



## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #163 — JUNE 19, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **Campaigns' Bane: Bain Capital**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, June 19, 2012)

I reckon this is a good subject for President Obama, because, believe me, nothing R0mney did at Bain prepared him in any way for the Presidency. Being governor of Massachusetts, yes. The rest is exactly like McCain thinking that being a prisoner of war prepared him. (I never did figure out what was supposed to have prepared his running mate.)

It may not seem like it at times, but, in reality, neither capitalism nor prison bears much resemblance to politics.

"Bain Capital: Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in a Muddle" by Alexander Burns and John F. Harris, Politico

June 18, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0612/77518.html>)

The Obama campaign wants you to know that Mitt Romney took over companies, laid off workers, canceled health plans, shipped jobs overseas and walked away with millions.

Not, mind you, that there's anything wrong with that: "He should be proud of the personal success he achieved as the head of a large financial firm," President Barack Obama said last week, of the man his own campaign ads have portrayed as a corporate vampire.

The Romney campaign wants you to know that the former private equity CEO was a brilliant investor who founded a business, made it an international powerhouse and helped grow companies that created tens of thousands of jobs.

Not that they'll tell you much about the details of Romney's work at Bain Capital or the actual decisions he made there. During a recent interview with Time magazine, the Republican nominee fumbled and mumbled when he was pressed to explain how, precisely, his business career would make him a better president.

Bain has hovered so persistently and powerfully over the politics of 2012 — a trend that is likely to continue through the fall — that both campaigns seem no longer to notice that the debate is barely making sense.

More precisely, both sides seem to believe their arguments have such emotional clarity that they're prepared to stick with them, despite the fact they are a logical muddle. Political risks have prompted both men to stop short of making consistent or even fully coherent arguments.

Obama has declined to embrace a belief that many Democrats strongly hold: that Bain is a fundamentally exploitative company and that Romney's decisions there reflect his own flawed judgment and morality.

If Obama believes that, he can't say it. Since 2009 he has labored — with minimal success — to avoid being seen as broadly anti-business, while critiquing and tightening regulations on the financial sector. With numerous voices in his party, starting with Bill Clinton, defending Romney's business career, Obama can't unleash the Bain-is-evil argument that some in the party's left would love to hear.

Romney, likewise, has not been willing to engage the impolitic argument that most free-market conservatives — and no small number of business-minded Democrats — genuinely believe: that private equity firms like Bain are a model of the creative destruction — separating the strong from the weak — that is a hallmark of a thriving first-world market economy.

By these lights, creating winners means that investors in efficient firms should quite properly get rich, and workers in inefficient firms should quite properly get laid off. It is a philosophy celebrated by a generation of free-market conservative economists that does not exactly resonate with many voters in a manufacturing-heavy state like, for instance, Ohio.

The conflict between what partisans really think about Bain and what the candidates can safely say has left what might be a rollicking, no-holds-barred fight about capitalism and workers' rights a stilted, delicate affair. Romney wants voters to view him as a private-sector wizard, without thinking too much about what that wizardry actually entailed. Obama wants them to see the darker side of Romney's career, but not open himself up to the charge that he's in some fundamental way hostile to business.

"They are trying to walk more of a tightrope here, in terms of not bashing the private sector and capitalism and corporate America, while at the same time trying to hit [Romney] for being out of touch," Ray Glendening, former political director of the Democratic Governors Association, said of Obama's strategy.

Democrats haven't always been so cautious. Just two years ago, DGA ran a slashing ad campaign against Connecticut Republican Tom Foley, saying he had "devastated a community and thousands of lives" in a corporate takeover. At the time, Glendening said, anger toward Wall Street and big companies was so intense that there was little point in delivering a subtler attack.

"We just decided to go for it," Glendening said. "I don't want to use the term 'corporate assaulter on the middle class' or anything like that, but that's pretty much the feel that we were going for. The squeeze was so hard on the economy and the housing market, everybody's antennae were so up and so sensitive."

Obama's campaign looked at first like it might make the same bet, airing a two-minute ad last month featuring a laid-off worker at a company controlled by Bain calling the buyout firm a "vampire." Prominent Democrats, including Clinton and former Democratic National Committee Chairman and Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, objected. Since then, Obama and his team have hewed closely to a more careful set of talking points: that Romney's values as a corporate leader might work in the financial services industry but that "Romney Economics" would be a disaster if implemented from the White House.

In the speech in Baltimore last week in which Obama allowed that Romney can be proud of his financial success, he went on to say that the values reflected in his business career are too narrow for the Oval Office. "I think he has drawn the wrong lessons from these experiences," the president said. "He seems to believe that if CEOs and wealthy investors like him are doing well, the rest of us automatically do well."

