



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #158 — JUNE 12, 2012

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China: 'Business Friendly'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, June 12, 2012)

While the U.S. has been busy fighting real wars that produce real debt, China has been winning the only war worth winning and one our leaders apparently didn't even know we were fighting—the Economic War of the Century! I've been saying it for years: it may not be readily apparent when you shop at Walmart or visit the Great Wall, but China is our enemy. "They are not playing an economic game, they are playing a nationalist game of strategic domination."

"The Real Reason Apple Can't Make Your iPhone in America" by Dave Johnson, AlterNet

June 11, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155830/>)

(The following is an adapted version of a speech delivered at Netroots.)

We used to make things here, and then came free trade and then China opened up, and we moved a lot of manufacturing there, especially electronics. We say Apple here, because Apple is the most obvious, and because the supposed values of Apple conflict dramatically with what we now know about the working conditions of the people who make their products. But we mean ALL OF THEM.

We used to think that China got so much business because labor was cheap. The elites, benefiting from that, said take advantage of the low prices, and our workers can move on to better, more productive pursuits.

Of course, intentionally undercutting the wages of our own workers was bad enough. And using that as a wedge to break unions was bad enough. But the story of our trade deal with China is much worse than that.

Not too long ago stories about the working conditions of Chinese electronics workers started to be heard. We started hearing about protests, strikes, and then about suicides at these factories.

The reports reached wide audiences from a *New York Times* report, "How the U.S. Lost Out on iPhone Work".

This report highlighted Steve Jobs telling President Obama that these jobs are never coming back, and the reason was not the lower cost of labor. The reason was that in China they could make workers do things that they can't make them do here. They can make them live in dorms where they wake them up at midnight to stand for hours on assembly lines, or use neurotoxins that let them clean many more screens in a day. They can dump horrible stuff

into the environment. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. Ask Chen Guangcheng, the blind lawyer who just arrived in the US, about how people are treated there.

The business advantage China offers is not low wages -- it is that in China the people do not have a say, and here people have a say.

When people have a say they say they want better pay, health care, retirement, vacations, sick pay, protections, worker safety, clean environment and taxes to support the country – things like that – the very things China offers to let our businesses escape from.

So what China offers is that China is “business-friendly.” Because people there do not have a say, so they can’t ask for the things people should have.

Corporate conservatives here say we should be more business friendly, we should lower wages, lower taxes, stop taking care of the environment, stop all those pesky health and safety and environmental inspections, stop telling businesses what they can and cannot do, and all the rest. They say we should be more like China.

What they are saying is that we should abandon the benefits that democracy brought to We, the People – the 99% in order to enrich a few people – the 1%.

When we opened up our borders to goods from China, and let this treatment of workers and the environment offer advantages to our elites, we made democracy a competitive disadvantage.

But wait, there’s more.

There is another difference to consider. Look what China offers our business leaders. China provides them with an exploited labor force at little cost. Beyond that China also subsidizes the manufacturing that is done there. They spend a great deal on manipulating their currency to keep prices of goods made there very low. They will build you a factory, pay for your electricity, and so much more.

China offers our business leaders an amazing deal – a deal that they can’t refuse. The owners and managers of our companies get really, really rich if they play along with China. Nerver mind if the companies go away later -- they’re rich.

China offers these things to our business leaders for a reason. This is the reason: China sees itself as a country, and we no longer do.

China competes with us as a country. But our businesses see themselves as GLOBALIZED, not as part of a country.

So since we – at least our businesses – no longer see themselves as part of a country we are not responding to this competition. We are not mobilizing to fight back.

In fact, China has essentially recruited our own business leaders to fight against our own government.

Look at the effects on our country since we entered into this deal with China.

They are luring our businesses to move our jobs, factories, industries and technologies there for the private gain of a few, at the expense of us as a country, and we let that happen.

The trade imbalance is bankrupting us as a country. It has already drained trillions from our economy, weakening us and strengthening them.

They are smart, they do this as a NATIONAL strategy, as a country competing with us as a country, and the result is that in a competition between countries we may have already lost.

There are many things we can do about this. China can still be a partner, and there are many things we can help lift the wages and open things up for working people there.

We can require American companies to behave in the interest of their own country and of our democratic system, for one thing.

We can immediately require that imports not exceed exports by issuing import licenses based on exports.

We can demand that China actually trade with us, using that huge accumulated trade surplus to buy goods and services made here. This is dramatically in their interest – imagine what would happen to our economy if China started actually trading with us, buying American-made goods. Then the thriving American economy would boost the purchases of Chinese goods in return! **That they don't do this, and instead use those resources against us, manipulating currency, subsidizing companies, tells us they are not playing an economic game, they are playing a nationalist game of strategic domination. As a country.**

Unfortunately, as I said, China's trade strategy has helped create a situation where many of our own elites are fighting against our government.

(Dave Johnson is a Fellow at Campaign for America's Future and a Senior Fellow at Renew California.)

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20120611-01	07:15	SteveB	Re: Not Exactly (reply to SteveM)
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Fw. from SteveM:

IN 2008, TERRY ANDERSON, A BLACK LOS ANGELES TALK RADIO HOST, WROTE DOWN A LIST OF THINGS THAT SENATOR OBAMA SAID (prior to becoming President) THAT AREN'T "TRUE AND CORRECT". NOBODY PAID ANY ATTENTION THEN. WILL ANYONE PAY ATTENTION TO THESE AND THE OTHER GROSS DISTORTIONS AND INACCURACIES MADE IN THE LAST THREE YEARS? So, who EXACTLY is this Obama guy?!? [Followed by a 3-4 year-old list of lies and mistruths about the President.]

SteveM, I printed and debunked this previously. It appears here:
http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/Political_Inbox_2007-2011.pdf.

20120611-08	11:43	SteveM	Re: Not Exactly (reply to SteveB, above)
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I see your defense of Obama is to change the subject.

OR is it that you are really saying that it's OK for a black man to lie, since that's their nature, you f*cking racist. The subtle underlying context of what you didn't say gives you away and betrays your true racism.

20120611-10	16:02	SteveB	Re: Not Exactly (reply to SteveM, above)
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No need to change the subject. I referred you to the publication where this email was previously debunked. For more, see: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/50lies.asp>.

The snopes.com webpage is called "50 Lies" for a very good reason. Your email only had 39. I don't know what happened to the missing lies.

