



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #152 — JUNE 4, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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Ferrari Builds a Unique Supercar for 'God'

(posted by Friends of the Middle, June 4, 2012)

SteveB: I usually abhor the excesses of the uber-rich (as Dennis says), but, somehow, in the case of Clapton, I say he deserves it! He is God (as are we all, I suppose...some just more than others...).

http://www.gizmag.com/claptons-ferrari/22716/?utm_source=Gizmag+Subscribers&utm_campaign=fb02218238-UA-2235360-4&utm_medium=email

<http://www.gizmag.com/claptons-ferrari/22716/pictures#4>

"The Ferrari SP12 EC was designed by Clapton in collaboration with Pininfarina and Centro Stile Ferrari." And what a beauty it is! I wanna ride! No, I wanna DRIVE!



LONG LIVE GOD! (In fact, he's looking extremely good for his age...not like Keith, at all! Obviously, a more reasonable, refined gentleman.



SteveG: That is pretty.

SteveB: Jeez! Ain't it! I am jealous.

SteveG: I want to buy one and move to a state without speed limits or maybe Germany is a better place. Not only pretty, but sexy for a car.

SteveB: Yes it is! A work of art! Like a very fast Harley, only more so. Like the finest thoroughbred horse. This car belongs in Germany (maybe only?). I guess God probably has it at his place in England. Montana, as you know has an independent streak. Men not carrying guns and speed limits were unknown until not very long ago. Still, on some proper, desolate stretches of road, you can still really open it up, and that was fun to do sometimes when we lived there. You just can't do it at night and, even in the daytime you have to really keep an eye out, because of the deer...well and buffalo, elk, skunks, cougars, bears, antelope, mountain sheep, and such critters. Many accidents! High insurance state!

SteveG: During July of 1952, my parents sold all they could or wanted to and loaded what was remaining, including my brother and I, into a 1939 Chevrolet with 104,000 miles on it and a two wheel trailer. In August we left for Florida and I started 1st grade in Melbourne, FL. Before Christmas we packed and moved to Las Cruces, NM and then backed up to Abilene, TX. By spring time we were in Brick Chapel and my brother and I were finishing the school year at Bainbridge. In 1968 I basically left Greencastle with all of my belongings for Kentucky and then El Paso returning in August 1970 with all of my belongings in a 1960 Volvo P 1800. On October 1, 2009 Brenda and I left Indiana with all we owned in a Chevrolet Impala. We traveled for 7 months, passing through 21 states – Louisville to Knoxville, through the Carolinas to Florida, back to Indiana through Georgia followed by a train ride on the Empire Building route to Pasco, WA, and then returning to Florida. The final journey was a car ride with all back to Indiana and a ride to Yakima, WA. I think at times I would make a good hermit.

SteveG: You had mentioned in earlier emails, SteveB, that you would like to take a motorcycle ride across country, but would prefer to take a run through South America. Would this setup work? Sidecar to carry gear and supplies in.



MarthaH: Trump you one Lamborghini, SteveB! (see first article, below)

SteveB: Man, that is a beautiful Lamborghini too! Can I have them both? They must each cost \$1,000,000 or so, don't they? I wonder if I'm low or high? And speaking of trumping, MarthaH:



MarthaH: Price: only about \$300,000 with extra costs. :-) Wonder what the insurance costs?????!!!! (see second article below)

Art: Do they gift wrap?

SteveB: Wow! It's a bargain! I'll have to give up bingo though. haha

Ben: Oho! You're a closet solipsist, are you?

SteveB: ???

Ben: Solipsism mandates that yours is the only reality, and that all other entities you encounter are projections of your own reality. "Clapton is God"... I was aboard another train of thought, when I read your message. The concept of solipsism was presented to me very amusingly in a great book, one of my big favorites, Iain M. Banks' *Against a Dark Background*. Very clever: intricate, scathing, and very, very literate.

SteveB: Happy to know about the book! To me solipsism only has to do with the fact that you cannot know anything else is real except the self. Descartes. "Clapton is God" could be Buddhist, or maybe he's the Second Coming, but not in any way a projection of me. If he is, I'm a freaking genius! In fact, wouldn't it be true that to say, "Clapton is a man," or "Clapton is God," would be exactly, equally solipsistic? Everything would equally be a projection and all real meaning, as we know it or think we do, would have ceased to exist.

Pam: Toys for boys.

SteveB: Big boys need their toys too! You girls have makeup and jewelry and clothing styles and...uh uh...homes and children... I had a girlfriend once who had hundreds of pairs of shoes. How many can you wear? But you're right, Pam, women seem much freer of what I call the human "pack rat" instinct that men possess so much more abundantly, I think. There are lots of women collectors, but men can get fanatical about it (and sometimes make a lot of money when they do). I sure wish I had my comic books and baseball cards! I mean, isn't it not just the barrage of commercials? Isn't there is something intrinsically acquisitive in us, especially in we men...women tend to have all they need right there if they have a happy home. Not that men don't want that too. But I just also want just one Ferrari or Lamborghini and, as SteveG pointed out, the proper road to open it up on, and I might add, with the proper companion and a half-drunk bottle of Jack Daniels! (just kidding about the last)

Pam: You guys know I was only pulling your leg. I think you're right, SteveB, we humans do want things. That's why I could never be a Buddhist--all that renunciation is not my cup of herbal tea. I've always had a theory that men are collectors and women are decorators, but there's probably quite a bit of overlap. My husband collects (and how!) old books and early 20th c. American art pottery. He can't get enough of 'em. Shoes? Well, that just makes sense. I heard of a man once who refused to marry his fiance until she got rid of all but a few pairs of her shoes. I cry abuse! I do believe people have "relationships" with their stuff. The thing is to own your stuff and not have it own you. There's something liberating about parting with worn-out or no-longer-loved items and clearing the decks. I like to fill in spaces and if there's a nail or a hook I want to hang something on it, but a periodic purge is good for the soul.



(AFP/Getty Images)

"Lamborghini Supercar Named Top Choice of Super-Rich" by Chris Woodyard, *USA Today*

June 1, 2012, (<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/driveon/post/2012/06/lamborghini-supercar-named-top-choice-of-super-rich/1#.T8upR9VYuRQ>)

The chronicle of the very rich, the *Robb Report*, has chosen its favorite car. And its list includes some of our favorite cars.

It's the magazine's 24th annual "Best of the Best" list, and it includes cars of every persuasion. That's the good news. The bad news is that few of us can afford any of them.

The magazine's favorite sports car, for instance, is one of the pricier supercars out there. It's the Lamborghini Aventador LP 700-4, one of those rockets that hit 60 miles per hour in less than five seconds from a dead stop and hit speeds over 200 miles per hour.

Here's the rest of the list:

Convertibles:	Ferrari 458 Spider
Coupes & GTs:	Maserati GranTurismo MC
Sedans:	BMW M5
Sport-Utility Vehicles:	Range Rover Evoque
Classic Roadster:	Morgan 3 Wheeler
Classic Muscle:	Classic Recreations Shelby G.T.350CR
Executive Transport:	Becker Cadillac Escalade ESV
Off-Road Vehicle:	Icon Bronco

"How Much Will That New Lamborghini Actually Cost You?" by Noah Joseph, autoblog

May 22, 2008, (<http://www.autoblog.com/2008/05/22/how-much-will-that-new-lamborghini-actually-cost-you/>)

Nobody buys a bare-bones Lamborghini unless they're planning on racing it or want to pretend they are. With the Superleggera discontinued and the new lightweight Gallardo yet to rear its head, most buyers of the new LP560-4

will be spec'ing out their Lambos with all the kit. The car retails for \$280,000. Big sticker price, then, but tick the boxes for all those must-have options and a quarter-million will look like a bargain as the price inches closer to a third.

For example, most Lambo buyers opt for the sequential paddle-shift transmission, which Sant'Agata calls e-gear, and which adds another \$12k to the price. Carbon ceramic brakes? You're going to want that stopping power to keep your six-figure supercar out of the trees, won't you? Another \$19k. Throw in sat-nav and up-rated rolling stock and the new Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 is pushing \$322,000. And that's if you can actually get your hands on one without finder's speculation or premiums, not to mention the cost of gas, insurance and the racks of tires you're bound to go through. Better talk to the kids about the benefits of going to college in-state.

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20120601-01	00:07	Charis	"Chagas: Is Tropical Disease Really the New AIDS?"
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"Chagas: Is Tropical Disease Really the New AIDS?" by Dylan Stableford, Yahoo! News

May 31, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/lookout/chagas-tropical-disease-really-aids-145745645.html>)

Chagas, a tropical disease spread by insects, is causing some fresh concern following an editorial—published earlier this week in a medical journal—that called it "the new AIDS of the Americas."

More than 8 million people have been infected by Chagas, most of them in Latin and Central America. But more than 300,000 live in the United States.

The editorial, published by the Public Library of Science's *Neglected Tropical Diseases*, said the spread of the disease is reminiscent of the early years of HIV.

"There are a number of striking similarities between people living with Chagas disease and people living with HIV/AIDS," the authors wrote, "particularly for those with HIV/AIDS who contracted the disease in the first two decades of the HIV/AIDS epidemic."

Both diseases disproportionately affect people living in poverty, both are chronic conditions requiring prolonged, expensive treatment, and as with patients in the first two decades of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, "most patients with Chagas disease do not have access to health care facilities."