The pro-Obama super PAC Priorities USA Action continues to attack Romney on the air with less-hedged attack ads showing workers who were laid off at Bain companies saying that Romney "made me sick" and turned one town "into a junkyard." They have the luxury — like the DGA — of making those kinds of charges as a more or less unaccountable independent expenditure group, rather than as a candidate in the flesh who has to answer follow-up questions.

Strategists for the Obama campaign and the super PAC argued that there is a larger consistency to the argument they're making about Bain — that familiarizing voters with that part of Romney's career leads them to view his decisions as governor, and the policies he's endorsed for the country, in a different context. It's easier, for instance, to persuade voters that Romney backs the House GOP's austerity budget that overhauls Medicare if they also know he shuttered factories as an investor.

"Empirical evidence shows that these ads have had a big impact on voters in important states, and we're going to continue to make sure that people know as much as possible about Mitt Romney's life and private equity, and whether or not that would make him a good president of the United States," Priorities USA strategist Bill Burton said. "So far, voters don't think so."

Democratic media strategist Steve Murphy said the nuance of Obama's argument is simply a necessity, given that he "has to be careful that he does not appear to be anti-business." It will take time, he said, to see the full impact of the message the campaign's using.

"The argument [is] that sending jobs overseas, cutting benefits to workers, none of that matters at all to private equity. That's a perfectly valid business approach, but is it who we want as president?" Murphy said. "Tactically, no matter what difficulty the Obama people have, strategically they're keeping the focus on Romney."

Romney's own Bain messaging is driven by a similar desire to generate a gut-level response from viewers without necessarily engaging in the complexity of the information involved. When he unveiled his presidential exploratory committee last year, Romney described his Bain career in a video: "Sometimes I was successful and helped create jobs, other times I was not. I learned how America competes with companies in other countries, why jobs leave and how jobs are created here at home."

And that has been more or less the extent of his message since then. Romney has not explained in detail how he would apply the lessons of his experience at Bain to the White House, except that he'd be friendlier to business than the current occupant. In an interview with Time magazine's Mark Halperin last month, Romney resisted invitations to say how his Bain years informed his view of the economy before eventually saying that he gained a better appreciation for the importance of energy prices.

"Well that's a bit of a question like saying, what have you learned in life that would help you lead? My whole life has been learning to lead, from my parents, to my education, to the experience I had in the private sector, to helping run the Olympics, and then of course helping guide a state," Romney said initially. When his interviewer pressed the issue, Romney responded: "Let's be a little more specific as to the area you'd like to suggest. Trade policies? Labor policies? Energy policies? Let's take energy, for instance. I understand that in some industries, the input cost of energy is a major factor in whether an industry is going to locate in the United States or go elsewhere."

Romney advisers say there's no reason why they can't make a more elaborate, information-rich argument later on — airing ads, say, that show workers explaining how Romney and Bain helped grow their companies and create jobs or simply having the candidate himself describe in greater specificity the positive values of his business career.

But for now, to the Democratic charge that his values as a financial wizard have only little — or negative — application to government, Romney's team says simply that the criticism is an assault on the private sector as a whole that voters will reject.

"I think the problem here is how dated the argument is — both dated in fact, but it really takes the Democratic Party back to a place where the Democratic Party doesn't want to be, which is the anti-business party," senior Romney strategist Stuart Stevens said. "The problem, I don't think, is how they did it. It's just the crux of the argument."

Republican pollster David Winston, who advised Newt Gingrich's campaign as a pro-Gingrich super PAC ran brutal Bain-bashing ads against Romney, said that as long as Democrats are tying themselves in knots on the Bain message, there's no reason for Romney to scramble for a more assertive response.

"The Democrats are doing that for Romney, when they start out and say, 'Well, Bain is actually successful and did well,'" he said. "If you're saying it was a successful company, that's what we would say and you're just saying it for us."

As far as politics goes, there's concern in both parties that the two presidential campaigns are missing opportunities by virtue of their caution. While Democrats recognize that the president doesn't want to risk being perceived as hostile to industry, some privately fret that the message he's delivering is too delicate and needle-threading to kneecap Romney for the general election.

And even absent the tactical struggles of the Obama campaign, there's a new sense of uncertainty over what impact the Bain attacks could have under the best of circumstances.

One Democratic strategist raised an eyebrow at the idea that any Bain message could, on its own, take out the Republican: "If you're going to make a case about who's on the side of average people versus who's on the side of the wealthy, it's certainly a pillar of that message. I'd be surprised if in and of itself, it was disqualifying."