The other problem with this email is that it's years old. Stale lies are even worse than stale beer, my friend.

Racism? Anti-white racism? What? Ridiculous! I just don't like rich, elitist, out-of-touch nerds—Romney or Herman Cain or Newt, or Cheney or Rove or Allen West, for that matter!

Now, as to Romney...he doesn't exactly seem like your kind of guy. I know if we were hanging out, we'd both much rather be with Barry than Mittens. What a bug-eyed geek!

What is it you like about him? That he'll do whatever the big money tells him to do?

On the other hand, your article, "Obama Labor Dept. Forces Journalists to Use Government-Issued Computers", proved to be quite popular with our readers. See comments in tomorrow's FotM Newsletter #158.

Thanks for that

20120611-02	07:43	MarthaH	"Pledges Forgotten, Local Governments Repurpose Federally Funded Parks"
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"Pledges Forgotten, Local Governments Repurpose Federally Funded Parks" by Robert McClure, InvestigateWest

June 11, 2012, (<http://www.invw.org/article/pledges-forgotten-local-g-1277>)

The government promised that the public would get parks where citizens could exercise and stay strong – shared open spaces that would be theirs forever, places that would inspire and invigorate.

But one park became a Las Vegas hotel. Another was almost turned into a beachfront McDonalds. Another is being converted into an upscale private resort in Oklahoma. And in New York City, the National Park Service allowed the New York Yankees, the nation's richest baseball franchise, to build a parking garage atop public ball fields that needy kids at the local schools didn't see replaced for six years.

Forty-eight years after Congress and President John F. Kennedy promised parks to the public, the budget-battered National Park Service program that awarded \$3.9 billion-plus to state and local governments to buy or improve those parks has routinely allowed the land to be converted to other uses, records and interviews by InvestigateWest show. Frequently, critics contend, these transactions violate federal law and regulations requiring that federally funded recreational acreage be replaced by lands of "reasonably equivalent" financial and recreational value.

Now, with tough times crimping cities' budgets, parks advocates say they are seeing increasing efforts to privatize parks funded under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

"Cities are just desperate for funding to keep schools open and what-have-you, and that becomes a big threat," said Huey Johnson, the former California natural resources secretary who founded the parks-advocacy group Defense of Place. "The place the cities turn is, 'Well let's sell the parks.' . . . This is really affecting the quality of people's lives."

In Oklahoma, the state allowed one of its most popular parks to deteriorate badly before selling it to a development company, which is turning it into a luxurious private resort. The development team includes one of the state's wealthiest businessmen.

In Michigan, stands of towering trees were knocked down at a park so three holes of a privately owned golf course could be built – extending right to the crest of sand dunes overlooking Lake Michigan. The town, Benton Harbor, the poorest in the state, is predominantly African-American.

In Sandusky, Ohio, residents nearly lost a waterfront park to a developer's hotel and high-rise condos. In exchange for a view of Sandusky Bay on Lake Erie, residents were going to get contaminated acreage inland that looked out on a T.G.I. Friday's. Only the developer's financing problems scotched the deal.

Land values have appreciated significantly since many of the parks were first created. As a result, governments and developers have been looking for ways to capitalize on that value.

From New York's Yankee Stadium to San Francisco's Candlestick Park, neighborhood public parks built or improved with grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act are being converted to private uses.

In every case it knows about, the National Park Service says it has wrung from those who take over parkland a promise to replace the open space with land of "at least equal fair market value and of reasonably equivalent usefulness and location," as required by the law. But the agency relies on states to alert the agency to parkland being converted to different uses in the first place – a key limitation in the Park Service's oversight authority.

And critics say some such conversions go on under the radar without the parks ever being replaced. When they are replaced, critics argue, it's often with land that is inferior to the original. Even when the Park Service is notified, an imbalance of power between local advocates and wealthy developers sometimes means uneven deals get struck. Opponents have sought to block a few such deals in court, with mixed success.

An InvestigateWest investigation found evidence of these and other failures in the administration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The failures have led to what parks advocates contend is an increasing number of park closures and conversions. The Park Service's internal controls are not adequate to fully police the program, and only in the last 12 years has the agency started to keep detailed information about park names and locations, a necessary step for monitoring compliance.

Moreover, the federal government relies on states to conduct inspections of LWCF-funded parks within five years of project completion and every five years thereafter, as Park Service rules require. However, some parks go without inspection for much longer, leaving large windows of time for development to move forward unchecked.

No Federal Review (p. 12) <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/357982-2008-progress-evaluation.html#document/p12/a57699>.

"The financial situations in the states are pretty critical across the board," said Joel Lynch, chief of the Park Service's State and Local Assistance Programs Division. "I'm sure some states have forgotten their responsibilities on inspecting the sites. We know that's occurring. We don't have a sense if it's widespread or not."

No one knows exactly how many of these conversions are occurring – and records dating from the 1970s suggest that the National Park Service never has known.

Park Service staffers strive to keep on top of park conversions, said Michael D. Wilson, Lynch's predecessor. They rely on Google Alerts to help them know when a park is undergoing a conversion, Wilson said.

"It's amazing how many conversions we discover just because Google sends an article to staff about a park in Podunk, Ark., being converted to some other use," Wilson said.

For three years InvestigateWest tracked the Park Service program and several large park conversions where critics contend the Park Service has sanctioned parkland trades that shortchange taxpayers.

For example, in exchange for allowing the denuding of a woodsy 22-acre patch behind dunes along Lake Michigan to make way for a luxury golf course in Benton Harbor, local residents are getting a system of hiking trails connecting smaller chunks of inland acreage. The replacement land, located in an area where waste materials had

been deposited, had previously tested positive for the presence of about 20 chemicals including lead, benzo<a>pyrene and anthracene.

Nicole Moon longs for that forest behind the dunes of Lake Michigan. She used to walk from her downtown Benton Harbor apartment to enjoy the undeveloped lakeside land. Now the forest and grassland have been flattened into sand and turf.

During a 2009 interview, Moon drove down a dirt road to reach one of the seven parcels of land that are supposed to make up for the swath of green swapped out of the center of the park. This parcel was covered by construction debris, old furniture, yard waste and other trash. The debris was finally bulldozed from the remote riverside parcel about six months ago.

"This is part of the land they're exchanging for the beautiful 22 acres of Jean Klock Park," Moon said. "It's way out in the middle of nowhere, it's a wetland, it's down a dirt road and, as you can see, it's not only a contaminated site, but it's become a dump site for all kinds of things."

