because Wisconsin's neighboring states of Iowa and Michigan, both Republican controlled, have job gains. That's embarrassing for Walker, considering he touted his policies as being a blueprint for job creation.

[20120526-09](#)

18:26 Dale

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)

I think the fundamentals are the same. When Walker has completed his term, if he hadn't performed well enough he should not be reelected. Perhaps all the facts should be cited. Teachers didn't lose their jobs, like they would have because of the massive debt from Democrat Govs and union leader cronyism. Taxes didn't go up. Workers have a choice whether they join an expensive and abusive union. The vast majority of the citizens of the state are not carrying the few public workers load to such a great degree. Now there is a start to balancing the distribution of health expenses. Walker's stance on many public law enforcement matters has resulted in firefighters and police union endorsement. Now how about all the money wasted on a midterm recall by union leaders who have been thrown off the gravy train? Millions of dollars wasted. In the private sector they might be liable for nuisance law suits but in the public sector, read government, the waste just keeps rolling along.

[20120526-13](#)

23:54 Dale

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Pam & Art, above) & "Employment Debate Requires Closer Look"

I appreciate your interest, Pam, but you are woefully uninformed and over influenced by Art's post. I have a residence in Milwaukee and have lived there at least part time since 1978. We raised two children there and participated in PTA's etc. The Village I live in is slightly biased Conservatively, but only about 55/45.

The article, below, is from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the primary newspaper in Southeast Wisconsin ("Employment Debate Requires Closer Look").

It is a coincidence that one of the writers, Rick Rommell, is a friend I've played basketball with over the last 20 years. I like the balance of the writing. I happen to know his political leaning, but I don't think it shows up at all. It's odd he was asked to write on this subject, since he is in the Business dept. of the paper.

While this piece only addresses the job growth section, Art's clip and paste "party line" talking points are not facts.....they are opinions dished out from an ideology. I think you share many of the same positions, so I'm not surprised you liked what he put out there. I come from a different perspective, so while I agree with the topic statement, I draw a different conclusion about whether it is a good thing or a bad thing.

For instance {from Art's article}...

"Anti-Abortion Laws: Speaking of the war on women, three days after repealing the equal pay law, Scott Walker signed three anti-abortion bills into law. One bill bans insurance policies offered through the state health insurance exchange program of the Affordable Care Act from including abortion coverage, which could also ban coverage of some contraceptives."

Cute labels -- this "anti-abortion" and a war on women. Slick political positioning but not correct. It is "anti forced funding" for abortions and contraceptives. You don't like it. That's ok, you can have your opinion. Wisconsin voters don't agree.

"Since that day two years ago, Walker has worked hard to turn Wisconsin into the national testing ground of the Koch agenda. Working closely with Koch funded group Americans for Prosperity, Walker has gutted Wisconsin's labor unions, killing collective bargaining, and supporting bills that kill environmental legislation. The Kochs have poured millions of dollars into Wisconsin to keep Walker from being recalled. All of this should be worrying to any voter in Wisconsin, because if any politician in America is a puppet of the Koch brothers, it's Scott Walker."

You and Art don't like Koch's political agenda...that's your opinion. Believe me, Walker is no one's puppet. He has started, not finished yet, to restore balance to a totally distorted public workers' union situation. Most residents are happy to see the changes, especially compared to what they would have faced without the changes. The alternatives to having public employees pay their fair share were: higher property taxes, layoffs of teachers and emergency responders, higher unemployment. Or, continued deficits, work rules that make it virtually impossible to remove public employees who don't perform, and a continuing exit of businesses.

"Killed High Speed Rail Funding"

You and Art don't like it, but the people in Wisconsin (and other states who killed this waste of money) are happy. Are you aware that studies on this particular high speed line from Milwaukee to Madison show users would have had to pay 4 times what it costs to drive the 90 miles. Then they would have had to pay for local transportation to their destination. To top it off, the "high speed" would have been only marginally faster than standard Rail and slower than auto. The cost? Out of sight for years. Obama loves it. The state doesn't want to be saddled for the sake of his legacy.

You and Art don't like Norquist and Christie....that's your opinion and your problem. Apparently the state of New Jersey does not agree. Mitt Romney likes him...November will tell if the US doesn't agree, but the race appears to be a near toss up now, so there are a whole lot of people who disagree with a knee jerk reaction that Walker should be tossed out for being liked by the Republican leadership.

I could take every one of the rest of the claims and individually debunk them as inaccurate or simply statements of preference. In Wisconsin we DO want to get rid of ridiculously burdensome environmental restrictions and administrative rules that kill jobs. We DO want to dump Obamacare and replace it with a simpler more realistic reform, like most Americans. We DO want to encourage businesses to invest and grow, not penalize them...or the people who take risks with their own money. We DO support having a rational immigration policy, not an ever changing mish mash of random enforcement based on the whims of an administration who is more interested in building a voter base than protecting our borders. To be honest, I have never read anything Walker has said about immigration, even though Wisconsin has international borders. He has demonstrated more interest in fostering International business growth and exchange and less interest in enabling illegal aliens to vote and soak up resources from citizens who are working and paying taxes.

Finally, even the national Democratic Party leadership has admitted the recall maneuver was a bad idea. Obama is keeping his distance and doesn't want to be linked to the inevitable failure of the movement. A falsely proud teachers union is poring union dues down the drain in a lost cause. The opposing candidate, Milwaukee mayor Barrett wasn't initially supported by the largest unions. He has not provided one piece of information on what he

would have done differently or what he will do differently if elected. It is a 100% anti-Walker campaign with 0% explanation of what will happen except restoration of bargaining procedures for public employees.

End of quiz.

"Employment Debate Requires Closer Look" by Rick Romell and Jason Stein, *Journal Sentinel*

May 26, 2012 (<http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/employment-debate-requires-closer-look-kc5i8b3-154560275.html>)

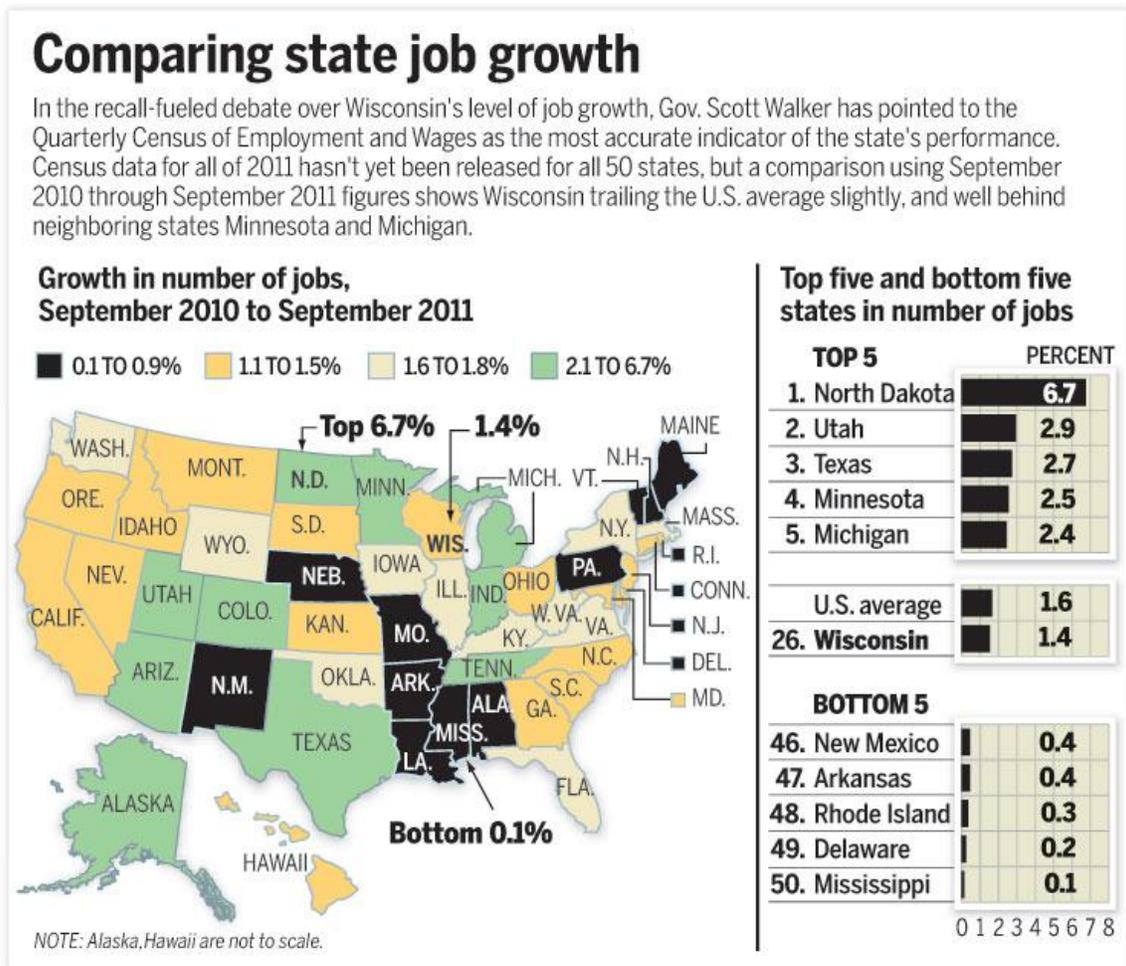
Scott Walker has it all figured out. Tom Barrett does too.

The rest of us can only duck and cover as the gubernatorial candidates lay down a cross-fire of conflicting economic data and carpet bomb the state with political rhetoric.

But at its heart, the Great War of the Jobs Numbers is essentially about this: Has Wisconsin's recent employment performance been abysmal, or merely mediocre?

Barrett, the Milwaukee mayor seeking to toss Walker out of the governor's mansion in the upcoming recall election, waves survey data suggesting that Wisconsin trails every state in job growth. Walker touts another data set that shows Wisconsin gaining jobs since he took office.

Unless you're a hard-shell political partisan who sees everything in black and white, it's difficult to say why the two sets of jobs numbers are at such great odds with each other, and where the truth lies. But at a time when jobs and economic development are so critical in the recall election, it's worth another, deeper look.

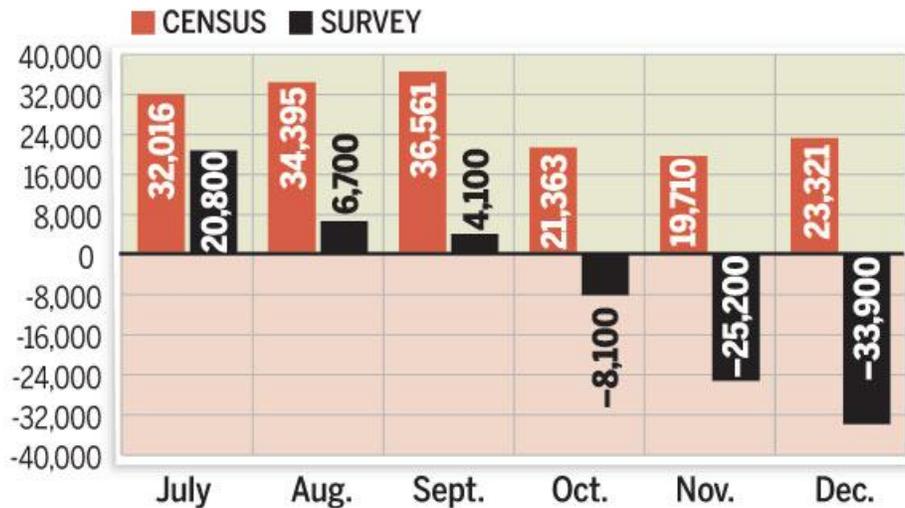


Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Journal Sentinel

2011's job data divergence

Two different methods of counting jobs, the **Current Employment Statistics survey** and the **Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages**, usually yield results within several thousand of each other. But in what remains a statistical mystery, the two diverged sharply in the second half of 2011.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Journal Sentinel

The data that shows Wisconsin dead last and actually losing jobs - the data Barrett points to - comes from the Current Employment Statistics survey. The survey is done every month and is widely reported. It's rough but important data, one of the major economic indicators on the national level and, although less reliable, traditionally a bellwether at the state level. In this case, Barrett used monthly survey data from March 2011 to March 2012.

