



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #170 — JUNE 28, 2012

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Hoping Against Hope

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



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20120627-01	09:29	SteveB	Re: 'Durable' Music from the 60's & 70's (reply to David, FotM Neslwttter #169)
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Well...I'm familiar with those Dylan songs, but he just doesn't break into my playlist. I'll dip back in and let you know what I think, as soon as I have a chance.

In the meantime, I want to see both you and Gomez when we come to the States next spring, hopefully at the same time. In fact, I'm thinking about staying at your house for a couple of weeks.

Anyway, I'm keeping too busy right now getting our little cookie business up and running. Just rented the "store". It's kinda cool to have essentially zero competition and great products, yet the "concept" is known, but just barely. We're using a "pyramid scheme" for distribution, and there is an intense love in the air for all things American (though the government hates us). We're not anything in Spanish. We're "gourmet cookies". We shall see...

Take care and keep listening (and see if you can't get a little more political, haha).

20120627-02	12:19	Art	Fw: Bucket Lists
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Don't normally do these and send out, but this one kind of fun. Seems to me we should add a few things.

- () Rode out a hurricane. [I do want to do this one, but not at sea. --SteveB]
- (X) Survived a tornado. [I did this once, but I was about three months old and don't remember it very well. -- SteveB]
- () Visited Mecca
- (Yes. yes, yes, no, no) Visited Petra, Taj Mahal, The Pyramids, Ankor Watt, Machu Picchu
- (X) Parachuted out of an airplane [Always wanted to. Never have, but still want to do this and visit Cuba and Mecca, so I can learn how my beloved friends, the communists and Muslims, do it. --SteveB]
- () Drove through the Khyber Pass
- () Passed through the Suez and Panama Canals
- (X) Spent a spring day in Paris

Feel free to add a few.

from a friend

Bucket List...Hit forward and place an x by all the things you've done, remove the x from the ones you have not, and send it to your friends (including me). Whether you've done this before or not, be a good sport. Do it again!

This is your life:

- Shot a gun...
- Gone on a blind date....
- Skipped school without excuse
- Watched someone die...
- Visited Africa
- Visited Canada
- Visited Hawaii
- Visited Cuba
- Visited Europe
- Visited South America
- Visited Las Vegas
- Visited Mexico .
- Visited Florida
- Visited Caribbean
- Seen the Grand Canyon
- Flown on a plane
- Served on a jury
- Been lost...
- Traveled to the opposite side of the country?
- Visited Washington, DC
- Swam in the Ocean
- Cried yourself to sleep.
- Played cops and robbers
- Played cowboys and Indians
- Recently colored with crayons
- Sang Karaoke
- Sang a solo or duet in church...
- Paid for a meal with coins only
- Made prank phone calls...
- Laughed until some beverage came out of your nose
- Caught a snowflake on your tongue
- Had children
- Had a pet
- Been skinny-dipping outdoors..
- Been fishing
- Been boating...
- Been downhill skiing
- Been water skiing
- Been camping in a trailer/RV
- Been camping in a tent
- Flown in a small 4-seater airplane
- Flown in a glider
- flown in a helicopter
- Flown in a hot air balloon
- Rode a horse
- Walked on/Saw a glacier
- Driven a motorcycle/been a passenger
- Been bungee-jumping
- Gone to a drive-in movie
- Done something that could have killed you-but did not

- (x) Done something that you will regret for the rest of your life
- (x) Visited Asia
- () Rode an elephant
- (x) Eaten just cookies or cake for dinner
- (x) Been on TV
- () Stolen any traffic signs
- (x) Been in a car accident
- (x) Donated blood
- () Gone Curling

20120627-03 12:36 Art "Republicans Support 'Obamacare' by Any Other Name"

Great article in yesterday's *WP*, page 11, on how this ever got to the Supreme's. I tried but could not get it to copy. In the beginning virtually all the legal community said it would never go the Supreme Court. Article covers how the Republicans literally did a 180 degree on individual mandate and somehow convinced everyone this was a constitutional violation issue. Even today something like 19 out of 21 constitutional legal scholars say it is not a violation of the Constitution, yet over half of them also feel it will be struck down. Amazing.

This not the article but yet another one which shows how stupid this all is. We are really dumbing down.

"Republicans Support 'Obamacare' by Any Other Name" by Greg Sargent, The Cap Times

June 27, 2012, (http://host.madison.com/ct/news/opinion/column/greg-sargent-republicans-support-obamacare-by-any-other-name/article_c9875c76-bfb6-11e1-9c58-0019bb2963f4.html)

For Republicans, nothing captures what they loathe about Barack Obama's presidency more perfectly than "Obamacare" — it's Big Government run amok and an existential threat to American liberty. But it turns out Republicans like what's actually in the law.

The Reuters-Ipsos poll taken June 19-23 found that "Obamacare" remains deeply unpopular: 56 percent of Americans oppose the law, vs. only 44 percent who favor it. But the poll also found that strong majorities favor the law's individual provisions — including solid majorities of Republicans.

I asked Ipsos for a partisan breakdown of the data. Key points:

- Eighty percent of Republicans favor "creating an insurance pool where small businesses and uninsured have access to insurance exchanges to take advantage of large group pricing benefits." That point is backed by 75 percent of respondents who self-describe as independents.
- Fifty-seven percent of Republicans support "providing subsidies on a sliding scale to aid individuals and families who cannot afford health insurance." That same sentiment is backed by 67 percent of independents.
- Fifty-four percent of Republicans favor "requiring companies with more than 50 employees to provide insurance for their employees." That idea is backed by 75 percent of independents.
- Fifty-two percent of Republicans favor "allowing children to stay on parents' insurance until age 26." Sixty-nine percent of independents agree.
- Seventy-eight percent of Republicans support "banning insurance companies from denying coverage for pre-existing conditions"; 86 percent of Republicans favor "banning insurance companies from cancelling policies because a person becomes ill." Those points are backed by 82 percent and 87 percent of independents, respectively.

And one provision that isn't backed by a majority of Republicans? The one "expanding Medicaid to families with incomes less than \$30,000 per year."

"Most Republicans want to have good health coverage," Ipsos research director Chris Jackson told me. "They just don't necessarily like what it is Obama is doing."

Bottom line: Big numbers of Republicans and independents favor regulation of the health insurance system. But the law has become so defined by the individual mandate — not to mention the president himself — that public sentiment on the actual reforms has been drowned out. It's another sign of the conservative messaging triumph in this fight and Democrats' failure to make the case for the law.

These data also suggest that if the law is struck down, Democrats might be able to salvage at least something from the wreckage by refocusing the debate on the individual reforms they have been championing — and what, if anything, Republicans would replace them with.

20120627-04	13:16	SteveB	From the Right: "In Praise of Discrimination"
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"In Praise of Discrimination" by John Stossel, *Human Events*

June 27, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/06/27/john-stossel-in-praise-of-discrimination/>)

I'm scared.

I fear that even if the Supreme Court overrules most of Obamacare (or did already, by the time you read this), Republicans will join Democrats in restoring "good" parts of the law, like the requirement that insurance companies cover kids up to age 26 and every American with a pre-existing condition.

Those parts of Obamacare are *popular*. People *like* getting what they think is free stuff. But requiring coverage to age 26 makes policies cost more.

Even Bill O'Reilly lectures me that government should ban discrimination against those with pre-existing conditions. Most Americans agree with him. Who likes discrimination? Racial discrimination was one of the ugliest parts of American history. None of us wants to be discriminated against. But discrimination is part of freedom. We discriminate when we choose our friends or our spouse, or when we choose what we do with our time.

