



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #165 — JUNE 21, 2012

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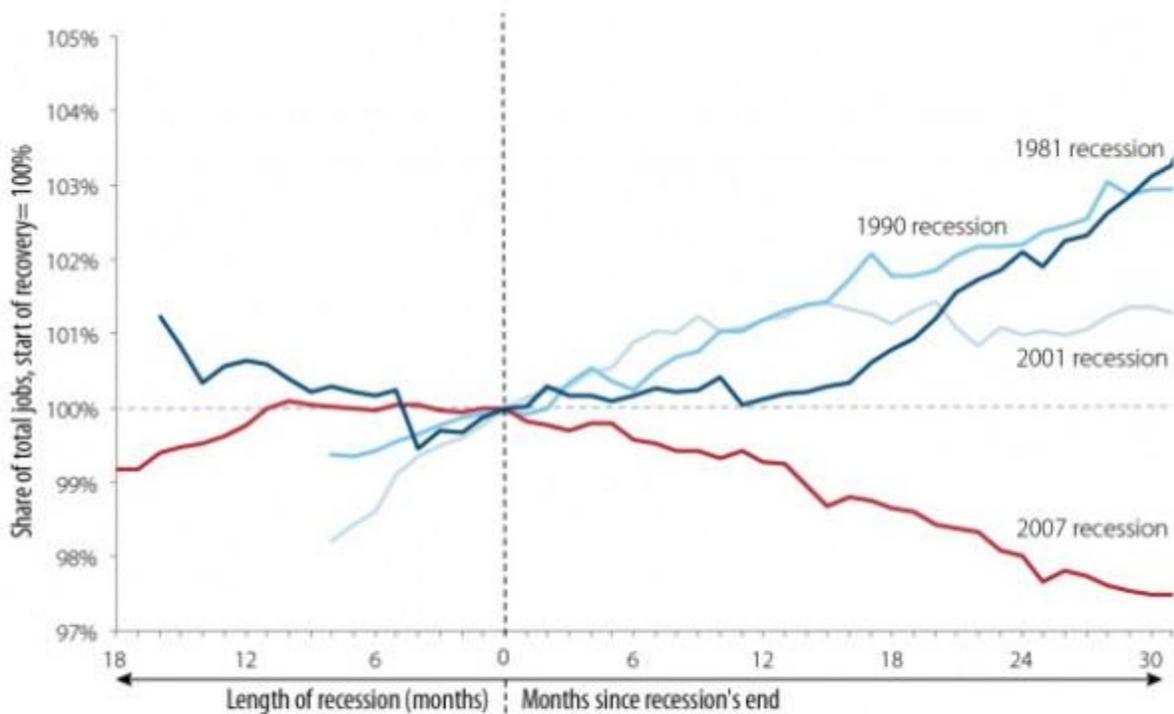
GOP Wants to Drive US Over the Cliff

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, June 21, 2012)

"A Secret the Republicans Know But Will Never Admit" by Michael Tomasky, The Daily Beast

June 11, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/06/11/a-secret-the-republicans-know-but-will-never-admit.html>)

Change in public-sector employment since the start of last four recoveries



Notes: Public data exclude temporary Census workers. The line for each recession begins at the official start of the recession, so the length of the line to the left of zero indicates the length of each recession.
Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Statistics public data series



Take a look, would you, at this very fascinating chart via Media Matters but originated by the Economic Policy Institute on public-sector job growth during recent American recessions.

In each of the three previous recent recessions of 1981, 1990 and 2001, the number of public-sector jobs increased during the darkest days. Now, first of all: hey, isn't it interesting that our three recent recessions started under Republican presidents? Huh.

At any rate, the chart shows you that in all those bleak periods, while the private sector was draining jobs, the public sector was gaining jobs. By about 1 percent in the 2001 recession, by 3 percent in the 1990 one, and by more than 3 percent in the 1981 one. Yes, as is often the case, Ronald Reagan was the most socialistic of the lot.

Why did this happen, even though the economy was contracting? Because the government kept spending money. You can "blame" the Democratic congresses that were in place if you want to, but there's no blame to be spread. This was a good thing. People were working and spending money. The increase in public payrolls was helping to offset the contraction of private ones.

Public-sector job loss this time, though, has contributed mightily to overall stagnation. EPI had much more to say on the subject in an excellent report issued last month. It's around 750,000 jobs we're down in the public sector.

Republicans know this. Even if they're sincere about smaller government, which is open to question in many cases, but even if they are, they understand enough about economics to know that a person working and making \$50,000 is doing more for the economy than a person not working. Whether that person is a teacher or a cop or a private-sector IT person, he is pumping money into the economy.

The Democrats have done their usual not-very-good job of making this an issue and putting the GOP on the defensive. You look at this chart and the ad writes itself. And yet, ads don't write themselves, because lots of good ones never seem to get written.

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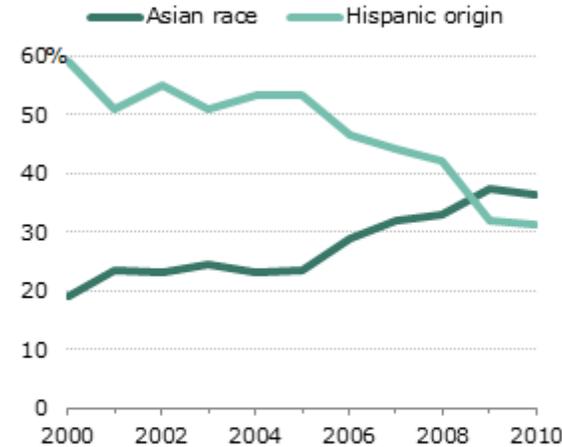
from "The Rise of Asian Americans" by Pew Social and Demographic Trends

June 19, 2012, (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/?src=prc-newsletter>)

"Asian Americans are the highest-income, best-educated and fastest-growing racial group in the United States. They are more satisfied than the general public with their lives, finances and the direction of the country, and they place more value than other Americans do on marriage, parenthood, hard work and career success, according to a comprehensive new nationwide survey by the Pew Research Center."

