



# **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE**

## **JULY, 2012 NEWSLETTERS**

Edited by Steven W. Baker for FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

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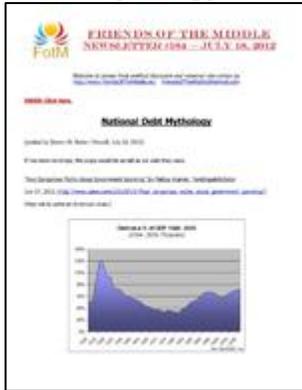
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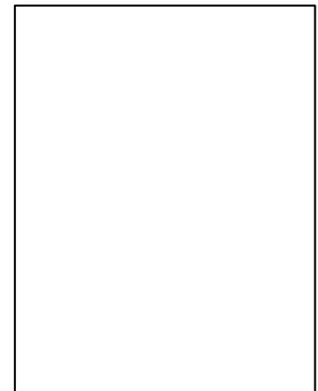


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<b>(01-12) 2012 PRIMARIES</b>			
<b>(02-12) 2012 ELECTIONS</b>			
<a href="#">20120704-03</a>	10:08	SteveG	"Bachmann on VP Spot: 'Not for Me to Make That Decision'"
<a href="#">20120723-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Race Heats Up</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney Searches for a Hit, Scores on an Error")
<a href="#">20120727-16</a>	23:17	SteveM	Graphic: Romney's Free Market vs. Obama's Socialism
BARACK OBAMA			
<a href="#">20120702-08</a>	13:05	Dennis	Graphic: Spending Growth by Presidency
<a href="#">20120709-07</a>	14:38	SteveB	From the Right: "Gingrich: President Obama Must Tell 'Grotesque Lies' to Get Re-Elected"
<a href="#">20120715-06</a>	11:48	SteveM	Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans! Dick Morris TV: Lunch ALERT!
<a href="#">20120715-07</a>	11:52	SteveM	Video: Obamaspill Timeline
<a href="#">20120716-08</a>	15:10	SteveB	"The Latest [Republican] Lie: 'You Didn't Build That'"
<a href="#">20120717-04</a>	14:20	SteveM	"Obama's Illegal Alien Uncle Given a Stay from [sic] Deportation Despite Criminal Fugitive Status & DUI"
<a href="#">20120717-05</a>	14:27	SteveM	Video: Best Anti-Obama Ad I've Ever Seen!"
<a href="#">20120717-09</a>	23:38	SteveM	Billboards from the Right - 1
<a href="#">20120717-12</a>	23:50	SteveM	"Who's the Real Felon, Mr. Obama?"
<a href="#">20120718-02</a>	10:05	SteveM	Fw: Best Bartender Joke Ever
<a href="#">20120718-31</a>	23:22	SteveM	Fw: Anagrams
<a href="#">20120718-27</a>	19:52	SteveM	Video: "American Crossroads: Operation Hot Mic"
<a href="#">20120719-01</a>	07:08	MarthaH	"Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare"
<a href="#">20120719-02</a>	08:58	Art	Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120719-03</a>	09:27	SandyI	Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to MarthaH & Art, above)
<a href="#">20120719-04</a>	09:53	SteveB	Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to SandyI, above)
<a href="#">20120719-06</a>	10:11	Pam	Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120719-05</a>	10:04	Pam	Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120719-09</a>	13:34	Art	Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120719-15</a>	16:58	SteveB	Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120719-24</a>	23:57	SteveM	Billboards from the Right - 2
<a href="#">20120723-11</a>	20:25	Dick	Fw: Bank Deposit Transaction Fee Beginning Jan. 1, 2013 on All Transactions (HR 4646)
<a href="#">20120723-13</a>	22:38	SteveB	Re: Bank Deposit Transaction Fee Beginning Jan. 1, 2013 on All Transactions (reply to Dick, above)
<a href="#">20120724-08</a>	12:10	SteveB	From the Right: "Obama's Philosophy Out of Step with American History's 'Self-Made Men'"
<a href="#">20120725-16</a>	18:48	SteveG	Quote: David Letterman on the President
<a href="#">20120726-03</a>	10:46	SteveM	Feeling Sorry for Obama
<a href="#">20120726-06</a>	14:32	SteveB	Re: Feeling Sorry for Obama (reply to SteveM, above)
<a href="#">20120728-06</a>	17:03	Tom	Graphic: Three Legendary Americans
<a href="#">20120728-07</a>	17:19	Tom	Fw: People Said It Didn't Matter [Thank Goodness! -SteveB]
<a href="#">20120729-17</a>	17:51	SteveB	Re: People Said It Didn't Matter (reply to Tom, above)
MITT ROMNEY			