Unlike HIV, Chagas is not a sexually-transmitted disease: it's "caused by parasites transmitted to humans by blood-sucking insects," as the *New York Times* put it.

"It likes to bite you on the face," CNN reported. "It's called the kissing bug. When it ingests your blood, it excretes the parasite at the same time. When you wake up and scratch the itch, the parasite moves into the wound and you're infected." [But the whole story is even more gross—see below! --SteveB]

"Gaaah," Cassie Murdoch wrote on Jezebel.com, summing up the sentiment of everyone who read the journal's report.

Chagas, also known as American trypanosomiasis, kills about 20,000 people per year, the journal said.

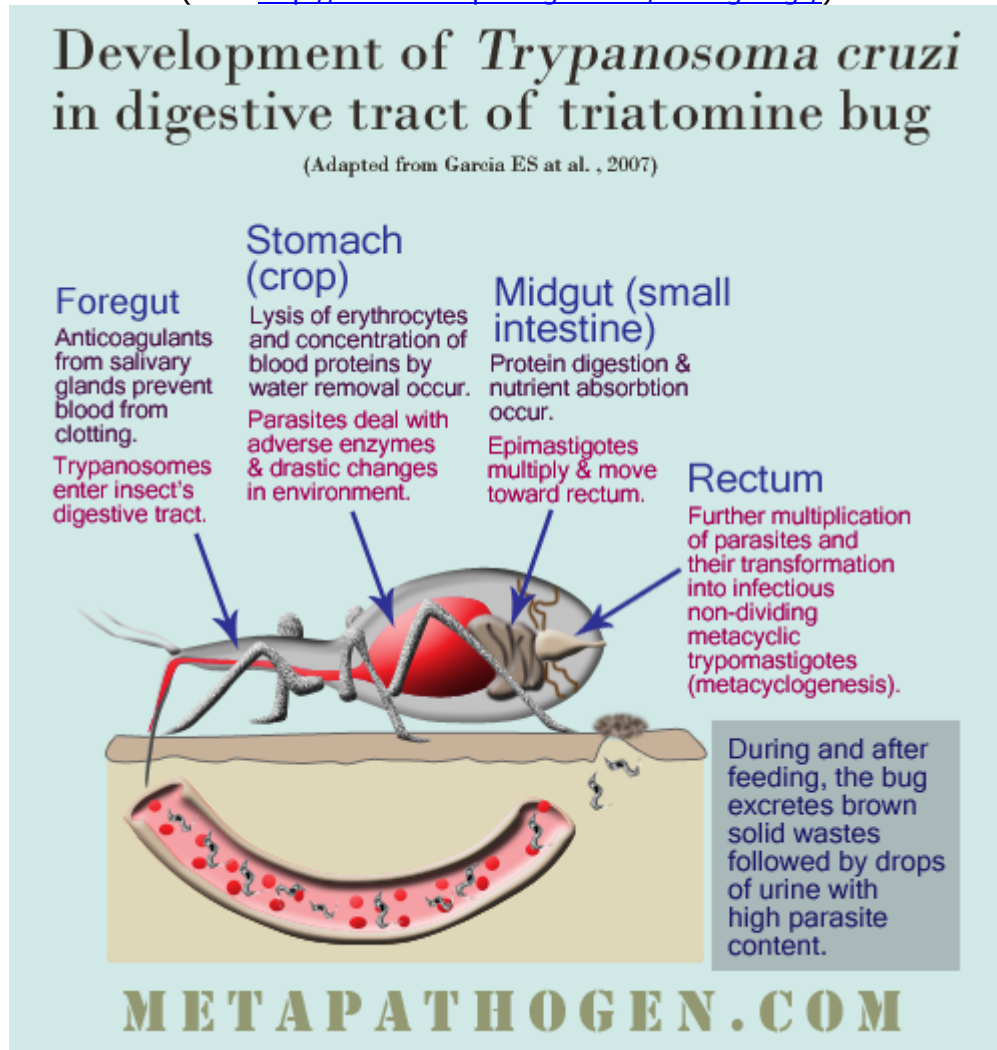
And while just 20 percent of those infected with Chagas develop a life-threatening form of the disease, Chagas is "hard or impossible to cure," the *Times* reports:

The disease can be transmitted from mother to child or by blood transfusion. About a quarter of its victims eventually will develop enlarged hearts or intestines, which can fail or burst, causing sudden death. Treatment involves harsh drugs taken for up to three months and works only if the disease is caught early.

"The problem is once the heart symptoms start, which is the most dreaded complication—the Chagas cardiomyopathy—the medicines no longer work very well," Dr. Peter Hotez, a researcher at Baylor College of Medicine and one of the editorial's authors, told CNN. "Problem No. 2: the medicines are extremely toxic."

And 11 percent of pregnant women in Latin America are infected with Chagas, the journal said.

(from <http://www.metapathogen.com/kissing-bugs/>)



[20120601-02](#) 00:15 Tom "Douche of the Week: Chris "The Real Hero" Hayes from MSNBC"

"Douche of the Week: Chris "The Real Hero" Hayes from MSNBC" posted by Nick, The Rhino Den

May 29, 2012, (<http://rhinoden.rangerup.com/douche-of-the-week-chris-the-real-hero-hayes-from-msnbc/>)

MSNBC's Chris Hayes proclaimed on Memorial Day that he was uncomfortable labeling fallen troops as heroes as he felt the term is used as an excuse to engage in "Unjust Wars".

Somewhere Michael Moore, Bill Maher, and the Westboro Baptist Church just had a Douchegasm.

Forget that Hayes chose the worst possible day imaginable to show off his Brown University education by trying to opine on the definition of the word "Hero". Also, forget that his "brilliance" had a special layer of disrespect as he dropped this knowledge bomb on us directly after speaking to a Marine who holds the honored and difficult

responsibility of delivering the news of the fallen to their families. Let's just look at his base contention: hearing the word "Hero" in relation to fallen members of the military makes people want to go to war.

Well, he does have a point. After all, it's proven in study after study that hearing the words "gay marriage" makes people instantly engage in sex with members of the opposite sex; hearing the words "iambic pentameter" immediately forces us to start dropping some Bill Shakespeare inspired accentual-syllabic verse; and hearing the words "Oxygen Thief Knob Jockey Douchebag" makes us instantly apply for a job at MSNBC.

Oh wait, that's not right. It actually seems like he has no point at all. We elect politicians and they decide when we go to war. The troops actually have absolutely nothing to do with it at all. We just execute policy. So if Hayes wanted to level his vitriol at President Bush for getting us into these wars or President Obama for having us fight one under absurd rules in Afghanistan, then he should have at it. I may agree or disagree with his contentions, but at least there'd be some reason in them.

Instead he opted to just insult our fallen comrades on Memorial Day for not all dying with an appropriate level of heroism. Maybe he could make a little Heroism-o-Meter for his show and every time we lose another brother or sister he can let us all know if he or she was a real hero or not. I think we'd all really appreciate it.

And yes, after the VFW skewered him, he issued a half-hearted "I'm sorry but you know...you guys just didn't understand what I meant" quasi-apology, but the fact remains that he is just one in a growing number of self-styled academic elitist bringers-of-truth who do not respect the service and sacrifice of our military members.

For an outsider to our community, it'd be easy to sit there and say that the military is trying to pat itself on the back. They imagine us all sitting around and telling each other how awesome we are as we drink beer and do manly and offensive things. The truth of the matter is so vastly different. I'm not a hero. Tom's not a hero. 99.9% of you out there wouldn't ever call yourselves heroes. Hell, the guys who have recently been awarded the Medal of Honor do not consider themselves Heroes.

But those who died, those who literally gave everything, who will never see their families, who will never hold their children, who will never again know their partner's embrace – these people are heroes.

They paid a price Mr. Hayes would never be willing to pay for this country. I'm sure he'd have a dozen great-sounding reasons why he wouldn't serve as well: he doesn't trust the leadership, he's more valuable somewhere else, he won't engage in unjust wars, blah, blah, blah. And he will surely have an army of followers supporting him, as they are all over the blogosphere right now, agreeing with his statements. As we speak, they are writing comments citing "facts" that are patently false about our intelligence, our income levels, and our education. They are developing arguments for why Hayes is right, why we are wrong, why anyone who serves isn't worthwhile or has no other options. If you don't believe me, please go look at the comments section under any Hayes article regarding this topic on a non-military blog.

It's easier to do that, to surround yourself with other people who haven't known service, who haven't sacrificed, who'd never dream of putting themselves at risk and convince each other that there is a reason why you're better than other people, than to admit others have experienced something you never will, or God forbid, may be more valuable citizens.

There was a time when men served – when to not serve was deemed cowardice. There was a time when Captain America, the weak little kid who couldn't enlist because he was too small and sickly but never gave up until he could wear the uniform, was our gold standard of manhood, service, and patriotism.

We all know those days are dying if they aren't dead already.

It's been replaced by a small patriotic civilian base who understands the founding principles of our nation and the 0.45%, a shrinking warrior caste that is expected to hold the Fort while much of the rest of the country pushes for their next thrill, next car, next reality TV show, and next pleasure.

And we're good with that, even as we don't fully understand it. We're capitalists. We believe in the American Dream. We believe in Freedom. If that's what Americans want to do, what they want to care about, how they want to live their lives, then they should get after it.