The National Park Service is ill equipped to monitor these parkland takeovers. And that has a lot to do with lack of consistent funding to maintain the program. Congress has sent this ambitious effort to boost Americans' health and maintain special natural places on a 40-year roller-coaster ride, hampering the program's ability to make sure debt-saddled cities don't sell off their parks.

Aspirations for good health

When Congress passed the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act in 1964 with vigorous bipartisan support, one major purpose was to "strengthen the health and vitality of the citizens" in parks where they could stay in shape by running, walking, bicycling and playing. This was long before the obesity epidemic that has gripped America in the last two decades.

Congress authorized the use of motorboat fuel taxes, proceeds from sales of surplus federal land and federally collected recreation fees to fund acquisition and improvement of local, state and federal parks. But in 1968, with a booming population and an according need for new parks, Congress tapped a major new revenue source. Offshore oil drilling was taking off, and it was happening on seafloor controlled by the federal government. Currently up to \$900 million a year of the drilling royalties are available for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

In essence, Congress made this bargain: Americans would accept the possibility of offshore oil spills in exchange for a steady stream of oil-industry payments that would secure parklands where Americans could exercise and commune with nature.

Parks supporters were excited to see their vision for public open space start to be realized.

But in 1969, Americans got a good look at the bargain they had struck. Some 200,000 gallons of oil came gushing up from the ocean after an accident at a drilling platform off Santa Barbara, Calif. It tainted 800 square miles of ocean and long stretches of Southern California's beaches.

Those trade-offs continue today, with BP's Deepwater Horizon the largest spill in U.S. history.

What Americans got in return was a program that was quite successful in preserving special places – from California's redwoods to North Carolina's Chimney Rock – and providing opportunities in and around cities for outdoor recreation. The Land and Water Conservation Fund provided money that would eventually be used for about 42,000 grants to states and local governments. That funding, along with state matching money, purchased more than 2.6 million acres – an area bigger than Rhode Island and Delaware combined. More than \$3.9 billion has gone to state and local parks.

As the number of parks grew, however, so did the challenge of making sure the parks stayed intact.

Government auditors long ago documented how overwhelmed federal workers were unable to keep up with the growing parkland acreage purchased or improved under the program, although their findings were little noticed by politicians or the public. The U.S. General Accounting Office reported in 1977 that the federal agency then responsible for the program, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, had not set up a reliable system for inspecting the parks to make sure they stayed available for outdoor recreation for the public. Auditors described one aspect of the inspection system, checks made on parks under development, as "hit or miss." They also said staffing levels were too low to police the whole process.

At a handful of sites, auditors said the parkland had been converted to other uses, including schools, and community centers. One had even been turned into a farm.

Then staffing levels dropped, making adequate oversight even less likely after the program was folded into the National Park Service in 1980.

Fast-forward to 2008 and the results of a federal Department of Interior Inspector General report suggested that the problems have only snowballed.

"We believe (the Park Service) needs to strengthen its monitoring and oversight of program results," inspectors wrote.

What an Effective Monitoring Strategy Looks Like (p. 13) <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/357982-2008-progress-evaluation.html#document/p13/a57700>.

Noting that researchers have reported that public health is correlated with use of parks, and that the distance to a park is closely related with a person's likelihood to use it, the inspectors said the Park Service should be at least spot-checking to make sure parks remain parks instead of relying on states to do the whole job.

"This would provide greater assurance that (Land and Water Conservation Fund) sites and facilities are protected and remain accessible open for public recreation," inspectors wrote.

Why did the Park Service stop doing the inspections?

"Staffing and funding reductions," the program reviewers wrote.

While the Park Service's rules call for a program audit of each state every three years, Park Service officials say those have not been done in many years for many states, and they are catching up on a backlog that in some cases meant states escaped such scrutiny for eight years or more. Bob Anderson, supervisor of the Park Service's Midwest region for state and local assistance, said while Park Service previously assigned one person to most states, workers now manage as many as eight states. And travel money is short.

They still catch some of the park conversions. The Park Service is pursuing more than 60 cases in Oregon, some dating back a decade.

At least some states know they're falling down on the job. Auditors for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection reported in February of this year that the state had stopped doing inspections, instead relying on "limited self-inspections" by cities, noting: "This could lead to misuse of grant funds." The same system is being tried as a pilot program in other states including California, Park Service officials said.

Mark Gelardi is a Portland attorney who analyzed the park-conversion issue in a 2007 law review article at the University of Washington. He pointed out that cities are violating federal law when they convert a park without Park Service permission.

"The National Park Service should be keeping track of the investments that they've made with the public's money in these parks," Gelardi said. "They need to make sure that the recipients of these grants follow federal law."

What went wrong?

The story of the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a cautionary tale as the nation contemplates controlling its budget deficit. It shows how actions to rein in spending in the short term can result in unintended and harmful consequences.

At first, the park-buying program was popular and successful. Funding soared to an ambitious \$370 million in 1980.

But then it dipped to zero when Reagan administration budget cuts hit in the early '80s, jumped back up to \$110 million in 1983 and then began a long slide to just \$16 million a year starting in 1988. For four years in the late 1990s, under President Bill Clinton, the program was again zeroed out: Oil companies continued to pay royalties for offshore drilling, but the money coming into the Land and Water Conservation Fund was not allocated to parkland for states and cities, as the law called for. And while campaigning in 2000, President George W. Bush promised to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund – which he did, only to divert funds to other Department of Interior programs while trying to slash outdoor recreation spending to zero in his second term.

“The program has been up and down for years in resources given to grants,” said Lynch, of the Park Service.

Over those decades, staffing went on the same roller-coaster ride as the budget. In the 1970s, the program operated as an independent agency, employing about 100 people. By the 1990s, it had shrunk to a backwater National Park Service bureau where, Anderson said, the number of personnel dropped from about 75 in 1995 to just 12 in 1997. Today the equivalent of 23 ½ full-timers work there – about a quarter the number in the 1970s.

Yet the number of parks protected under the act has continued to grow year by year.

NPS Should Conduct Some Inspections (p. 12) <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/357982-2008-progress-evaluation.html#document/p12/a59739>.

The 2008 inspector general’s report pointed out that park inspections are conducted by the very states that the National Park Service is supposed to be policing. It stated: “We believe NPS officials should have responsibility for conducting at least some inspections and should clearly report the extent to which they fulfill this obligation.”