Meet the New Immigrants: Asians Overtake Hispanics

% of immigrants, by year of arrival, 2000-2010



Note: Based on total foreign-born population, including adults and children. Asians include mixed-race Asian population, regardless of Hispanic origin. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010 American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) files

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"A century ago, most Asian Americans were low-skilled, low-wage laborers crowded into ethnic enclaves and targets of official discrimination. Today they are the most likely of any major racial or ethnic group in America to live in mixed neighborhoods and to marry across racial lines. When newly minted medical school graduate Priscilla Chan married Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg last month, she joined the 37% of all recent Asian-American brides who wed a non-Asian groom."

[Continue...](#)

"Democrats, GOP Debate Political Non-Profits' Donors" by Fredreka Schouten, USA Today

June 19, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-06-19/nonprofits-campaign-donors-disclosure/55698330/1?csp=34news>)

(WASHINGTON) The advertising onslaught against Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill has been unrelenting — nearly \$7.1 million from outside groups determined to defeat the first-term Democrat in an election still five months away. Nearly all the money — \$6.8 million — has come from non-profit groups that don't disclose their donors' identities.

"It's scary because we are being swamped," said McCaskill, who has made criticizing the outside spending a centerpiece of her re-election bid. "If the American people weren't cynical enough about politics, this is going to make them even more cynical."

But voters are unlikely to learn more about those donors before November's election.

Conservatives in Congress have mounted an aggressive drive to block new proposals aimed at unmasking anonymous donations to groups such as Crossroads GPS— which is spending \$2 million this month alone on ads targeting McCaskill and two other Democratic Senate candidates. Crossroads GPS, affiliated with Republican strategist Karl Rove, does not have to reveal its contributors because it is a non-profit advocacy group, not a political action committee.

In a fiery speech last week, the Senate's top Republican, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, denounced a Democratic bill in Congress that would require non-profit political groups to reveal their funders and accused President Obama and his campaign of Nixon-style dirty tricks to restrict opponents' free speech.

The DISCLOSE Act, as the Democratic proposal is known, "is nothing less than an effort by the government itself to expose its critics to harassment and intimidation," McConnell told the conservative American Enterprise Institute. As evidence of disclosure's dangers, McConnell slammed an April 20 Obama campaign document hitting eight wealthy donors to Mitt Romney as an "old-school enemies list" and said an Idaho businessman on the list has been singled out as a "personal target."

McConnell was referring to Frank VanderSloot, the CEO of Melaleuca, described by the campaign as a "bitter foe of the gay rights moment," after he donated \$1 million to a pro-Romney super PAC. Super PACs disclose their contributors.

VanderSloot told *USA Today* he went through "living hell" and lost about 200 customers of his nutritional supplements company in the first two weeks after the list appeared. In the weeks since, he said, supporters have outnumbered detractors after conservative commentators have taken up his cause.

VanderSloot, however, said he doesn't oppose disclosure, but is more worried about journalists "spreading falsehoods" about him. "I believe the public deserves to know where the money is coming from," he said in an e-mail.

Obama campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt said McConnell is "running a cover-up operation for the special-interest donors attempting to buy the election."

This week, Obama campaign lawyer Robert Bauer urged Crossroads GPS to reveal its donors, saying it really is a political organization. He also filed a complaint against the group with the Federal Election Commission in an effort to force disclosure.

"Unless he's sending the same letter to the groups supporting Obama ... then this is an ideological witch hunt," Crossroads spokesman Jonathan Collegio said.

It could be months before the FEC takes up the complaint against Crossroads, and the DISCLOSE Act's prospects in Congress are dim — where it is unlikely to pass the Republican-controlled House. Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., the measure's primary champion, said McConnell's criticism is a "crass political move because he believes Republicans in Congress will benefit from the secret bankrolling of campaigns and television advertising."

McConnell "finds it interesting that when wealthy Democrats were giving, Democrats weren't complaining," his spokesman Don Stewart said Tuesday. "Now that the spending is more balanced, they are complaining."

The airwaves in several states crucial to the presidential and congressional contests have been saturated with political ads, driven in part by new super PACs that can raise and spend unlimited corporate and union money.

But non-profits are gearing up to play a larger role. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which does not publicly disclose its donors, plans to spend more than \$50 million on elections, Chamber President Tom Donohue recently told reporters. Americans For Prosperity, a conservative non-profit that doesn't reveal its donors, plans to spend \$100 million this year.

The stakes are high for both political parties. Democrats have a 53-seat majority in the 100-member Senate. McCaskill holds one of seven Democrat-held seats considered "tossups" by the non-partisan Cook Political Report.

So far, Democratic donors, such as Progressive Insurance founder Peter Lewis, have been slow to counter the Republican spending. Lewis, who spent \$25 million in the 2004 election, to oppose President George W. Bush, won't fund attack ads to help Democrats this year, his spokeswoman Jennifer Frutchy said in a statement. Instead, he plans to donate to think tanks and other groups to "build the progressive infrastructure." Lewis "finds the corrupting power of money offensive with its negativity and denigration of opponents," she said.