Three things, though, Mr. Hayes:

1. Wisdom comes from experience. It is comical to watch a man such as yourself espouse any understanding of the word "Hero". You've lived a pampered existence handheld by academic and political elites and have never been in harm's way.
2. You, being who you are, surrounded by the people you retain, and coming from where you do, will disregard my first point and assume your experience with television, academia, politics, and "big thinking" is in some way comparable. You will want to argue this point citing events throughout history gleaned from books as your own wisdom. You will want to explain yourself further as you see everything as an argument to be won for your "side". When you get this urge, check the calendar. If it is Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, or the Fourth of July, shut the f*ck up.
3. Quit being such a f*cking douche.

20120601-03	07:42	MarthaH	"First Amendment Rights Can Be Terminated': When Cops, Cameras Don't Mix"
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Having taught government 12 and played devil's advocate, I have had years of musing the topic of the First Amendment. With rights come responsibilities and none more than opening one's mouth!!!! Does my neighbor have the RIGHT to play hip-hop at 3 a.m. with freedom of speech? You betcha! Does the First Amendment mean someone spouting hate really has a right to tell lies?... Besides the rule of law to be debated by both sides and the common decency that tends to be lacking, it is a matter of conscience, however you defend yours. Certainly we see on the news many examples of "free" speech and consequences for all of us. As a civil society, we must add the golden rule and come to the middle to continue to exist as civilized...or we will pass on the results of an immature society to the next generations. Bottom line: All should think before they jaw. My father's favorite saying was "Empty wagons rattle." Well--even he and I disagreed on who was empty and who was full sometimes...but even "just" in 1992 when he was dying, civility was far better than today. Birthers....Nazi...socialist...Obamacare...all for political gain...and that doesn't serve us at all well in increasingly difficult times. Denial and lies are not what the First Amendment is about. The touted Founding Fathers had a history that demanded they give us free speech, but we are all old enough to know that freedom comes at a great cost. Honesty is right up there!

My freedom: your toes: our freedom: my toes. Common sense: self-control of all. Human nature...

This rant is sponsored by the following article I just read:

["First Amendment Rights Can Be Terminated': When Cops, Cameras Don't Mix" by Bob Sullivan, MSNBC](#)

June 1, 2012, (<http://redtape.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/06/01/11998060-first-amendment-rights-can-be-terminated-when-cops-cameras-dont-mix?lite>)

Video from March 2012 shows Chicago police taking members of the media into custody:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDaUD6H6srE>.

"Your First Amendment rights can be terminated," yells the Chicago police officer, caught on video right before arresting two journalists outside a Chicago hospital. One, an NBC News photographer, was led away in handcuffs essentially for taking pictures in a public place. He was released only minutes later, but the damage was done. Chicago cops suffered an embarrassing "caught on tape" moment, and civil rights experts who say cops are unfairly cracking down on citizens with cameras had their iconic moment.

Tales of reporters, protestors and citizen journalists being threatened or arrested for filming law enforcement officials during disputes are on the rise, critics say, with Occupy Wall Street protests a lightning rod for these incidents. The National Press Photographers Association claims it has documented 70 such arrests since September and, in May, called on U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to focus attention on the issue.

"The First Amendment has come under assault on the streets of America," the photography association said in a letter to Holder that was also signed by several other interest groups. "Police have arrested dozens of journalists and activists simply for attempting to document political protests in public spaces."

Such allegations are ironic, given the sharp rise in police surveillance technology, which gives cops vast capabilities to film citizens, said Catherine Crump, an American Civil Liberties Union attorney.

"It is true that Americans are photographed more and more today as they walk around in public spaces," Crump said. "And it is ironic that law enforcement agencies are objecting when the same activity is being used to film their activities. But it's not surprising because there's often a double-standard in this space."

There's always been a tense relationship between cops and cameras, but that relationship is being pushed to the brink now that half of U.S. adults carry smartphones, nearly all of them capable of filming and sharing visuals instantly with the whole world via the Internet. Cops at Occupy Wall Street protests -- such as those at Zucotti Park in New York City -- routinely deal with dozens of amateur photographers shoving cameras in their faces, many of them aggressive. It's not hard to see how the cameras can escalate an already tense situation.

But First Amendment law is clear: Citizens in public spaces have a right to film things they see in plain sight. Courts have repeatedly upheld that right in high-profile cases.

Court rulings sometimes have no bearing during intense situations, however.

"It wouldn't really matter with some police officers if you had an original copy of the Bill of Rights with you," said Mickey Osterreicher, a lawyer for the press photographers association. He said he deals with new cases nearly every day involving photographers who he believes have been wrongly arrested.

"The sign on my desk that reads, 'Bang head here,' is getting worn out," he said.

In April, Connecticut's State Senate passed a law that clearly defined citizens' right to film, but the state's lower house failed to act on the measure. The proposal was introduced by Sen. Majority Leader Martin M. Looney, D-New Haven, after a series of incidents involving cops in that state's capital city. In one, a police officer is caught on camera saying "You don't take pictures of us," before making an arrest. In another incident, 26-year-old Luis Luna was arrested for filming an arrest, and video files on his iPhone were deleted.

"In the past several years, police officers have wrongly arrested members of the public for using video cameras or cell phone cameras," said Adam Joseph, a spokesman for Looney. "In the opinion of a number of senators, there were far too many instances, and that demonstrated the right to videotape needed to be codified and is unfortunately necessary."

The proliferation of devices that can film and share has made this conflict almost inevitable, but there are other causes, too.

"So many mainstream journalists have been laid off and are freelancing," said Osterreicher, the press association lawyer. "Then you have people who consider themselves citizen journalists. They have 'prosumer' devices capable of taking video and still images with the same quality as pro equipment, and can share them with the world, without mainstream media. That's something we've never seen, until recently."

As a result, civil liberties lawyers have beaten a path to courthouses around the country, said Crump.

"We do hear about these more frequently now because everyone walks around with cell phone cameras," she said. "Law enforcement officers sometimes react badly to this, and view it as a threatening act."

The most celebrated case involves Simon Glik, who in 2007 filmed police arresting a homeless man near Boston Commons. Glik was arrested and charged with violating the state's wiretapping law. His case was dismissed, but he then brought a federal civil rights lawsuit against the city. In August 2011, the First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the First Circuit ruled unanimously in his favor.

"That decision is 24 pages of pure gold," Osterreicher said. "The judges talked about the right to record in public. They said the First Amendment right is self-evident. They took judicial notice of the fact that news is as likely to come from someone with a cellphone as anyone. And they talked about the fact that police officers ... should expect to be recorded when out in public."

In March of this year, Boston paid Glik \$170,000 to settle the suit.

"It's really not up to police officers to decide what is and isn't newsworthy," Osterreicher said. "It's a shame Boston had to learn an expensive lesson."

Other rulings have offered a similarly strong endorsement of the right to film, Crump said.

"The First Amendment is strongly protective of right to video and record in public spaces. There's obviously a good reason for that. Sunlight is the best disinfectant," she said. She said court rulings have been so consistent, she's not worried about any weakening of the First Amendment – but she is worried about the more practical side of the problem. Glik's settlement -- most of which paid for his legal fees -- took five years to arrive. In most real-life situations, police officers have wide discretion, and few observers have the time, money or wherewithal to see a First Amendment case through to completion.

Osterreicher, both a former journalist and a reserve police officer, prefers far more practical methods. He travels the country training police officers in First Amendment law. Invited by Chicago police brass, he offered such training in advance of recent NATO meetings in Chicago, which attracted sizable protests. He thinks it worked: To his knowledge, only one photographer was arrested during those protests.

He also offers suggestions tips to would-be cop videographers.

"The First Amendment is not absolute," he said. "It is subject to reasonable time, place and manner restrictions. But the key word is 'reasonable.' Is it reasonable when covering a protest to ask someone to stand back or get on a sidewalk? Absolutely. Is it reasonable to expect the press to go away when there is an order to disperse? No."

One rule that is fairly absolute, he said: While there are situations when police can seize cameras and cellphones, they have no right to destroy data, such as pictures or videos, without consent from the owner. In fact, doing so could be considered destruction of evidence.

The ACLU hosts an information page designed to help amateur photographers understand their rights on its website. But Crump offered a thumbnail sketch of the law that draws an important distinction between public and private property.

"Generally, when you are in a public space where you have the right to be, you have right to photograph anything in plain view, and that includes police who are executing their duties," she said. "But if you are on private property, the property owner gets to set the rules."

But Osterreicher said any advice photographers receive should come with a warning: "It's complicated."

"I can't give you an answer that covers all situations. You're going to have to make an assessment," he said "Is this officer nonchalantly asking you to move? Or is he getting real cranky? A lot of situations can be defused with conversation.... You want it to end well."

[And all the Right can worry about is their precious 2nd Amendment! And that worry is so misplaced. Not the worry expressed in this article, which is all too real. –SteveB]

20120601-07	09:56	Pam	Re: "'First Amendment Rights Can Be Terminated': When Cops, Cameras Don't Mix" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Your comments are great, Martha, and I like the article too. It sounds like Syria or Egypt when police start arresting journalists and photographers. I say, hurray for cell phones. Even the police need to know the whole world is watching, especially the police. I agree about self-regulation as well. Having freedom does not mean running amok. I always feel sorry for celebrities who don't want to be stalked by the paparazzi. Democracy works best when everyone is trustworthy. I think that's one reason cultures that are driven by corruption are so often oppressive. What worries me these days is the expansion of the surveillance state (Big Brother) and malfeasance in high places (Goldman Sachs). Trust means letting go and letting someone else carry the ball, but you have to know they're heading toward the right goal line.