On the other side, there's anxiety that Romney's exceedingly narrow message on Bain still leaves an awful lot of space on the canvas for Democrats to fill in with negative information. Whatever language Obama's using on the stump, Priorities USA continues to deliver a much blunter anti-Bain message in select swing-state television markets.

It's too early to know whether those commercials are moving voter opinion of Romney, and the Obama super PAC has not been able to raise American Crossroads-level money to go on the attack. But Romney has done little to minimize himself as a target in the meantime.

"There was certainly a window of opportunity for Romney to get out there and define his experience at Bain in a clearer manner, right after the [Newark Mayor Cory] Booker comment and the Clinton remarks. But in many ways, he's had a number of high-profile Democrats doing that for him," one national Republican operative said, musing: "That's how he loses this thing. If the ads stick and he has yet to define his biography and experience, then he pays a price."

Obama campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt said it is a price Romney deserves to pay. "Mitt Romney has made his tenure as a corporate buyout specialist the central point in his argument about why he should be elected — since he claims to be an economic Mr. Fix It whose goal was job creation," LaBolt e-mailed on Sunday. **"He claimed once again today [in network TV interviews] that he doesn't have a political career — a preposterous claim for someone who has been running for office for two decades — but it again signaled to voters that he is running on his private sector job creation claims. An analysis of that record shows he profited off of bankrupting companies and outsourcing jobs — and that his job creation claims do not hold up — so the question we have asked Americans — is that the economy philosophy they want to see in the Oval Office?"**

**FotM NEWSLETTER #163 (June 19, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX**

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120619-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Campaigns' Bane: Bain Capital</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Bain Capital: Barack Obama & Mitt Romney in a Muddle")
<a href="#">20120618-01</a>	10:08	MarthaH	"Challenges Give Health Care Law Four Possible Outcomes"
<a href="#">20120618-02</a>	11:30	SteveG	Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along
<a href="#">20120618-03</a>	12:02	Pam	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120618-10</a>	17:00	Art	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to Pam & SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120618-11</a>	17:15	Pam	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120618-12</a>	17:23	Art	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120618-15</a>	18:00	SteveB	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120618-16</a>	18:56	SteveG	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120618-18</a>	19:22	SteveB	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120618-19</a>	19:31	SteveG	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120618-21</a>	19:45	Pam	Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120618-04</a>	13:52	Tom	Fw: How to Install a Bubba Home Security System
<a href="#">20120618-05</a>	14:20	SteveB	"Paradise Lost: The Sinking Middle Class"
<a href="#">20120618-06</a>	14:24	SteveB	Video Report: "Chicago Workers have Economic Plan: Go Co-Op!"
<a href="#">20120618-07</a>	15:27	SteveG	Graphic: Cost/Benefit Analysis for Education
<a href="#">20120618-08</a>	15:39	Pam	Re: Graphic: Cost/Benefit Analysis for Education (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120618-09</a>	16:49	Art	Re: Graphic: Cost/Benefit Analysis for Education (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120618-13</a>	17:41	Art	Re: The Scale of the Universe (reply to Jim, FotM Newsletter #162)
<a href="#">20120618-14</a>	17:48	Art	Cartoon: It's Better in Somalia!
<a href="#">20120618-20</a>	19:41	Pam	Re: Cartoon: It's Better in Somalia!
<a href="#">20120618-17</a>	19:02	SteveG	ChartsBin Website
<a href="#">20120618-22</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Somalia

<a href="#">20120618-01</a>	10:08	MarthaH	"Challenges Give Health Care Law Four Possible Outcomes"
-----------------------------	-------	---------	--

"Challenges Give Health Care Law Four Possible Outcomes" by Richard Wolf, *USA Today*

June 16, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/story/2012-06-16/health-care-law-supreme-court/55607156/1>)

(WASHINGTON) The Supreme Court's decision this month on President Obama's health care law is likely to take one of four basic forms. No matter what the court rules, however, it won't be the last word.

The court can uphold the entire law, strike down the "individual mandate" requiring most Americans to buy insurance, strike down the mandate and related health insurance changes, or kill the entire law.

Still to come: State actions. More lawsuits. The verdict from voters on Nov. 6. And more battles in Congress next year.

"The bottom line here is the Affordable Care Act is moving through a gantlet," says Robert Laszewski, a private health policy consultant. "The first stop in the gantlet was the Supreme Court. The second stop in the gantlet is the election."

The court has some additional issues to decide, including whether the law's Medicaid expansion is unduly "coercive" and whether the law can't be challenged at all until someone pays a penalty to the Internal Revenue Service for not buying insurance.

The major battle, however, is over the constitutionality of the mandate and its relationship to the rest of the law.

Here are four scenarios:

### Option 1: Law upheld

A decision upholding the law would unleash a series of political, legislative and legal forces.