McCaskill, who will face the winner of an Aug. 7 GOP primary, said it will be hard to match the spending against her, but said: "I'm proud of a lot of wealthy donors on our side of the equation because they don't want to play in this cesspool."

20120620-03	09:09	SteveB	Fw: CREDO Action Action: Buy a <i>Citizens United</i> T-Shirt!
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from CREDO Action:

After Gov. Scott Walker's victory in Wisconsin, it's clear that Tea Party extremists won't give up easily.

The forces backing them are committed to spending millions — so we need to be equally committed to fighting back.

With the help of CREDO activists, we've already built the largest grassroots SuperPAC fighting Tea Party extremists, but we've got a long way to go.

Stand up to Tea Party extremism now. Contribute \$35 or more, and get your limited-edition CREDO SuperPAC "Overturn *Citizens United*" T-Shirt:

https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/overturnshirt?refcode=actblue_homepage.

If you don't want a shirt, you can still chip in \$5 or more to help us defeat the Tea Party Ten.

We know that one of the best ways to upend Tea Party extremism is by overturning the horrendous *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision that has allowed Tea Party radicals to take Congress by storm.

CREDO SuperPAC organizers and volunteers are building local grassroots campaigns, and making a major impact against some of the worst of the worst across the country.

But it will take all of us to build a campaign that can take down these Tea Party extremists.

Show your support now with a contribution of \$35 or more and get your limited-edition CREDO SuperPAC T-shirt. Or just chip in \$5 — every contribution helps.

Thanks for standing with us, Mudcat Arnold, Campaign Manager, CREDO SuperPAC,
http://act.credoaction.com/take_down/

20120620-04 09:53 SteveB Video: "Philadelphia: Bed Bug Capital of America?"

Video: "Philadelphia: Bed Bug Capital of America?" by Yahoo! News

June 19, 2012, (http://screen.yahoo.com/philadelphia-bed-bug-capital-of-america-29722190.html?pb_list=23dce613-c500-43f0-9134-70e58b73187a)

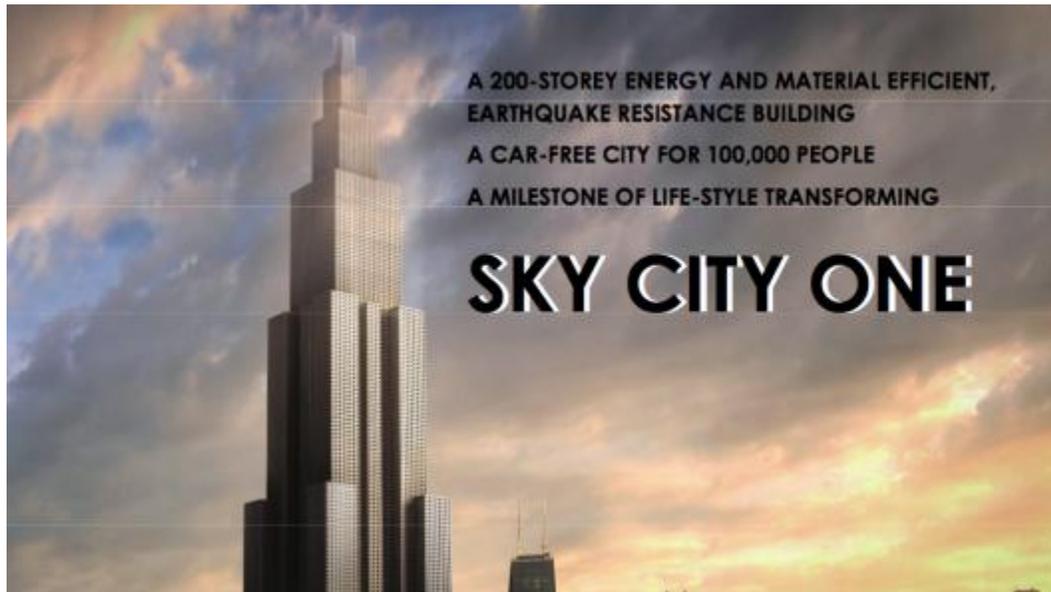
[At least we don't have these critters in Bolivia—yet! –SteveB]

20120620-05 09:57 SteveB "World's Tallest Building to Be Built in Only 90 Days"

Hurry up and wait! / Doesn't anything cool happen in America, the capital of school shootings, anymore?

"World's Tallest Building to Be Built in Only 90 Days" by James Holloway, GizMag

June 18, 2012, (http://www.gizmag.com/broad-sky-city-one/22983/?utm_source=Gizmag+Subscribers&utm_campaign=dc36ad1a56-UA-2235360-4&utm_medium=email)





Chinese construction company Broad Group has announced ambitious plans to construct the world's tallest skyscraper in an implausibly swift 90 days. If the target is met, the 838-meter (2,750-ft) "Sky City One" will take only a twentieth of the time that the Burj Khalifa, the world's current tallest building, took to construct, and will stand 10 meters (33 feet) taller still upon completion. The secret to the rapid construction is prefabrication. Approximately 95 percent of the building will have been put together in modular form before work even commences on site.

Broad has form in the area of rapid prefab construction. The company, which primarily makes air conditioning, has already demonstrated its Broad Sustainable Building (BSB) concept, albeit at a much smaller scale. It built the 15-story New Ark Hotel prototype in one week and a 6-story demo pavilion in a single day. Broad is clearly confident that the SBS principle can be applied to the 220-story Sky City One, perhaps taking confidence from a 30-story prototype withstanding a simulated "magnitude 9 earthquake."