Above all, discrimination is what makes insurance work. An insurance regime where everyone pays the same amount is called "community rating." That sounds fair. No more cruel discrimination against the obese or people with cancer. But community rating is as destructive as ordering flood insurance companies to charge me nothing extra to insure my very vulnerable beach house, or ordering car insurance companies to charge Lindsay Lohan no more than they charge you. Such one-size-fits-all rules take away insurance companies' best tool: risk-based pricing. Risk-based pricing encourages us to take better care of ourselves.

Car insurance works because companies reward good drivers and charge the Lindsay Lohans more. If the state forces insurance companies to stop discriminating, that kills the business model.

[But we don't all have to drive. Unfortunately, we do all have to live. (Or, from the Republican perspective, maybe not!) –SteveB]

No-discrimination insurance isn't insurance. It's welfare. If the politicians' plan was to create another government welfare program, they ought to own up to that instead of hiding the cost.

Obama -- and the Clintons before him -- expressed outrage that insurance companies charged people different rates based on their risk profiles. They want everyone covered for the same "fair" price.

The health insurance industry was happy to play along. They even offered to give up on gender differences. Women go to the doctor more often than men and spend more on medicines. Their lifetime medical costs are much higher, and so it makes all the sense in the world to charge women higher premiums. But Sen. John Kerry pandered, saying, "The disparity between women and men in the individual insurance market is just plain wrong, and it has to change!" The industry caved. The president of its trade group, Karen M. Ignagni, said that disparities "should be eliminated."

Caving was safer than fighting the president and Congress, and caving seemed to provide the industry with benefits. Insurance companies wouldn't have to work as hard. They wouldn't have to carefully analyze risk. They'd be partners with government -- fat and lazy, another sleepy bureaucracy feeding off the welfare state. Alcoholics, drug addicts and the obese won't have to pay any more than the rest of us.

But this just kills off a useful part of insurance: encouraging healthy behavior. Charging heavy drinkers more for insurance gives them one more incentive to quit. "No-discrimination" pricing makes health care costs rise even faster. Is it too much to expect our rulers to understand this?

Of course, the average citizen doesn't understand either. When I argue that medical insurance makes people indifferent to costs, I get online comments like: "I guess the 47 million people who don't have health care should just die, right, John?"

The truth is, almost all people do get health care, even if they don't have health insurance. Hospitals rarely turn people away; Medicaid and charities pay for care; some individuals pay cash; some doctors forgive bills. I wish people would stop conflating the terms "health care," "health insurance" and "Obamacare." Reporters ask guests things like: "Should Congress repeal health care?" I sure don't want anyone's health care repealed.

Reporters also routinely called Obamacare health "reform." But the definition of reform is: making something better. More government control won't do that. We should call politicians' insurance demands "big intrusive complex government micromanagement."

Let the private sector work. Let it discriminate.

20120627-06	13:47	Art	"How Republicans Made It Possible for the Supreme Court to Rule Against the Mandate"
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Good read. Painful to extract.

"How Republicans Made It Possible for the Supreme Court to Rule Against the Mandate" by Ezra Klein, *The Washington Post*

June 25, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/how-republicans-made-it-possible-for-the-supreme-court-to-rule-against-the-mandate/2012/06/25/gJQA0wFw2V_story.html)

It wasn't easy for Barack Obama to persuade David Axelrod to take him on as a client. It took years, actually. But there was a reason Obama wanted Axelrod to run his campaigns. Axelrod knew how to get black candidates elected by white voters. In fact, he had a whole theory about it.

In a 2008 profile of Axelrod in the *New Republic*, Jason Zengerle quoted Ken Snyder, a Democratic consultant and Axelrod protege, on his mentor's approach. "David felt there almost had to be a permission structure set up for certain white voters to consider a black candidate." The "permission structure" relied heavily on "third-party authentication" — endorsements from respected figures or institutions that the targeted voters admired.

If you think back to the 2008 campaign, Axelrod was slowly building this permission structure around Obama. Right before Super Tuesday, Axelrod rolled out the endorsements of Ted and Caroline Kennedy. Right before the election, he rolled out Colin Powell. The timing and nature of the endorsements were meant to make an African American

candidate with an international upbringing and the name Barack Hussein Obama into someone that Ohio steelworkers could feel comfortable voting for. If Ted Kennedy and Colin Powell can back this guy, so can you.

But permission structures aren't just for elections. Over the past two years, the Republican Party has slowly been building a permission structure for the five Republicans on the Supreme Court to feel comfortable doing something nobody thought they could do: Violate the existing understanding of the commerce clause and, in perhaps the most significant moment of judicial activism since the New Deal, overturn either all or part of the Affordable Care Act.

The first step was perhaps the hardest: The Republican Party had to take an official and unanimous stand against the constitutionality of the individual mandate. Typically, it's not that difficult for the opposition party to oppose the least popular element in the majority party's signature initiative. But the individual mandate was a policy idea Republicans had thought of in the late 1980s and supported for two decades. They had to, in effect, persuade every Republican to say that the policy they had been supporting was an unconstitutional assault on liberty.

They succeeded. In December 2009, every Senate Republican voted to call the individual mandate unconstitutional. They did this even though a number of them had their names on bills that included an individual mandate.

The unity among Senate Republicans reflected a unity among all the institutions associated with the Republican Party. Fox News and right-wing talk radio pushed the idea that the mandate was unconstitutional. Republican attorneys general began pushing the idea that the individual mandate was unconstitutional. Conservative think tanks — including the Heritage Foundation, which arguably brought the mandate to Washington and the Republican Party in 1989 — began releasing a steady stream of material arguing that the mandate was unconstitutional. Conservative legal scholars began developing arguments showing that the individual mandate was unconstitutional. Within a matter of months, the fact that the individual mandate was unconstitutional was as much a part of Republican Party dogma as "no new taxes."

All of this forced the controversy over the individual mandate into the mainstream media, too. After all, if one of America's two major political parties thinks the most significant health reform since Medicare is unconstitutional, well, that's a story!

With the Republican Party on board, the news media interested and the public confused, the next step was the legal system. Conservatives filed 26 cases against the Affordable Care Act, ensuring that they would get a hearing in dozens of district courts. Judge Henry Hudson, a Republican appointee who was heavily invested in a Republican consulting firm called Campaign Solutions, was the first to rule against the law. Judge Roger Vinson, another Republican appointee, backed him up. In a pattern that would be repeated over and over again as the law proceeded through the court system, Vinson and Hudson's rulings got vastly more media attention than the much larger number of instances in which district judges ruled for the bill or threw the challenges out of court. The result? Polls began showing a majority of Americans thought the mandate was unconstitutional.

The effort had setbacks, too. On the appellate level, two of the brightest stars in the conservative legal firmament ruled in the law's favor. Orin Kerr, a law professor at George Washington University and a former clerk for Justice Anthony Kennedy, told me, "the two top choices for Supreme Court picks on the Republican side are probably Brett Kavanaugh and Jeff Sutton. Sutton voted to uphold the mandate on the merits and Kavanaugh voted to say it was not justiciable." Judge Sutton, by the way, is a former clerk for Justice Antonin Scalia.

But those setbacks were nothing compared with the luck Republicans had during the oral arguments before the Supreme Court. Paul Clement, the talented lawyer prosecuting the case against the Affordable Care Act, gave what most everyone agreed was the performance of his career. Don Verrilli, the solicitor general of the United States, gave what most everyone agreed was one of the worst performances of his. He began by choking on water and seemed to never quite recover his composure. "He was passive. He was stumbling. He was nervous," CNN legal analyst Jeffrey Toobin told Politico. "I was just shocked."

For all the Republican Party had done to make the mandate's constitutionality a live issue, the oral arguments gave their cause a credibility that strategic positioning couldn't buy. The two arguments had met in front of the Supreme Court and the argument against the mandate's constitutionality had clearly won. Everything up until that point could have been written off as conservatives convincing conservatives of something conservatives already wanted to

believe. But on that day, the argument against the individual mandate met the argument for the individual mandate, and the argument against it won — even in the eyes of the mandate’s supporters.