As states decide whether to implement the law, such as setting up health care exchanges for millions of Americans to pick insurance plans, "there's going to be political action, there's going to be legislative action, there's going to be lawsuits," says Michael Cannon, health policy director at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. "Opponents ... will not go away."

- Republicans in Congress plan to resume legislative attacks. The House of Representatives has voted to weaken or wipe out the law more than a dozen times, including this month's vote to repeal a tax on medical devices.
- Opponents would be galvanized for the fall elections. For Obama, that could mean a more difficult path to re-election, despite his victory in court.
- Lawsuits pending at lower courts will move forward, and new ones could be filed to test other aspects of the law, ranging from its Independent Payment Advisory Board — charged with finding savings in Medicare — to its requirement that most insurance plans pay for contraception coverage.

The pace of litigation could increase as more regulations are issued, because "there's going to be winners and losers all over the place," says Bradley Joondeph, a law professor at Santa Clara University who tracks health care litigation.

Given that upheaval, state governments would face a choice: How fast should they move to implement the law? "I think most of us are going to wait," Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican, said Thursday.

Bill McCollum, the former Florida attorney general who filed the first lawsuit against the Affordable Care Act on March 23, 2010, agrees. "I don't think it would be an immediate rush to enact the exchanges or conform to the law," he says.

Nevertheless, the Department of Health and Human Services says 34 states have accepted grants to pay for exchanges. They have until November to meet deadlines for exchanges to go into effect in January 2014.

Ezekiel Emanuel, a former White House health policy adviser now at the University of Pennsylvania, says the health exchanges should be up and running roughly a year from now. "We certainly can't do that at the last minute," he says.

### Option 2: No mandate

The verdict that would present the biggest complications is also one of the most likely, if the justices' questions in March prove prophetic: striking down the individual mandate requiring most Americans to buy health insurance.

That's because the law's expansive provisions would remain, including requirements that insurance companies guarantee coverage for people with pre-existing conditions and limit premiums for those with expensive ailments.

The mandate is intended to bring young, healthy people into the market, providing premiums for insurers and patients for health care providers. Without it, the Congressional Budget Office estimates, about half of the law's projected 32 million newly insured people would remain uninsured, and premiums in the individual health insurance market would rise by an additional 15% to 20%.

"It becomes an impossible thing for the insurance companies. It becomes unworkable," McCollum says. "I think both sides would realize that there has to be some change."

Insurers wouldn't be the only ones seeking a change. Doctors, hospitals, drugmakers and medical device manufacturers accepted new taxes and cuts in Medicare reimbursements under the law because they expected more patients.

Proponents of the law say not much would be lost. They say the mandate was a small portion of the law, dwarfed by the promise of covering 32 million Americans and improving coverage for millions of others.

"The notion that the mandate is the heart of the statute is way off base," says Ron Pollack, executive director of Families USA, a leading health care consumers group. He says Congress could replace it with incentives designed to get young adults to buy insurance, such as late enrollment penalties or automatic enrollment provisions.

States — most likely those controlled by Democrats — also could create their own mandates. That's what then-governor Mitt Romney signed in Massachusetts in 2006, without legal challenge.

In Congress, Democrats could seek alternatives to the mandate, but such efforts might prove unpopular before the November elections. Republicans, prodded by the insurance industry, could try to scuttle the insurance changes for people with preexisting conditions, but those are among the law's most popular provisions.

"Whether Congress can agree on any of those alternatives is a very different story," says Larry Levitt, vice president of special projects at the non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation. "It's entirely possible that stalemate is the result."

### Option 3: More provisions invalidated

Lawmakers would be under far less pressure to fix what the court hands them if insurance protections for people with pre-existing conditions and related changes are eliminated along with the mandate.

The insurance market would be similar to today's, with the same advantages and drawbacks. Premiums could go down, particularly for young and healthy people. But so would the quality of coverage, particularly for the old and sick.

Even a high-risk insurance pool created under the law to help people with pre-existing conditions who were without insurance at least six months will expire in January 2014, when the broader changes were to take effect. About 60,000 people have joined that plan, the Health and Human Services Department says.

Under this scenario, states could seek to fill the gap with their own mandates and insurance market changes. That's most likely in states with Democratic governors and legislatures.

Democrats in Congress also could try to replace the mandate and insurance market overhaul with lesser changes.

Among opponents, however, "there's going to be blood in the water," Cannon says. Opponents "are going to be energized to get rid of the rest of it."

House Republicans say they will try to repeal the rest of the law — its insurance expansions, taxes, Medicare savings and more — and then vote on lesser fixes as part of their "repeal and replace" strategy.