Broad has described Sky City One is a self-contained earthquake-resistant carless city which will not only accommodate approximately 100,000 people, but provide them with retail and leisure facilities too.

According to CNN the Sky City One will contain 1,000,000 sq m (10,800,000 sq ft) of usable floor space and its 220 floors will be connected by 104 separate elevators. Broad CEO Zhang Yue reportedly claims that the tower will consume only one fifth of the energy of a conventional building of its size (if you can call any building this tall conventional) due to sustainable design approaches built into the BSB concept including 15-cm (6-inch) thick exterior walls and quadruple glazing, both of which up Sky City's insulation.

CNN reports that the the Sky City One is projected to cost U.S. \$628 million: positively cheap when compared to the \$1.5 billion Burj Khalifa. Work is due to commence on site in November 2012 with completion due the following January, though final approval from Chinese authorities is yet to be granted.

[20120620-06](#) 10:03 SteveG Fw: Word Origins for Oldies

NOW THIS IS A REAL EDUCATION

Where did "pi*s poor" come from?

We older people need to learn something new every day... Just to keep the grey matter tuned up.

Where did "Pi*s Poor" come from? Interesting History.

They used to use urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot And then once it was full it was taken and sold to the tannery... If you had to do this to survive you were "Pi*s Poor".

But worse than that were the really poor folk who couldn't even afford to buy a pot... They "didn't have a pot to pi*s in" and were the lowest of the low.

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be. Here are some facts about the 1500s:

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!"

Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, "It's raining cats and dogs."

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying, "Dirt poor." The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery In the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, It would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way. Hence: a thresh hold. (Getting quite an education, aren't you?)

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme: "Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old".

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could, "bring home the bacon." They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and chew the fat.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous [in Br.].

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the upper crust.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out

on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom; "of holding a wake".

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house, and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift.) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be, "saved by the bell" or was "considered a dead ringer". And that's the truth.

Now, whoever said History was boring!!! So get out there and educate someone! Share these facts with a friend. Inside every older person is a younger person wondering, 'What the heck happened?' We'll be friends until we are old and senile. Then we'll be new friends. "Smile", it gives your face something to do!

20120620-08	11:05 Pam	Re: Word Origins for Oldies (reply to SteveG, above)
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Is this all really true? If so, it's fascinating.

20120620-07	10:09 SteveB	"Poisoned Search Results: More of a Malware Threat Than You Probably Think"
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"Poisoned Search Results: More of a Malware Threat Than You Probably Think" by Tim Sprinkle, Yahoo! News

June 19, 2012, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/the-exchange/poisoned-search-results-more-malware-threat-probably-think-150643365.html>)

Be careful what you click on when searching the Web; the international cybercrime community is coming for you.

That's the message from Internet security firm Blue Coat, which earlier this year found that poisoned search engine results remain the number one malware threat on the Web, accounting for a full 40 percent of all cyberattacks in 2011. The popular bait-and-switch tactic is nearly four times more likely to snag unsuspecting users than the once common email-based approach, which now only accounts for 11 percent of attacks. Social networking rounds out the top three threats with 6.5 percent.

The Blue Coat report was based on an analysis of the Web traffic of more than 75 million users.

"Searching is at least as dangerous as going into your email in-box and clicking on things," Chris Larsen, Blue Coat's chief malware expert, recently told USA Today.

The scam works like this: The bad guys set up themed "bait sites" using terms that are likely to show up in search engine results, as a way to trick users into visiting their sites. When the unsuspecting user clicks on a poisoned result in their search engine, thinking they are going to a legitimate site related to their search, they are served a site designed by the phishers to gather their financial information or get them to download a piece of malware or otherwise fall victim to whatever scam they are running. In many cases, users don't even know they have been victimized until it's too late.

It's the sheer scale of search engine traffic that attracts the scammers. With millions of users clicking on Google and Bing search results every hour of every day, sooner or later someone is going to slip up and visit a malware site.

Still, the study revealed some interesting trends in search poisoning strategy. The conventional wisdom is that cyber criminals are more likely to focus on major news events or celebrity stories that would generate lots of traffic for their sites, but in fact they seem to prefer to target searches to terms that only a few people will be searching for to give themselves a better chance of showing up at the top of the search results page. People don't expect poisoned

search results when looking for obscure refrigerator parts or Christmas decorating ideas, Larsen said, so their guard is down and they are more likely to click.

And, unfortunately for everyday users, poisoned search results are far from rare. There were 26 million new malware samples reported in 2011, according to the Anti-Phishing Working Group, and nearly 40 percent of the world's computers are thought to be infected. According to Blue Coat, 1 in every 142 searches last year led to a malicious link, while research by Web security firm Symantec has found that as many as one in three search results in its studies are poisoned. Either way, the odds heavily favor the bad guys.

Case in point: Earlier this year, search results related to the popular Hunger Games series of books and movies were poisoned on a large scale by cyber criminals, setting off international warnings from Web security firms.