20120601-04	09:17	Art	Re: "Wisconsin Unions See Ranks Drop Ahead of Recall Vote" (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #151)
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Still Dale you have to admit if Walker took away the right to bargain over wages or working conditions, what's the point?

20120601-05	09:27	Pam	Re: "Wisconsin Unions See Ranks Drop Ahead of Recall Vote" (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #151)
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Yes, Dale, I agree that Reagan's mass firing of the air controllers ushered in a new era--not a good one. I've never belonged to a union, so I have no personal experience; I do know that historically unions were instrumental in securing workers' rights and safety at a time when they were being savagely exploited by factory and mine owners. Whether they serve the same purpose, or a different one, now, I can't say, but I think Reagan's action was a mistake, as it began the era of demoting the worker and promoting big money, whether government or corporate. Walker looks to me like a bully, who stirs up (or tries to) animosity toward public employees, who are, in fact, essential to the functioning of of the state, ie., Wisconsin, not "the State."

Also, I would point out that the reason many teachers and workers are leaving their unions is because unions have been emasculated and are no longer able to achieve results. I wouldn't pay dues to an organization that was impotent either, but who's to blame for that impotence? The unions or employers who stonewall? I'm not so sure the workers are displaying their disdain for unions as much as they're simply choosing to keep more money in their pockets at a time when money is short--at least for most of us.

Perhaps the time for unions has passed. We're no longer fighting the battles of the early 20th c. But workers still need a voice and a modicum of power; otherwise, the balance of power will continue to tilt in the direction of big money. (Someone ought to trademark that phrase: "Big Money.") Unions are the only entity I know of that has provided the organization and the "muscle" to speak for workers and negotiate for acceptable contracts. There is an inevitable push-and-pull between labor and capital, and it's important to the health of the nation that that tug-of-war be between relatively equal interest groups. That's why a two-party political system is good--until one side gobbles up all the power. Checks and balances works in many ways, including in education, industry, and finance. Everyone needs to be fighting in the same weight class as his opponents.

Remember the old nursery rhyme: "I do not like thee, Dr. Fell./ The reason why I cannot tell,/ But this I know and know full well,/ I do not like thee, Dr. Fell." I guess when you get right down to it, that's how I feel about Gov. Walker. He looks like a bully and a sycophant to me.

20120601-06	09:38	MarthaH	Re: "Wisconsin Unions See Ranks Drop Ahead of Recall Vote" (reply to Pam, above)
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He who does like a bully is one!

20120601-08	11:34	Art	Video: The Golden Rush
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Our household is almost this bad/good at feeding time:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=0E4P4-jvs2I.

[Hilarious! Especially the straggler. I bet those are happy dogs when they're running together outdoors like that! How many do you have, Art? 9? My kids could never say "golden retriever" when they were little, so they'd just call them "golden doggies" and they are! Thanks. -SteveB]

20120601-09	14:00	Pam	Quote: Anthony Burgess on 'The State'
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Comments by Anthony Burgess in this week's *New Yorker*:

I personally do not trust politicians or statesmen--very few writers and artists do--and consider that men enter politics for the negative reason that they have little talent for anything else and the positive reason that power is always delicious.....the state has been responsible for most of our nightmares. No single individual or free association of individuals could have achieved the repressive techniques of Nazi Germany, the slaughter of intensive bombing, or the atomic bomb.....The modern state, whether in a totalitarian or a democratic country, has far too much power, and we are probably right to fear it. —Anthony Burgess, 1973

I do think there is such a thing as good politics and bad politics, but it's a fight to the death to see which will prevail.

20120601-10	14:02	SteveB	"Can Apple Start Making Their Product in the U.S. Again? The Answer Is YES."
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"Can Apple Start Making Their Product in the U.S. Again? The Answer Is YES." by Steven Capozzola, NationofChange

June 1, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/can-apple-start-making-their-product-us-again-answer-yes-1338530120>)

Last fall, we pondered whether Apple could start building iPads and iPhones in the U.S. Our conclusion was, YES, Apple could indeed start assembling products in the U.S.

Some key points:

1. Labor costs are not the key factor.

As Michele Nash-Hoff (President of Electro Fab) and Curtis Ellis (of the American Jobs Alliance) have explained, labor is a small part (probably less than 10 percent) of Apple's cost of manufacturing, far less than capital equipment, and components. With wages rising in China, and U.S. manufacturing workers actually being far more productive, the labor cost differential become very small.

2. Apple is the rare product that competes on quality, not price.

While it may or may not cost more in total to assemble iPads in the U.S., Apple is not competing against dozens of similar products. And so, retail price is not the key criteria because consumers are already buying iPads due to their unique quality and attributes, not "low sticker price."

3. Thanks to high productivity and top quality, U.S. manufacturing offers its own cost-savings and benefits.

U.S. manufacturers are recognized as being the most productive, efficient, and safe in the world. A state-of-the-art U.S. manufacturing facility would offer its own cost savings by virtue of its incredibly productive and streamlined assembly processes.

Okay, so why are we analyzing the Apple production process today? Because Apple CEO Tim Cook was quoted this week at an All Things Digital Conference as saying he'd like to see his company make more components, and possibly assemble them, in the U.S.

Specifically, Cook said:

There are things that can be done in the U.S., not just for the U.S. market but that can be exported for the world...On the assembly piece, could that be done in the U.S.? I hope so, again, one day.

There are stumbling blocks to a possible reshoring of Apple products, though. Andrew Nusca at Between the Lines says that American companies can always "go overseas for greater flexibility, lower price and sheer speed." He also cites the potential shortage of skilled high-tech workers in the U.S. who can tackle the logistical and competitive needs of such competitive, state-of-the-art production.

But these are battles worth fighting. For starters, a high-tech facility COULD produce in the manner required by Apple for rapid market response. And as for worker skills needed in such a high-tech industry, the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM) has repeatedly urged that the U.S. needs to prioritize such training in order to compete successfully in the 21st Century.

All of this is a battle worth fighting, and a very necessary one if the U.S. is to maintain a solid middle class economy. Apple can do it, and so can the U.S. The question is who will take the big step first?

20120601-11	15:58	Art	"Koch Brothers Plan to Funnel Tens of Millions to Conservative Allies to Influence 2012 Elections"
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Don't know about you, but I keep asking myself why are these supposedly hard nosed businessmen so anxious to pour hundreds of \$ millions into an election unless they expect a substantial return on their investment. What exactly is the return they expect? Food for thought.

"Koch Brothers Plan to Funnel Tens of Millions to Conservative Allies to Influence 2012 Elections" by Peter H. Stone, Huffington Post

June 1, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/01/koch-brothers-network_n_1560596.html)

(WASHINGTON) As they strategize to spend as much as \$400 million to defeat President Barack Obama and help Republicans win control of Congress, the billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch and an allied network of wealthy conservatives are looking to funnel tens of millions into conservative-leaning groups for television ads and get-out-the-vote drives.

Three GOP fundraisers familiar with the plans of the billionaire Koch brothers and their rich friends told The Huffington Post that their donor network is expected to funnel this year tens of millions into conservative groups, including the National Rifle Association, Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform, the National Right to Life Committee, Ralph Reed's Faith and Freedom Coalition, the 60 Plus Association and the American Future Fund. By spreading their wealth throughout the conservative ecosystem, the Kochs can exploit trusted brands with

passionate followings that reach beyond the Tea Party base. These three sources all requested anonymity since they are not authorized to speak about the Koch donor network's plans.

The billionaire brothers, working with the Koch-founded Americans for Prosperity, aim to enlist these groups' grassroots networks to mount a national get-out-the-vote drive and ad blitz that could prove crucial to GOP fortunes in battleground states.

While they have not always worked in sync, representatives of the Kochs have been meeting regularly this year with leaders of other big GOP allies, notably the Karl Rove-backed super PAC American Crossroads and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. These elite planning meetings involving Koch representatives take place in addition to larger meetings hosted periodically by American Crossroads with a dozen or so GOP groups since the 2010 midterm elections.

If the Koch-backed efforts hit their fundraising goals this year, they will rival -- and perhaps surpass -- the target of \$300 million that American Crossroads and its affiliated nonprofit Crossroads GPS have set for their electoral drives. The two Crossroads groups raised \$71 million in 2010 after being set up by GOP strategists Rove and Ed Gillespie in the wake of high court rulings that opened the floodgates for unlimited spending by corporations, individuals and unions on advertising and other electoral tools that directly advocate for candidates.

The \$400 million fundraising target of the Kochs and their mega-donor associates was first reported by Politico on Wednesday and confirmed by the three GOP fundraisers who spoke to HuffPost over the past several weeks.

To rev up the Koch-led fundraising machinery, a few dozen rich conservatives and consultants from Wall Street, Las Vegas, California and other locales flew into Palm Beach one Friday early this spring for a conference organized by the billionaire brothers. The event featured detailed election strategy talks by, among others, Tim Phillips, the president of the Koch-backed nonprofit Americans for Prosperity; since late last year the group has announced about \$15 million in TV ad buys blasting White House policies on energy and other issues.