The data that shows Wisconsin gaining jobs - the data Walker points to - comes from unemployment insurance reports by employers that ultimately become part of the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Compared with the monthly survey, the quarterly census seldom gets attention. The figures typically are six months old by the time they're released.

In this case, Walker is using census data - released early, before the last three months were vetted by federal officials - from December 2010 to December 2011.

While it is less timely, the census is more precise - it's essentially a nose count of jobs. In fact, statisticians use the census to correct the survey numbers months after the monthly figures have been released.

But even when measured by the census, the instrument Walker favors, Wisconsin's recent economic performance, while better, is far from stellar. For September 2010 through September 2011 - the most recent year-over-year census data comparison available with all 50 states - Wisconsin ranks 26th, in the middle of the country as a whole and lagging behind its Midwestern neighbors.

For the period, which includes the last four months of former Gov. Jim Doyle's administration, the figures show Wisconsin added 36,561 jobs. During the same 12 months, Minnesota, with a labor force similar in size to Wisconsin, added more than 64,000.

In relative terms, Wisconsin employment grew by not quite 1.4%. Nationwide jobs, meanwhile, grew by 1.6%. Minnesota and Michigan added 2.5% and 2.4% respectively. Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and Ohio also outstripped Wisconsin.

"Even using his numbers," Barrett said of Walker, "we're at the bottom of the Big Ten."

Walker campaign spokeswoman Ciara Matthews, meanwhile, said, "Governor Walker in just 15 short months has helped create an economic climate which allowed for the creation of more than 35,000 new jobs since he has taken office and Wisconsin's unemployment rate to fall to 6.7%, the lowest it has been in since 2008."

Data usually in sync

The question of why there is such a large variance between the monthly survey and quarterly census job numbers, meanwhile, may remain unanswered until both sets of data are fully vetted and adjusted.

Since at least 2008, the year-over-year changes in the monthly survey typically have moved in sync with the year-over-year changes in the quarterly census. The average monthly difference has been about 10,000 jobs. But the census and survey drifted apart in the last half of 2011 - by 57,000 jobs as of December - even though the survey numbers had gone through an annual revision using the census numbers in a process the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls benchmarking.

One possible factor in the recent dramatic deviation of the monthly jobs survey from the quarterly census: The federal bureau took over the responsibility from the states of putting out the monthly numbers, beginning with the March 2011 figures.

"That was the last of our opportunity to have any real say in these estimates," said Steve Hine, Minnesota's director of the Labor Market Information.

Like officials in Wisconsin and some other states, Hine questions whether the loss of local responsibility for the jobs figures has harmed their accuracy. The monthly employment numbers, he said, show Minnesota roughly 40,000 jobs behind where he knows the state actually is because of the more accurate unemployment-insurance counts.

In a statement, federal officials have said that the consolidation of the data collection has saved money and that it should improve accuracy. They said that state agencies can still provide federal officials with information about local events such as plant closings, but also acknowledged that part of reason for the change was to rely "less on individual analyst judgment and more on the use of standard statistical" models.

John Koskinen, chief economist for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, said it appears that northern states like Minnesota and Wisconsin have been the most affected by the problems in the jobs data, but said he couldn't explain why. Neither could Hine.

Koskinen acknowledged that Wisconsin lagged behind its neighbors for the September 2010 to September 2011 period, but said that was in part because Wisconsin didn't lose as many jobs in prior years as other states like Illinois and Indiana did.

Generally speaking, revisions to the survey tend to show a pattern, Jesse Rothstein, an economics professor at the University of California, Berkeley and former chief economist at the U.S. Department of Labor, said via email. Because the survey can only account for the births and deaths of companies by using a model, he said, it tends to miss changes in the pattern of business start-ups and closures.

"That means that it tends to miss turning points - it overstates employment going into a recession (when deaths rise) and understates employment coming out (when births rise)," Rothstein said.

The revisions also point out how difficult it is to compare jobs data when it is most current - and of greatest interest.

Ultimately, the numbers in the survey - in Wisconsin it includes about 5% of employers and has a margin of error of 9,300 jobs in either direction - are revised at least twice, and in some cases three times, as the bureau incorporates firmer data.

In addition, the unemployment insurance job counts for the end of 2011, which Walker's administration released last week to support the case that Wisconsin has been gaining jobs, also are likely to change to some degree before they get the bureau's stamp of approval and become the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

In other words, even in the smoothest of circumstances, there are multiple versions of "the jobs numbers," based on both the collection process and the time frame.

With so many iterations, it's not hard for politicians to find versions that glorify themselves or vilify their opponents.

20120527-01	09:55	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Again, interesting response. One question, do you think your response is not ideology? I'm still looking for any facts.

20120527-06	14:36	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Happy Memorial Day, Dale,

I have to say I enjoy our back-and-forth, and if I can learn something that helps me clarify my thinking, that will be great. I'm not wedded to any "ideology," or maybe I am, but not in a knee-jerk way.

At any rate, you can peruse my comments below if you wish. I appreciate your responses always.

Dale wrote above: Cute labels -- this "anti-abortion" and a war on women. Slick political positioning but not correct. It is "anti forced funding" for abortions and contraceptives. You don't like it. That's ok, you can have your opinion. Wisconsin voters don't agree.

Pam: I am concerned about women's health, and abortion and contraception both fall in that category. Anything that is "legal" should be unrestricted, certainly when it serves the public. If Catholic hospitals don't want to perform abortions, fine. I wouldn't force them. If an employer hires people of a different religion (a Jew working in a Catholic hospital, for instance), then those people should not have their benefits curtailed just because the employer takes exception to them. Let the Catholic employees forgo insurance that provides that coverage, if they so choose. I doubt very many Catholics would make that choice. This issue is a distraction. We settled these issues a long time ago. As with gay marriage, no one is forced to have an abortion who doesn't want one. Keep legislators and judges out of the doctor-patient relationship. I have a hard time believing Wis. voters want to roll back Roe v. Wade or accessible birth control. Show me statistics on this specific issue, or I just don't buy it.

Dale wrote above: You and Art don't like Koch's political agenda...that's your opinion. Believe me, Walker is no one's puppet. He has started, not finished yet, to restore balance to a totally distorted public workers' union situation. Most residents are happy to see the changes, especially compared to what they would have faced without the changes. The alternatives to having public employees pay their fair share were: higher property taxes, layoffs of teachers and emergency responders, higher unemployment. Or, continued deficits, work rules that make it virtually impossible to remove public employees who don't perform, and a continuing exit of businesses.

Pam: In general, I support labor unions. I do not support unions that are dictatorial, intransigent, or out of touch with the realities of the day. Workers nearly always come up short when they have no bargaining body to represent them. Maybe they always do; I wouldn't be surprised. You say, Walker went after public employee unions because the unions caused teacher layoffs. I thought it was the unions that protected teachers' jobs. This doesn't compute. Everyone should pay their fair share. Rather than eliminating unions, maybe negotiating in good faith (on both sides) would be less draconian and would garner more public support than chopping unions off at the

knees. I simply do not believe that unions cause unemployment. If they need to be improved, improve them, but don't throw workers under a bus. BTW, I am not following in Art's footsteps. If we agree on some things, that's because we have each come to our conclusions independently. I'm sure there are plenty of things he and I disagree on, not that it matters.

Dale wrote above: You and Art don't like it, but the people in Wisconsin (and other states who killed this waste of money) are happy. Are you aware that studies on this particular high speed line from Milwaukee to Madison show users would have had to pay 4 times what it costs to drive the 90 miles. Then they would have had to pay for local transportation to their destination. To top it off, the "high speed" would have been only marginally faster than standard Rail and slower than auto. The cost? Out of sight for years. Obama loves it. The state doesn't want to be saddled for the sake of his legacy.

Pam: Other nations are way ahead of us on high-speed rail and public transportation. We are falling behind, and it will do us no good in the long term, hell, in the medium term. We MUST reduce our carbon footprint, and this is at least one way to begin doing that. Talk about waste! What is more wasteful than hundreds of thousands of cars wearing out our highways, with each car usually containing one person. We are going to have to change our way of life--a difficult challenge, I know--but continuing the way we are will destroy the planet and make life as we know it impossible. I see in architecture magazines that more and more people are adding on to their homes by building underground. I see this as a growing trend. Come the millennium, underground (sorry about the underline, don't know where that came from) life will be the norm--for those who can afford it. We need more bicycles and more attractive public transportation and fewer private automobiles. This will probably never happen, because the car industry is so powerful, but we're all going to pay a very heavy price if we don't wake up and smell the coffee. My guess is that in 50 years hybrids will be the norm. I hope so.

Dale wrote above: You and Art don't like Norquist and Christie....that's your opinion and your problem. Apparently the state of New Jersey does not agree. Mitt Romney likes him...November will tell if the US doesn't agree, but the race appears to be a near toss up now, so there are a whole lot of people who disagree with a knee jerk reaction that Walker should be tossed out for being liked by the Republican leadership.

Pam: I don't know all that much about Christie. He seems likeable enough, but that's about all I can say. I think Norquist is a public menace. It is totally preposterous for someone who isn't even in government to demand that all Republican Senators and Representatives sign a pledge to do, or not do, anything. And what weenies those Republicans are to allow themselves to be put in that corner. Talk about fascism! I see that many of the Rep. candidates running for office now have disavowed or refused to sign Norquist's stupid pledge. I find that slightly encouraging.

[Note: I don't believe Gov. Christie has ever been mentioned by anyone here before now. --SteveB]

Dale wrote above: I could take every one of the rest of the claims and individually debunk them as inaccurate or simply statements of preference. In Wisconsin we DO want to get rid of ridiculously burdensome environmental restrictions and administrative rules that kill jobs. We DO want to dump Obamacare and replace it with a simpler more realistic reform, like most Americans. We DO want to encourage businesses to invest and grow, not penalize them...or the people who take risks with their own money. We DO support having a rational immigration policy, not an ever changing mish mash of random enforcement based on the whims of an administration who is more interested in building a voter base than protecting our borders. To be honest, I have never read anything Walker has said about immigration, even though Wisconsin has international borders. He has demonstrated more interest in fostering International business growth and exchange and less interest in enabling illegal aliens to vote and soak up resources from citizens who are working and paying taxes.

Pam: It's those "burdensome environmental restrictions" that keep our water and air clean and slow down the environmental depredations of coal mining. It is OSHA that watches out for workers' safety. I find it absurd that Republicans want to "drill, Baby, drill," and erect ugly, humongous oil rigs off our beaches yet balk at a row of sleek windmills, which I find far more attractive, if beauty is what we're going for, and I don't think we should discount it.