So what can average users do to protect themselves from the risks of poisoned search results? Awareness is the key, as is a basic understanding of what legitimate Web addresses look like. Here are a few suggestions from Blue Coat:

- Scan the site description — Google and Bing display two lines of "flavor text" alongside their text search results, which can provide clues to the site's provenance. "Look for disjointed, random text, like it was mashed up by a computer (because it was)."
- Check out the domain name — "Is it one you've heard of? Does it seem to have something to do with the topic you were searching for?"
- Preview before clicking — "Google now has a 'preview' feature, where text-search results have a little button to the right. If you hover your mouse on it, it will display an image of the page. This lets you see if the page 'looks legit.'"
- Know your top level domains (TLDs) — "There are a lot of two-letter TLDs assigned to specific countries: .RU = Russia, .IN = India, etc. If you're searching for a U.S. culture topic, like Halloween costume ideas, or Thanksgiving recipes, or Christmas decorations and your search returns results on .RU or .IN, etc, ask yourself if it's likely that a site hosted there would really have good content about your search topic."
- Use protection — [Condoms? --SteveB] It's always important to protect your computer with antivirus and antimalware software, which will block many of the malicious infrastructures that run search engine poisoning attacks. [Oh! --SteveB]

"Super PACs and Secret Money Destroying America's Democracy" by Jim Hightower, NationofChange

June 20, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/super-pacs-and-secret-money-destroying-america-s-democracy-1340199746>)



Leave it to Bill Moyers, one of America's most useful citizens, to sum up our country's present political plight in a succinct metaphor: "Our elections have replaced horse racing as the sport of kings. These kings are multibillionaire corporate moguls who by divine right — not of God, but (of the Supreme Court's) *Citizens United* decision — are now buying politicians like so much pricey horseflesh."

Pricey, indeed. In its disgraceful, democracy-crushing judicial edict of January 2010, the Court took the big advantage that America's corporate elite already had in politics — and super-sized it. This is the first presidential election to be run under the rigged rules invented by the Court's five-man corporatist majority, and we can see the effects of this ruling.

For instance, we saw in this year's Republican nominating contests that a new, supremely authorized critter not only arose, but instantly became the dominant force in the game, allowing a handful of extremely wealthy players to shove their selfish agenda ahead of all other interests in the election process: super PACs!

These are secretive money funnels that various political partisans have set up to take advantage of the court's implausible finding that the Constitution allows corporations and super-rich individuals to put unlimited sums of money into "independent" campaigns to elect or defeat whomever they choose. (I should note that the justices' ruling was a model of fairness in that it also allows poor people to put unlimited amounts of their money into super PACs.)

These new entities amassed and spent vastly more than the campaigns of the actual candidates. Nearly all of this super PAC cash was used to flood the airwaves with biblical levels of nauseatingly negative attack ads, further debasing our nation's democratic process. Thanks for that, Supremes.

The Court's surreal rationale for allowing this special-interest distortion of elections was that super PACs would be entirely independent from the candidates they back. In his *Citizens United* opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy blithely wrote, "We now conclude that independent expenditures, including those made by corporations, do not give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption."

Wow, if ignorance is bliss, he must be ecstatic!

Of course, these justices knew what they were doing: enthroning the wealthiest Americans, not merely to reign supreme over the political process, but also to control government.

In a nation of 313 million people and an electorate of 217 million, fewer than a hundred uber-wealthy individuals and corporations (a tiny fraction of a fraction of even the 1 percent) shaped the GOP presidential debate and nomination to their personal benefit.

While the conventional media dwelled on such sideshows as the snarling nastiness among some of the candidates and whether or not Romney could get any love from the GOP's hard-right, Bible-pounding, social-issues faction, the million-dollar-plus givers to the super PACs were having one-on-one conversations with each candidate "in quiet rooms" (as Mitt Romney so-genteelly put it).

Super PACs are only Wave One of the financial tsunami sweeping over America's politics this year. Wave Two, also authorized by *Citizens United*, will be even larger, for it allows Fortune 500 giants to siphon as much money as they want directly out of their corporate vaults and pour it into campaigns — while keeping the sources of the money secret from voters.

These totally secret corporate political funds are laundered through outfits organized under Section 501(c)(4) of the tax code as (WARNING: The following fact is so stupefying that it can cause temporary insanity in sensible people) nonprofit "social welfare organizations" engaged in charitable work! Never mind that the welfare of the plutocracy is the cause being served by this perverse philanthropy.

At present, the largest of these is Crossroads GPS, created by the noted political altruist and GOP hatchet man Karl Rove. It alone expects to raise \$240 million from undisclosed corporate interests and spend nearly all of it on venomous attack ads to defeat Barack Obama this fall. You'd need more than a GPS to find all the sources of Crossroads' cash, but it's known that nearly 90 percent of the \$77 million it raised in the last six months of 2011 came from a couple dozen donors chipping in from \$1 million to \$10 million each.

The unlimited special-interest money gush into American politics dethrones democratic rule, corrupts government, increases both wealth disparity and social injustice, and destroys essential public trust in our society's commitment to fairness.

Super PACs are but one of the pipelines allowing corporate money to drown America's historic ideal of egalitarian self-government. The secret (c)(4) corporate "charities," the corporate "bundlers" who collect billions for the candidates' campaigns, the myriad fundraising committees run by both political parties, the sham "foundations" that permit corporate favor-seekers to make tax-deductible donations to elected officials — these and all other channels of private purchase must be capped if America is ever to have a government of, by and for the people.