Another prominent guest in Palm Beach this spring was Ken Cuccinelli, Virginia's attorney general. A major player in court challenges to the constitutionality of President Obama's health care reforms, Cuccinelli served as a featured speaker.

The Florida event took place at the ritzy PGA National Resort & Spa and included a dinner at David Koch's Palm Beach mansion, according to two of the three fundraisers who spoke to The Huffington Post and participated in the day. The third fundraiser heard details of the Koch electoral spending plans from one of the brothers. The Koch brothers themselves are expected to chip in at least \$60 million and perhaps as much as \$100 million toward the \$400 million goal, say these three fundraisers.

The Kochs, who have long hosted twice-a-year conferences drawing scores of wealthy conservatives -- typically in January and the summer -- have worked hard to maintain secrecy about their contributions and donations by their allies. The Palm Beach event served as an extra fundraising and strategy session this year.

A Charles Koch speech at a Koch-sponsored conference in the summer of 2011 identified more than two dozen \$1 million-plus donors over a year's time. Charles Koch cited, among others, mutual fund tycoon Foster Friess, Amway cofounder Richard DeVos and Oklahoma oil and gas mogul Harold Hamm as patrons who gave at least \$1 million.

Two other \$1 million donors mentioned by Charles Koch also had a presence in Palm Beach: Paul Singer, who runs the giant hedge fund Elliott Management, attended the spring event, along with a consultant for Charles Schwab of the eponymous investment firm.

A hefty share of the donor network's money will be directed to 10 battleground states in the presidential race, including Florida, Ohio and Virginia. These states and a few others also have high-stakes Senate races under way and the GOP is hoping to win enough seats to regain the majority.

The Koch donor network's strategy to funnel large sums to powerful allies mirrors what Crossroads GPS has already done by shelling out millions to allies such as the NRA, Americans for Tax Reform, the National Right to Life

Committee, according to these three GOP fundraisers. In April, Crossroads GPS disclosed that it gave millions to conservative outfits in its IRS filing of required 990 tax forms, covering its first 18 months of operations. Neither Crossroads GPS nor the Koch favorite Americans for Prosperity are required to disclose the identity of their donors because of their nonprofit tax status.

The NRA's electoral efforts this year seem to offer an example of how the Kochs' strategy can work, according to the three GOP fundraisers. The NRA, they say, has already received a hefty cash infusion from the Koch donor network this year, enabling the 4 million-member pro-gun behemoth to expand voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives.

The NRA hired about two dozen "campaign field representatives" to coordinate NRA ground operations and voter registration work in a dozen battleground states, including Florida, Ohio and Virginia, Chris Cox, the NRA's top lobbyist told me for a Center for Public Integrity article. The drive will target "gun shows and retailers" and includes a six-figure TV ad blitz that launched in February, Cox said.

This is all part of the NRA's multimillion dollar "Trigger the Vote" registration drive, expected to be its largest ever, Cox said. "This election is going to be won on the ground," Cox stressed, adding that millions of gun owners are not registered to vote. Most of the NRA voter registration campaign is being funded through its Freedom Action Foundation, a nonprofit not required to disclose donors.

Cox declined to discuss large donors but said that the foundation is mostly financed by small donors; corporate filings have revealed, however, that Texas energy magnate Clayton Williams donated \$1 million in 2010. Williams told a Houston luncheon last summer that he would pony up another million for the foundation again this election year, according to two luncheon attendees.

The increased emphasis by the Kochs and their allied super donors on underwriting ground operations could prove crucial in battleground states where Democrats have often had an edge in getting out the vote because of well-funded labor efforts. The AFL-CIO and other unions, for example, plan to spend \$400 million on federal, state and local races this year. But Democratic super PACs and nonprofits might raise only \$100 million to \$150 million this election, say Democratic operatives, and are lagging behind their GOP rivals in raising money.

In the near term, the Koch brothers' network, along with Americans for Prosperity and its allied foundation, is flexing its financial muscle to help Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker win a June 5 recall election. David Koch sees a hero in Walker, who galvanized liberal opposition with his anti-union policies and cuts to public services.

Several months ago, Koch told the *Palm Beach Post* that Scott Walker is "an impressive guy and very courageous" in taking on public unions. Americans for Prosperity's foundation spent \$700,000 earlier this year on ads defending Walker's campaign against collective-bargaining "abuses." A Wisconsin Americans for Prosperity chapter launched a 10-city bus tour late last month that it bills simply as educational.

20120601-13	18:30	MarthaH	FactCheck.org Hot Topics: "Don't Get Spun by Internet Rumors"
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Clearing thing up...

"Don't get Spun by Internet Rumors" (<http://www.factcheck.org/hot-topics/>)

Just because you read it on somebody's blog or in an email from a friend or relative doesn't mean it's true. It's probably not, as we advised in our special report "Is this chain e-mail true?" back on March 18, 2008. On this page we feature a list of the false or misleading viral rumors we're asked about most often, and a brief summary of the facts. But click on the links [follow link, above] to read the full articles. There is a lot more detail in each answer.

Did President Obama secretly sign a law that makes it a crime to protest against him or ask him a question he doesn't like?

No. He openly announced the signing of a bill overwhelmingly passed by Congress that slightly revises a 1971 law against trespassing into areas under Secret Service protection. May 7, 2012

Is the National Association of Realtors lobbying to repeal a 3.8 percent “sales tax” on homes before it takes effect in 2013?

No. There’s no such “sales tax” in the new health care law. And Medicare premiums aren’t going to \$247 either. But these virulent falsehoods keep going around. April 30, 2012

Does the new health care law impose a 3.8 percent tax on profits from selling your home?

No, with very few exceptions. The first \$250,000 in profit from the sale of a personal residence won’t be taxed, or the first \$500,000 in the case of a married couple. The tax falls on relatively few — those with high incomes from other sources. April 22, 2010

Will the new health care law raise Medicare’s basic monthly premium to \$247 in 2014, as a viral message claims?

No, Medicare officials project the basic premium will be less than half that. But the law will eventually cause 14 percent of seniors with incomes over \$85,000 a year (\$170,000 for couples) to pay higher “income-related” premiums, up from 5 percent currently. April 1, 2011

Is “Obama’s finance team” recommending a 1 percent tax on all bank transactions, as a chain e-mail claims?

No. This idea was first floated in 2004 by one House member, who says it would replace the federal income tax and eliminate the national debt. So far it has gone nowhere. Sept. 8, 2010

Are three former Fannie Mae executives “economic advisers” to Obama?

No, claims made in a chain e-mail are false. Jim Johnson advised on non-economic matters but quit after a week. Franklin Raines says he took a “couple of calls” but was never an adviser. We find no evidence Tim Howard ever had a connection to the Obama campaign. Oct. 9, 2008

Will Muslim Americans be exempt from the mandate to have health insurance?

The Muslim faith does not forbid purchasing health insurance, and no Muslim group has ever been considered exempt under the definitions used in the health care law. May 20, 2010

Is President Obama giving away several Alaskan islands to Russia?

No. The U.S. has never claimed ownership of the islands identified in viral emails and websites. They lie far closer to the coast of Siberia than to Alaska. March 27, 2012

Is President Obama responsible for Chinese companies building U.S. bridges with stimulus money, as reported by ABC News?

No. A viral email distorts an ABC News report. California officials hired a Chinese contractor and rejected federal money to avoid federal “Buy American” laws. Feb. 17, 2012

How much has the federal debt gone up under Obama?

During his first three years in office, it rose \$4.7 trillion, an increase of 45 percent. Partisan graphics circulating via email and Facebook are both incorrect. Feb. 2, 2012

Did Obama issue a policy that “no U.S. serviceman can speak at any faith-based public event”?

This claim in a chain e-mail is false. Army officials say there has been no change in policy regarding “faith-based” events. And the event the e-mail refers to wasn’t a “faith-based” one. June 10, 2009

Does Obama plan to deny emergency brain surgery for patients over 70?

No. A man claiming on a radio talk show to be a brain surgeon lied about that, and about a meeting of two associations of neurological surgeons, those associations say. Jan. 5, 2012

Is it true that members of Congress, their staffers and their family members do not have to pay back their student loans?

Not true. Some congressional employees are eligible to have up to \$60,000 of student loans repaid after several years — just like other federal workers. But that’s not the case for members of Congress or their families. Jan. 6, 2011

Did Obama order the military to drop the words “on behalf of the president of the United States” when presenting the flag to the next of kin at funerals?

A chain email that makes that claim is wrong. Spokespersons for the Defense Department and the armed forces say that no change was ordered. Oct. 10, 2011

Is President Obama honoring Jane Fonda as one of the women of the century?

No. That was done 11 years ago by Barbara Walters of ABC News. Nov. 22, 2010

Did President Obama have his dog, Bo, flown to Maine in his own private jet for the family vacation?

No. The family and staff took two small jets because the airport couldn’t accommodate the usual presidential plane. Bo flew with several staffers. Sept. 16, 2010

Is it true that nobody remembers Obama attending Columbia University?

At least one of his classmates remembers him well, and the university proudly claims Obama. Feb. 16, 2010

Does George Soros own the company buying many firms that make guns and ammunition?