We ALL want business to invest and grow. If the rich want to risk million dollars in a risky venture, well and good. But don't drag the ordinary citizen with a pension plan or a mutual fund into treacherous waters, as has been and still is happening. We need to encourage saving, as well as investing. What we do not need is a nation of naifs betting money they either don't have or can't afford to lose. Privatize Social Security??? One of the more insane ideas W. came up with. Rational immigration policy, fine. No argument there. I just don't want us to become a country where you can get arrested if you don't have "your papers" on your person. Enforce, don't persecute. Finally, the only thing wrong with Obamacare is that it doesn't go far enough. My mantra hasn't changed: universal coverage, single payer. Rationing? We already have it, and we probably will need more as our generation ages and begins to soak up more of the nation's health dollars. We need to get the middleman, i.e., the insurance companies and HMOs, out of the way, cut down on redundancy, reduce paperwork, and learn a lesson from other countries who spend less of their GDP on medical care and get better results than we do. Obama did what no other President has managed to do, Republican ones included. That he didn't have carte blanche to propose a vastly better system is not his fault. I have a good friend who has been a pediatrician for forty years. He is so discouraged with the way things are going that he can't wait to retire. I don't know any doctors who are happy with all the bullshit the insurance companies keep adding to their already heavy loads.

Dale wrote above: Finally, even the national Democratic Party leadership has admitted the recall maneuver was a bad idea. Obama is keeping his distance and doesn't want to be linked to the inevitable failure of the movement. A falsely proud teachers union is pouring union dues down the drain in a lost cause. The opposing candidate, Milwaukee mayor Barrett wasn't initially supported by the largest unions. He has not provided one piece of information on what he would have done differently or what he will do differently if elected. It is a 100% anti-Walker campaign with 0% explanation of what will happen except restoration of bargaining procedures for public employees.

Pam: I'm not from Wisconsin, so I am not as informed about Walker as you. I am a teacher (retired), and if teachers don't like him, then I tend to listen to what they have to say. I do think it matters that the Koch brothers have poured so much money into his lap, just as I think Citizens United is just about the worst decision the Supreme Court has ever made, and it's made some bad ones. The marketplace of ideas doesn't function when money rules. It becomes a question of "might makes right." Unfortunately, that's often how it goes, hence my continued pessimism.

Dale wrote above: End of quiz.

Pam: What I wish we could do is find common ground somewhere and build on that. My goal is not merely to change your mind but to become better informed myself, while defending my positions until I see something better. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it appears to me that just about everything Republicans say is negative: no to health care reform, no to campaign finance reform, no to development of clean energy, no to gay marriage, no to religious tolerance, no to concern for the unemployed (cutting off unemployment benefits), no to Head Start, no to keeping interest rates low on Pell Grants (they seem to have given a little on this one, but not because they wanted to), no to regulation (I'm sure there are some regulations that are onerous; I would like to see specific ones and their effects. "Regulations" by itself doesn't mean much.)

Democrats aren't perfect by any means, but they have always been the party of the working man, the common man, the minorities (racial and gender), and a fairer shake for all citizens. Democrats pushed for legalized abortion and contraception, the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act, desegregation, Social Security and Medicare. It was Republicans who pushed back and still do. We all know that the Republican party attracts more of the wealthy than the Democratic. It's the factory owners, the corporate board members, the country-club joiners, the private jet owners, whose kids go to elite schools that cost the earth and do, in fact, provide a top-notch education. Mitt Romney looks ridiculous in his blue jeans fresh out of the box, and it's no wonder. If you're born poor, you have a greater understanding of the struggles most people face, and I include past Republican Presidents like Reagan and Nixon, as well as Johnson and Truman. If you're born rich, like FDR or JFK, then you need to have a capacious conscience. Say what you will about Carter and Clinton, but look at what they've done with their lives post-Presidency. Then look at W. Don't even get me started. I do not believe in "trickle down" anything, unless is the

great pissing on the small. I do believe in building from the ground up so as to have a strong foundation, rather than financial bubbles that float into the stratosphere for a time, but always burst.

Keep pushing, Dale. I feel like I'm getting stronger from this workout.

[20120527-04](#)

12:17 Dale

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above) & "Governor Walker: The Facts Are the Facts" & "Education for the 21st Century"

You are right, my response is rife with ideology. I'll list some facts for you, but following those bullets, please take the time to read the material on Education Reforms in Wisconsin under Walker leadership. I will not hide that it comes from his website and I would expect some skepticism on your part; however, the bipartisan approach, involving parents, teachers, and education academics he is taking is such a different one from the union's efforts to maintain the status quo that after you get past the negative rhetoric about collective bargaining, the emphasis on STUDENTS, not job protection is obvious.

"Governor Walker: The Facts Are the Facts" Press Release by Friends of Scott Walker

May 25, 2012, (<http://www.scottwalker.org/press-releases/2012/05/governor-walker-facts-are-facts>)

The facts show that Wisconsin is moving forward under Scott Walker:

Governor Walker Eliminated The Historic \$3.6 Billion Deficit Without Raising Taxes. The Department of Administration also predicted that the state would have a 154.5 million at the end of fiscal year 2013. (2011 Wisconsin Act 32; Todd Richmond, "Walker projects state will have \$154.5 million budget surplus by 2013," State Journal 5/10/12)

Governor Walker Signed A True Property Tax Freeze And Reduced The Property Tax Bill For The Median Valued Homeowner For The First Time In 12 Years. School property taxes also went down by \$47 million, the first reduction in six years. (2011 Wisconsin Act 32; Steven Walters, "Breaking down the property tax dip," Journal Sentinel, 4/21/12; Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, <http://wistax.org>, accessed 3/22/12)

Taxpayers Have Saved Over A Billion Dollars Due To Governor Walker Fundamental Reforms. The savings achieved by state and local governments and school districts exceeded \$1,046,369,388 in health and pension contributions and health plan design changes. (Office of the Governor, "Reforms and Results," <http://reforms.wi.gov>, accessed 5/16/12)

Wisconsin Added 23,321 Jobs In 2011. The actual data derived directly from Wisconsin employers show a net change from the original estimates to this reliable census of over 57,000 jobs. The data obtained directly from over 96 percent, or about 160,000 Wisconsin employers show that Wisconsin added 23,321 jobs in 2011, not the 33,900 loss that was previously believed. (Craig Gilbert, "Walker speeds release of positive jobs data," Journal Sentinel, 5/15/12)

Wisconsin Has Created 10,100 Private Sector Jobs In 2012 Under Governor Walker. (Bureau Of Labor Statistics Website, www.bls.gov, accessed 5/17/12)

Wisconsin Has Created 13,400 Manufacturing Jobs Since Governor Walker Took Office. Wisconsin ranked in the top ten states (8) for creation of manufacturing jobs in 2011 and 2012. (Bureau Of Labor Statistics Website, www.bls.gov, accessed 5/25/12)

Wisconsin Unemployment Rate Is 6.7 Percent In April of 2012, The Lowest Since 2008. (BLS, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, accessed 5/15/12)

Initial Unemployment Claims Lowest In Past 5 Years. (Dept. Of Revenue, "Changing the spot of the ball," PowerPoint, March 2012)

The Continued Unemployment Insurance Claims Are Below 2011, 2010 and 2009 Levels. The number of people that continue on unemployment has dropped to 10.86 percent below 2011 levels, consistent with the falling unemployment rate and the quarterly jobs data. (Dept. Of Revenue, "Changing the spot of the ball," PowerPoint, March 2012)

Wisconsin Per Capita Income Growth In 2011 Was In Top 25 Percent Of Entire Nation. Wisconsin's per capita income is growing, now 11th in the nation. (US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, "State Personal Income 2011," Press Release, 3/28/11)

In Fiscal Year 2012, Tax Collection Are Exceeding Estimates In All Three Major Categories- Income Taxes, Corporate Taxes And Sales Taxes. (Dept. Of Revenue, "Changing the spot of the ball," PowerPoint, March 2012)

The Number Of New Businesses Entities Formed In Wisconsin Was 13,006. This is an increase of 11.9 percent compared to the first four months of 2011. (Dept. of Financial Institutions, "New Business Formation in Wisconsin Up 11.9% over Prior Year," Press Release, 5/14/12)

"Education for the 21st Century" by Friends of Scott Walker

undated, 2012, (<http://www.scottwalker.org/content/education-21st-century-0>)

Focus on Fundamentals

Today, roughly one-third of Wisconsin fourth graders cannot read at even a basic level – proof that Wisconsin's educational system is failing our children. In fourth grade, reading becomes the primary tool for gaining knowledge in every other subject. To borrow a phrase used by others, fourth graders are no longer "learning to read," they are using "reading to learn."

Other states have worked to set high standards, measure progress, and intervening at the first sign of difficulty. By replicating their success and continuing to innovate, we can put children on the path to reading well before they reach third grade.

This is why we put together the Read to Lead Task Force, a bipartisan group of teachers, reading specialists, parents, and others from across the state to create a plan for improving the reading skills of our students.

The Read to Lead Task Force has put together a comprehensive list of recommendations including:

- Funding a literacy screener to assess the skill level of each child entering kindergarten.
- Adopting a more rigorous licensure test that ensures teachers have the tools they need to succeed.
- Creating a public-private partnership dedicated to improving reading.
- To further assist future teachers, we are working with our colleges and universities to help them better prepare our next generation of outstanding educators.

A recent study showed that children who fall behind on reading comprehension are at least four times more likely to drop out of high school. These students are 13 times more likely to drop out if they come from a low income household. We cannot afford to let our future leaders down and, as Governor, I am working to ensure they have every opportunity to succeed through my Read to Lead plan.

Across all subjects, we have also adopted rigorous and comprehensive learning standards that are future-focused.

We are in the process of discontinuing the use of outdated and ineffective tests, and have funded a 21st Century data system focused on the following necessities:

- Improving transparency.
- Improving accountability.
- Highlighting the ability to differentiate instruction.
- This new comprehensive data system will allow teachers and parents to track student progress and identify learning challenges early on so they can be corrected before it's too late.

We shouldn't be micromanaging school districts, but rather setting high standards and giving districts the flexibility to meet them.

To ensure our education system remains focused on teaching, not pushing paperwork, we've identified and removed many one-size-fits-all or unfunded school mandates. Today we are looking for more ways to help principals and administrators focus on serving teachers and students first.

Once this is accomplished, schools can focus on teaching marketable skills such as those offered in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education programs.

That's why I've worked with Democrats and Republicans alike to allow school districts to offer courses that can lead to nationally recognized certifications in everything from welding to computer programming. These reforms will allow students from across our state to earn real life job skills and even college credits before leaving high school.

More Choices for Parents

We've dramatically increased parental choice since I took office. We reformed open enrollment and expanded the application window from a few weeks to a few months so more parents and kids can take advantage of the options available to them.

My budget also removed the arbitrary caps on online learning and the Milwaukee choice program. We even expanded the program to Racine and allowed more schools to participate.

Parents should have control over their child's education, not the government. The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program and charter schools around Wisconsin have been successfully serving students for over a decade. That is why we are working to expand Milwaukee's successful independent charter school program to more communities.

But choice alone is not enough. Parents must have the ability to choose the best possible education for their kids. In order for this to be effective we must not allow any Wisconsin school to fail our children and their future. It is not only bad public policy, but a bad idea in general to let a school fail year after year and continue to serve children. That is why, for the first time we will be instituting real accountability for all schools, including choice and charter. By holding all levels of public instruction accountable to a higher standard we can find the gaps and weaknesses that need to be addressed, and in doing so better serve our kids and the future of Wisconsin.

Reform Failing Schools

I campaigned on a pledge to turn around failing schools, and with the help of the Department of Public Instruction, convened a School Accountability Design Team to develop the criteria to accomplish this necessary goal.