After that, confidence that the mandate would survive the court collapsed. A poll of former Supreme Court clerks taken before the oral arguments found that only 35 percent thought the court would overturn the mandate. After the oral arguments, that rocketed up to 57 percent. A poll of top constitutional law scholars found that 19 of 21 thought the mandate was constitutional, but only eight were confident that the Supreme Court would uphold it. InTrade, a political betting market, puts a 67 percent chance on the mandate being overturned.

What the conservative movement has done — with a big assist from Verrilli — is build a permission structure that would permit the Republican appointees to the Supreme Court to rule against the individual mandate. They had taken a legal campaign initially dismissed as a bitter and quixotic effort based on a radical and discredited reading of the commerce clause and given it sufficient third-party authentication to succeed. If the Supreme Court rules against the mandate, it will no longer be out on a ledge. It will be in lock step with the entire Republican Party, many polls, a number of judges, the impression the public has gotten from the media coverage and the outcome of the oral arguments.

And that’s what has changed from two years ago. When this campaign began, it was unthinkable that the Supreme Court would indulge it, even if some on the Supreme Court were sympathetic to its aims. “There is a less than 1 percent chance that the courts will invalidate the individual mandate,” Kerr said at the time. Today, it’s entirely thinkable that the Supreme Court will indulge it, and that means that the members of the Supreme Court, who care deeply about protecting their institution’s legitimacy, are free to rule in whichever direction they want. We’ll find out what direction that is on Thursday.

[20120627-07](#)

14:21 Pam

Re: “How Republicans Made It Possible for the Supreme Court to Rule Against the Mandate” (reply to Art, above)

Wow. This is horrible. I'd hate to be in Verilli's shoes. How would you like to be the one who lost health care for the neediest Americans? I'm going to say it: I think the Republican party is engaging in a conspiracy to fundamentally change the structure of the American government. I think they've been working on this for a long time, ever since FDR in fact. They have a very different concept of government than I do, that's for sure. I feel sick and hopeless about the way things are going. We've come a long way from Uncle Walter (Cronkite) and his credibility and objectivity to Fox News trashing every single thing the Democrats do or try to do, even when they contradict themselves to do it. They are wedded to an ideology and they are willing to sacrifice a lot (of other people) to bring it to fruition. Just like the communists of yore, they're willing to sacrifice a whole generation in order to create a world where their kind of people can flourish. I have come to believe that they actually believe in what they say. I've had a hard time with that.

One reason I feel so hopeless is, in fact, my best friend, who describes herself as a libertarian but whose every political instinct is Republican/conservative. We had dinner together last night, and she sat there telling me what great jurists Roberts, Scalia, and Alito are and how they will do the right thing. I'm used to this sort of thing from her, and I protested rather mildly, considering my true feelings. I don't want to damage our friendship, and if that means swallowing some words, I'll do that. What this means, I think, is, it's hard to have an open, honest conversation with someone you disagree with, especially if you like that person. That makes true dialogue next to impossible, as the only conversations that take place are among like-minded people, where no feelings risk being hurt.

The Republicans have no subtlety, no flexibility, no respect for anyone who disagrees with them in any way. They will twist themselves into pretzels in order not to go against the Republican grain; witness Marco Rubio dancing around the issue of immigration, to say nothing of Romney. I have the sick feeling the Supremes are going to eviscerate every Obama initiative, most especially Obamacare. I have the sick feeling Romney is going to be our next President. I feel sick, period.

[20120627-10](#) 18:12 SteveB Re: "How Republicans Made It Possible for the Supreme Court to Rule Against the Mandate" (reply to Pam, above)

I believe, Pam, that you are 100% correct and it's about time we started shouting it from the rooftops. The Right thinks they can wreck the economy, even the world economy, then reestablish the 19th Century. I think the germ of this idea goes all the way back to the Reagan era, though maybe not to the Gipper, himself.

It's exactly what I meant the other day in the headline:

GOP Wants to Drive US Over the Cliff

Please add: !!!!!

[20120627-11](#) 18:25 Art Re: "How Republicans Made It Possible for the Supreme Court to Rule Against the Mandate" (reply to Pam & SteveB, above)

I think the real issue here is the cold calculating way the Republicans went about it. Purely political. I can't determine if there is any real sense of right and wrong about them but I think this was just another slimy political maneuver to discredit the President backed by lots of corporate money.

I too recall early on the general opinion that this wouldn't reach the supreme court for years, if ever. Most circuit judges ruled it was constitutional. What happened? Suddenly like quicksilver it has slithered it's way through and was on the Court docket.

As for friends Pam, I gave that up on that a long time ago. When I hear that crap, my response is Bullshit! Back up this drivell with facts or shut up. Actually, I haven't lost many friends but some do tread very warily around me. ;-)

They know I have a very low BS meter.

[20120627-09](#) 14:57 MarthaH "What the High Court Will Decide & What the Aftermath Will Be"

Asking citizen's what the name of the healthcare bill/healthcare law was/is shows the inattention to our government except when the chuckhole influences "my" life, but wait until and if provisions lost, in my opinion, are brought to the attention of those (of us!) to feel them. Do they pick and choose for the powerful and let us also still pick up the tab for the rest in our tabs at the ER? Stay tuned. It's just the future of the grandchildren...The webs we homo sapiens weave...or some of us...At what cost to all of us do nine decide once again? I have held my breath several times in anticipation and been surprised...other times shocked. I fear this bunch is very predictable.

Here's a good summary of what we will be facing, thanks to the 9:

"What the High Court Will Decide -- and What the Aftermath Will Be" by Tom Curry, MCNBC

June 27, 2012, (<http://nbcpolitics.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/06/27/12440103-what-the-high-court-will-decide-and-what-the-aftermath-will-be?lite>)

(The U.S. Supreme Court will announce Thursday morning on the constitutionality of President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act. NBC's Pete Williams reports. Video: <http://www.nbc.com/news-sports/today-show/2012/06/romney-obama-prep-for-healthcare-ruling/>)

The health care drama that began in the earliest days of the Obama presidency will reach its crescendo Thursday morning when the Supreme Court announces its decision on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

As NBC's Chuck Todd reports, both the president and his GOP challenger, Mitt Romney, are eagerly awaiting the Supreme Court ruling on "Obamacare" to claim a campaign-trail victory.

It has been a long, twisting road to this point: from pledges made by candidate Barack Obama when he ran for the presidency in 2008, to months of bargaining by congressional Democrats with interest groups such as the pharmaceutical and insurance industries, to 2010 campaign charges of "death panels," to legal challenges battled in lower federal courts.

"If 'Obamacare' is not deemed constitutional, then the first three and a half years of this president's term will have been wasted on something that has not helped the American people," Republican presidential contender Mitt Romney said Tuesday as he campaigned in Virginia.

Four legal issues are at stake:

- First, the justices must decide whether challenges to the law can be resolved now, or whether those who seek to overturn the law must wait until 2015 when the federal government begins collecting penalties from people who refuse to buy insurance, as required by the ACA. The consensus among legal observers is that the justices have decided to not wait and that the challenges to the law will be resolved with Thursday's decision.
- Second, the court must decide whether the ACA's individual mandate – the requirement that most uninsured people purchase health insurance – forces people into commerce and thus renders that part of the law unconstitutional. The Constitution gives Congress the power to regulate interstate commerce, but not the power to force a non-buyer to become a buyer.
- The third and perhaps most crucial question to be decided: If the justices do rule that the mandate is unconstitutional, can that part of the law be surgically removed while leaving the remainder intact, or will the justices decide the entire law must be struck down because Congress designed each of its parts to work together?
- Finally, the fourth issue: Is the ACA's Medicaid provision, which adds nearly 30 million more people to the insurance program for low-income Americans, unconstitutionally coercive by forcing states to go along with the expansion, or is it a legitimate enlargement of an existing program?