No. Contrary to a fanciful claim made in a viral email, the Freedom Group is not linked to the liberal billionaire. The National Rifle Association says the real owners are “strong supporters” of gun rights. Oct. 21, 2011

Was President Obama’s tour bus made in Canada?

The shell of the \$1.1 million bus came from Canada, but it was converted for the Secret Service by a company in Tennessee. Aug. 25, 2011

Is a chart claiming to show the “top 20 raises” to White House staffers accurate?

It’s misleading. The salary increases for 19 of the 21 employees listed resulted from promotions. Average pay for White House staff actually declined. Aug. 4, 2011

Is President Obama flying on Air Force One more than other presidents did? Is he being accompanied by more people on international trips?

Two chain e-mails suggesting that the president's travel habits are more excessive than his predecessors are off base. July 8, 2011

Is it true that boycotting companies that import foreign oil will "avoid putting more money into the coffers" of foreign countries?

No. There is no way to know for sure whether your local station is selling gasoline from imported or domestic oil. Besides, U.S. oil demand is twice its domestic supply. March 25, 2011

What about the "Congressional Reform Act of 2011"?

A viral e-mail calls for fixing some abuses and excesses that don't exist, repeating misinformed claims that we've addressed before. March 18, 2011

Is President Obama using tax dollars to rebuild mosques around the world?

Yes — and to rebuild historic churches and temples as well. The State Department's program to preserve overseas cultural landmarks started under President Bush in 2001. March 10, 2011

Do statistics in a chain e-mail give an accurate "report card" of President Obama's first two years?

Not exactly. The author made many minor mistakes and some major omissions in describing the terrible economic conditions he attributes to the president. Feb. 25, 2011

Does Illinois pay a grandmother \$1,500 per month per child to be the foster parent to her eight grandchildren?

No. State officials have no record of such a case, and state law would not allow it. This second-hand story spread by a Danville urologist isn't true. Dec. 10, 2010

Has President Obama canceled the May 6 National Day of Prayer?

No. This widely circulated falsehood echoes similar claims made last year when the president issued a pro-prayer-day proclamation but didn't hold White House services as President Bush had done. April 29, 2010

Was Michelle Obama's brother's job saved with money from the stimulus act?

This chain email is a hoax. It makes a ridiculously false claim about Craig Robinson, who is the head coach of Oregon State University's men's basketball team and the first lady's older brother. March 22, 2010

Did Congress raise its own pay for 2010 while voting to deny an increase for Social Security recipients?

No. A chain e-mail calling for "retribution" in the fall elections makes false claims and uses fabricated figures. Jan. 8, 2010

Did Obama loan \$2 billion to Brazil's oil company to benefit China and George Soros?

The president had nothing to do with the loan, which the Export-Import Bank approved for Brazil to buy U.S.-made equipment and services. Sept. 18, 2009

Is there any truth in the e-mail claiming to give "a few highlights from the first 500 pages of the Healthcare bill"?

Barely. We examined all 48 claims, finding 26 of them to be false and 18 to be misleading, only partly true or half true. Only four are accurate. Aug. 28, 2009

Is the ACLU suing to have cross-shaped headstones removed from military cemeteries?

The ACLU has filed no such suit, and it hasn't sued to "end prayer from the military" either. July 5, 2009

Did Obama accuse veterans of "selfishness" and whining? Would he have forced them to "pay for their war injuries"?

This chain e-mail contains fabricated quotes and misrepresents a budget idea that the White House scrapped. May 12, 2009

Has a "smoking gun" been found to prove Obama was not born a U.S. citizen? Did he attend Occidental College on a scholarship for foreign students?

This chain e-mail is a transparent April Fools' Day hoax. It fabricates an AP news story about a nonexistent group, and makes false claims about Obama and the Fulbright program. May 7, 2009

Is Congress about to give Social Security to illegal immigrants?

No. Congress hasn't voted on any measure to pay benefits to illegal immigrants, and has no plans for any such vote. March 1, 2009 (This long-standing falsehood was bandied about back in 2006 and again during the 2008 presidential election.)

What's the deal with Prof. Joseph Olson's "unreported stats" from the 2008 election?

This chain e-mail is a hoax. The "statistics" are grossly incorrect, and Olson says he didn't write it. Jan. 5, 2009

Was Obama born in the U.S.A.?

Yes. We give you the truth about Obama's birth certificate. Aug. 21, 2008 Updated Nov. 1, 2008

Is there a connection between FactCheck.org and Barack Obama or Bill Ayers?

None, aside from benefiting at different times from the charity of the late publisher Walter Annenberg. We are a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania and get funding from the Annenberg Foundation, created by Walter Annenberg in 1989. Ayers was one of three Chicago educators who applied for a grant from the Annenberg Foundation in 1995, which was one of 5,200 grants the foundation made during its first 15 years. That \$49 million grant, plus additional funds raised locally, funded the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, which sought to improve Chicago public schools. Obama was selected by Chicago officials (not Ayers) to chair the board set up to administer Annenberg Challenge funds, and he headed it until 1999. FactCheck.org came into being in late 2003. For other details see our Oct. 10, 2008, article about Obama and Ayers, which includes a sidebar: "FactCheck.org and the 'Annenberg Challenge.'"

20120601-12	16:57	SteveG	Re: 'Natural' Will Mean 'Old-Fashioned' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #151)
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I will not knowingly eat food that is radiated, cloned, genetically made or grown in China. It is getting difficult especially with hybrid seeds and the corporations monopolizing food production. Watch the 2008 documentary Food, Inc. Doubt that it has gotten better in the past 4 years

20120602-01	07:03	SteveB	Re: 'Natural' Will Mean 'Old-Fashioned' (reply to SteveG, above)
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Food from China is the most stinking idea in the world. Not for me! I actually think the irradiation is an excellent idea and could save many lives with zero risk. All it does is kill germs, like heat. It's like climate change, just science. And only science has a chance of helping keep at least some of these too many billions of people fed.

Maybe you know, already, the world would be in very deep trouble if it were not for genetically modified rice that was introduced many years ago in the East, before gene splicing, so it may not be as GMO as what's produced now.

[20120602-02](#) 10:01 SteveG Re: 'Natural' Will Mean 'Old-Fashioned' (reply to SteveB, above)

From my standpoint on the radiation: back in the early 50's we were the last car through White Sands, New Mexico before a bomb testing; late 50's I had a series of 5 radiation therapies to shrink a tumor (at that time they told me I could never have any more radiation); since then I have had numerous x-rays, MRI's, etc. From this history I am paranoid about radiation. Isn't another aspect of radiation to ripen the food so it can be picked early and shipped?

Another good reason not to eat rice. Just kidding. It would probably be easier to name the veggies and fruits that have not been genetically altered.

[20120602-04](#) 11:12 SteveB Re: 'Natural' Will Mean 'Old-Fashioned' (reply to SteveG, above)

I think you're right about both thing, Steve. And I don't blame you for being "paranoid". Fortunately, irradiating food leaves behind no residual radiation. Pretty easy science compared to what Monsanto tries to do.

I'm actually pretty pi*sed about food right now, because my vet (seriously) just diagnosed me with a liver problem, and I have to stop eating most fat. Now, not that I shouldn't do that, even just for my weight, but I think I'm the world's biggest lover of fat food—pizza, dripping hamburgers, hot dogs, French fries, cookies, butter, bacon, chocolate, cream...all the best things in life. Ouch!!! Pass me the GMO corn, please?

[20120602-03](#) 11:04 SteveB Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #151)

I just wanted to add one more thought to this thread while we're on it.

Public funding of elections scares the hell out of me because it opens the flood gates for all sorts of 3rd and 20th parties. The government would never be able to legally discriminate against any, and the government could not be as discriminating in their contributions as individuals or even corporations. Ron Paul or Adolf Hitler would be exactly in the same class as President Obama or Jesus. The government's hands would be totally tied if the law ere effective (not like we have tried in the past). Maybe you wouldn't be subject to all those super-PAC commercials, instead, you'd be subject to Zimmerman running for governor of Florida, etc., etc., etc., with equal government funding of whatever they choose to do or say.

Now, maybe this would be a good thing. The present situation doesn't seem to be working, except perhaps to slow the dismantling of all government services but those to the upper class.

The two-party system has served us well in the past. Forcing a change would be a radical experiment that I, for one, am not willing to embark upon without very sound reasoning and evidence that it could work. Hard or impossible to provide. Therefore, I'm totally against it. WE MUST CONTROL THE MONEY! Easy to do, actually, except with our present, totally corrupt government.

OK, I'm on record. Have a great weekend.

[20120602-05](#) 11:14 SteveG Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to SteveB, above)

I believe it was the first George W. (Washington) that warned us of the evils of a 2 party system. There needs to be a balance in funding and that can only be in the hands of one entity. What we are doing isn't working and while we are at it how about doing away with the electoral college?

[20120602-06](#) 11:29 SteveB Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to SteveG, above)

I say pitch it, except then we're messing with the Constitution, which I'm also conservative about.

[20120602-09](#) 11:58 SteveG Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to SteveB, above)

If the electoral college is gone the focus becomes each individual vote and not the block of votes one state or another may be able to produce. I agree in regards to the constitution, but we know more about the presidential candidates than we do about the people running for city council, county offices, state offices, etc. 2 times the popular vote has been for a candidate that was defeated by the electoral college – where is the democracy in that?