We cannot begin putting meaningful reforms in place until we know which schools are failing and why. After months of work, our Task Force released its proposed system for rating all schools, including public, choice, and charter. This spring we applied for a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind Act, this will allow Wisconsin teachers and parents, not Washington bureaucrats, can decide how best to educate our kids.

Schools will receive a public report card and be graded on an accountability index of 0 to 100. Among other criteria, schools will be judged on the following:

- Student performance.
- Drop-out rates.
- Third-grade reading levels.

- College readiness.

By establishing a statewide system of accountability and with the help of teachers, parents and the legislature, we will find real solutions to help those schools that are failing. Additionally, we will now be able to replicate the efforts of our best schools and allow families to see which districts throughout the state are providing the highest level of education.

Keeping the Best and Brightest in the Classroom

My fundamental reforms have improved classroom education throughout Wisconsin, allowing school districts to manage their budgets and staffing creates opportunity for each child to grow in the classroom.

Prior to my reforms, school districts were required to layoff the newest employees first. In 2010, the educator named Wisconsin's Outstanding First Year Teacher was laid off due to collective bargaining and the archaic, last in first out, mentality of the tenure system. These outrageous provisions harmed our students and my reforms changed this. Now, school districts can staff based on merit and pay based on performance. The teacher to student ratio in the classroom is well below the national average and the vast majority of districts have the same or smaller elementary school class sizes than before the reforms. For example, the Kaukauna School District reduced class sizes, hired additional teachers and instituted a merit pay system. In doing so, they also eliminated a \$400,000 budget shortfall and created a \$1.5 million surplus.

Finding Efficiencies

School districts were given the tools to manage their budgets effectively. By doing this, schools were able to reduce the property tax burden on Wisconsin families by \$47 million, the first overall reduction in school property taxes in six years.

By our ground breaking reforms to the collective bargaining process, school districts can now focus on curriculum and not union grievances.

As identified by my bipartisan Waste, Fraud and Abuse Commission, school districts should pool their resources to buy in bulk. District can also work together by instituting the following reforms:

- Sharing resources.
- Contracting for services.
- Expanding the use of technology - like online learning.
- Potentially voluntarily merging, when appropriate.

Meanwhile, parents should have the ability to scrutinize spending decisions which is why I will continue to work towards facilitating local efforts to post expenditures online just as I am doing through my Department of Administration for state agencies.

[20120527-07](#)

14:41 Pam

Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above)

I'll look at this more closely later. I want to go work in the yard for a while. But first, let me say, I know there is a LOT that is wrong in education these days. I do NOT defend the status quo. I chose not to join a teachers' union years ago, even though, as an underpaid graduate student without benefits, I wish we'd had one. If the unions are the problem, then let them thrash it out. God knows, a lot needs to be done. Between the unions and government mandates, teachers are in a tight place. This is too big a subject for right now. Later.....

[20120527-08](#) 15:42 Art Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, above) & Happy Memorial Day

Dale, Good stuff but, of course, perhaps a wee bit biased coming from the Governor's website. I'll do a little research on this and get back to you. Some of the numbers leap out at you as very contradictory. They can't both be right. Personally I think our public school system is not doing well at all. Not sure who exactly at fault but the results are discouraging. So, the outcome laid out below has my full support. Question, as always, is how to get there.

We are currently away from home up (as we think of it) in our non air conditioned cabin in WV with 90 degree temperatures. (Discouraging article about that today in the *Washington Post*. The door is about to close on a 2 degree Centigrade increase which is happening as we write. Six (6) degrees by the end of the century. Won't be much of humanity left by then.) The good news is we have bats in our bat house. Always a good sign and supposed to be good luck. We're all going to need it.

Happy Memorial Day.

[20120527-09](#) 17:10 Dale Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to all, above) & Happy Memorial Day

Have a Great Memorial Day Holiday.

A year ago while spending my first winter in ten years in Wisconsin, I experienced my first ever true blizzard. The morning I crawled out a window because there was five feet of snow blocking the front door, I would have decided the global warming story was a fairy tale. Of course we know there are local cycles and anomalies that have nothing to do with "global" changes, but it messes with your common sense view of what is real.

I suppose it also speaks for a philosophy of "living in the moment" for we don't really know what will happen next. Today, my wife and I will enjoy playing with our grand children. Hope your day is as blessed.

[20120525-25](#) 21:34 SteveB "Obama Pot-Smoking Details Revealed in David Maraniss Book" (reply to Pam)

from Pam:

I think our only difference might be our attitude toward immigration. I know it's a problem, but I figure, immigrants wouldn't come here if they didn't expect to find opportunity, which must mean there's a need for their labor. Who would pick our strawberries if not them? I also sympathize with people who are pushed to the wall. Of course, it's horrible when illegals get tax refunds and that sort of thing, but what we need there is, perhaps, a different method for admitting people. I don't know. It's complicated, and I don't live in Arizona, so I probably don't know what I'm talking about. What's your stance on legalizing marijuana? I've never smoked pot in my life, but I support legalization. We've got a practically failed state on our border, and that concerns me.

Those darned wetbacks!

Just kidding. But I think individual cases can get in the way of national interest. I say, enforce the law or change it (fat chance).

The drug laws and the War on Drugs are ridiculous idiocy and have been from the start. Prohibition taught us nothing. 1,000,000 people are needlessly in prison, not contributing to society. Law enforcement has been corrupted. Taxes are not being collected. Addicts are dying. Children are dying. Let's be practical.

And it turns out Barry was a big pot head and then was coming down hard on medical marijuana. Go figure. His bosses told him to? Now, that's a scary thought.

I guess Bill Clinton got into a little trouble again with same. A real news pic taken in Monaco with three porno stars (oops!) a couple of days ago. No word from Hillary yet.



Back to the War on Drugs, remember when GaryC couldn't understand why President Obama's government was raiding medical marijuana clinics in California? Considering what a pot-head Barry was in part of his youth, it's hard to believe he was behind those efforts against his favorite drug. That appears to me like a normal cigarette in the photo, but the POTUS still looks like a pretty cool dude...not a blood-sucking, money-grubbing robot like...well...you know who. Are you Right-wingers completely sure the President is a Muslim? Doesn't look like one here.



"Obama Pot-Smoking Details Revealed in David Maraniss Book" by Luke Johnson, Huffington Post

May 25, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/25/obama-pot-smoking-details_n_1545904.html)

The meticulous biographer David Maraniss revealed President Barack Obama's early girlfriends in an excerpt of his forthcoming biography, and now the Internet is seizing upon new details of the president smoking marijuana with his buddies at the Punahou School in Hawaii.

Politico's Playbook teased the following excerpt from *Barack Obama: The Story*, which will be published in June but is already viewable on Google Books. "When a joint was making the rounds, he often elbowed his way in, out of turn, shouted 'Intercepted!' and took an extra hit," Maraniss writes. But Obama's buddies, who called themselves the "Choom Gang," didn't mind him messing up the rotation. (After all, this was Hawaii.)

That's not all. Maraniss writes that Obama was known for starting a trend called "TA," short for "total absorption."

When you were with Barry and his pals, if you exhaled precious pakalolo (Hawaiian slang for marijuana, meaning "numbing tobacco") instead of absorbing it fully into your lungs, you were assessed a penalty and your turn was skipped the next time the joint came around.

Maraniss also describes Obama's technique of "roof hits" while hot-boxing cars. "When the pot was gone, they tilted their heads back and sucked in the last bit of smoke from the ceiling," he writes.

The fate of their dealer, Ray, was far more tragic than those of Obama and his largely privileged pals. In a scene that could've been in a Quentin Tarantino movie, a "scorned gay lover" later killed Ray with a ball-peen hammer.

The Huffington Post can't independently verify the claims of Maraniss, who won a Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting in 1993.

Obama has been less than shy about his drug use in the past, writing about the topic in *Dreams from My Father*. "Pot had helped, and booze; maybe a little blow when you could afford it," he writes in the memoir.

Obama's tone grows darker, and drugs are an escape for the young Obama, who is facing questions about his own identity:

Junkie. Pothead. That's where I'd been headed: the final, fatal role of the young would-be black man. Except the highs hadn't been about that, me trying to prove what a down brother I was. Not by them, anyway. I got high for just the opposite effect, something that could push questions of who I was out of my mind, something that could flatten out the landscape of my heart, blur the edges of my memory. I had discovered that it didn't make any difference whether you smoked reefer in the white classmate's sparkling new van, or in the dorm room of some brother you'd met down at the gym, or on the beach with a couple of Hawaiian kids who had dropped out of school and now spent most of their time looking for an excuse to brawl.

As Obama moved to higher stage, he's also been forthcoming about drug use. On Bill Clinton's personal triangulation that he had tried marijuana but "didn't inhale," Obama said smiling in 2006, "That was the point, wasn't it?"

Later in *Dreams from My Father*, one of Obama's friends was arrested for drug possession and his mother, home from Indonesia, confronted him about it in his room, and he walked out.

The fun continued for Obama at Occidental College in Los Angeles, but he became much more serious after transferring to Columbia University after his sophomore year, when he lived, in his words, "like a monk."



[Boy! This is a low blow! This really pi*sces me off! LOL! They forgot your favorites—the horrible, dreaded Nancy and Harry. Surely they deserve a place in the cavity search line too? And what about all those communists in Congress? Why aren't they headed for prison? How much destruction does one country have to endure before people want to change the change and still get a little change back? I'm beginning to wonder myself. (And I'm also still pi*sed that those "shovel-ready" projects weren't "shovel-ready", they were more like ready-for-a-do-nothing-Congress-to-appropriate funds to assist in the nation's economic recovery.) –SteveB]

"GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes" by Rosalind S. Helderman, *The Washington Post*

May 25, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/gop-showing-small-shifts-on-taxes/2012/05/25/gJQAQ5I0pU_story.html)

In GOP activist circles it is known simply as "the pledge," and over the past generation it has become the essential conservative credential for Republicans seeking elective office. Of the 242 Republicans in the House today, all but six have signed the pledge.

But now, an increasing number of GOP candidates for Congress are declining to sign the promise to oppose any tax increase, a small sign that could signal a big shift in Republican politics on taxes.

Of the 25 candidates this year promoted by the National Republican Congressional Committee as "Young Guns" and "Contenders" — the top rungs of a program that highlights promising candidates who are challenging Democrats or running in open seats — at least a third have indicated they do not plan to sign the pledge authored by anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist.

Two of the seven candidates promoted by the NRCC as the "Young Gun Vanguard" — candidates competing in open seats that are considered Republican-leaning — also have declined to sign.

The pledge pushed by Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, compels candidates to "resist any effort" to raise tax rates for individuals and businesses. Signers also pledge to oppose the elimination of tax credits and deductions unless they are matched dollar-for-dollar with tax cuts.

Norquist insists ATR, the powerful group he founded in 1986, is ahead of schedule in collecting pledge signatures from congressional candidates for the year. He points out that the likely GOP nominee for president, Mitt Romney, has signed the pledge. But there have been defections.

Republican candidates declining to sign generally indicate that they nevertheless oppose tax hikes. But some chafe against the constraint on eliminating tax loopholes, believing those restrictions limit Republicans' ability to negotiate seriously with Democrats on a deal to tackle the nation's mounting debt.

In Pennsylvania, Republican state Rep. Scott Perry said he was disappointed to see his party's presidential candidates — all but one of whom signed the pledge — uniformly indicate in a debate last year that they would reject a deficit reduction deal that paired \$1 in revenue increases for every \$10 in spending cuts.