Sam Hall, former director of the program from the 1970s through the 1990s, said Congress originally provided enough funding to double-check on whether states were enforcing the requirements that privatized parkland be replaced.

“We found a lot of conversions. We found primarily local governments who would sell lands to a local developer for housing, or they put a fire station on the land or wanted to turn it into a municipal city dump,” he said.

In one case in Louisiana, the concessionaire running a state park campground beside a reservoir actually started selling off RV pads, Hall recalled. State inspectors who were coming around dutifully at least once every five years caught him.

“People had put in brick patios and all kinds of developments on their little sites,” Hall said. “It was a major conversion.”

Without adequate Park Service oversight to ensure the state inspections are done, though, such privatization can easily go unchallenged today.

The recession’s bite into municipal budgets, parks advocates say, makes it more likely that towns will take money for green space and hope to replace it on the cheap – or not at all. That’s what’s happened at Lake Texoma State Park in Oklahoma, where the state began selling land to a developer of a posh resort in 2008, but still has not replaced the park facilities.

Sometimes local governments just don’t want to hear about the law’s requirement that privatized parkland must be replaced, said Hall, the former program director. When Las Vegas allowed a hotel to be built on federally funded parkland in the early 1990s, city officials wouldn’t agree to build a new park until the Park Service threatened to

invoke provisions in federal law that allowed withholding of federal funding for highways and other purposes, Hall said.

Local governments have tried even more outrageous shenanigans. For example, American Samoa started making plans to allow a McDonalds to be built in a park that offers the only public beach in the South Pacific U.S. territory, said David Siegenthaler of the Park Service, who polices park conversions in California and American Samoa.

Siegenthaler got an anonymous tip about the proposed deal. When Siegenthaler called to check on what he'd heard, Samoan officials repeatedly denied they planned to allow the McDonald's, he said. Prodded by park supporters, though, he kept asking questions. Eventually he discovered the governor had signed an agreement to allow the deal, Siegenthaler said.

Staying on top of the parks funded by some 42,000 grants is a big challenge for the program. The mammoth task is complicated by gaps in early record-keeping that didn't document specifics about some grants, such as the name of the park. Also, parks sometimes change names after the federal grant is awarded, so just keeping straight which park is which can be complicated, Park Service officials said.

The agency set out several years ago to straighten out the records so that, for example, parks are more clearly identified. But, Wilson, the former Parks Service administrator, said in 2010, "We've been hindered because we lacked the funding to do the project justice. But we hope to catch up over the next few years." The project is still not done.

He said officials in recent years have been finding out about more park conversions than in the past.

"It's difficult to tell if it's been happening more frequently or if through today's technology we find out about it more," Wilson said.

Park Service officials say one of the most frequent reasons parkland is converted is to build or widen roads, although conversions for other uses, such as cellphone towers, have become more common in recent years.

Under federal regulations, a decision to convert a park to private use or anything other than public outdoor recreation has to be approved ahead of time by the Park Service – even though Park Service officials freely admit that large numbers of park conversions are a done deal by the time they get wind of them.

The law also says such a decision has to be made under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. That law requires that federal officials in any decision affecting the environment look at all alternatives and listen to the public.

However, Park Service officials acknowledge that when they find out a city or state already has allowed parkland to be converted to some other use, the consideration of other alternatives are effectively precluded, because one – keeping the parkland intact – may have already been foreclosed.

When a beloved park is paved over, "I'm at a loss to say what you do," Wilson said.

Johnson, the California parks advocate who helped found the Trust for Public Land, cautions that unless reforms are undertaken, more cash-strapped cities are likely to push for privatizing parkland without offering citizens equal recreational opportunities.

"It's just like watching bank accounts if you're a bank president," Johnson said. "If you walk out of the bank and don't watch... someone's going to walk away with some of the money."

LuAnne Kozma, a Michigan parks activist, said the entire debate needs to be re-framed so that cities and states no longer look to the biggest patch of green on their map when government coffers come up short.

"We're trying to get people to realize that there shouldn't be a dollar value attached to a park any more," she said. "Once a park becomes a park, it's out of the market . . . It's just priceless."

(Jason Alcorn contributed to this report, which was edited by Carol Smith.)

20120611-03	08:53	Pam	Re: "Pledges Forgotten, Local Governments Repurpose Federally Funded Parks" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Oh, great! Another outrage to be outraged about. I don't want to lose all hope, but some days it's difficult not to. I'm lucky though. Here in Greensboro we have a lot of great parks that are maintained by volunteers and open to the public. Our arboretum runs along a major highway and was created when a string of those huge metal conductor things was put in to provide electricity. These towers are not beautiful, but the park around it is, so it's not unpleasant to walk there. In fact, it's beautiful and I've seen a pair of red-tailed hawks that are nesting there. Yesterday I walked in our Bicentennial Gardens, a beautiful park with flowers everywhere, paved walking paths and lots of grass. It's a peaceful place to gather your thoughts. I could go on, but Greensboro really is lucky in our parks management. I think it depends on local political will. No one would dare touch our Bicentennial Gardens or the Battleground Park, where the Battle of Guilford Courthouse was fought. This post reminds me to be grateful to Greensboro Beautiful, the volunteer group that does so much for our community.

20120611-04	09:15	Tom	Front Sight Patriots: Laugh Out Loud of the Week
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When four deer hunters arrived at the deer camp for their annual hunt they found that all the lodging was taken except for two cabins, both equipped with two beds.

Three of them, John, Bill and Fred had a lively discussion as who would bunk with Bob who was a habitual snorer.

They finally decided that the only fair way was to take turns.

Bill shared a cabin with Bob the first night and the next morning he appeared red-eyed from lack of sleep. He said that Bob snored so loud that getting to sleep was impossible so he sat up all night and watched Bob.

The second night it was Fred's turn and the next morning he looked even worse than Bill had. He stated that Bob's snoring was so loud that even the windows shook and there was no way he could get to sleep so he too sat up all night and watched Bob.

The third night was John's turn and the next morning he appeared all bright-eyed, alert and fully rested and Bob looked as if he had not slept.

Bill and Fred was amazed at John's appearance and asked him what happened.

John told them that when they went to bed he patted Bob on the bottom, kissed him on the cheek, and Bob sat up watching him all night!