Thursday's ruling could be a deafening political thunderclap, but may be followed by a kind of lull as Congress tries to figure out what, if anything, it can do to respond to the ruling.

Senate Democrats may try to put some ideas to a vote, even though they know the Republican-controlled House is unlikely to act on their proposals.

But Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., a member of the Senate Finance Committee, which drafted much of the law, predicted that congressional Democrats wouldn't spring into action immediately to offer bills replacing the ACA if the court strikes down parts of it. "You don't get a decision like this and if there are changes in the law, jump right out and say, 'We'll now propose the following' in the next 15 minutes."

But Senate Health, Education Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Tom Harkin, who is responsible for the ACA's provisions on preventive health care, said he'll be ready to respond. "It's unfortunate that it's going to be decided on the Thursday when we get out of here – because that leaves 10 days when we're not in session – but depending on what the court does, we will be ready when we come back," the Iowa Democrat said. Referring to the 10-day Senate hiatus following the decision, Harkin said, "I'm just wondering if that politically motivated Supreme Court didn't plan it that way."

He added, "If we were here, then we could move rapidly to get something on the agenda and in the hopper to respond to this in a way that the American people would understand that we're going to move ahead on this."

But the argument from some GOP leaders is that no matter what the court decides, the American people have already written off the law as a failure.

Missouri Republican Sen. Roy Blunt said Tuesday, "There really have always been three questions: Is it constitutional? Is it a good idea? Can we afford it? And if the answer to any of those is no, we shouldn't do it. I think the American people have clearly decided that the more they found out about this bill, they believed that the answer to 'is it a good idea?' and 'can we afford it?' is 'no' and 'no.' The court will decide the third one, but there's no question (that) we shouldn't go forward with this."

The possible damage to the ACA the Supreme Court might leave in its path is crucial, hence the importance of severability – severing one part of the law and leaving the rest intact.

Asked to hazard a prediction for what might happen Thursday, Republican Sen. Mike Lee, a freshman conservative from Utah and a former law clerk for Justice Samuel Alito, said Tuesday: "I tend to think that they strike down the mandate." He also said, "It would not be an easy task" for the justices to declare the individual mandate invalid and yet leave the rest of the bill intact. "That would be a grueling task and I'm not sure how they would do it." He said he "would not be surprised if we see a finding of non-severability."

Patricia Millett, a former lawyer in the solicitor general's office during the Clinton administration who has argued 31 cases before the high court, said the justices' questions during the oral argument showed how difficult it would be to remove one section of the law without damaging the rest: "Do we then create a Frankenstein of a statute that functions in a way that Congress would have never wanted?"

Democrats who designed the ACA are divided on just how significant the individual mandate is and how well the rest of the law could work without it.

"Since the mandate is so central in terms of (insurance) premiums and putting everybody in a pool, we'd have to go back to the drawing board" if the Supreme Court declared the mandate unconstitutional, Harkin said.

He added, "This whole thing (the ACA) kind of holds together. If the court strikes down the individual mandate – which I hope they don't, because I think there's a lot of precedents to support it – but if they do, then we are going to have to think of some other approaches and I have been thinking about it and we have things ready to go."

But Wyden had a different view, saying, "In one sense, the focus on the individual mandate is a little bit overblown," suggesting it isn't necessarily the heart and soul of the law. "I got into the bill section 1332, a requirement that states be allowed to obtain waivers (from the mandate) and they could go off and try any of a variety of approaches."

He said that liberal states could enact single-payer health insurance and conservative states could enact more market-oriented approaches. That waiver takes effect in 2017, but Wyden wants to advance that date to 2014. "For people who want in good faith to get this done and do it in line with their principles, section 1332 I think is going to get some discussion," he said.

There's one big catch with section 1332: Whatever alternative plans states might adopt would need to provide individuals insurance coverage at least as comprehensive as provided under the ACA.

20120627-08

14:28

SteveB

Fw: Daily Kos Action: Contribute to Democrats Who Support Allowing Everyone to Purchase Medicare Insurance!

from Daily Kos:

If the Supreme Court strikes down the health care law tomorrow morning, we all know Republicans in Congress won't do anything to help the millions of Americans who will be denied health insurance coverage.

That's why at Daily Kos we identified some of the most important districts Democrats need to win to retake Congress, and asked the Democratic candidates running in those districts if they support allowing all Americans to purchase Medicare at any age.

So far we've found six Democrats who unequivocally said "yes," and we're going to work to get all six elected to Congress.

Please, click here to give \$1 to each of the six Democrats who will kick both Republicans and the health insurance industry out of Congress:

<https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/medicare4all?refcode=627em7>.

Most legal experts say the conservative Supreme Court will defy precedent and strike down the health care law either in part or in full. As a result, at least 15 million people who otherwise would have received health insurance will end up not being covered.

If we are going to prevent something like this from happening in the future, we need to start passing health care laws that don't rely on complications like an individual mandate and an insurance exchange, and instead simply allow everyone to buy into Medicare.

For decades, pundits in the corporate media have said it's too risky for Democrats to take bold positions like this if they want to win the battleground districts that determine which party controls Congress. However, we found half a dozen Democrats aiming to prove otherwise, and we need to stand with them against the wave of billionaire and insurance industry attack ads they will inevitably face.

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers, Campaign Director, Daily Kos

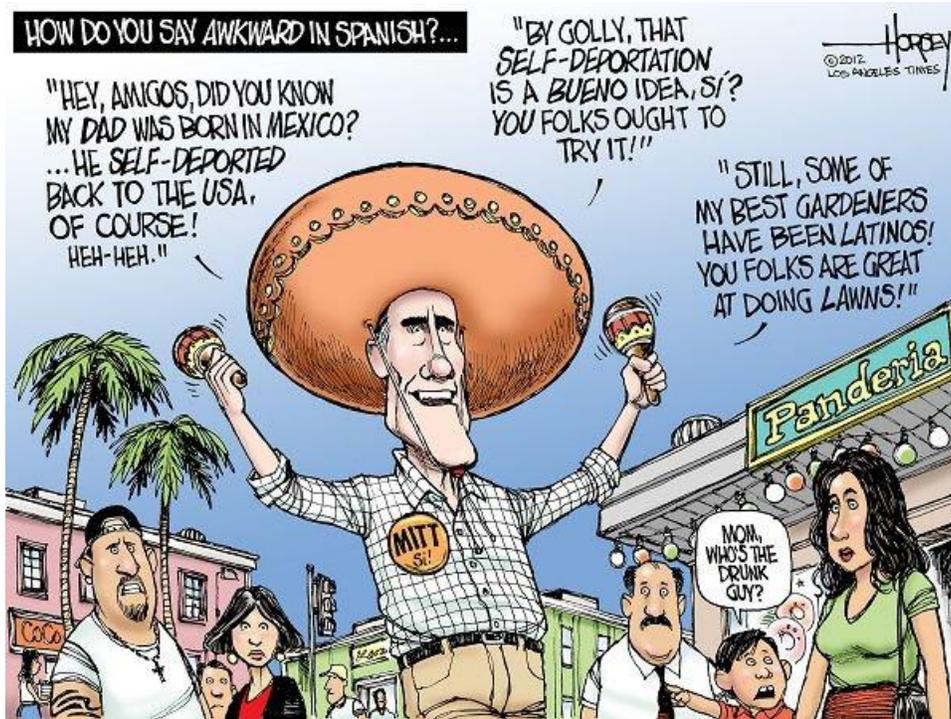
20120627-05	13:41	SteveB	"Positive News for the Housing Market"
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"Positive News for the Housing Market" by Dean Baker, NationofChange

June 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/positive-news-housing-market-1340812930>)

Latest indicators and developments in the housing sector show more evidence that the housing market is on the mend. Prior to May, the market had seen unusually high levels of sales due to unusually good winter weather across much of the country. For this reason we should have expected a sharp falloff in sales in May. Instead, May sales were down by only 1.5 percent from their April level. They were 9.6 percent above the May 2011 level.