"I just think it's imprudent to hem yourself in where you can't make a good agreement that overall supports the things you want to do," said Perry, who said he generally opposes tax increases but recently won a Republican primary in a conservative district over candidates who had signed the pledge. "I just don't see what the point of signing would be for me. . . . I've got a record, and everyone who wants to know where I've been and where I'm at can look to that."

Others insist they can make promises to voters without signing a pledge circulated by a Washington lobbying group. That indicates Democrats might be having some success at painting Norquist as a D.C. insider instead of the anti-establishment rebel he portrays himself to be.

"I don't want to get tied up in knots," said Richard Tisei, an NRCC Young Gun and former Republican state senator in Massachusetts who is running against Democratic Rep. John F. Tierney. "If there's a loophole that can be closed that ends up generating additional revenue that can be used specifically to pay down the national debt, I'm not going to lose sleep. And I don't want to be bound by the pledge not to close it."

The refusals among some new candidates come as a handful of incumbent Republicans who signed the pledge when they first ran for office also are publicly rejecting it.

Freshman Rep. Scott Rigell (R-Va.), who signed the pledge in 2010, recently posted an open letter to constituents indicating that he would not renew the promise as he runs for reelection. He said he fears it could stand in the way of an everything-on-the-table approach to tackling the mounting debt.

"Averting bankruptcy requires us to grasp the severity of our fiscal condition and summon the courage to speak boldly about the difficult steps needed to increase revenues and sharply decrease spending," he wrote.

An erosion of support among candidates would be especially significant because Norquist has long aimed to collect signatures from Republicans before they take office. He encourages candidates to use their pledges to help to define their tax stance for voters.

Once the pledge is signed, Norquist considers it binding for the remainder of the candidate's career in public service if he or she wins office.

In an interview, Norquist said the pledge is as strong as ever. He noted that in the pressure-cooker days of the debt-ceiling debate last summer, Republicans held firm against tax increases and wrested a deal from Democrats to lower deficits through spending cuts alone.

"That was when the pledge was tested and the commitment of Republicans not to raise taxes was really pushed hard. And Obama and the spending interests failed, and Republicans and the taxpayers won," he said.

He cited several recent examples of Republican primaries in which ATR-backed candidates defeated Republicans considered less fiscally conservative. This month, ATR helped Indiana state Treasurer Richard Mourdock defeat six-term Sen. Richard G. Lugar in a Republican primary. And this week, Tom Cotton won a Republican primary in

Arkansas after ATR called voters to let them know his opponent had not signed the pledge. Cotton is seeking a seat held by retiring Democrat Rep. Mike Ross.

Norquist said the ATR pledge remains the best way to signal to wary voters that a candidate will not change his mind on taxes once in office. "The pledge isn't what keeps them from raising taxes," he said. "It's what confirms to voters that they won't raise taxes. Because they're competing with several hundreds of years of politicians lying about this."

But a new test looms: a colossal fight over spending and taxes at the end of the year, when the Bush-era tax cuts expire at the same time a series of deep cuts to defense and domestic programs is set to take effect.

Democrats have said they will not agree to renew some of the tax breaks or avert the defense cuts, as Republicans want, unless Republicans agree to impose higher taxes on the wealthy. Any wiggle room for Republicans on taxes could dramatically reshape that debate.

Because of the GOP's sweeping successes in the 2010 election, the NRCC's targeted Young Gun races include some districts where Republicans have little chance of winning in November. It is unclear how many of the new pledge refuseniks will make it to Washington.

But after months of Democratic attacks on ATR and Norquist as obstacles to a debt deal, some Republican candidates report that they are hearing from more voters who want them to reject the pledge than the opposite.

Gary DeLong, a member of the Long Beach City Council who is labeled a "contender" for a House seat by the NRCC, said he is routinely encouraged on doorsteps and at town halls and candidate coffees to avoid the pledge.

Voters "want me to represent them and not special interests," said DeLong, who will compete next month in California's unusual mixed-party primary for one of two spots on the November ballot in a newly drawn district.

Two Republicans vying to challenge Democratic Rep. Dave Loebsack in Iowa have indicated they will not sign. In Indiana, former U.S. attorney Susan Brooks won the GOP nomination for a solidly Republican seat, defeating three Republicans who had signed the pledge.

"She's committed to lowering taxes," said Dollyne Sherman, a spokeswoman for Brooks. "She thinks that's a key ingredient in restoring the nation's economy. But she doesn't need to sign a tax pledge to do that."

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), a fiscal conservative who has tangled with Norquist, said he believes candidates are starting to understand that the ATR pledge's power has been exaggerated by Norquist and the media and that Norquist is wrong when he asserts that it is nearly impossible to win a Republican primary without signing the pledge.

"That's him patting himself on the back," Coburn said. "And I think it's bull crap."

20120526-05	08:46	Pam	Re: "GOP Showing Small Shifts on Taxes" (reply to MarthaH, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Finally, a little backbone is showing. What a bunch of weenies to sign the stupid pledge in the first place. I guess it's easy to bully a bully, which is essentially what Norquist did, the Richlieu of the the Republican party.

20120526-06	09:51	Dale	"Why We Lie"
-----------------------------	-------	------	--------------

I am not sending this with any particular mission in mind. I just thought you would be interested in it.

"Why We Lie" by Dan Ariely, *The Wall Street Journal*

May 26, 2012, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304840904577422090013997320.html>)

(We like to believe that a few bad apples spoil the virtuous bunch. But research shows that everyone cheats a little—right up to the point where they lose their sense of integrity.)

Not too long ago, one of my students, named Peter, told me a story that captures rather nicely our society's misguided efforts to deal with dishonesty. One day, Peter locked himself out of his house. After a spell, the locksmith pulled up in his truck and picked the lock in about a minute.

"I was amazed at how quickly and easily this guy was able to open the door," Peter said. The locksmith told him that locks are on doors only to keep honest people honest. One percent of people will always be honest and never steal. Another 1% will always be dishonest and always try to pick your lock and steal your television; locks won't do much to protect you from the hardened thieves, who can get into your house if they really want to. The purpose of locks, the locksmith said, is to protect you from the 98% of mostly honest people who might be tempted to try your door if it had no lock.

We tend to think that people are either honest or dishonest. In the age of Bernie Madoff and Mark McGwire, James Frey and John Edwards, we like to believe that most people are virtuous, but a few bad apples spoil the bunch. If this were true, society might easily remedy its problems with cheating and dishonesty. Human-resources departments could screen for cheaters when hiring. Dishonest financial advisers or building contractors could be flagged quickly and shunned. Cheaters in sports and other arenas would be easy to spot before they rose to the tops of their professions.

But that is not how dishonesty works. Over the past decade or so, my colleagues and I have taken a close look at why people cheat, using a variety of experiments and looking at a panoply of unique data sets—from insurance claims to employment histories to the treatment records of doctors and dentists. What we have found, in a nutshell: Everybody has the capacity to be dishonest, and almost everybody cheats—just by a little. Except for a few outliers at the top and bottom, the behavior of almost everyone is driven by two opposing motivations. On the one hand, we want to benefit from cheating and get as much money and glory as possible; on the other hand, we want to view ourselves as honest, honorable people. Sadly, it is this kind of small-scale mass cheating, not the high-profile cases, that is most corrosive to society.

1.69	1.82	2.91
4.67	4.81	3.05
5.82	5.06	4.28
6.36	5.19	4.57

Which two numbers in this matrix add up to 10? Asked to solve a batch of these problems, most people cheated (claiming to have solved more of them than they had) when given the chance.

Much of what we have learned about the causes of dishonesty comes from a simple little experiment that we call the "matrix task," which we have been using in many variations. It has shown rather conclusively that cheating does not correspond to the traditional, rational model of human behavior—that is, the idea that people simply weigh the benefits (say, money) against the costs (the possibility of getting caught and punished) and act accordingly.

The basic matrix task goes as follows: Test subjects (usually college students) are given a sheet of paper containing a series of 20 different matrices (structured like the example you can see above) and are told to find in each of the matrices two numbers that add up to 10. They have five minutes to solve as many of the matrices as possible, and they get paid based on how many they solve correctly. When we want to make it possible for subjects to cheat on the matrix task, we introduce what we call the "shredder condition." The subjects are told to count their correct answers on their own and then put their work sheets through a paper shredder at the back of the room. They then tell us how many matrices they solved correctly and get paid accordingly.

View Interactive ("The Forces That Shape Dishonesty"):

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304840904577422090013997320.html#>.

In a variety of experiments, Dan Ariely and his colleague have identified many factors that can make people behave in a more or less honest fashion.

What happens when we put people through the control condition and the shredder condition and then compare their scores? In the control condition, it turns out that most people can solve about four matrices in five minutes. But in the shredder condition, something funny happens: Everyone suddenly and miraculously gets a little smarter. Participants in the shredder condition claim to solve an average of six matrices—two more than in the control condition. This overall increase results not from a few individuals who claim to solve a lot more matrices but from lots of people who cheat just by a little.

Would putting more money on the line make people cheat more? We tried varying the amount that we paid for a solved matrix, from 50 cents to \$10, but more money did not lead to more cheating. In fact, the amount of cheating was slightly lower when we promised our participants the highest amount for each correct answer. (Why? I suspect that at \$10 per solved matrix, it was harder for participants to cheat and still feel good about their own sense of integrity.)

Would a higher probability of getting caught cause people to cheat less? We tried conditions for the experiment in which people shredded only half their answer sheet, in which they paid themselves money from a bowl in the hallway, even one in which a noticeably blind research assistant administered the experiment. Once again, lots of people cheated, though just by a bit. But the level of cheating was unaffected by the probability of getting caught.

Knowing that most people cheat—but just by a little—the next logical question is what makes us cheat more or less.

One thing that increased cheating in our experiments was making the prospect of a monetary payoff more "distant," in psychological terms. In one variation of the matrix task, we tempted students to cheat for tokens (which would immediately be traded in for cash). Subjects in this token condition cheated twice as much as those lying directly for money.

Another thing that boosted cheating: Having another student in the room who was clearly cheating. In this version of the matrix task, we had an acting student named David get up about a minute into the experiment (the participants in the study didn't know he was an actor) and implausibly claim that he had solved all the matrices. Watching this mini-Madoff clearly cheat—and waltz away with a wad of cash—the remaining students claimed they had solved double the number of matrices as the control group. Cheating, it seems, is infectious.

Other factors that increased the dishonesty of our test subjects included knowingly wearing knockoff fashions, being drained from the demands of a mentally difficult task and thinking that "teammates" would benefit from one's cheating in a group version of the matrix task. These factors have little to do with cost-benefit analysis and everything to do with the balancing act that we are constantly performing in our heads. If I am already wearing fake Gucci sunglasses, then maybe I am more comfortable pushing some other ethical limits (we call this the "What the hell" effect). If I am mentally depleted from sticking to a tough diet, how can you expect me to be scrupulously honest? (It's a lot of effort!) If it is my teammates who benefit from my fudging the numbers, surely that makes me a virtuous person!

The results of these experiments should leave you wondering about the ways that we currently try to keep people honest. Does the prospect of heavy fines or increased enforcement really make someone less likely to cheat on

their taxes, to fill out a fraudulent insurance claim, to recommend a bum investment or to steal from his or her company? It may have a small effect on our behavior, but it is probably going to be of little consequence when it comes up against the brute psychological force of "I'm only fudging a little" or "Everyone does it" or "It's for a greater good."

What, then—if anything—pushes people toward greater honesty?