20120611-05	10:23	SteveB	D.I.Y.
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For anyone who doesn't know about this great magazine, website, and source of materials and plans, please be advised—it's great for all sorts of interesting D.I.Y. projects! Ben and I have been fans from the start.

<http://www.makershed.com/default.asp>

20120611-06	10:33	Pam	Re: "Obama Labor Dept. Forces Journalists to Use Government-Issued Computers" (reply to SteveB & SteveM, FotM Newsletter #157)
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I really like Stiglitz's interview; it confirms my opinions, so of course I like it. Also, it makes sense. What really troubles me in this FotM is the piece on the new restrictions on journalists' use of their own computers. One by one, we see pieces of the public domain carved off. Even if it a government agency that has issued this dictat, I consider it an infringement of public space. I'm a liberal, but when government does something I consider questionable, I will say so. There may be good arguments for the change, though none were provided. Was there a problem that needed fixing? What will be the unexpected consequences of the change? Who made the decision? Why? How does this change increase transparency? If the concern is security, I wouldn't think journalists would have access to classified information anyway. Security just sounds like a made-up reason to me. I find this very troubling.

20120611-07	11:02	Art	Re: "Obama Labor Dept. Forces Journalists to Use Government-Issued Computers" (reply to Pam, above)
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Think the key may be the computers are located inside the Dept of Labor offices. Suspect it has something to do with security. Today in many embassies overseas (of course that is where all of ours are) you have to check your cell phone at the door. Not allowed to take inside the building, or if not that, onto special floors within the embassy. They all have little pigeon hole shelving units to place the phones which you can retrieve as you leave. I tired to bring my Mac into the new embassy at Muscat when I worked there and it required a major act of God.

Thought article on Romney's draft avoidance particularly interesting. Does this guy know how to tell the truth about anything?

20120611-09	13:16	Pam	Re: "Obama Labor Dept. Forces Journalists to Use Government-Issued Computers" (reply to Art, above)
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Situation clarified, Art. Thanks. And no. I don't think Romney would know the truth if he fell over it.

20120611-11	18:28	Art	U.S. National Parks Passes & "U.S. Agencies Join Forces to Honor & Support Military Families"
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[This is a great program. I think it should include veterans. Anyway, almost as good a deal is what I call the "Oldies" pass: you have to be 62, it costs only \$10, and is good for whatever small increment of time might remain for you in this miserable existence, as your light continues to dim, hence your need to get away to the national parks. A "normal" annual pass costs \$80, and is well worth it. Support your national parks and those who bravely serve. -SteveB]

"U.S. Agencies Join Forces to Honor and Support Military Families" U.S. Forest Service Press Release

May 30, 2012, (<http://www.kvsun.com/articles/2012/06/04/news/doc4fc555473fc61770363526.txt>)

As part of the Joining Forces initiative to support our nation's service members and their families, several U.S. government agencies will announce an annual pass to active duty service members and their dependents, granting free access to more than 2,000 national parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, and other public lands around the nation in the coming years.

"First Lady Michelle Obama and I started the Joining Forces initiative last year as a way to honor, recognize and support our veterans and military families," said Dr. Jill Biden. "This effort is a wonderful way to give something back, giving our military men and women and their families a chance to reconnect with their loved ones, experience the beauty of this country, and simply have a little fun."

Beginning on Armed Forces Day on May 19, active duty service men and women, (Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and activated National Guard and Reserves) can obtain the new military version of the America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands Annual Pass. The pass will be accepted at National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Army Corps sites that charge entrance or standard amenity fees.

The initiative was announced during a ceremony at Colonial National Historical Park in Yorktown, Virginia where Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Director of the National Park Service Jonathan B. Jarvis and Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Jo-Ellen Darcy distributed the first passes to one member from each of the military's five branches.

"Our nation owes a debt of gratitude to our service men and women who make great sacrifices and put their lives on the lines to protect our country and preserve our freedom," Secretary Salazar said. "In recognition of their contributions and service, we are putting out a welcome mat for these brave men and women and their families at America's most beautiful and storied sites."

"Our country's iconic memorials, open spaces, and majestic landscapes provide inspiration for those serving in the military, especially those far from home," said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, whose agency oversees national forests. "In appreciation for their service, we want to encourage these men and women and their families to visit and enjoy America's wondrous lands and waterways."

"Our soldiers, sailors and airmen give so much to this country. The federal family is honored to thank them for their service by offering them an opportunity to visit the natural resources that they defend," said Assistant Secretary Darcy. "The Corps is proud to be participating in the program by accepting the America the Beautiful Military Pass at Corps recreation facilities."

Military members and their dependents can pick up a pass at any national park or wildlife refuge that charges an entrance fee or other selected sites. Members must show a current, valid military identification card to obtain their pass. The pass is also available to dependents of active duty personnel. A list of participating sites is available [here](#).

Today's announcement complements the Joining Forces Initiative launched by the First Lady and Dr. Biden, a national initiative to mobilize all sectors of society to give service members and families the opportunities and support they have earned. In just its first year, Joining Forces has rallied American businesses to hire tens of thousands of veterans and military spouses, schools have improved educational opportunities for military children, and the medical community has vowed better care for military families.

Where there are entrance fees, the pass covers the owner and accompanying passengers in a single, private, non-commercial vehicle at recreation sites that charge per vehicle. At sites where per-person entrance fees are charged, it covers the pass owner and three accompanying adults age 16 and older. There is no entry fee for children 15 and under.

While the pass is not available to veterans and retirees, many of these individuals are eligible for other discounted passes, such as the Senior Pass, granting lifetime access to U.S. citizens over 62 for \$10, and the Access Pass granting free lifetime access for permanently disabled U.S. citizens.

For more information on the pass, visit: <http://store.usgs.gov/pass/index.html>.

20120611-12	20:40	SteveM	Fw: "Obama Is Victim of Bush's Failed Promises"
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"Obama Is Victim of Bush's Failed Promises" by Chuck Green, *Aurora Sentinel*

Feb. 7, 2010, (<http://smartgirlpolitics.ning.com/profiles/blogs/obama-is-victim-of-bush-s-failed-promises>)

Here's an opinion piece by Chuck Green who writes "Greener Pastures" for the *Denver Post & Aurora Sentinel*...one of the more liberal papers in the country. Additionally, Mr. Green is a lifelong Democrat...so this is rather a stunning piece...

Obama is victim of Bush's failed promises!