20120620-10	16:34	Ben	"Leadership Issues Plagued Rebel Alliance, Prolonged War"
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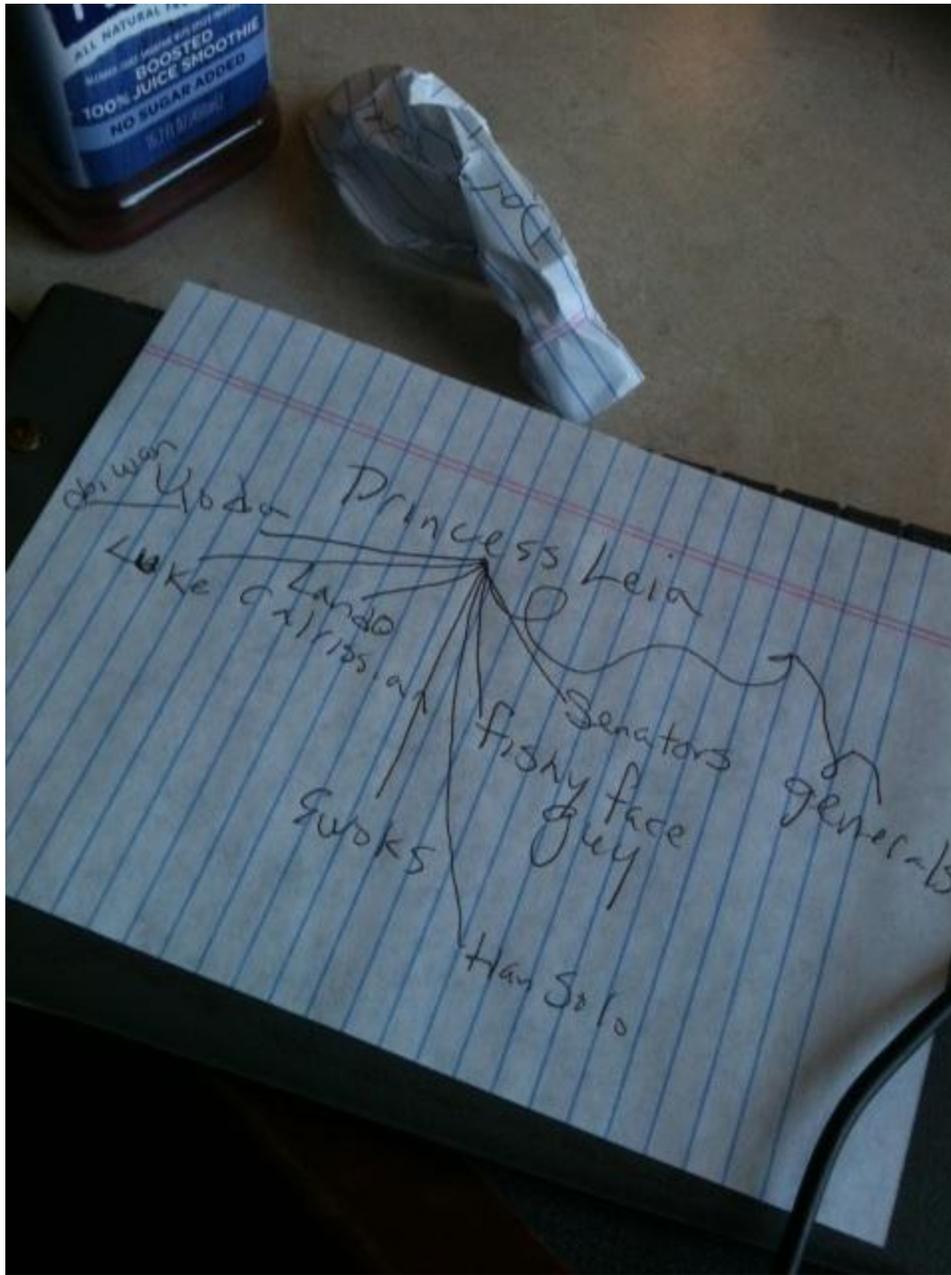
A colleague called this blog essay to my attention, as I do to yours.

["Leadership Issues Plagued Rebel Alliance, Prolonged War" posted by piedpatter](#)

Feb. 9, 2012 (<http://piedpatter.wordpress.com/2012/02/09/leadership-issues-plagued-rebel-alliance-prolonged-war/>)

Ron Ashkenas writes in his article "Why People Micromanage", "Over the past few decades I've worked with hundreds of managers, and many complain that they work for micromanagers. But strangely I don't recall anyone who ever admitted to being one." The problem with this approach is beautifully articulated in this *Avoiding Micromanaging* quote, "Micromanagers take perfectly positive attributes – an attention to detail and a hands-on attitude – to the extreme. Either because they're control-obsessed, or because they feel driven to push everyone around them to success, micromanagers risk disempowering their colleagues. They ruin their colleagues' confidence, hurt their performance, and frustrate them to the point where they quit." This was really what lay at