The data also show permits for single family homes were up 4.0 percent in May from their April level and were 19.9 percent above their year-ago level. This is the highest rate of construction since early 2010 when the first-time buyers' credit was temporarily boosting the market. Also, new home sales in May were at their highest level since the end of the first-time buyers' tax credit caused a surge in April of 2010.



"What's the True Meaning of Patriotism?" by Robert Reich, Robert Reich's Blog / rsn

June 26, 2012, (<http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/12111-whats-the-true-meaning-of-patriotism>)

Recently I publicly debated a regressive Republican who said Arizona and every other state should use whatever means necessary to keep out illegal immigrants. He also wants English to be spoken in every classroom in the

nation, and the pledge of allegiance recited every morning. "We have to preserve and protect America," he said. "That's the meaning of patriotism."

To my debating partner and other regressives, patriotism is about securing the nation from outsiders eager to overrun us. That's why they also want to restore every dollar of the \$500 billion in defense cuts scheduled to start in January.

Yet many of these same regressives have no interest in preserving or protecting our system of government. To the contrary, they show every sign of wanting to be rid of it.

In fact, regressives in Congress have substituted partisanship for patriotism, placing party loyalty above loyalty to America.

The GOP's highest-ranking member of Congress has said his "number one aim" is to unseat President Obama. For more than three years congressional Republicans have marched in lockstep, determined to do just that. They have brooked no compromise.

They couldn't care less if they mangle our government in pursuit of their partisan aims. Senate Republicans have used the filibuster more frequently in this Congress than in any congress in history.

House Republicans have been willing to shut down the government and even risk the full faith and credit of the United States in order to get their way.

Regressives on the Supreme Court have opened the floodgates to unlimited money from billionaires and corporations overwhelming our democracy, on the bizarre theory that money is speech under the First Amendment and corporations are people.

Regressive Republicans in Congress won't even support legislation requiring the sources of this money-gusher be disclosed.

They've even signed a pledge - not of allegiance to the United States, but of allegiance to Grover Norquist, who has never been elected by anyone. Norquist's "no-tax" pledge is interpreted only by Norquist, who says closing a tax loophole is tantamount to raising taxes and therefore violates the pledge.

True patriots don't hate the government of the United States. They're proud of it. Generations of Americans have risked their lives to preserve it. They may not like everything it does, and they justifiably worry when special interests gain too much power over it. But true patriots work to improve the U.S. government, not destroy it.

But regressive Republicans loathe the government - and are doing everything they can to paralyze it, starve it, and make the public so cynical about it that it's no longer capable of doing much of anything. Tea Partiers are out to gut it entirely. Norquist says he wants to shrink it down to a size it can be "drowned in a bathtub."

When arguing against paying their fair share of taxes, wealthy regressives claim "it's my money." But it's their nation, too. And unless they pay their share America can't meet the basic needs of our people. True patriotism means paying for America.

So when regressives talk about "preserving and protecting" the nation, be warned: They mean securing our borders, not securing our society. Within those borders, each of us is on our own. They don't want a government that actively works for all our citizens.

Their patriotism is not about coming together for the common good. It is about excluding outsiders who they see as our common adversaries.

[I love his use of the word "Regressives". I hope it catches on, because it is so perfectly appropriate! The Progressives and the Regressives...makes sense, even if my spellchecker doesn't like it. -SteveB]

20120627-14 22:00 SteveG Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels' Sweet Deal

In Indiana Mitch Daniels will be governor through the end of 2012. During his 8 years as governor he has appointed 8 of the 10 trustees at Purdue University.

The trustees have voted that Mitch Daniels will be the president of Purdue in January 2013 and they will set his salary which will be 4-5 times higher than his governor's pay.

Anyone see an ethics problem?

20120627-15 23:29 SteveM Fw: Muslim Heritage in America

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

MUSLIM HERITAGE IN AMERICA:

Have you ever been to a Muslim hospital, heard a Muslim orchestra, seen a Muslim band march in a parade, witnessed a Muslim charity, shaken hands with a Muslim Girl Scout, seen a Muslim Candy Striper, or seen a Muslim do anything that contributes positively to the American way of life? The answer is no, you did not. Just ask yourself WHY ?

Barack Obama, during his Cairo speech, said: "I know, too, that Islam has always been a part of America's history." [June 4, 2009. Very old news! -SteveB]

AN AMERICAN CITIZEN'S RESPONSE:

Dear Mr. Obama:

Were those Muslims that were in America when the Pilgrims first landed? Funny, I thought they were Native American Indians.

Were those Muslims that celebrated the first Thanksgiving day? Sorry again, those were Pilgrims and Native American Indians.

Can you show me one Muslim signature on the United States Constitution? Declaration of Independence ? Bill of Rights? Didn't think so.

Did Muslims fight for this country's freedom from England ? No.

Did Muslims fight during the Civil War to free the slaves in America ? No, they did not. In fact, Muslims to this day are still the largest traffickers in human slavery.. Your own half-brother, a devout Muslim, still advocates slavery himself, even though Muslims of Arabic descent refer to black Muslims as "pug nosed slaves." Says a lot of what the Muslim world really thinks of your family's "rich Islamic heritage," doesn't it Mr. Obama?

Where were Muslims during the Civil Rights era of this country? Not present.

There are no pictures or media accounts of Muslims walking side by side with Martin Luther King, Jr. or helping to advance the cause of Civil Rights.

Where were Muslims during this country's Woman's Suffrage era? Again, not present. In fact, devout Muslims demand that women are subservient to men in the Islamic culture. So much so, that often they are beaten for not wearing the 'hajib' or for talking to a man who is not a direct family member or their husband. Yep, the Muslims are all for women's rights, aren't they?

[They sound exactly like most Republicans to me. The two are blood brothers: the GOP and Islamic Jihad! –SteveB]

Where were Muslims during World War II? They were aligned with Adolf Hitler. The Muslim grand mufti himself met with Adolf Hitler, reviewed the troops and accepted support from the Nazi's in killing Jews. [Shocking news!]

Finally, Mr. Obama, where were Muslims on Sept. 11th, 2001? If they weren't flying planes into the World Trade Center , the Pentagon or a field in Pennsylvania killing nearly 3,000 people on our own soil, they were rejoicing in the Middle East . No one can dispute the pictures shown from all parts of the Muslim world celebrating on CNN, Fox News, MSNBC and other cable news networks that day. Strangely, the very "moderate" Muslims who's asses you bent over backwards to kiss in Cairo , Egypt on June 4th were stone cold silent post 9-11. To many Americans, their silence has meant approval for the acts of that day.

[Yet Egypt was our staunch ally, helping to maintain a little stability in the Middle East. I take it the author, here, thinks the President should have bombed Cairo instead of making a speech and engaging in diplomacy at the highest levels? --SteveB

And THAT, Mr. Obama, is the "rich heritage" Muslims have here in America.

[How, exactly does "part of American history" get legitimately twisted into "rich heritage"?

Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot to mention the Barbary Pirates. They were Muslim.

And now we can add November 5, 2009 - the slaughter of American soldiers at Fort Hood by a Muslim major who is a doctor and a psychiatrist who was supposed to be counseling soldiers returning from battle in Iraq and Afghanistan.

That, Mr. Obama is the "Muslim heritage" in America

EVERY AMERICAN MUST READ THIS !! [Or else? –SteveB] Be sure to SEND IT TO ALL .

Muslim Heritage, my foot. And if you don't share this message, you are part of the problem!

20120627-17	23:35 SteveB	"Remarks by the President on a New Beginning" (Cairo Univ., June 4, 2009) (reply to SteveM, above)
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To set the record straight:

(Oh, crap, except that he admits in this speech he was born in Kenya...)