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<a href="#">20120710-00</a>		SteveB	<b>He's Hiding Something!</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt's Gray Areas")
<a href="#">20120713-00</a>		SteveB	<b>R0mney Lied About Bain</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney Stayed at Bain 3 Years Longer Than He Stated" & "Romney & Bain Capital: The Secrecy Is Killing Him")
<a href="#">20120712-03</a>	14:36	Pam	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120712-04</a>	14:42	SteveG	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120712-05</a>	14:55	Clark	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120712-09</a>	15:58	Art	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Clark, above)
<a href="#">20120712-06</a>	15:29	Pam	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Clark, above)
<a href="#">20120712-07</a>	15:31	Clark	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120712-10</a>	16:02	Pam	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120712-11</a>	16:15	Art	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120712-12</a>	16:59	Pam	Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120712-14</a>	18:40	SteveB	"Romney Addresses NAACP Convention, Receives Standing Ovation"
<a href="#">20120712-18</a>	20:19	Bill	"A Note from Mitt Romney's Doctor About His Memory Loss"
<a href="#">20120712-01</a>	07:10	MarthaH	"25% of Romney Bundlers Hail from Finance Sector"
<a href="#">20120712-08</a>	15:47	Art	Re: "25% of Romney Bundlers Hail from Finance Sector" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120713-03</a>	11:00	SteveB	"Bain Will Never Go Away"
<a href="#">20120713-04</a>	11:06	Pam	Re: "Bain Will Never Go Away" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120713-06</a>	13:25	SteveG	Re: "Bain Will Never Go Away" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120713-08</a>	14:20	SteveB	Cartoons: Crunch!
<a href="#">20120714-02</a>	21:22	Art	"Rachel Maddow Mocks Mitt Romney's Interview Blitz"
<a href="#">20120715-02</a>	05:51	SteveB	Great Snarkiness!
<a href="#">20120715-03</a>	12:11	SteveG	R0mney & Texas Voter ID Law
<a href="#">20120716-10</a>	20:51	SteveB	Drip...Drip...Drip...
<a href="#">20120719-00</a>		SteveB	<b>'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney Taxes Controversy Shows He's Still A Tough Sell")
<a href="#">20120718-07</a>	15:33	Pam	Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120718-11</a>	16:07	SteveG	Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120718-15</a>	16:16	Art	Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120718-16</a>	16:19	SteveG	Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120718-19</a>	17:12	Tom	Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120720-06</a>	13:37	Art	"Romney Adviser Stumped on How Romney Would Reduce the Debt"
<a href="#">20120720-08</a>	13:55	Pam	Re: "Romney Adviser Stumped on How Romney Would Reduce the Debt" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120723-15</a>	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Mitt R0mney: Helping America Lose \$100 Billion per Year
<a href="#">20120726-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Mitt in Mass.</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Romney: Massachusetts's 'Un-Favorite Son'")
<a href="#">20120727-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Mitt's Anglo-Saxon Blood No Help in London</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney Walks Back London Olympics Criticism")
<a href="#">20120725-13</a>	15:45	Dennis	Graphic: Romney's Tax Returns
<a href="#">20120726-12</a>	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Mitt R0mney as Michigan 'State Trooper'
<a href="#">20120730-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Krauthammer: 'Unbelievable...Beyond Human Understanding... Incomprehensible'</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Romney's World" & "Why Romney Is a Foreign Policy Lightweight")
<a href="#">20120730-04</a>	12:51	SteveB	"How Mitt Got His"
<a href="#">20120730-16</a>	23:57	SteveG	Cartoon: All Bets Are on the Table
<b>(03) CONSERVATIVE MIND, THE</b>			
<a href="#">20120629-07</a>	17:02	Dennis	"Conservative Southern Values Revived: How a Brutal Strain of American Aristocrats Have Come to Rule America"