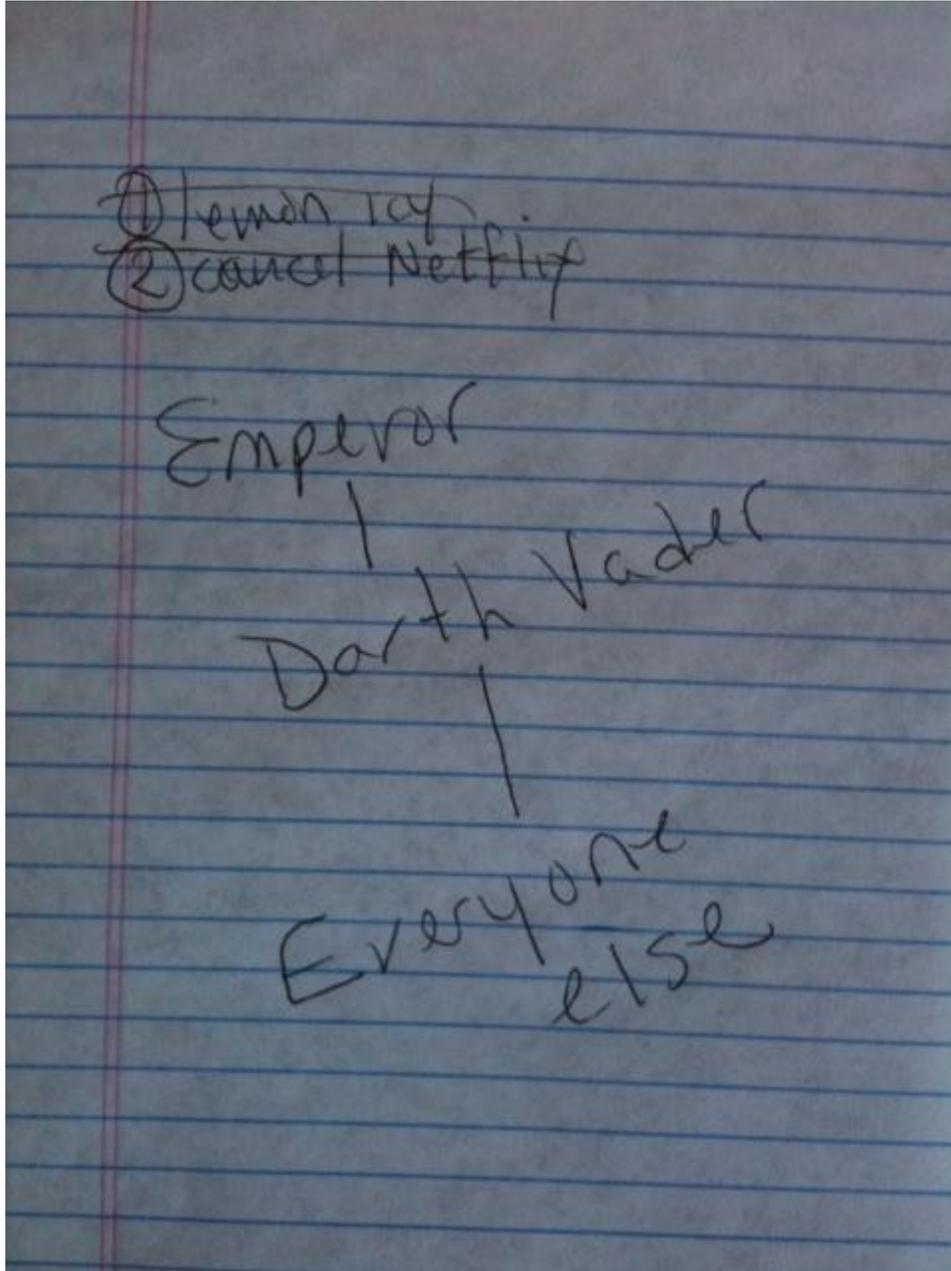
the heart of the Rebel Alliance's failure to secure victory for so long. A micromanager whose management style eventually drove Han Solo to quit. If you look at the organizational chart below (not comprehensive), you can see there was only one person in charge of like everyone, and it made no logical sense to have her in charge.



Why was Princess Leia briefing X-Wing fighters about the tactical assault on the Death Star? (h/t Family Guy for pointing out the absurdity). Was she a pilot? Did she pick off rat thingy's in Beggars Canyon back home that weren't much bigger than 2 meters? No. She was adopted by some Senator and handed the title of Princess, and it was never made clear why. (Don't send emails explaining how this happened, I don't really care)

Had the rebels had a better sense of who was in charge, they would have found the confidence they needed to succeed and push through to victory sooner. One author said it this way, "Poor organization structure and work processes (in other words poor organization design) stop many organization's from achieving high performance. Unfortunately many leaders think of organization design as something done by the H.R boffins." Perhaps Princess Leia felt the same way, she would just let the boffins take care of the rebel's performance issues. Or maybe she simply failed to see her role in the problem. Whatever the reason, the question remains, why the hell was she in charge?

Let's now take a look at the Empire. You'll recall they had some strategic victories against the rebels, Hoth not the least of which. But why should it be that they had such marked successes? They were after all evil. Well, they had some distinct advantages, the Death Star for one. But they also had an impressive organizational structure, where the chain of command was clearly defined. See below:



Unless you were stupid or dead, no one could have been confused by this. It was simple and straightforward. The other advantage was the ability of the Emperor to delegate responsibility to Darth Vader. He knew the dark side of the Force was strong with Vader, this skill set allowed the Emperor to build the evil bond of trust which was so vital to the mission of crushing the rebels. Finally, the Death Star was tidy. Kyra Sheahan puts it this way, "Working in an office environment that is neat and tidy will reduce the amount of time you spend hunting files down, and increase your ability to get things done." The insistence of the leadership to keep the Death Star clean was evident on all levels, from the garbage dumping before jumping into hyperdrive, to cleaning up dead generals after Vader Force choked them.

In the end, the rebels were victorious. Their righteous cause and huge assist from Wookies and teddy bears could not be thwarted no matter how illogical and token Princess Leia was as a leader. She did unfreeze Han Solo and kill

Jabba the Hut in a space bikini, to her credit, but her failure to step out of the way, only prolonged the war unnecessarily. Had she done so, we may have all been spared the Ewoks. Why even have those things? WHY?