THE WHITE HOUSE, Office of the Press Secretary (Cairo,Egypt)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 4, 2009

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT ON A NEW BEGINNING, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt, 1:10 P.M. (Local)

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you very much. Good afternoon. I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo, and to be hosted by two remarkable institutions. For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning; and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt's advancement. And together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress. I'm grateful for your hospitality, and the hospitality of the people of Egypt. And I'm also proud to carry with me the goodwill of the American people, and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: Assalaamu alaykum. (Applause.)

We meet at a time of great tension between the United States and Muslims around the world -- tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate. The relationship between Islam and the West includes

centuries of coexistence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars. More recently, tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations. Moreover, the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalization led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to the traditions of Islam.

Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks of September 11, 2001 and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. All this has bred more fear and more mistrust.

So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, those who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. And this cycle of suspicion and discord must end.

I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles -- principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

I do so recognizing that change cannot happen overnight. I know there's been a lot of publicity about this speech, but no single speech can eradicate years of mistrust, nor can I answer in the time that I have this afternoon all the complex questions that brought us to this point. But I am convinced that in order to move forward, we must say openly to each other the things we hold in our hearts and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground. As the Holy Koran tells us, "Be conscious of God and speak always the truth." (Applause.) That is what I will try to do today -- to speak the truth as best I can, humbled by the task before us, and firm in my belief that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart.

Now part of this conviction is rooted in my own experience. I'm a Christian, but my father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims. As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the azaan at the break of dawn and at the fall of dusk. As a young man, I worked in Chicago communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith.

As a student of history, I also know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam -- at places like Al-Azhar -- that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities -- (applause) -- it was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires; timeless poetry and cherished music; elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation. And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality. (Applause.)

I also know that Islam has always been a part of America's story. The first nation to recognize my country was Morocco. In signing the Treaty of Tripoli in 1796, our second President, John Adams, wrote, "The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Muslims." And since our founding, American Muslims have enriched the United States. They have fought in our wars, they have served in our government, they have stood for civil rights, they have started businesses, they have taught at our universities, they've excelled in our sports arenas, they've won Nobel Prizes, built our tallest building, and lit the Olympic Torch. And when the first Muslim American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution using the same Holy Koran that one of our Founding Fathers -- Thomas Jefferson -- kept in his personal library. (Applause.)

So I have known Islam on three continents before coming to the region where it was first revealed. That experience guides my conviction that partnership between America and Islam must be based on what Islam is, not

what it isn't. And I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear. (Applause.)

But that same principle must apply to Muslim perceptions of America. (Applause.) Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire. The United States has been one of the greatest sources of progress that the world has ever known. We were born out of revolution against an empire. We were founded upon the ideal that all are created equal, and we have shed blood and struggled for centuries to give meaning to those words -- within our borders, and around the world. We are shaped by every culture, drawn from every end of the Earth, and dedicated to a simple concept: E pluribus unum -- "Out of many, one."

Now, much has been made of the fact that an African American with the name Barack Hussein Obama could be elected President. (Applause.) But my personal story is not so unique. The dream of opportunity for all people has not come true for everyone in America, but its promise exists for all who come to our shores -- and that includes nearly 7 million American Muslims in our country today who, by the way, enjoy incomes and educational levels that are higher than the American average. (Applause.)

Moreover, freedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion. That is why there is a mosque in every state in our union, and over 1,200 mosques within our borders. That's why the United States government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab and to punish those who would deny it. (Applause.)

So let there be no doubt: Islam is a part of America. And I believe that America holds within her the truth that regardless of race, religion, or station in life, all of us share common aspirations -- to live in peace and security; to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities, and our God. These things we share. This is the hope of all humanity.

Of course, recognizing our common humanity is only the beginning of our task. Words alone cannot meet the needs of our people. These needs will be met only if we act boldly in the years ahead; and if we understand that the challenges we face are shared, and our failure to meet them will hurt us all.

For we have learned from recent experience that when a financial system weakens in one country, prosperity is hurt everywhere. When a new flu infects one human being, all are at risk. When one nation pursues a nuclear weapon, the risk of nuclear attack rises for all nations. When violent extremists operate in one stretch of mountains, people are endangered across an ocean. When innocents in Bosnia and Darfur are slaughtered, that is a stain on our collective conscience. (Applause.) That is what it means to share this world in the 21st century. That is the responsibility we have to one another as human beings.

And this is a difficult responsibility to embrace. For human history has often been a record of nations and tribes -- and, yes, religions -- subjugating one another in pursuit of their own interests. Yet in this new age, such attitudes are self-defeating. Given our interdependence, any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail. So whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners to it. Our problems must be dealt with through partnership; our progress must be shared. (Applause.)

Now, that does not mean we should ignore sources of tension. Indeed, it suggests the opposite: We must face these tensions squarely. And so in that spirit, let me speak as clearly and as plainly as I can about some specific issues that I believe we must finally confront together.

The first issue that we have to confront is violent extremism in all of its forms.

In Ankara, I made clear that America is not -- and never will be -- at war with Islam. (Applause.) We will, however, relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security -- because we reject the same thing that people of all faiths reject: the killing of innocent men, women, and children. And it is my first duty as President to protect the American people.

The situation in Afghanistan demonstrates America's goals, and our need to work together. Over seven years ago, the United States pursued al Qaeda and the Taliban with broad international support. We did not go by choice; we went because of necessity. I'm aware that there's still some who would question or even justify the events of 9/11. But let us be clear: Al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 people on that day. The victims were innocent men, women and children from America and many other nations who had done nothing to harm anybody. And yet al Qaeda chose to ruthlessly murder these people, claimed credit for the attack, and even now states their determination to kill on a massive scale. They have affiliates in many countries and are trying to expand their reach. These are not opinions to be debated; these are facts to be dealt with.

Now, make no mistake: We do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan. We see no military -- we seek no military bases there. It is agonizing for America to lose our young men and women. It is costly and politically difficult to continue this conflict. We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home if we could be confident that there were not violent extremists in Afghanistan and now Pakistan determined to kill as many Americans as they possibly can. But that is not yet the case.

And that's why we're partnering with a coalition of 46 countries. And despite the costs involved, America's commitment will not weaken. Indeed, none of us should tolerate these extremists. They have killed in many countries. They have killed people of different faiths -- but more than any other, they have killed Muslims. Their actions are irreconcilable with the rights of human beings, the progress of nations, and with Islam. The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent is as -- it is as if he has killed all mankind. (Applause.) And the Holy Koran also says whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind. (Applause.) The enduring faith of over a billion people is so much bigger than the narrow hatred of a few. Islam is not part of the problem in combating violent extremism -- it is an important part of promoting peace.

Now, we also know that military power alone is not going to solve the problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's why we plan to invest \$1.5 billion each year over the next five years to partner with Pakistanis to build schools and hospitals, roads and businesses, and hundreds of millions to help those who've been displaced. That's why we are providing more than \$2.8 billion to help Afghans develop their economy and deliver services that people depend on.

Let me also address the issue of Iraq. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world. Although I believe that the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, I also believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible. (Applause.) Indeed, we can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said: "I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be."

Today, America has a dual responsibility: to help Iraq forge a better future -- and to leave Iraq to Iraqis. And I have made it clear to the Iraqi people -- (applause) -- I have made it clear to the Iraqi people that we pursue no bases, and no claim on their territory or resources. Iraq's sovereignty is its own. And that's why I ordered the removal of our combat brigades by next August. That is why we will honor our agreement with Iraq's democratically elected government to remove combat troops from Iraqi cities by July, and to remove all of our troops from Iraq by 2012. (Applause.) We will help Iraq train its security forces and develop its economy. But we will support a secure and united Iraq as a partner, and never as a patron.