Barack Obama is setting a record-setting number of records during his first term in office:

- Largest budget ever.
- Largest deficit ever.
- Largest number of broken promises ever.
- Most self-serving speeches ever.
- Largest number of agenda-setting failures ever.
- Fastest dive in popularity ever!

Wow! Talk about change.

Just over two years ago, fresh from his inauguration celebrations, President Obama was flying high. After one of the nation's most inspiring political campaigns, the election of America's first black president had captured the hopes and dreams of millions. To his devout followers, it was inconceivable that a year later his administration would be gripped in self-imposed crisis.

Of course, they don't see it as self-imposed. It's all George Bush's fault!

George Bush, who doesn't have a vote in congress and who no longer occupies The White House, is to blame for it all.

He broke Obama's promise, to put all bills on the White House web site for five days before signing them.

He broke Obama's promise, to have the congressional health care negotiations broadcast live on C-SPAN.

He broke Obama's promise, to end earmarks.

He broke Obama's promise, to keep unemployment from rising above 8 percent.

He broke Obama's promise, to close the detention center at Guantanamo in the first year.

He broke Obama's promise, to make peace with direct, no precondition talks with America's most hate-filled enemies during his first year in office, ushering in a new era of global cooperation.

He broke Obama's promise, to end the hiring of former lobbyists into high White House jobs.

He broke Obama's promise, to end no-compete contracts with the government.

He broke Obama's promise, to disclose the names of all attendees at closed White House meetings.

He broke Obama's promise, for a new era of bipartisan cooperation in all matters.

He broke Obama's promise, to have chosen a home church to attend Sunday services with his family by Easter.

Yes, it's all George Bush's fault! President Obama is nothing more than a puppet in the never-ending failed Bush administration. If only George Bush wasn't still in charge, all of President Obama's problems would be solved. His promises would have been kept, the economy would be back on track, Iran would have stopped its work on developing a nuclear bomb and would be negotiating a peace treaty with Israel. North Korea would have ended its tyrannical regime, and integrity would have been restored to the federal government.

Oh, and did I mention what it would be like, if the Democrats, under the leadership of Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, didn't have the heavy yoke of George Bush around their necks? There would be no ear marks, no closed-door drafting of bills, no increase in deficit spending, no special-interest influence (unions), no vote buying (Nebraska, Louisiana).

If only George Bush wasn't still in charge, we'd have real change by now.

All the broken promises, all the failed legislation and delay (health care reform, immigration reform) is not President Obama's fault or the fault of the Democrat-controlled Congress. It's all George Bush's fault !

Take for example the attempt of Eric Holder, the president's attorney general, to hold terrorists' trials in New York City. Or his decision to try the Christmas Day underpants bomber as a civilian.

Two disastrous decisions.

Certainly those were bad judgments based on poor advice from George Bush!

Need more proof?

You might recall when Scott Brown won the election to the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts, capturing "The Ted Kennedy Seat", President Obama said Brown's victory was the result of the same voter anger that propelled Obama into office in 2008. People were still angry about George Bush and the policies of the past 10 years. And they wanted change.

Yes, according to the president, the voter rebellion in Massachusetts, was George Bush's fault.

Therefore, in retaliation, they elected a Republican to the Ted Kennedy seat, ending a half-century of domination by Democrats. It is all George Bush's fault!

Will the failed administration of George Bush ever end, and the time for hope and change ever arrive???

Will President Obama ever accept responsibility for something/anything?

(Chuck Green is a veteran Colorado journalist and former editor-in-chief of The Denver Post.)

20120611-13 20:49 SteveM "When Will Obama Crack in Public?"

[SteveM, and you have the nerve to accuse me of being racist??? –SteveB]

"When Will Obama Crack in Public?" by Mychal Massie, WND

Apr. 19, 2011, (<http://www.wnd.com/2011/04/288657/>)

(Exclusive: Mychal Massie says BHO displayed 'a dark psychopathy' during budget talks.)

(Mychal Massie is chairman of the National Leadership Network of Black Conservatives-Project 21 – a conservative black think tank located in Washington, D.C. He was recognized as the 2008 Conservative Man of the Year by the Conservative Party of Suffolk County, N.Y. He is a nationally recognized political activist, pundit and columnist. He has appeared on Fox News Channel, CNN, MSNBC, C-SPAN, NBC, Comcast Cable and talk-radio programming nationwide. A former self-employed business owner of more than 30 years, Massie's website is mychal-massie.com.)

At a time when many Americans can barely afford Burger King and a movie, Obama boasts of spending a billion dollars on his re-election campaign. Questioned at a recent appearance about the spiraling fuel costs, Obama said,

"Get used to it" – and with an insouciant grin and chortle, he told another person at the event, who complained about the effect high fuel prices were having on his family, to "get a more fuel-efficient car."

The Obamas behave as if they were sharecroppers living in a trailer and hit the Powerball, but instead of getting new tires for their trailer and a new pickup truck, they moved to Washington. And instead of making possum pie, with goats and chickens in the front yard, they're spending and living large at taxpayer expense – opulent vacations, gala balls, resplendent dinners and exclusive command performances at the White House, grand date nights, golf, basketball, more golf, exclusive resorts and still more golf.

[All stuff Nixon, Reagan, the Bush's, and Romney never do or did! Yes, the American people demand that their President live poor! Maybe he's supposed to move to some DC ghetto, since he and his wife are obviously not good enough for the White House. Please give me a break! –SteveB]

Expensive, ill-fitting and ill-chosen wigs and fashions hardly befit the first lady of the United States. The Obamas have behaved in every way but presidential – which is why it's so offensive when we hear Obama say, in order "to restore fiscal responsibility, we all need to share in the sacrifice – but we don't have to sacrifice the America we believe in."

The American people have been sacrificing; it is he and his family who are behaving as if they've never had two nickels to rub together – and now, having hit the mother lode, they're going to spend away their feelings of inadequacy at the taxpayers' expense.

(Why do modern liberals think and act as they do? Find out in Dr. Lyle Rossiter's book, *The Liberal Mind: The Psychological Causes of Political Madness*.)

Obama continues to exhibit behavior that, at best, can be described as mobocratic and, at worst, reveals a deeply damaged individual. In a February 2010 column, I asked, "Is Obama unraveling?" I wrote that it was beginning to appear the growing mistrust of him and contempt for his policies was beginning to have a destabilizing effect on him.