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SteveB

Re: "Leadership Issues Plagued Rebel Alliance, Prolonged War" (reply to Ben, above)

Well...interesting that the author could possibly draw contrasts and conclusions between the two organizational charts, which are--in essence--precisely identical, with exactly the same degree of micromanaging employed, from what we can tell. I guess that's part of the joke?

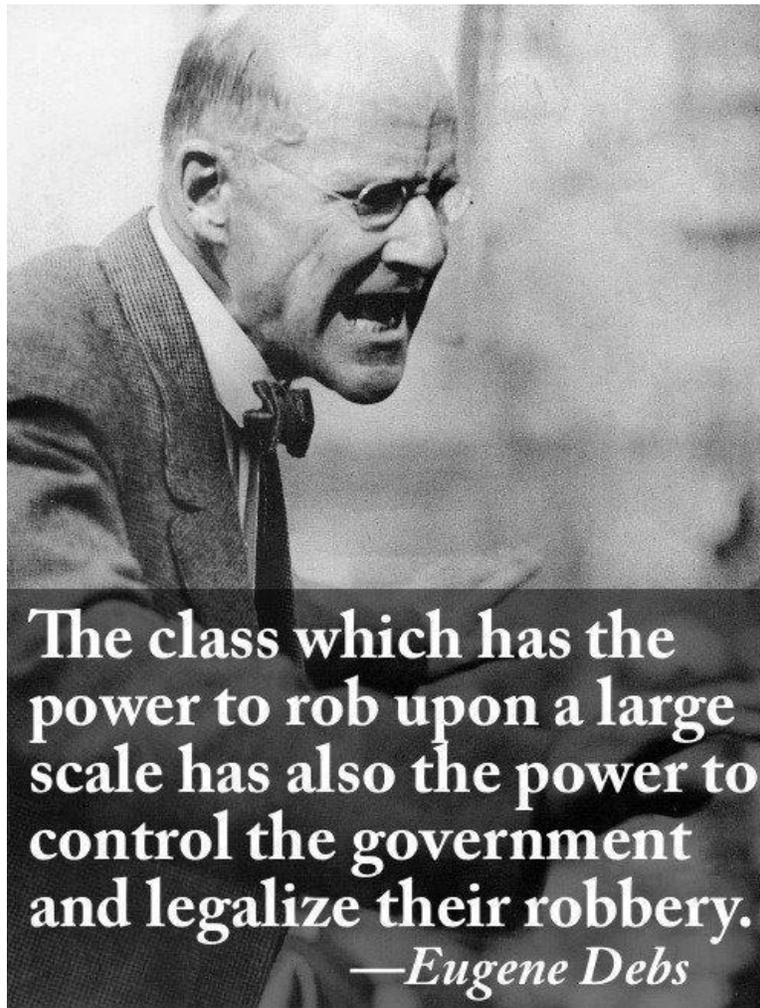
I liked this a lot!

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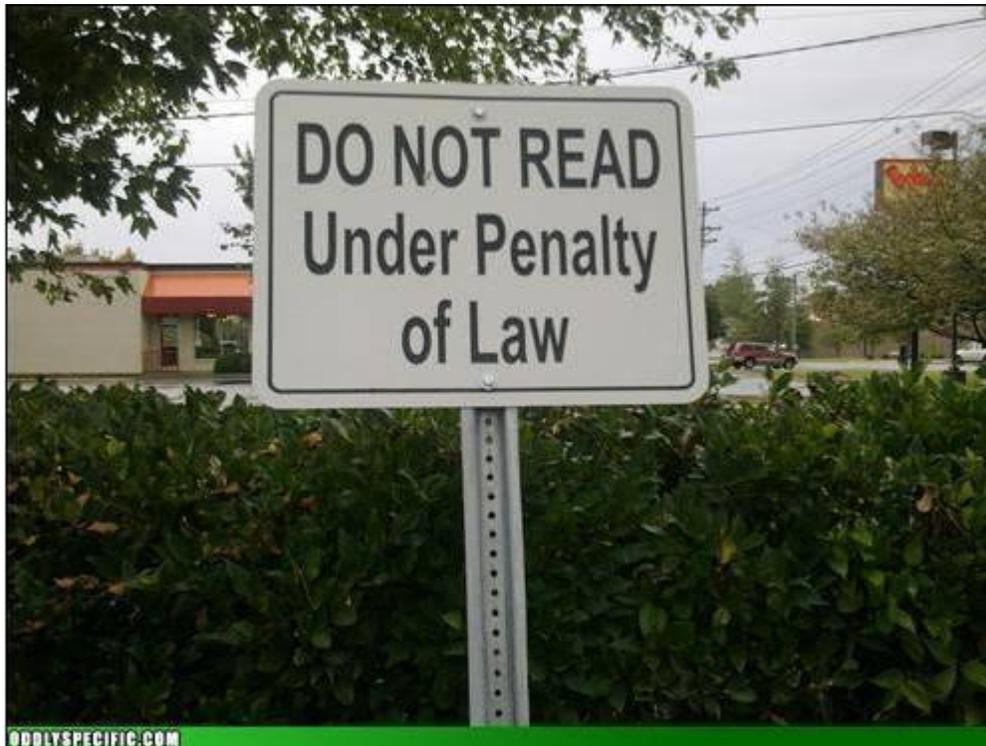
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SteveG

Quote: Eugene Debs on the Power of Money



[And this sure seems to be what has happened, huh? –SteveB]



<http://newsthatmattersnot.com/2010/01/worlds-shortest-building-burj-mumbai.html>

The Burj Mumbai's side view. A dog is seen here patrolling the world's most hi-tech sh*t-ground.



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

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