And finally, just as America can never tolerate violence by extremists, we must never alter or forget our principles. Nine-eleven was an enormous trauma to our country. The fear and anger that it provoked was understandable, but in some cases, it led us to act contrary to our traditions and our ideals. We are taking concrete actions to change course. I have unequivocally prohibited the use of torture by the United States, and I have ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed by early next year. (Applause.)

So America will defend itself, respectful of the sovereignty of nations and the rule of law. And we will do so in partnership with Muslim communities which are also threatened. The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer.

The second major source of tension that we need to discuss is the situation between Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world.

America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties, and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied.

Around the world, the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries, and anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust. Tomorrow, I will visit Buchenwald, which was part of a network of camps where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death by the Third Reich. Six million Jews were killed -- more than the entire Jewish population of Israel today. Denying that fact is baseless, it is ignorant, and it is hateful. Threatening Israel with destruction -- or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews -- is deeply wrong, and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis this most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve.

On the other hand, it is also undeniable that the Palestinian people -- Muslims and Christians -- have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than 60 years they've endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead. They endure the daily humiliations -- large and small -- that come with occupation. So let there be no doubt: The situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. And America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own. (Applause.)

For decades then, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive. It's easy to point fingers -- for Palestinians to point to the displacement brought about by Israel's founding, and for Israelis to point to the constant hostility and attacks throughout its history from within its borders as well as beyond. But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: The only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security. (Applause.)

That is in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest, and the world's interest. And that is why I intend to personally pursue this outcome with all the patience and dedication that the task requires. (Applause.) The obligations -- the obligations that the parties have agreed to under the road map are clear. For peace to come, it is time for them -- and all of us -- to live up to our responsibilities.

Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and it does not succeed. For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding. This same story can be told by people from South Africa to South Asia; from Eastern Europe to Indonesia. It's a story with a simple truth: that violence is a dead end. It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus. That's not how moral authority is claimed; that's how it is surrendered.

Now is the time for Palestinians to focus on what they can build. The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people. Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have to recognize they have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, recognize Israel's right to exist.

At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. (Applause.) This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop. (Applause.)

And Israel must also live up to its obligation to ensure that Palestinians can live and work and develop their society. Just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be a critical part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress.

And finally, the Arab states must recognize that the Arab Peace Initiative was an important beginning, but not the end of their responsibilities. The Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems. Instead, it must be a cause for action to help the Palestinian people develop the institutions that will sustain their state, to recognize Israel's legitimacy, and to choose progress over a self-defeating focus on the past.

America will align our policies with those who pursue peace, and we will say in public what we say in private to Israelis and Palestinians and Arabs. (Applause.) We cannot impose peace. But privately, many Muslims recognize that Israel will not go away. Likewise, many Israelis recognize the need for a Palestinian state. It is time for us to act on what everyone knows to be true.

Too many tears have been shed. Too much blood has been shed. All of us have a responsibility to work for the day when the mothers of Israelis and Palestinians can see their children grow up without fear; when the Holy Land of the three great faiths is the place of peace that God intended it to be; when Jerusalem is a secure and lasting home for Jews and Christians and Muslims, and a place for all of the children of Abraham to mingle peacefully together as in the story of Isra -- (applause) -- as in the story of Isra, when Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, peace be upon them, joined in prayer. (Applause.)

The third source of tension is our shared interest in the rights and responsibilities of nations on nuclear weapons.

This issue has been a source of tension between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. For many years, Iran has defined itself in part by its opposition to my country, and there is in fact a tumultuous history between us. In the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian government. Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S. troops and civilians. This history is well known. Rather than remain trapped in the past, I've made it clear to Iran's leaders and people that my country is prepared to move forward. The question now is not what Iran is against, but rather what future it wants to build.

I recognize it will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude, and resolve. There will be many issues to discuss between our two countries, and we are willing to move forward without preconditions on the basis of mutual respect. But it is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point. This is not simply about America's interests. It's about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path.

I understand those who protest that some countries have weapons that others do not. No single nation should pick and choose which nation holds nuclear weapons. And that's why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons. (Applause.) And any nation -- including Iran -- should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That commitment is at the core of the treaty, and it must be kept for all who fully abide by it. And I'm hopeful that all countries in the region can share in this goal.

The fourth issue that I will address is democracy. (Applause.)

I know -- I know there has been controversy about the promotion of democracy in recent years, and much of this controversy is connected to the war in Iraq. So let me be clear: No system of government can or should be imposed by one nation by any other.

That does not lessen my commitment, however, to governments that reflect the will of the people. Each nation gives life to this principle in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people. America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election. But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere. (Applause.)

Now, there is no straight line to realize this promise. But this much is clear: Governments that protect these rights are ultimately more stable, successful and secure. Suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away. America respects the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them. And we will welcome all elected, peaceful governments -- provided they govern with respect for all their people.

This last point is important because there are some who advocate for democracy only when they're out of power; once in power, they are ruthless in suppressing the rights of others. (Applause.) So no matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who would hold power: You must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections alone do not make true democracy.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Barack Obama, we love you!

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you. (Applause.) The fifth issue that we must address together is religious freedom.

Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia and Cordoba during the Inquisition. I saw it firsthand as a child in Indonesia, where devout Christians worshiped freely in an overwhelmingly Muslim country. That is the spirit we need today. People in every country should be free to choose and live their faith based upon the persuasion of the mind and the heart and the soul. This tolerance is essential for religion to thrive, but it's being challenged in many different ways.

Among some Muslims, there's a disturbing tendency to measure one's own faith by the rejection of somebody else's faith. The richness of religious diversity must be upheld -- whether it is for Maronites in Lebanon or the Copts in Egypt. (Applause.) And if we are being honest, fault lines must be closed among Muslims, as well, as the divisions between Sunni and Shia have led to tragic violence, particularly in Iraq.

Freedom of religion is central to the ability of peoples to live together. We must always examine the ways in which we protect it. For instance, in the United States, rules on charitable giving have made it harder for Muslims to fulfill their religious obligation. That's why I'm committed to working with American Muslims to ensure that they can fulfill zakat.

Likewise, it is important for Western countries to avoid impeding Muslim citizens from practicing religion as they see fit -- for instance, by dictating what clothes a Muslim woman should wear. We can't disguise hostility towards any religion behind the pretence of liberalism.

In fact, faith should bring us together. And that's why we're forging service projects in America to bring together Christians, Muslims, and Jews. That's why we welcome efforts like Saudi Arabian King Abdullah's interfaith dialogue and Turkey's leadership in the Alliance of Civilizations. Around the world, we can turn dialogue into interfaith service, so bridges between peoples lead to action -- whether it is combating malaria in Africa, or providing relief after a natural disaster.

The sixth issue -- the sixth issue that I want to address is women's rights. (Applause.) I know -- I know -- and you can tell from this audience, that there is a healthy debate about this issue. I reject the view of some in the West that a woman who chooses to cover her hair is somehow less equal, but I do believe that a woman who is denied an education is denied equality. (Applause.) And it is no coincidence that countries where women are well educated are far more likely to be prosperous.

Now, let me be clear: Issues of women's equality are by no means simply an issue for Islam. In Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, we've seen Muslim-majority countries elect a woman to lead. Meanwhile, the struggle for women's equality continues in many aspects of American life, and in countries around the world.

I am convinced that our daughters can contribute just as much to society as our sons. (Applause.) Our common prosperity will be advanced by allowing all humanity -- men and women -- to reach their full potential. I do not

believe that women must make the same choices as men in order to be equal, and I respect those women who choose to live their lives in traditional roles. But it should be their choice. And that is why the United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support expanded literacy for girls, and to help young women pursue employment through micro-financing that helps people live their dreams. (Applause.)