There's a joke about a man who loses his bike outside his synagogue and goes to his rabbi for advice. "Next week come to services, sit in the front row," the rabbi tells the man, "and when we recite the Ten Commandments, turn around and look at the people behind you. When we get to 'Thou shalt not steal,' see who can't look you in the eyes. That's your guy." After the next service, the rabbi is curious to learn whether his advice panned out. "So, did it work?" he asks the man. "Like a charm," the man answers. "The moment we got to 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' I remembered where I left my bike."

What this little joke suggests is that simply being reminded of moral codes has a significant effect on how we view our own behavior.

Inspired by the thought, my colleagues and I ran an experiment at the University of California, Los Angeles. We took a group of 450 participants, split them into two groups and set them loose on our usual matrix task. We asked half of them to recall the Ten Commandments and the other half to recall 10 books that they had read in high school. Among the group who recalled the 10 books, we saw the typical widespread but moderate cheating. But in the group that was asked to recall the Ten Commandments, we observed no cheating whatsoever. We reran the experiment, reminding students of their schools' honor codes instead of the Ten Commandments, and we got the same result. We even reran the experiment on a group of self-declared atheists, asking them to swear on a Bible, and got the same no-cheating results yet again.

This experiment has obvious implications for the real world. While ethics lectures and training seem to have little to no effect on people, reminders of morality—right at the point where people are making a decision—appear to have an outside effect on behavior.

Another set of our experiments, conducted with mock tax forms, convinced us that it would be better to have people put their signature at the top of the forms (before they filled in false information) rather than at the bottom (after the lying was done). Unable to get the IRS to give our theory a go in the real world, we tested it out with automobile-insurance forms. An insurance company gave us 20,000 forms with which to play. For half of them, we kept the usual arrangement, with the signature line at the bottom of the page along with the statement: "I promise that the information I am providing is true." For the other half, we moved the statement and signature line to the top. We mailed the forms to 20,000 customers, and when we got the forms back, we compared the amount of driving reported on the two types of forms.

People filling out such forms have an incentive to underreport how many miles they drive, so as to be charged a lower premium. What did we find? Those who signed the form at the top said, on average, that they had driven 26,100 miles, while those who signed at the bottom said, on average, that they had driven 23,700 miles—a difference of about 2,400 miles. We don't know, of course, how much those who signed at the top really drove, so we don't know if they were perfectly honest—but we do know that they cheated a good deal less than our control group.

Such tricks aren't going to save us from the next big Ponzi scheme or doping athlete or thieving politician. But they could rein in the vast majority of people who cheat "just by a little." Across all of our experiments, we have tested thousands of people, and from time to time, we did see aggressive cheaters who kept as much money as possible. In the matrix experiments, for example, we have never seen anyone claim to solve 18 or 19 out of the 20 matrices. But once in a while, a participant claimed to have solved all 20. Fortunately, we did not encounter many of these people, and because they seemed to be the exception and not the rule, we lost only a few hundred dollars to these big cheaters. At the same time, we had thousands and thousands of participants who cheated by "just" a few matrices, but because there were so many of them, we lost thousands and thousands of dollars to them.

In short, very few people steal to a maximal degree, but many good people cheat just a little here and there. We fib to round up our billable hours, claim higher losses on our insurance claims, recommend unnecessary treatments and so on.

Companies also find many ways to game the system just a little. Think about credit-card companies that raise interest rates ever so slightly for no apparent reason and invent all kinds of hidden fees and penalties (which are often referred to, within companies, as "revenue enhancements"). Think about banks that slow down check processing so that they can hold on to our money for an extra day or two or charge exorbitant fees for overdraft protection and for using ATMs.

All of this means that, although it is obviously important to pay attention to flagrant misbehaviors, it is probably even more important to discourage the small and more ubiquitous forms of dishonesty—the misbehavior that affects all of us, as both perpetrators and victims. This is especially true given what we know about the contagious nature of cheating and the way that small transgressions can grease the psychological skids to larger ones.

We want to install locks to stop the next Bernie Madoff, the next Enron, the next steroid-enhanced all-star, the next serial plagiarist, the next self-dealing political miscreant. But locking our doors against the dishonest monsters will not keep them out; they will always cheat their way in. It is the woman down the hallway—the sweet one who could not even carry away your flat-screen TV if she wanted to—who needs to be reminded constantly that, even if the door is open, she cannot just walk in and "borrow" a cup of sugar without asking.

(Mr. Ariely is the James B. Duke Professor of Behavior Economics at Duke University. This piece is adapted from his forthcoming book, *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone—Especially Ourselves*, to be published by HarperCollins on June 5.)

[20120526-12](#) 19:25 SteveB Re: "Why We Lie" (reply to Dale, above)

Very interesting, Dale. Thanks. Monday's FotM Newsletter will be a good one.

[20120526-07](#) 15:23 SteveB "Fox Mangles Data to Claim 'The Poor' are Getting 'Richer'"

["Fox Mangles Data to Claim 'The Poor' are Getting 'Richer'" by Media Matter/NationofChange](#)

May 26, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/fox-mangles-data-claim-poor-are-getting-richer-1338045893>)

("Empirical Studies Show 'A Strong Positive Relationship' Between 'Parent And Child Income In The United States.' From a report by the Congressional Research Service titled, 'The U.S. Income Distribution And Mobility: Trends and International Comparisons.'")

Fox's John Stossel claimed that it's a "myth" that "the poor are getting poorer" and that they are actually getting "richer." In fact, incomes for the bottom fifth have shown almost no growth in recent decades, and the numbers Stossel used to support his argument were cherry-picked.

Incomes At The Bottom Have Shown Almost No Growth In Decades; Stossel Calls It "Getting Richer"
Stossel: "The Rich Have Gotten Richer, But So Have The Poor." From Fox News' *Fox & Friends*:

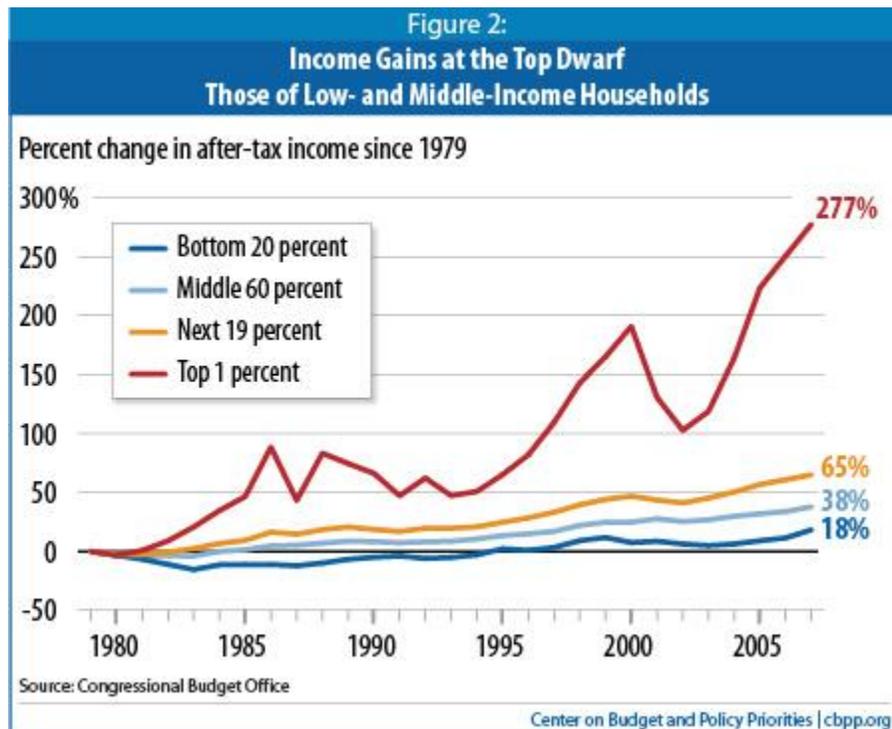
STOSSEL: There are just two myths. One is that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. And the truth is yes, over time the rich have gotten richer, but so have the poor -- 20 percent richer since I was in college. (Fox News, *Fox & Friends*, 5/24/12)

CBPP: "The Era Of Shared Prosperity Ended In The 1970s." From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report:

Census family income data show that the era of shared prosperity ended in the 1970s and illustrate the divergence in income that has emerged since that time. CBO data allow us to look at what has happened to comprehensive income since 1979 -- both before and after taxes -- and offer a better view of what has happened at the top of the distribution.

As Figure 2 shows, between 1979 and 2007, average income after taxes in the top 1 percent of the distribution rose 277 percent, meaning that it nearly quadrupled. That compares with increases of about 40 percent in the middle 60 percent of the distribution and 18 percent in the bottom fifth.

The report included this graph:

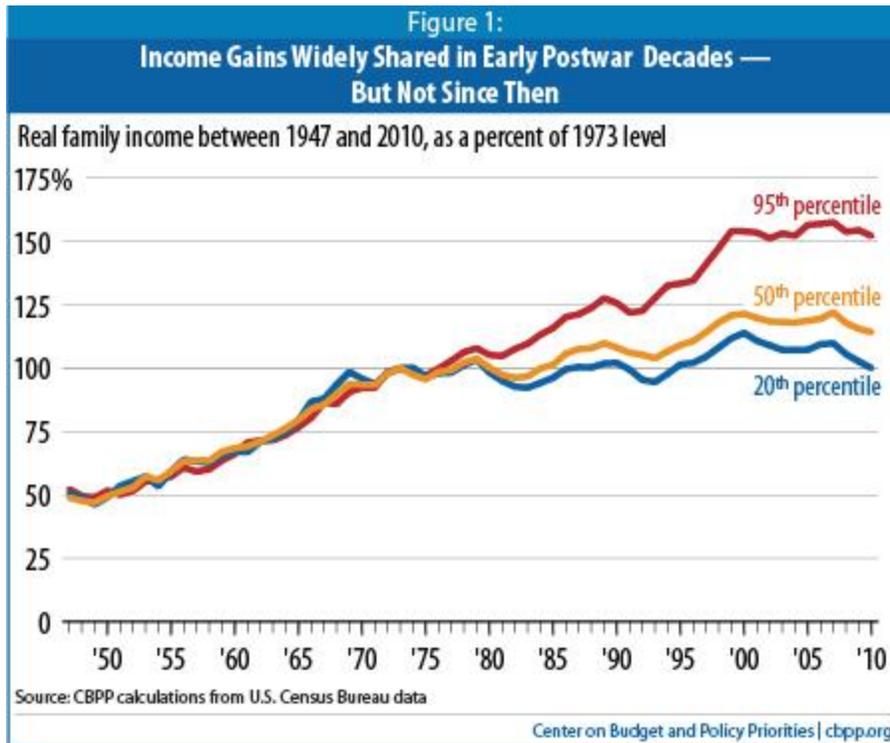


(Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 3/5/12) (<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3629>)

CBPP: In The 1970s, "Income Disparities Began To Widen, With Income Growing Much Faster At The Top Of The Ladder Than In The Middle Or Bottom." From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

Census family income data show that from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, incomes across the income distribution grew at nearly the same pace. Figure 1 indexes the level of income at several points on the distribution to its 1973 level. It shows that real (inflation-adjusted) family income roughly doubled over that period at the 95th percentile (the level of income separating the 5 percent of families with the highest income from the remaining 95 percent), the median (the level of income separating the richer half of families from the poorer half), and the 20th percentile (the level of income separating the poorest fifth of families from the remaining 80 percent). Beginning in the 1970s, income disparities began to widen, with income growing much faster at the top of the ladder than in the middle or bottom.

The report included this graph:



[Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [3/5/12](#)]

Fox Graphic Cherry-Picks Numbers To Mislead About Change In Incomes At The Bottom
Graphic: "Poorest Fifth Now 17% Richer." From Fox News' *Fox & Friends*.