At that time, I wrote that not having things go one's way can be a bitter pill, but reasonable people don't behave as he was behaving. He had insulted Republicans at their luncheon, where he had been an invited guest. I had speculated that was, in part, what had led him to falsely accuse Supreme Court justices before Congress, the nation and the world, during the 2010 State of the Union address.

It appeared, at that time, as if he were "fraying around the emotional edges." That behavior has not abated – it has become more pronounced. While addressing the nation, after being forced to explain the validity of his unilateral aggression with Libya, America witnessed a petulant individual scowling and scolding the public for daring to insist he explain his actions.

But during an afternoon speech to address the budget/debt, he took his scornful, unstable despotic behavior to depths that should give the nation cause for concern. Displaying a dark psychopathy more representative of an episode of "The Tudors" television series, he invited Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., to sit in the front row during his speech and then proceeded to berate both Ryan and Ryan's budget-cutting plan. Even liberal Democrats were put off by the act. MSNBC's Joe Scarborough questioned the sanity of Obama's actions.

Today, criticism is coming from all sides. A senior Democrat lawmaker said, "I have been very disappointed in [Obama], to the point where I'm embarrassed that I endorsed him. It's so bad that some of us are thinking, is there some way we can replace him? How do you get rid of this guy?" ("Democrats' Disgust with Obama," *The Daily Beast*, April 15, 2011)

Steve McCann wrote: Obama's speech "was chock full of lies, deceit and crass fear-mongering. It must be said that [he] is the most dishonest, deceitful and mendacious person in a position of power I have ever witnessed" ("The Mendacity of Barack Obama," *AmericanThinker.com*, April 15, 2011).

McCann continued: “[His] performance was the culmination of four years of outright lies and narcissism that have been largely ignored by the media, including some in the conservative press and political class who are loath to call [him] what he is in the bluntest of terms: a liar and a fraud. That he relies on his skin color to intimidate, either outright or by insinuation [against] those who oppose his radical agenda only add to his audacity. It is apparent that he has gotten away with his character flaws his entire life, aided and abetted by sycophants around him. ...”

With these being among the kinder rebukes being directed at Obama, and with people becoming less intimidated by his willingness to use race as a bludgeon, with falling poll numbers in every meaningful category and an increasingly aggressive tea-party opposition – how much longer before he cracks completely?

The coming months of political life are not going to be pleasant for Obama. Possessed by a self-perceived palatine mindset, that in his mind places him above criticism, how long before he cracks in public? Can America risk a man with a documented track record of lying and misrepresenting truth as a basic way of life, who is becoming increasingly more contumelious?

[20120611-14](#) 23:31 SteveG “This Next Generation Will Be Left Behind in the Land of No Opportunity”

“This Next Generation Will Be Left Behind in the Land of No Opportunity” by Salvatore Babones, Truthout

June 11, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/news/item/9595-not-news-america-is-no-longer-the-land-of-opportunity>)

There are places in the world where the majority of people are doomed to live no better than their parents and grandparents did. Places where a poor child from the slums might as well dream of being an astronaut as dream of having a decent middle-class job. Places where the children of the rich get even richer while the children of the poor stay poor.

Places like Burma and Kenya and the United States.

Well, at least if you're a poor Kenyan your son just might grow up to be president of the United States. For most poor Americans, even state senator is out of reach. You'd be lucky to find the money to send your child to college, never mind law school.

As that son of a Kenyan said in his most recent State of the Union address, America is becoming "a country where a shrinking number of people do really well, while a growing number of Americans barely get by." The numbers back him up. Both executive compensation and the poverty rate are at or near all-time highs.

While Democrats have a reputation for caring about poverty and inequality, Republicans usually focus on the idea that in America anyone who works hard can succeed. America is the country of entrepreneurs. The rags-to-riches story is one of the foundations of our national identity.

The only problem is that it's not true - or, at least, it's not true anymore.

According to data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), **the United States has some of the lowest rates of entrepreneurship in the world.** Even at the top of the boom in 2005-2007, only two countries (Belgium and Norway) had lower levels of new business formation than the United States. The other 22 countries studied by the OECD all had higher rates of new business formation than the United States.

In fact, over 50 percent of Americans work for large companies of 250 employees or more. Only two other countries in the world have economies that are so dominated by large firms: Slovakia and Luxembourg.

We are not a nation of entrepreneurs. We are a nation of workers. And over the past forty years the American worker has gone from riches to rags, not the other way around.

For more than a century, from 1870 to 1973, the wage income of the typical American worker rose an average of 2 percent per year, as I have documented elsewhere. Since 1973, it has fallen. It has fallen most for the young. A

typical American 30-year-old makes an astounding 27 percent less today than a typical 30-year-old made in 1973 (adjusted for inflation).

Back in the late 19th century, when the actual Horatio Alger was writing Horatio Alger stories about young working-class people rising into the middle class through hard work and careful saving, actual young working-class people were rising into the middle class through hard work and careful saving. With today's median wage of \$16.57 an hour, that's not likely.

Even Republicans have come to realize that rags to riches just doesn't work anymore. Republican presidential runner-up Rick Santorum did more than anyone else to inject this issue into the campaign. "Believe it or not, studies have been done that show that in Western Europe, people at the lower parts of the income scale actually have a better mobility going up the ladder now than in America," he said during the October 19 Republican presidential debate in Las Vegas.

Believe it. Santorum may not be right about much, but he's right about mobility. Academic studies typically show that around 45 percent of income differences between families are transmitted from one US generation to the next. This is about twice as high as the equivalent figures in Western Europe and Australia.

More careful economic estimates suggest that the American class system is even more sclerotic than that. In a highly technical report in the Review of Economic and Statistics, Federal Reserve economist Bhashkar Mazumder showed that prior researchers have seriously underestimated the degree to which children inherit their parents' positions in society.

His best estimate is that the intergenerational stickiness in income is around 60 percent. In other words, over half of a person's economic status in life is predetermined at birth. Mazumder concludes that it would take an average of five generations for a family's offspring to rise from low income to middle income.

It wasn't always this way. Time was when opportunities for advancement in America were expanding, not contracting. Research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago shows that intergenerational mobility increased continuously from 1940 to 1980. Only then did it start to fall.

By 2000 (the final year of the study covered), mobility in America was lower than where it had started in 1940.