Finally, I want to discuss economic development and opportunity.

I know that for many, the face of globalization is contradictory. The Internet and television can bring knowledge and information, but also offensive sexuality and mindless violence into the home. Trade can bring new wealth and opportunities, but also huge disruptions and change in communities. In all nations -- including America -- this change can bring fear. Fear that because of modernity we lose control over our economic choices, our politics, and most importantly our identities -- those things we most cherish about our communities, our families, our traditions, and our faith.

But I also know that human progress cannot be denied. There need not be contradictions between development and tradition. Countries like Japan and South Korea grew their economies enormously while maintaining distinct cultures. The same is true for the astonishing progress within Muslim-majority countries from Kuala Lumpur to Dubai. In ancient times and in our times, Muslim communities have been at the forefront of innovation and education.

And this is important because no development strategy can be based only upon what comes out of the ground, nor can it be sustained while young people are out of work. Many Gulf states have enjoyed great wealth as a consequence of oil, and some are beginning to focus it on broader development. But all of us must recognize that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century -- (applause) -- and in too many Muslim communities, there remains underinvestment in these areas. I'm emphasizing such investment within my own country. And while America in the past has focused on oil and gas when it comes to this part of the world, we now seek a broader engagement.

On education, we will expand exchange programs, and increase scholarships, like the one that brought my father to America. (Applause.) At the same time, we will encourage more Americans to study in Muslim communities. And we will match promising Muslim students with internships in America; invest in online learning for teachers and children around the world; and create a new online network, so a young person in Kansas can communicate instantly with a young person in Cairo.

On economic development, we will create a new corps of business volunteers to partner with counterparts in Muslim-majority countries. And I will host a Summit on Entrepreneurship this year to identify how we can deepen ties between business leaders, foundations and social entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world.

On science and technology, we will launch a new fund to support technological development in Muslim-majority countries, and to help transfer ideas to the marketplace so they can create more jobs. We'll open centers of scientific excellence in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and appoint new science envoys to collaborate on programs that develop new sources of energy, create green jobs, digitize records, clean water, grow new crops. Today I'm announcing a new global effort with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio. And we will also expand partnerships with Muslim communities to promote child and maternal health.

All these things must be done in partnership. Americans are ready to join with citizens and governments; community organizations, religious leaders, and businesses in Muslim communities around the world to help our people pursue a better life.

The issues that I have described will not be easy to address. But we have a responsibility to join together on behalf of the world that we seek -- a world where extremists no longer threaten our people, and American troops have come home; a world where Israelis and Palestinians are each secure in a state of their own, and nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes; a world where governments serve their citizens, and the rights of all God's children are respected. Those are mutual interests. That is the world we seek. But we can only achieve it together.

I know there are many -- Muslim and non-Muslim -- who question whether we can forge this new beginning. Some are eager to stoke the flames of division, and to stand in the way of progress. Some suggest that it isn't worth the effort -- that we are fated to disagree, and civilizations are doomed to clash. Many more are simply skeptical that real change can occur. There's so much fear, so much mistrust that has built up over the years. But if we choose to be bound by the past, we will never move forward. And I want to particularly say this to young people of every faith, in every country -- you, more than anyone, have the ability to reimagine the world, to remake this world.

All of us share this world for but a brief moment in time. The question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart, or whether we commit ourselves to an effort -- a sustained effort -- to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children, and to respect the dignity of all human beings.

It's easier to start wars than to end them. It's easier to blame others than to look inward. It's easier to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share. But we should choose the right path, not just the easy path. There's one rule that lies at the heart of every religion -- that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. (Applause.) This truth transcends nations and peoples -- a belief that isn't new; that isn't black or white or brown; that isn't Christian or Muslim or Jew. It's a belief that pulsed in the cradle of civilization, and that still beats in the hearts of billions around the world. It's a faith in other people, and it's what brought me here today.

We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning, keeping in mind what has been written.

The Holy Koran tells us: "O mankind! We have created you male and a female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another."

The Talmud tells us: "The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace."

The Holy Bible tells us: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Applause.)

The people of the world can live together in peace. We know that is God's vision. Now that must be our work here on Earth.

Thank you. And may God's peace be upon you. Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)

20120627-18	23:50	SteveB	Re: Muslim Heritage in America (reply to SteveM, above)
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"I know, too, that Islam has always been a part of America's history."

President Obama could have been referring to many things, because the founding fathers were obviously worldly men, but, here, the President is referring to the Treaty of Tripoli (1796-97) — ya, the famous "shores of Tripoli" in the Marine song.

Ironically for the Right, this treaty is also one of the best, earliest expressions of how the U.S. is NOT a Christian nation:

Treaty of Tripoli, Article 11:

As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion,— as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen,—and as the said States never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.

So I will defend the President's statement, above—Islam has been an important force in world history for a long time. America because part of that history and, when we did, that was all handed down to us. Greeks, Romans, cave men, Popes, Kings, Muslims.

President Obama is worldly enough to know that. They're worldly enough to know that in Cairo (see above speech). Maybe some Americans should get their heads out of the sand long enough to learn what's going on in the world and what has happened in the history of that world.

That being said, I don't have much use for Islam or Christianity. Both evil, in my view. Both should be kept as far away from government as humanly possible. Many Muslim countries demonstrate the dangers of such a marriage. Much better to let gays marry than to allow church and state to cohabit.

[20120627-16](#) 23:31 SteveM Fw: The Cow & the Ice Cream

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

THE COW AND THE ICE CREAM (ONE OF THE BEST THEORIES OF WHY OBAMA WON THE ELECTION)

-- From a teacher in the Nashville area --

"We are worried about 'the cow' when it is all about the 'Ice Cream.' The most eye-opening civics lesson I ever had was while teaching 3rd grade.

The last Presidential election was heating up and some of the children showed an interest. I decided we would have an election for a class president. We would choose our nominees. They would make a campaign speech and the class would vote. To simplify the process, candidates were nominated by other class members. We discussed what kinds of characteristics these students should have.

We got many nominations and from those, Jamie and Olivia were picked to run for the top spot.

The class had done a great job in their selections. Both candidates were good kids.

I thought Jamie might have an advantage because he got lots of parental support.

I had never seen Olivia's mother.

The day arrived when they were to make their speeches.

Jamie went first.

He had specific ideas about how to make our class a better place. He ended by promising to do his very best.

Everyone applauded and he sat down.

Now it was Olivia's turn to speak.

Her speech was concise. She said, "If you will vote for me, I will give you ice cream." She sat down.

The class went wild. "Yes! Yes! We want ice cream."

She surely would say more. She did not have to.

A discussion followed. How did she plan to pay for the ice cream? She wasn't sure. But no one pursued that question. They took her at her word.

Would her parents buy it or would the class pay for it...She didn't know.

The class really didn't care. All they were thinking about was ice cream...

Jamie was forgotten. Olivia won by a landslide.

Every time Barack Obama opened his mouth he offered ice cream and 51.4 % of the people reacted like nine year olds.

They want ice cream.

The other 48.6% percent know they're going to have to feed the cow and clean up the mess."

This is the ice cream Obama promised us!

Remember, the government cannot give anything to anyone that they have not first taken away from someone else.

Did you vote for the ice cream?

THAT, MY FRIEND, IS HOW OBAMA GOT ELECTED, BY THOSE WHO WANT EVERYTHING FOR FREE!

For a man who didn't give a damn about who paid for it.

Let's NOT repeat the mistake of 2008 in 2012!

CLASS DISMISSED...

"It ain't what you don't know that gets you in trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so." —Mark Twain

[OK, no, where's my damned ice cream and I want it now! –SteveB]

<http://kaulapele.wordpress.com/2012/03/10/a-message-and-this-is-the-last-thing-i-will-write-about-the-kony-2012-video-we-have-crossed-the-chasm/>



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

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