"Our goal would be to have the end result be all of it gone," says Brendan Buck, a spokesman for House Speaker John Boehner. "Clear out whatever is left from what they strike, and then move step by step on our replacement provisions."

### Option 4: Law killed

The justices may decide to strike down all the taxes, subsidies, mandates, coverage expansions, insurance market changes and other provisions in the law. But some may find their way back.

Several insurance companies plan to keep some changes already enacted. "Consumers and employers will continue to have the option of purchasing coverage that includes many of the benefits they have today, such as allowing dependent children to stay on their parents' policies until age 26," says Karen Ignagni, president of America's Health Insurance Plans.

Some 6.6 million young adults joined their parents' plans in the first year of eligibility, according to the Commonwealth Fund, a liberal health research group.

One program at risk would be discounts from drug companies for more than 5 million seniors and people with disabilities. The Medicare discounts have saved consumers \$3.5 billion since the law was passed.

The bigger question: Would the effect of the court's ruling be prospective or retroactive? It would be difficult to retract benefits already on the books.

"You would have a mess on your hands," says Levitt, of the Kaiser Family Foundation. "The general sense is anything that's already happened kind of is water under the bridge."

The politics could be a wash, as in the case of the law being upheld. While Obama and Democrats would lose their most prized achievement from his term in office, their liberal base would be energized. A recent United Technologies/*National Journal* poll found striking down the law would have little impact on the president's re-election

The Supreme Court, favored by just 44% of Americans in a recent *New York Times*/CBS Poll, could become more unpopular after such a perceived power grab.

"You could well imagine an argument being made around the politicization of the court," says Sheila Burke, a health policy lecturer at Harvard University who served as the top aide to former Senate Republican leader Bob Dole.

What would happen next?

Democrats might seek to replace at least portions of the law, such as smaller federal subsidies for the uninsured. But they would face the "Obamacare" moniker that has made the law relatively unpopular, Cannon says. Republicans likely would follow through on their "repeal and replace" agenda by proposing lesser changes. Romney, for instance, wants to give states more flexibility, let consumers buy insurance across state lines, and limit awards in medical malpractice lawsuits.

"It puts the ball back in the political arena," says Randy Barnett, a Georgetown University law professor who represents the business groups challenging the law. "We'll have a national debate about health care reform, and then we'll have an election, and whoever wins the election will have a mandate."

[20120618-02](#) 11:30 SteveG Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along

"Can't we all...just...get along?" —Rodney King

A simple question by a troubled person twenty some years ago that we don't seem to be able to answer today.

[20120618-03](#) 12:02 Pam Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to SteveG, above)

I heard his interview on NPR this morning and was very touched by it. He had a hard life, but it sounds like he made the best of it. RIP, Rodney.

[20120618-10](#) 17:00 Art Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to Pam & SteveG, above)

I just can't get too sympathetic for King. All he had to do was obey the police in the initial incident and lay down. Of course, when you're looped out on PCP, who knows what you'll do.

[20120618-11](#) 17:15 Pam Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to Art, above)

From the interview I heard, it sounded like he'd turned his life around. If so, then I give him credit for that. But that officer shouldn't have beaten him so hard he nearly died. You should have heard the description of the operation he had to repair his eye socket. I remember the footage of that attack, and he was no threat to those police, but they kept on beating and kicking him. No, I don't sympathize with those cops. I'm sure they all pumped on adrenalin, but still. Just saying....

[20120618-12](#) 17:23 Art Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to Pam, above)

You're right, of course. I am embarrassed by the lack of professional conduct shown by the police.

On the other hand, I guess I have just had to deal with too many drunks and hopheads in life to have much time for them either. I don't know what I would have done if I had been there, but I would have been tempted to shoot him.

Tell you a story some day.

[20120618-15](#) 18:00 SteveB Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to Art, above)

Well...to weigh in where I know absolutely nothing...King doesn't seem like much of a hero to me, but was smart enough to get \$3.8 million, but maybe that's what killed him. I'd have a hell of a hard time drowning in my pool. Haha

Still...no one hates cops beating people more than I do...even if it's black people who might deserve it. ^\_^

But, Art, OK, let me picture this. Pam, help me out, does Art resemble Dirt Harry at all? So there's Art and he's had a rough day maybe so he'd just as soon skip the beating part and get to the shooting. I can see why you used to be a Republican. Just kidding. I want to make that movie!

I'm just glad I don't have to do that job and face those risks every day and those things that tend to dehumanize almost anyone in those positions over time. I'm happy they do what they do and I'd be happy to pay them a little more to do it more gently, you never know when it might be your family, or friends, or even you.

I'd say the guy was definitely too young to go! RIP

[20120618-16](#) 18:56 SteveG Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to all, above)

Well, I think I got the answer to the original question – no, we cannot just get along.