[20120602-11](#) 13:30 SteveB Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to SteveG, above)

I agree. It just seems like we're so far away from constitutional reform compared to legal reform, though that constitutional convention I and others have previously proposed for fixing the whole campaign, election, corruption mess in one fell swoop might have a better chance than congress doing something...ever!

You hear almost no one in either party talking about this stuff. And, just like with the flat tax or tax cuts or deregulation or de-unionization, whenever the Republicans propose a solution—like term limits—you can be assured that they're pretty sure it's something that will work in their favor and fit into their agenda of taking the country down to chaos, or whatever their "vision" of the future really is.

[20120602-12](#) 14:48 SteveG Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to SteveB, above)

The republican vision of the future of America is America in 1890: white mail landowners control all, taxes are low, no social services, etc.

If we had gone on popular vote the 43rd president would have been Gore – think that would have made a difference?

I am for a constitutional convention that is fairly composed and works toward the betterment of the country- won't happen this century

[20120602-07](#) 11:35 SteveB Gomez Again

If you have not already, I insist that you go to this website immediately and download the free live album #3 and listen to it loud like we used to!!!!

<http://www.gomeztheband.com/liveseries/>

Do it now! Believe me, my friends, you will be very happy indeed that you did!

[20120602-08](#) 11:52 David Re: Gomez Again (reply to SteveB, above)

I've been a Gomez fan for quite some time. Satellite radio is the best.

Now I'm compiling a list of durable/non-durable bands from our era.

Durable: Pink Floyd, The Band

Non-Durable: Mick Jagger

[20120602-10](#) 13:23 SteveB Re: Gomez Again (reply to David, above)

Off the top of my head...

Led Zeppelin...much more durable than I gave them credit for at the time. One of the very best when not screaming.

The Doors – I think, incredibly durable.

Agree completely about the Band!

The Who still sounds awfully good to me. Mostly, I can't listen to the Beatles.

LYNYRD SKYNYRD!!! Better all the time.

Little Feat still sounds wonderful! I like Carlos Santana now better than I used to at the time.

The Grateful Dead and Jimi Hendrix – extreme durability.

Much of the soul stuff sounds very fresh and undated to me...Otis, etc. Also, Bob Marley.

And, of course, most Clapton. Much blues and jazz.

Not so durable: Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Joni Mitchell, the Guess Who, the Byrds, Sheb Wooley, whoever made the Macarena...

[20120602-13](#) 15:36 David Re: Gomez Again (reply to SteveB, above)

If you can't listen to the Beatles, try George Martin's remix *Love*.

[20120602-14](#) 16:06 SteveB Re: Gomez Again (reply to David, above) & The Knack

I will. Here's one I think has stood the test of time, strangely:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbr60I0u2Ng&ob=av3e>.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1T71PGd-J0> (live).

I always thought he was saying "gimme some tight sharona" but it sounds more like "gimme some time, Sharona" in the live version. Damn, I like my "wrong" lyrics better, as usual.



Delicious. Don't you just love it when someone is so irony challenged??

"Editorial: John Edwards' Trial Leaves Only Losers" by Chuck Burton, AP/USA Today

Oct. 31, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/story/2012-05-31/john-edwards-trial-losers/55320438/1>)

Thursday's messy ending of John Edwards' criminal trial seemed somehow fitting for a prosecution that was a stretch to begin with and a defendant whose political career was over no matter what the jury decided.

While Edwards thanked the jury, which acquitted him on one count of violating campaign finance laws and deadlocked on five other counts, there was no victory to celebrate. Not for anyone.

Sure, Edwards got off, apparently after defense attorneys convinced jurors he was a liar, a cad and a sinner — but not a criminal. Was there anybody who didn't already know what he was? He cheated on his wife, fathered a child with another woman, had an aide falsely claim paternity, and lied about it on national TV, all while his wife was dying of cancer. The nation is fortunate that someone of such flawed character never made it to the White House.

The Justice Department is also a loser. It fought to a draw on five counts after spending years — and who knows how much valuable time and tax dollars — investigating Edwards, five weeks trying him and nine days waiting for a verdict. A retrial is unlikely.

Perhaps the public is the biggest loser. It remains stuck with a campaign finance system as worthless and hypocritical as the one Edwards was charged with offending.

Prosecutors accused Edwards of taking about \$1 million in illegal campaign donations from two admirers, the bulk of it from heiress Rachel "Bunny" Mellon, whose funds came to be known as "Bunny money." It was used to hide his mistress to keep his 2008 presidential campaign afloat. At the time, campaign donations were limited to \$2,300 per candidate per election.

Illegal or not, the scheme certainly qualified as sleazy. But today, mega-donations are an accepted part of running for president. Donors can give millions of dollars as long as they keep up the fiction that the money is going to an "independent" super PAC.

Thursday's verdict is irrelevant to Edwards' future in politics. He has none. **Fixing the corrupt campaign finance system is a different story.**

20120603-02 07:44 Art Re: "John Edwards' Trial Leaves Only Losers" (reply to MarthaH, above)

How sad but true. For whatever reason I always intently disliked the guy. I felt he crippled the medical system of North Carolina just for his own gain.

20120603-03 08:13 SteveB Fw: Obama-Biden 2012 Action: Chip In \$3, Please!

from Obama for America:

Can you even imagine how much a billion dollars can buy in negative ads and smear campaigns?

I can't -- and I work in this business. It's simply a level of outside spending unprecedented in American politics, but a number of shadowy conservative groups are determined to go there. The only reason some of them exist is to defeat Barack Obama.

So the question is: Will Mitt Romney, the Republican Party, and their vast web of special-interest allies be able to buy this election?

That's for you to decide.

Your donation today -- before the midnight deadline -- will build the ground game we need to be able to beat their air game.

Chip in \$3 or whatever you can today:

<https://donate.barackobama.com/Midnight-Your-Time>.

Thanks, Julianna Smoot, Deputy Campaign Manager, Obama for America

20120603-04 09:01 MarthaH "Spelling Disaster: Romney Is Butt of Jokes After 'Amercia' App Gaffe"

"Spelling Disaster: Romney Is Butt of Jokes After 'Amercia' App Gaffe" by AFP

June 1, 2012, (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Spelling-disaster-Romney-is-butt-of-jokes-after-Amercia-app-gaffe/articleshow/13696745.cms>)

(WASHINGTON) White House hopeful Mitt Romney has meticulously spelled out his vision for a better America while on the campaign trail this year. But in his new mobile app? Not so much.

The 'With Mitt' application for the iPhone allows users to express support for the recently anointed Republican flagbearer by personalizing a photo with an overlaid Romney slogan. Trouble is, one of the slogans has a howler of a spelling mistake: 'A Better Amercia'.

Members of the proofreading public recently made the discovery and it went viral on microblogging site Twitter late on Tuesday, with people mockingly tweeting photos showing the 'Amercia' message.

"Some poor app designer is getting strapped in a cage on the top of a car and driven across country tonight. #amercia," one user tweeted, in a reference to Romney's hard-to-live-down decision years ago to strap the family dog in its carrier on the roof of the car during a vacation.

On Wednesday, the app, promoted by official campaign website mittromney.com, had yet to be corrected, and new downloads contained the spelling error. "Mistakes happen," Romney campaign spokeswoman Andrea Saul said on MSNBC.

"I don't think any voter cares about a typo at the end of the day," she said, adding that an update had been sent to Apple and was awaiting final approval - and presumably one last spellcheck.

[20120603-07](#) 09:25 Art Re: "Spelling Disaster..." (reply to MarthaH, above)

You know, people make mistakes. It is just that they are so "holier than thou" about it.

[20120603-06](#) 09:20 SteveB Good Links

I want to remember to get these into the website soon (<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/links.html>), but I'll post them here for now:

<http://www.petitionspot.com/>

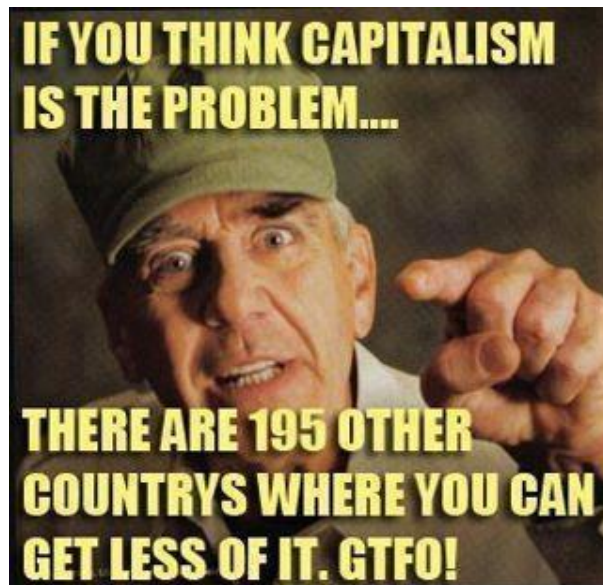
<http://www.goenglish.com/Idioms.asp>

<http://www.scribd.com>

[20120603-08](#) 11:30 Tom Video: "Obama's and Brennan's 'Kill List'"

Video: "Obama's and Brennan's 'Kill List'" The Real News

http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=767&Itemid=74&jumival=8394&update_x=2012-06-01+10%3A09%3A54



What do all these pics have in common? [There were others in the email. –SteveB]



They all show a basic disrespect for The White House and its furnishings! The Resolute Desk was built from the timbers of the HMS Resolute and was a gift from Queen Victoria to President Rutherford B. Hayes. It is considered a national treasure and icon of the presidency.