(Fox News, *Fox & Friends*, 5/24/12)

Fox's Numbers Are Deceptive; Average Income In Bottom Fifth Was Actually \$11,034 In 2010. The figures in Fox's on-screen graphic represent income earned by a household at the 20th percentile of the income distribution, meaning that almost every household in the bottom fifth actually made less than \$20,000 in 2010. At no point during the segment did Fox make clear that its figures represented the top income in the bottom 20 percent. (Census Bureau, September 2011)

Fox Cherry-Picked Its Data -- Income At The 20th Percentile Peaked In 2000 And Has Fallen By More Than 10 Percent. In 2000, a household at the 20th percentile of the income distribution earned \$22,689. From the Census Bureau's "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010":

Table A-3.

Selected Measures of Household Income Dispersion: 1967 to 2010

(Income in 2010 CPI-U-RS adjusted dollars. For further explanation of income inequality measures, see Current Population Reports, Series P60-204, *The Changing Shape of the Nation's Income Distribution: 1947-1998*. Standard errors presented in this table were calculated using general variance formula parameters and may differ from the standard errors in text tables that were calculated using replicate weights. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar11.pdf)

Measures of income dispersion	2010	2009 ¹	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004 ²	2003	2002	2001	2000 ³
MEASURE											
Household Income at Selected Percentiles											
10th percentile limit	11,904	12,320	12,315	12,789	12,977	12,607	12,589	12,490	12,871	13,160	13,398
20th percentile limit	20,000	20,791	20,974	21,337	21,666	21,419	21,338	21,320	21,713	22,131	22,689
50th (median)	49,445	50,599	50,939	52,823	52,124	51,739	51,174	51,353	51,398	52,005	53,164
80th percentile limit	100,065	101,651	101,508	105,156	104,930	102,420	101,580	102,980	101,824	102,833	103,525
90th percentile limit	138,923	139,904	140,050	143,012	143,825	140,823	139,514	140,125	138,299	139,937	141,805
95th percentile limit	180,810	182,972	182,277	186,126	188,175	185,397	181,399	182,707	181,797	185,345	183,865

(Census Bureau, September 2011) (<http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-239.pdf#page=49>)

Stossel Ignores Problems With Income Mobility In U.S.

Stossel: "The Poor Are Not The Same People" Because "There Still Is Income Mobility In America."

From the show:

STOSSEL: There's this myth that the poor have gotten poorer; it's not true. Also, the poor are not the same people. Oprah Winfrey was once on welfare, and now she's one of the richest people in the world. There still is income mobility in America. (Fox News, *Fox & Friends*, 5/24/12)

CRS: Empirical Studies Show "A Strong Positive Relationship" Between "Parent And Child Income In The United States." From a report by the Congressional Research Service titled, "The U.S. Income Distribution And Mobility: Trends and International Comparisons":

Intergenerational elasticity (IGE) measures how persistent position in the income distribution is from one generation to the next. IGE is a single number that indicates the extent to which parents' position in the income distribution explains their adult children's relative income. The lower the elasticity, the less likely inequality is to be perpetuated from one generation to the next; that is, the more mobile the society.

Empirical analyses have estimated a strong positive relationship -- about 0.5 -- between parent and adult child income in the United States. An IGE of 0.5 suggests that if the income of a child's parents was 30% higher than the average income of families in the parents' generation, then the child's income will be 15% above the average for his/her generation. In other words, in the United States, about 50% of the (dis)advantage of growing up in a (low) high income family may be inherited. (Congressional Research Service, 3/7/12)

CRS: Children Born Into Low Income Families "May Have Become Less Likely To Surpass Their Parents' Position At The Bottom Of The Income Distribution." From the CRS report:

It is difficult to precisely answer the question of whether the importance of parents' relative income to adult children's relative income changed over the period that inequality has been increasing in the United States. This is partly the case because few sources cover multiple generations of adults for which data are available on family income at the time they were children. As described more fully below, empirical analyses suggest that children born into low-income families have not become more likely and may have become less likely to surpass their parents' position at the bottom of the income distribution. Put differently, mobility in the United States does not appear to have offset the increase in cross-sectional inequality in recent decades. (Congressional Research Service, 3/7/12)

CRS: "The United States Typically Is Found To Be Among The Least Mobile Of The Advanced Economies."

The CRS report notes that "although the rank of the United States differs somewhat from one study to the next, as discussed below, the United States typically is found to be among the least mobile of the advanced economies." (Congressional Research Service, 3/7/12)

CRS: United States "Has Less Upward Mobility From The Bottom [Fifth] And More Low-Income Persistence" Than U.K. And Nordic Countries. From the report:

Jantti et al. developed comparable intergenerational samples for six countries from which they derived estimates of intergenerational mobility at different points in the joint distribution of father and son earnings. The estimation of transition matrices allowed them to compare mobility rates from one quintile to another in the distribution. The researchers found that the United States has less upward mobility from the bottom quintile and more low-income persistence than the United Kingdom and Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) included in their analysis.

The authors suggest that, despite these results, Americans have been able to maintain the perception of living in a mobile society because transition rates of the middle three quintiles are similar in the United States and other advanced economies. "In the U.S., such middle class moves are associated with fairly substantial changes in real living standards (i.e., measured in actual dollars earned) ... [that] are experienced or witnessed by a substantial fraction of the U.S. population." (Congressional Research Service, 3/7/12)

NY Times: "42 Percent Of American Men" Born Into Bottom Fifth "Stay There As Adults." From *The New York Times*:

At least five large studies in recent years have found the United States to be less mobile than comparable nations. A project led by Markus Jantti, an economist at a Swedish university, found that 42 percent of American men raised in the bottom fifth of incomes stay there as adults. That shows a level of persistent disadvantage much higher than in Denmark (25 percent) and Britain (30 percent) -- a country famous for its class constraints.

Meanwhile, just 8 percent of American men at the bottom rose to the top fifth. That compares with 12 percent of the British and 14 percent of the Danes. (*The New York Times*, 1/5/12)

NY Times: 65 Percent Of Americans "Born In The Bottom Fifth Stay In The Bottom Two-Fifths." From the *Times*:

Despite frequent references to the United States as a classless society, about 62 percent of Americans (male and female) raised in the top fifth of incomes stay in the top two-fifths, according to research by the Economic Mobility Project of the Pew Charitable Trusts. Similarly, 65 percent born in the bottom fifth stay in the bottom two-fifths. (*The New York Times*, 1/5/12)

Stossel Disappears Tens Of Millions Of Americans Shielded From Poverty By Federal Safety Net
Stossel: Idea That Government Can Alleviate Poverty "Is Just A Lie." From the show:

STOSSEL: I'm not -- if you are mentally ill, if you're in a shelter, you can have a really tough life. I don't mean to make light of that. But this idea that government can fix it, and it's a horrible growing crisis, is just a lie. (Fox News, *Fox & Friends*, 5/24/12)

CBPP: Stimulus Programs Kept Nearly 7 Million People Out Of Poverty. From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

Six temporary federal initiatives enacted in 2009 and 2010 to bolster the economy by lifting consumers' incomes and purchases kept nearly 7 million Americans out of poverty in 2010, under an alternative measure of poverty that takes into account the impact of government benefit programs and taxes. These initiatives -- three new or expanded tax credits, two enhancements of unemployment insurance, and an expansion of benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called food

stamps) -- were part of the 2009 Recovery Act. Congress subsequently extended or expanded some of them.

To gauge the impacts of these initiatives on poverty, analysts cannot use the official poverty measure because it counts only cash income and does not take refundable tax credits, SNAP benefits, and other non-cash assistance into account. Therefore, we use a poverty measure that adopts recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), and that most experts prefer to the traditional poverty measure. Using the NAS measure to analyze newly released Census data for 2010, we find that the six Recovery Act initiatives kept 6.9 million people above the poverty line in 2010:

- Expansions in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) kept 1.6 million people out of poverty.
- The Making Work Pay tax credit, which expired at the end of 2010, kept another 1.5 million people out of poverty.
- Expansions in the duration and level of unemployment insurance benefits kept 3.4 million people out of poverty.
- Expansions in SNAP benefits kept 1.0 million people out of poverty.

These initiatives had a wide reach across the population, reaching a majority of American households. The 6.9 million people kept above the poverty line in 2010 included an estimated 2.5 million children, 200,000 seniors, 3.1 million non-Latino whites, 1.3 million non-Latino blacks, and 2.0 million Latinos. (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 11/7/11)

CBPP: Social Security Keeps Nearly 20 Million Americans -- Including More Than 1 Million Children -- Out Of Poverty. From a Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report titled, "Social Security Keeps 20 Million Americans Out of Poverty: A State-By-State Analysis":

Almost 90 percent of people aged 65 and older receive some of their family income from Social Security. Without Social Security benefits, 45.2 percent of elderly Americans would have incomes below the poverty line, all else being equal. With Social Security benefits, only 9.7 percent are poor. Some 13.2 million elderly Americans are lifted out of poverty by Social Security.

Social Security is important for children and their families as well as for the elderly. About 6 million children under age 18 (8 percent of all U.S. children) lived in families that received income from Social Security in 2008, according to Census data. Over 3 million children received their own benefits as dependents of retired, disabled, or deceased workers. Others lived with parents or relatives who received Social Security benefits. In all, 1.1 million children are lifted out of poverty by Social Security. (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 8/11/10)

20120526-10	19:05	SteveB	"Romney Messes Up, Tells the Truth About Austerity"
-------------	-------	--------	---

It is not the job of business to take care of the people, though meeting the needs of people can result in profits. It is the government's job to see to the welfare of its people, or it is doomed to failure. History documents these failures over and over again.

"Romney Messes Up, Tells the Truth About Austerity" by William K. Black, Huffington Post

May 25, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/william-k-black/romney-austerity_b_1545454.html)

Mitt Romney has periodic breakdowns when asked questions about the economy because he sometimes forgets the need to lie. He forgets that he is supposed to treat austerity as the epitome of economic wisdom. When he responds quickly to questions about austerity he slips into default mode and speaks the truth -- adopting austerity during the recovery from a Great Recession would (as in Europe) throw the nation back into recession or depression. The latest example is his May 23, 2012 interview with Mark Halperin in *Time* magazine.

Halperin: Why not in the first year, if you're elected -- why not in 2013, go all the way and propose the kind of budget with spending restraints, that you'd like to see after four years in office? Why not do it more quickly?

Romney: Well because, if you take a trillion dollars for instance, out of the first year of the federal budget, that would shrink GDP over 5%. That is by definition throwing us into recession or depression. So I'm not going to do that, of course.

Romney explains that austerity, during the recovery from a Great Recession, would cause catastrophic damage to our nation. The problem, of course, is that the Republican congressional leadership is committed to imposing austerity on the nation and Speaker Boehner has just threatened that Republicans will block the renewal of the debt ceiling in order to extort Democrats to agree to austerity -- severe cuts to social programs. Romney knows this could "throw us into recession or depression" and says he would never follow such a policy.

Romney, however, has not opposed Boehner's threat to use extortion to force austerity on the nation. Romney has the nomination sown up, but I predict that he will stand by and let Boehner try to throw us into a Great Depression rather than upset the Tea Party-wing of the Republican Party. Indeed, Romney will attack Democrats who have the political courage to defend our nation against his Party's demands for austerity that would throw us into recession or depression.

What does one call a politician who, solely to advance his personal political ambition, supports his Party's efforts to coerce austerity even though he knows that the austerity would cause a national economic catastrophe and states that he, "of course," would never adopt such self-destructive austerity if he were president? Romney is failing the tests of courage, integrity, and loyalty to our nation and people.