I never said he was sympathetic and never believed he was. No one should have been beaten to that extent, especially in this country.

Alcoholics and hopheads are troubled people and remain troubled all of their lives – addiction does that to people – that isn't to excuse any of their behavior – just a statement. Legal consequences—yes, treatment consequences—yes, beatings—no.

[20120618-18](#) 19:22 SteveB Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to SteveG, above)

Agree completely!

[20120618-19](#) 19:31 SteveG Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to SteveB, above)

Real sad situation we have here, and gets no better day by day – maybe worse.

[20120618-21](#) 19:45 Pam Re: Quote: Rodney King on Getting Along (reply to SteveB, above)

I've had some dealings with the police here in Greensboro because of my adopted son, and I have to say I found them incredibly professional and understanding. I only had one bad experience, and that was with a woman officer who was full of herself and didn't know which end was up. The rest of the police and court system were wonderful, and I am grateful to them to this day.

[20120618-04](#) 13:52 Tom Fw: How to Install a Bubba Home Security System

[Source of original email unknown, but who cares? –SteveB]

#### HOW TO INSTALL A HOME SECURITY SYSTEM

1. Go to Goodwill and buy a pair of size 14 -16 men's work boots.
2. Place them on your front porch, along with some old, well-read copies of *Guns & Ammo* Magazines.
3. Put four giant dog dishes next to the boots and magazines.
4. Leave a note on your door that reads....

Bubba,

Bertha, Duke, Slim, & me went for more ammo and beer. Be back in an hour.

Don't mess with the pit bulls. They got the mailman this morning and messed him up bad. I don't think Killer took part, but it was hard to tell from all the blood.

Don't make any racket as to wake up old "Coot," He's try'n to nap on the couch, and you know what a hair trigger he has on that 12 Gauge!

Anyway, I locked all five of 'em in the house. Better wait outside. Be right back.

—Scooter

[This trick reminds me of what I used to do when young men would come to our house to take one of my lovely daughters out on a date. I'd talk to them about hunting and the Army, then ask them very seriously if they'd like to come down to the basement to see my knife, gun, and torture collection. Not one of them ever said yes and, hopefully, my point was made subtly. :-) –SteveB]

[20120618-05](#) 14:20 SteveB "Paradise Lost: The Sinking Middle Class"

"Paradise Lost: The Sinking Middle Class" by Thomas Magstadt, NationofChange

June 18, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/paradise-lost-sinking-middle-class-1340027521>)

Deep down we know there's no paradise on earth, but as the children of immigrants who came to this country believing it was a land of milk and honey, we are stalwart. For generations now, it's the middle class that has

sustained the dream of "America, the Beautiful" – with a dash of liberty and justice for all. But now the very foundations on which that dream has rested are crumbling. Consider the facts in this recent editorial in the *New York Times*:

[The] numbers on the loss of personal wealth [since 2007-2008] are staggering and say a lot about why the economic recovery has been so sluggish — and why the government will need to do a lot more to turn things around.

According to a new survey from the Federal Reserve, the median American family's net worth dropped by nearly 40 percent from 2007 to 2010 — from \$126,400 to \$77,300 — wiping out 18 years' worth of accumulated wealth. The crash in house prices accounted for most of that loss. Median family income, which was already edging down in the years before the recession, continued to decline, dropping from \$49,600 in 2007 to \$45,800 in 2010, about where it was in the mid-1990s.

The middle class was hit the hardest...

The recession "would have been much deeper and the weak recovery much weaker", we are told, but for past government support (for example, payroll tax cuts and extended jobless benefits). Of course, Republicans in Congress opposed these measures. Give the socialist Obama an inch, you see, and he will turn this country into a Marxist dictatorship.

The *Times* editorial calls for "...more support, including federal spending on education and public-works projects to create jobs, targeted tax credits for hiring, programs to deliver mortgage relief that supports house prices...as well as a renewed commitment to financial regulation to ensure that the system doesn't melt down again." However, "The Republicans — for reasons of ideology and self-serving election-year politics — are determined to block all of these necessary programs."

In case you haven't heard: Freedom isn't free. Just ask the rich Republicans who seem to think it's fair that millionaires and billionaires get big tax breaks not available to middle class working families. After all, "earned income" is for losers; winners have "capital gains" to keep them warm.

And so what if losers pay a higher rate of tax than winners. Somebody has to pay for all that freedom they...uh, I mean we...enjoy.

There are no two ways about it. When the middle class is in decline, the storied "American way of life" is imperiled. Neither a republic worthy of the name nor a robust market economy can exist without a strong and vibrant middle class. That's not bleeding heart schmaltz; it's a fact that only block-headed fools dare to dispute.