The White House belongs to the People of America and should be more revered than to use anything and everything for a foot rest! What all these shots have in common is that they continue to prove that this man has NO CLASS!

So, Mr. Obama, here's a message from the American people:

You are not in a hut in Kenya or Indonesia, or public housing in Chicago. With all due respect, get your feet off our FURNITURE!

The problem with public housing is the residents are not the owners. The people who live in the house did not earn the house, but were loaned the property from the true owners. Because of this, the residents do not have the "pride of ownership" that comes with the hard work necessary to provide the house. In fact, the opposite happens and residents resent their benefactors because the very house is a constant reminder that they themselves did not earn the right to live in the house. They do not appreciate the value of the property and see no need to maintain or respect it in any way. The result is the same, whether you are talking about a studio apartment or a magnificent mansion full of priceless antiques.

If the people who live there do not feel they've earned the privilege, they will make this known through their actions.

DEBUNKED! It's just an ordinary desk. And the President of the most powerful nation on Earth can put his feet on the furniture anytime he likes, I'd say.

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/photos/desk.asp>

Take a look especially at the photos at the bottom of other President's acting normally and living normal lives, with their feet up on the White House furniture, which I guess a black President is not allowed to do by the hate-mongers among us who seek nothing but their own gain.

ALL THESE RIGHT-WING EMAILS ARE LIES, SteveM.

20120603-10	13:36	Dale	"Poll: Romney Gains 21 Points in Favorability Among Female Voters"
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Another failed attempt...

Warning: political content ahead!

Note that this has been a big stump talking point the last month...a lot of emphasis put on the subject by Democrat surrogates. Instead, it has turned into another Democratic Party failure, another demonstration of lack of leadership by the head of the party. The effort to mislabel Romney as someone who is conducting a "war on women" is exposed for what it is -- BS. The people are brighter than the party leaders thought. Go figure. Trying to pin that label on Walker is just as bogus and the people of Wisconsin know it too.

These are desperation tactics and all but the blinded faithful can smell it -- gender warfare, class warfare, race and ethnicity warfare -- all from a politician who said he was going to bring the country together, to be a healer. Inexperience or naivete? Which is it?

"Poll: Romney Gains 21 Points in Favorability Among Female Voters" by Jonathan Easley, *The Hill*

May 30, 2012, (<http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/polls/230067-poll-romney-gains-among-women>)

Female voters have boosted Mitt Romney to his highest favorability rating to date, according to an ABC News-Washington Post poll released on Wednesday.

While still negative, Romney's favorability among women is on the upswing, with 40 percent saying they have a favorable view of the presumptive GOP nominee, compared to 44 negative. That's a 21-point swing from the same poll in April, when Romney was at 27 favorable and 52 unfavorable among women.

Obama has seen a small decline among women, at 51 favorable and 44 unfavorable. Last month he was at 58 favorable and 36 unfavorable.

The increase in favorability among women has buoyed Romney's overall favorability, which was historically low for a frontrunner throughout the Republican primaries. Last month Romney was underwater by 12 percent overall, but is now moving toward break-even, at 41 favorable and 45 unfavorable overall. It's the first time Romney has topped 40 percent this cycle.

Obama's overall favorability has declined to 52 favorable and 45 unfavorable, compared to last month when he was at 56 favorable and 40 unfavorable.

While Romney is the only modern-day candidate to have a negative approval rating at this point in the race, according to ABC News-Washington Post data, the improvement among female voters is encouraging his campaign.

Obama has held a massive lead over Romney among women so far, and Democrats have kept the pressure on by attacking Romney for "turning back the clock" on women's health issues.

The Romney campaign has worked to flip the script by charging that the Obama administration's handling of the economy is the real issue that affects women.

The poll of 1,021 adults was conducted between May 23 and 27 and has a 3.5 percent margin of error.

[20120603-11](#)

16:04 Pam

Re: "Poll: Romney Gains 21 Points in Favorability Among Female Voters"
(reply to Dale, above)

What I really don't understand is why poll numbers change at all. Is there really anyone who hasn't already made a choice between Romney or Obama? If they were more alike, I'd understand how people might have a hard time deciding which one to go for, but as it is they couldn't be more different. How can anyone not know who they prefer?

[20120603-14](#)

20:30 Art

Re: "Poll: Romney Gains 21 Points in Favorability Among Female Voters"
(reply to Dale, above)

Hi Dale, Attended a dinner the other night and sat next to two Wisconsiners who are still voting there. They own and operate a small business, so imagine my surprise when I learned they both loath Walker. Go figure.

I wouldn't put too much faith in the below. How is it a Democratic Party failure? Romney is the consummate used car salesman, he'll tell you anything he thinks you want to hear to make the sale. Admirable in a used car salesman perhaps, maybe not so much for a President.

[20120603-15](#)

21:21 Dale

Re: "Poll: Romney Gains 21 Points in Favorability Among Female Voters"
(reply to Art, above)

That's an interesting observation. I know lots of people who believe Obama, The Speech Giver In Chief, is the ultimate snake oil salesman. Who else has ever been less qualified to be POTUS? He really had zero leadership experience, yet somehow sold millions of people on the concept that he could manage the country. Everyone gives him style points for charisma, but that's not what the country needs.

Time after time, Obama has promised and not delivered, except to feather his own nest. Now, that is how used car salespeople, male and female, : -), earn the reputation for being untrustworthy. Then, they get fired. I suppose the unscrupulous car salesperson tries to blame the car, and their boss, and the maintenance dept, but eventually, they are held accountable. This is what we are now observing. If someone has put a lot of emotional dependence on a different outcome, it's painful, I'm sure.

By the way, if he is not re-elected, I'm sure there will be gloaters, but most of the "just plain people" I know will only be relieved that we can move forward from this lost period. Please consider, Obama has had four years to build consensus, or at least cooperation. No one says it was an easy task, but he has been absolutely unsuccessful, finishing with a strife ridden conclusion. Who believes he will have any more success in the next four years? Electing a new President at least offers a chance. I don't expect any devote opponents to Romney to accept this postulation, but many independents are doing this calculation and arriving at the same conclusion. I have not read/heard one pundit say the Democrats are going to win a bunch of congressional seats. The talk is about "can they hold on?". So, if Obama is re-elected we end up with continuing gridlock and confrontation, at best. Or, do you think he will change his approach in a second term? I don't.

[20120603-16](#)

22:05 SteveB

Re: "Poll: Romney Gains 21 Points in Favorability Among Female Voters"
(reply to Dale, above)

Dale, I simply have to tell you my honest opinion. What you've written about the Obama situation is one of the biggest bunches of BS I've ever read in my life. No offense intended, seriously. I just can't understand how you could actually "believe" this party-line stuff.

"Change his approach"? To what, to total capitulation? Renounce the Democratic Party and join the GOP? What exactly is there about his "approach" you find inadequate and why?

No experience? No consensus? No cooperation?

None of these bear any relation to reality to President Obama and his actions. It sure does sound like your friends, the GOP, though, doesn't it? GET REAL!

How can you possibly still be harping on the "no experience" issue??? If we're going to vote on experience this time around, I believe your man is completely, positively SUNK! I can't believe you'd even mention the word. That one is left over from the McCain-Palin talking points from four years ago, right?

By the way, did you know President Obama also puts his feet up on the furniture in the White House? What a low-life, huh?

20120603-13	20:29	GaryF	Europe
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[My good friend, GaryF, has lived extensively in Europe, including France, from which his very nice wife hails. I recently asked him what he thought about the recent elections in France and what the future might hold for the EU. I do know one thing, though, right now would be a very good time to travel in Europe given the current Dollar/Euro exchange rate. Anyway, here is Gary's reply. -SteveB]

Well I finally have a couple minutes to sit down write you a proper email. Holland, too far left for me, but certainly much better than Sarkozy who was way too far right, he would say anything to try to get a vote, reminds me of Romney. Although I think Holland will try to go too far raising taxes, it's pretty obvious that austerity alone isn't working in Europe exactly the way it won't work here, you just can't cut your way out of this mess, it will take both cutting spending as well as raising taxes, and probably cutting back on the 8 weeks of paid vacation the French get. France will have plenty of problems coming up that's for sure, right now their population is 10% Muslim, and that will grow, we're certainly not the only country to have immigration problems. I don't see how the Euro will survive, certainly not in its' present state Greece will get the Drachma back I think, you also have to remember, Europeans have a lot longer memory than us colonials, they remember quite vividly how the Germans controlled them during the war, and they see the same thing happening now, except that its happening monetarily instead of a physical occupation, plus the fact that the average Germans is tired of paying taxes to support the Mediterranean countries who they see as lazy. The EU was itself poorly planned, hwo can you have a common currency without common economic regulations? Thatcher was the only one who could see the problems that would arise

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2151815/Chagas-disease-New-AIDS-Americas-cause-victims-hearts-explode.html>

<http://www.incrediblethings.com/lists/kill-it-with-fire-12-terrifying-bugs/>



Some assassin bugs like to carry their victims' corpses on their backs. No one knows why.



Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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