Later in the interview, Romney claims that federal budgetary deficits are "immoral." But he has just explained that using austerity for the purported purpose of ending a deficit would cause a recession or depression. A recession or depression would make the deficit far larger. That means that Romney should be denouncing austerity as "immoral" (as well as suicidal) because it will not simply increase the deficit (which he claims to find "immoral" because of its impact on children) but also dramatically increase unemployment, poverty, child poverty and hunger, and harm their education by causing more teachers to lose their jobs and more school programs to be cut. Fewer children will be able to get college degrees. Austerity is the great enemy of children -- it is the epitome of a self-destructive, immoral economic policy.

Listen for the sounds of silence from Romney in coming months. I predict that he will not act to protect our children or our economy from the suicidal and "immoral" austerity his Republican allies are trying to coerce the Democrats to inflict on our economy and our children.

20120526-11	19:15 SteveB	An HONEST Game of 'Life'
-------------	--------------	--------------------------

http://www.collegehumor.com/article/6774819/honest-game-of-life?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+collegehumor%2Farticles+%28CollegeHumor+Articles%29



MEMORIAL DAY

In case you thought it was national BBQ Day.

A must read about medical care that republicans, democrats, independents, left, right, moderate, and all Americans should be aware of and collectively fight to correct.

"Many Hospitals, Doctors Offer Cash Discount for Medical Bills" by Chad Terhune, *Los Angeles Times*

May 27, 2012, (<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-medical-prices-20120527,0,4627745.story>)

(The lowest price is usually available only if patients don't use their health insurance. In one case, blood tests that cost an insured patient \$415 would have been \$95 in cash.)

A Long Beach hospital charged Jo Ann Snyder \$6,707 for a CT scan of her abdomen and pelvis after colon surgery. But because she had health insurance with Blue Shield of California, her share was much less: \$2,336.

Then Snyder tripped across one of the little-known secrets of healthcare: If she hadn't used her insurance, her bill would have been even lower, just \$1,054.

"I couldn't believe it," said Snyder, a 57-year-old hair salon manager. "I was really upset that I got charged so much and Blue Shield allowed that. You expect them to work harder for you and negotiate a better deal."

Here's what eight hospitals charge for a CT scan of the abdomen if paid in cash, compared with an insurer's negotiated rate and the full price reported to the state in 2011:

Hospital	Cash	Average insurance price	Average 2011 charge
Los Alamitos Medical Center	\$250	\$2,400	\$4,423
Long Beach Memorial	527*	2,400	3,525
Cedars-Sinai	623	2,400	4,995
Lakewood Regional	779	3,200	4,197
Downey Regional	847	2,400	3,691
Keck, USC	882*	2,400	3,651
Hoag, Newport Beach	1,294*	1,600	1,896
St. Francis, Lynwood	N/A**	2,400	3,816

*Excludes physician fees

**Required a doctor's faxed order and patient's annual income

Sources: The hospitals, Blue Shield of California, Office of Statewide Health

Planning and Development. Graphics reporting by **CHAD TERHUNE**

Los Angeles Times

Unknown to most consumers, many hospitals and physicians offer steep discounts for cash-paying patients regardless of income. But there's a catch: Typically you can get the lowest price only if you don't use your health insurance.

That disparity in pricing is coming under fire from people like Snyder, who say it's unfair for patients who pay hefty insurance premiums and deductibles to be penalized with higher rates for treatment.

The difference in price can be stunning. Los Alamitos Medical Center, for instance, lists a CT scan of the abdomen on a state website for \$4,423. Blue Shield says its negotiated rate at the hospital is about \$2,400.

When *The Times* called for a cash price, the hospital said it was \$250.

"It frustrates people because there's no correlation between what things cost and what is charged," said Paul Keckley, executive director of the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions, a research arm of the accounting firm. "It changes the game when healthcare's secrets aren't so secret."

Snyder's experience is hardly unique. In addition to Los Alamitos, *The Times* contacted seven other hospitals across Southern California, and nearly all had similar disparities between what a patient would pay through an insurer and the cash price offered for a common CT, or computed tomography, scan, which provides a more detailed image than an X-ray.

Health insurance still offers substantial value for consumers by providing preventive care at no cost and offering protection from major medical bills that could bankrupt most families.

But cash prices — typically available for hundreds of common outpatient services and tests — have a real appeal to millions of consumers who are on the hook for a growing share of their medical costs as employers and insurers cut back on coverage and push more high-deductible plans.

Some doctors are trying to spread the word about cash prices and they're urging patients to pressure hospitals and insurers to offer a better deal.

David Belk, an internist in Alameda, launched a website about medical costs and speaks to community groups about the huge markups compared with the prevailing cash price.

Belk recently told a group gathered at a seniors center about the vast price difference when he requested routine blood work for a patient last year. A local hospital charged her \$782. Her insurer said that with its discount, she owed only \$415.

"She could have gotten it for \$95 in cash. How does that make sense?" Belk said. "The last thing the insurance companies want you to know is how inexpensive this stuff really is."

For those patients who have insurance, getting the lower price would typically mean withholding that information from the hospital or clinic. Experts warn that doing so, however, means any payments don't apply to customers' annual insurance limits for out-of-pocket spending.

The decision on whether to pay cash or apply the fee toward the deductible will depend on a variety of factors, including the amount of the deductible and whether the person expects to incur more medical bills that year.

The cash discounts evolved over time after hospitals were criticized in recent years for charging the uninsured their highest rates and then hounding them at times with overzealous collection efforts.

New government rules ensued limiting in many cases what hospitals could charge lower-income patients who were footing their own bills. Meantime, hospitals have been trying to boost revenue by encouraging more patients to pay upfront so they can avoid a lengthy and uncertain collections process.

The California Hospital Assn. says that discounted cash prices are intended for the uninsured, not those who have coverage. Jan Emerson-Shea, a vice president at the industry group, said most hospitals offer a separate discount to insured patients who are willing to pay their portion upfront.

"If you have insurance, you are under that insurance plan's negotiated rate with the hospital," she said.

In the view of Robert Berenson, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute and vice chairman of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, big hospitals are exerting their market power to charge ever-increasing rates and major insurers go along with it because they can pass along the costs to employers and consumers. Insurance industry officials say that health plans negotiate the lowest prices they can, but that they also need to include prominent hospitals favored by customers in the network, and those institutions can command higher prices.

Hospital executives say they don't like to charge insured patients more, but say that's a result of the country's broken healthcare system.

At Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, where Snyder got her CT scan, the hospital's chief financial officer said insured patients like her pay more to subsidize the uncompensated care given to the uninsured and low reimbursements for Medicaid patients.

"We end up being forced to charge a premium to health plans to make the books balance," said John Bishop, the hospital's finance chief. "It's a backdoor tax on employers and consumers."

Those higher prices charged by hospitals and other medical providers drove up healthcare spending at double the rate of inflation during the recession even as patients used less medical care, according to a new study by the Health Care Cost Institute.

Snyder, the salon manager, stumbled across the two-tier system accidentally. She has filed suit against her insurer, saying she hopes her case will lead to more disclosure of the price options, and ultimately lower treatment costs for patients.

The Long Beach woman said she sought treatment in 2009 for a pain in her abdomen. First her doctor ordered a CT scan of her abdomen and pelvis at Liberty Pacific Medical Imaging, an independent facility near Long Beach Memorial.

She got approval from Blue Shield, and she paid the negotiated rate of \$660. Snyder underwent surgery on her colon, and her doctor ordered another CT scan in January 2010 because she felt lingering pain.

This time, her surgeon referred her to the hospital's imaging center. Snyder said she assumed her bill would be about the same because it was the identical test. Instead, Blue Shield's rate with Long Beach Memorial was \$3,497 and the insurer told Snyder she owed \$2,336, records show.

Incensed by having to pay nearly four times as much for the second scan, she started searching for an explanation. That's when she discovered that the hospital's cash price was less than half what she owed through her insurance.

In a complaint filed last month in Orange County Superior Court, Snyder accused Blue Shield of unfair business practices, breach of good faith and misrepresentation over her medical bills. The suit seeks class-action status on behalf of other Blue Shield customers.

A spokesman for Blue Shield said the case has no merit and the nonprofit insurer negotiates the most favorable rates it can.

In a court filing, Blue Shield said it "cannot promise or represent that there could not be providers who will charge someone less out-of-pocket cost for a service than she would pay if the Blue Shield contract rate applies."

Snyder said she went back to work last year at a hair salon in Seal Beach, partly to help pay her insurance premiums of \$700 a month.

"It kills me that I'm paying that much in premiums," she said, "and it's better to pay cash out of my own pocket."

Health-policy experts say the growing awareness of cash prices should accelerate the trend toward increased disclosure of all types of medical costs. But entrenched interests are likely to resist.

"The insiders in the healthcare industry don't want to lose control over this information," Keckley said. "But price transparency is inevitable."

20120527-05 12:53 SteveB "Memorial Day Thoughts on National Defense"

"Memorial Day Thoughts on National Defense" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

May 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/memorial-day-thoughts-national-defense-1338127207>)

We can best honor those who have given their lives for this nation in combat by making sure our military might is proportional to what America needs.

The United States spends more on our military than do China, Russia, Britain, France, Japan, and Germany put together.

With the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the cost of fighting wars is projected to drop – but the "base" defense budget (the annual cost of paying troops and buying planes, ships, and tanks – not including the costs of actually fighting wars) is scheduled to rise. The base budget is already about 25 percent higher than it was a decade ago, adjusted for inflation.

One big reason: It's almost impossible to terminate large defense contracts. Defense contractors have cultivated sponsors on Capitol Hill and located their plants and facilities in politically important congressional districts.

Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and others have made spending on national defense into America's biggest jobs program.

So we keep spending billions on Cold War weapons systems like nuclear attack submarines, aircraft carriers, and manned combat fighters that pump up the bottom lines of defense contractors but have nothing to do with 21st-century combat.

For example, the Pentagon says it wants to buy fewer F-35 joint strike fighter planes than had been planned – the single-engine fighter has been plagued by cost overruns and technical glitches – but the contractors and their friends on Capitol Hill promise a fight.

The absence of a budget deal on Capitol Hill is supposed to trigger an automatic across-the-board ten-year cut in the defense budget of nearly \$500 billion, starting January.

But Republicans have vowed to restore the cuts. The House Republican budget cuts everything else — yet brings defense spending back up. Mitt Romney's proposed budget does the same.

Yet even if the scheduled cuts occur, the Pentagon is still projected to spend over \$2.7 trillion over the next ten years.

At the very least, hundreds of billions could be saved without jeopardizing the nation's security by ending weapons systems designed for an age of conventional warfare. We should shrink the F-35 fleet of stealth fighters. Cut the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons, ballistic missile submarines, and intercontinental ballistic missiles. And take a cleaver to the Navy and Air Force budgets. (Most of the action is with the Army, Marines, and Special Forces.)

At a time when Medicare, Medicaid, and non-defense discretionary spending (including most programs for the poor, as well as infrastructure and basic R&D) are in serious jeopardy, Obama and the Democrats should be calling for even more defense cuts.

A reasonable and rational defense budget would be a fitting memorial to those who have given their lives so we may remain free.

[20120527-10](#)

21:54

SteveG

"Reckoning with Torture: Memos & Testimonies from the 'War on Terror'"

Look around, read some of the declassified documents:

<http://reckoningwithtorture.org/>.

<http://www.thequesoqueen.com/2010/10/cheesy-introduction.html>

(Nicole Buegers)



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

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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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