In its latest report, the Federal Reserve published a bleak analysis showing – guess what? – the the impact of the Great Recession hit the middle class the hardest. The 60 percent of American families in the middle of the middle had a larger decline in wealth and income on a percentage basis than the very wealthy or the very poor.

The reasons are fairly obvious. The most important asset for the average middle-class household is, well, the house it's holding (or trying to hold onto), an asset which is worth a frightful fraction of what the owners paid for it in the bank-driven Bubble Era before the Big Meltdown in 2008. The median value of home equity plunged from \$110,000 in 2007 to \$75,000 in 2010. While the stock market has staged a comeback of sorts, housing prices have barely budged.

Meanwhile, median family income has plummeted. The crash of housing prices accounts for three-quarters of the loss, but it's also clear from this mass of data that the crisis of the middle class cannot be explained in terms of a single cause or fixed with bobby pins and band-aids.

The rot has eaten deeply into the political system as well. We will see the effects of this decay on display in the 2012 election. Casino tycoon and multibillionaire Sheldon Adelson says the money he's prepared to pour into Mitt Romney's bid for the presidency is "limitless". Here's the scenario Steve Bertoni writing in *Forbes* magazine lays out:

Thanks to the *Citizens United* decision, there are no curbs on how much Adelson could give the pro-Romney Super PAC, Restoring Our Future. Given that he's one of the 15 richest people in the world, the Sands chairman could personally bankroll the equivalent of entire presidential campaign—say, \$1 billion or so—and not even notice. (The \$10 million donation he just made to Romney is equivalent to \$40 for an American family with a net worth of \$100,000.)

What we are experiencing in this country is an unsustainable state: the rich get everything they want, and they want everything. It's as though the plutocrats have a death wish. Tragically, they alone are in a position to move the machinery of government toward necessary reforms, but they persist in doing the opposite. If the inequality and injustice of the New Derivative Economy does not provoke a popular uprising, the combination of fundamental structural imbalances and corrupt politics will eventually bring the whole degenerate system crashing down.

No mass consumption society can prosper if its middle-class citizens lack the means to consume and the confidence to invest. And no republic can flourish or long survive when the people's elected representatives get in bed with billionaires and bankers, rig elections, sell votes, polarize society for personal gain, and place partisan interests above the public interest.

20120618-06	14:24	SteveB	Video Report: "Chicago Workers have Economic Plan: Go Co-Op!"
-------------	-------	--------	---

Not that co-ops are anything new, but this article shows what I mean when I say we need to find "ways of organizing capital and labor" other than either regular capitalism or socialism. Workers like these need help, but it seems that all the big money wants to do is destroy them.

[Video Report: "Chicago Workers have Economic Plan: Go Co-Op!" by Laura Flanders, NationofChange/GritTV](#)

June 18, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/chicago-workers-have-economic-plan-go-co-op-1340031476>)

As President Obama was addressing the nation regarding the economic outlook this week, some workers in one particular Chicago factory were making progress toward their own economic future. The group of individuals who occupied the Republic Windows and Doors factory in 2008 have founded a worker-run cooperative. Using the state of Illinois as their incorporated state; they have bid to buy the machinery from their former employer; now, they are just waiting for a response from Serious Energy, the company that took over the plant most recently. These workers are looking to save their jobs during a tough economy by way of co-operatives. Back in 2008, these group of workers occupied their plant for six days after Republic closed down the plant and tried to weasel their way out of the state by owing workers back-pay and benefits. Fortunately, the occupiers won a \$1.75 million settlement from Bank of American and Chase Bank. Following its predecessor, Serious also failed to properly manage the plant and walked away. The workers do not plan on walking away from their jobs like their former employers have.