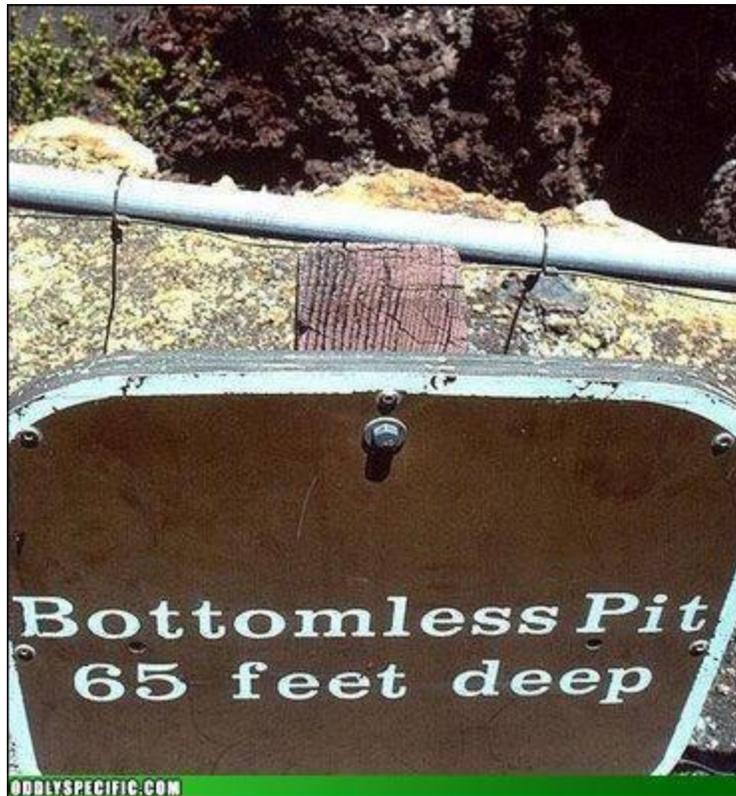
What can we do to reinvigorate the American dream? The American people don't need experts to answer this question for them. Surveys show that the American people are quite capable of answering it on their own.

A 2011 poll from the Pew Charitable Trusts' Economic Mobility Project found that 83 percent of Americans "support a government role in promoting upward economic mobility." The top three things Americans said the government should do? Provide all children with a quality education, promote job creation and ensure equal opportunity - all of which President Obama called for in his State of the Union Address.

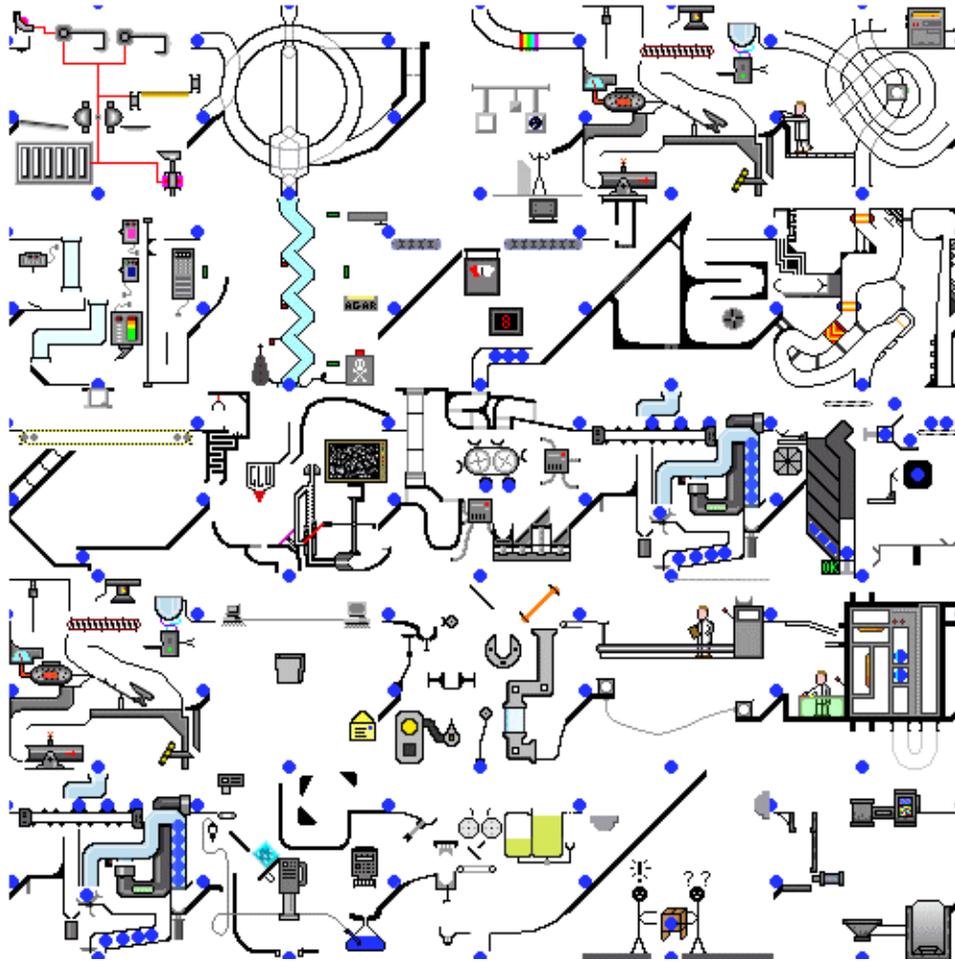
Government can and should promote greater social mobility. Inevitably, however, greater mobility for the poor and working classes comes at the cost of higher taxes and fewer privileges for the middle and upper classes. Economic opportunity is incompatible with an economy dominated by \$8-an-hour service jobs.

We can return to an America of boundless upward mobility only if we return to an America of well-funded schools, good union jobs and top-quality government services supported by progressive taxes on those who can most afford to pay. Like all good things, mobility comes at a price. Those who have achieved the American dream have to be willing to share it with everybody else. Sadly, it seems they no longer are.

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Have you ever wondered how a woman's brain works? Well....it's finally explained here in one, easy-to-understand illustration:



Every one of those little blue balls is a thought about something that needs to be done, a decision or a problem that needs to be solved. A man has only 2 balls and they take up all his thoughts.



Can you hear the rocks singing? It's a lovely, haunting sound...but if you hear it from a boat at night or in a blind fog, you are probably in trouble...

<http://www.guideoftravels.com/acadia-national-park-mountains-forests-and-ponds.html>



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

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