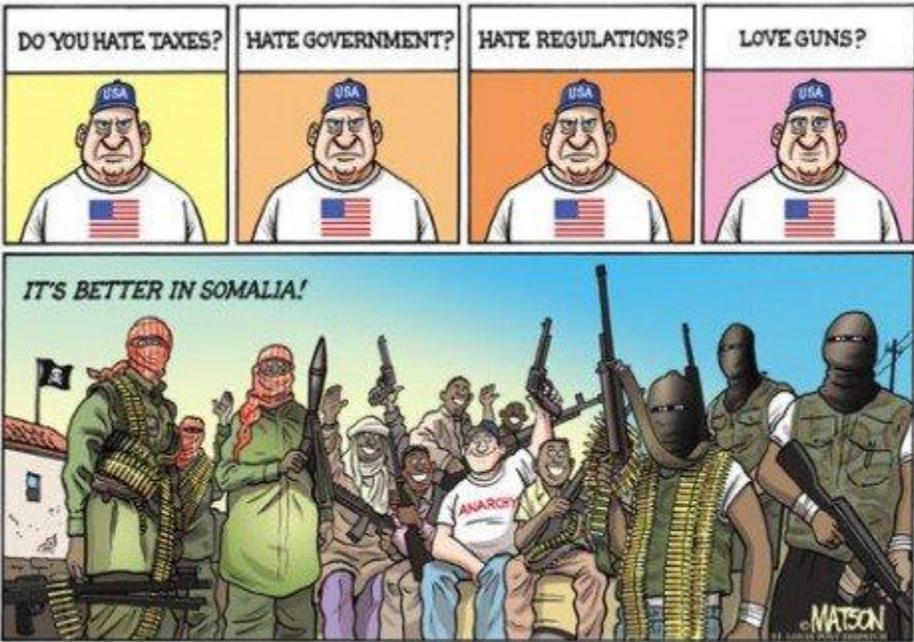


This is great!!

Good one!!!!

Amazing. Try this! (<http://htwins.net/scale2/>)

One of my current favorites:



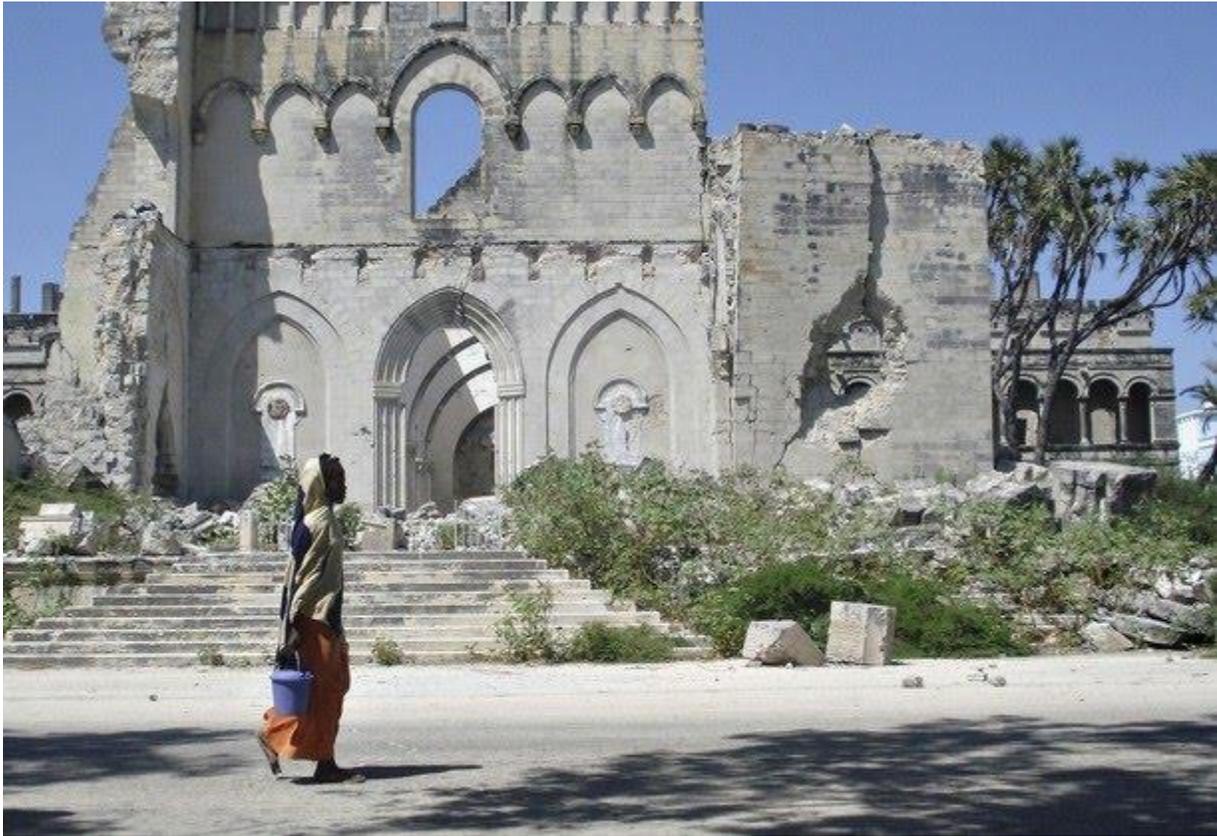
You are so right!

This is a great site for learning the amount of everything you might want to know, everywhere in the world. Facts or fiction?

<http://chartsbin.com/graph>

[What a treasure of a website! Thanks, SteveG! –SteveB]

<http://www.iangarrickmason.com/category/history/page/2/>



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

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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)