<b>DATE-ID</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>FROM</b>	<b>SUBJECT/TITLE</b>
<a href="#">20120630-11</a>	13:25	Pam	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120630-20</a>	16:50	Art	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120630-12</a>	14:08	SteveB	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam & Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120630-15</a>	16:40	Pam	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120630-21</a>	16:59	Art	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120630-22</a>	17:16	Art	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120630-23</a>	19:20	LarryK	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120630-24</a>	20:13	SteveB	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to LarryK, above)
<a href="#">20120630-27</a>	22:46	SteveG	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to LarryK, above)
<a href="#">20120701-01</a>	05:29	SteveB	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120701-03</a>	08:32	Art	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120701-06</a>	10:05	Pam	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120701-07</a>	10:08	SteveG	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120701-12</a>	12:36	Art	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120701-10</a>	11:09	SteveB	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120701-11</a>	11:44	Beth	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120701-13</a>	12:46	SteveB	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Beth, above)
<a href="#">20120701-17</a>	18:35	LarryK	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120701-19</a>	19:24	Art	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to LarryK, above)
<a href="#">20120702-02</a>	11:42	Dennis	Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Art & LarryK, FotM Newsletter #172)
<a href="#">20120703-02</a>	10:57	SteveM	Video: "Make Mine Freedom"
<a href="#">20120703-09</a>	13:57	SteveB	Re: Video: "Make Mine Freedom" (reply to SteveM, above)
<a href="#">20120703-14</a>	21:57	SteveG	"Jonathan Krohn, Reformed Conservative Boy Wonder, Responds to Criticism"
<a href="#">20120704-01</a>	09:04	Pam	Re: "Jonathan Krohn, Reformed Conservative Boy Wonder, Responds to Criticism" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #174)
<a href="#">20120705-07</a>	16:53	SteveG	"Alabama Pastor Holds 'Whites Only' Conference"
<a href="#">20120709-13</a>	23:58	SteveG	Cartoon: With a Prayer
<a href="#">20120710-10</a>	23:10	Jim	Video: "Why America's Not the Greatest Country" (Jeff Daniels in HBO's "Newsroom")
<a href="#">20120710-02</a>	11:10	SteveB	Debate: "American Exceptionalism & the Difference Between the Left & the Right" & "Leftists Continue to Misuse & Undermine American Exceptionalism"
<a href="#">20120718-03</a>	10:56	SteveM	Fw: A Lesson in Irony
<a href="#">20120719-25</a>	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: GOP Utopia!
<a href="#">20120724-21</a>	22:27	SteveG	From the Right: "Colorado Batman Shooting Shows Obvious Signs of Being Staged"
<a href="#">20120725-05</a>	12:09	SteveM	Videos: Anita Moncrief, ACORN 'Whistleblower', at C-PAC
<a href="#">20120725-08</a>	14:03	SteveB	From the Right: "Hey, Boston: Leave Chick-fil-A Alone"
<a href="#">20120729-18</a>	18:05	SteveB	From the Right: Graphic: Shout Racist!
<a href="#">20120729-19</a>	19:15	Tom	Graphic: Where Hate Comes From
<a href="#">20120729-21</a>	19:29	SteveB	Re: Graphic: Where Hate Comes From (reply to Tom, above)
<a href="#">20120729-23</a>	21:42	Tom	Re: Graphic: Where Hate Comes From (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120729-24</a>	22:41	SteveB	Re: Graphic: Where Hate Comes From (reply to Tom, above)
<a href="#">20120730-05</a>	13:35	SteveM	Fw: Boy's Arm Crushed by Islam
<a href="#">20120730-06</a>	14:02	SteveB	Re: Boy's Arm Crushed by Islam (reply to SteveM, above)
<a href="#">20120730-15</a>	23:56	Tom	Quote: Freedom Over Slavery
<b>(04) DEMOCRATS</b>			
<a href="#">20120630-04</a>	08:20	MarthaH	"Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?"

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120630-05</a>	08:59	Pam	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120630-14</a>	16:35	Art	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120630-17</a>	16:43	Pam	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120630-13</a>	16:20	Art	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120630-16</a>	16:40	Pam	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to Art, above)
<b>(05) LIBERAL MIND, THE</b>			
<a href="#">20120710-03</a>	12:37	SteveB	"How to Think"
<b>(06) MISC. POLITICS / CORRESPONDENCE w/ POLITICIANS</b>			
<a href="#">20120727-03</a>	10:39	SteveG	Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies
<a href="#">20120729-01</a>	08:59	SteveB	Re: Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120729-02</a>	09:56	Art	Re: Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120729-03</a>	10:43	SteveG	Re: Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies (reply to Art & SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120729-04</a>	11:29	SteveB	Re: Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies (reply to SteveG & Art, above)
<b>(07) REPUBLICANS</b>			
<a href="#">20120629-06</a>	16:48	SteveG	Graphic: GOP on USA
<a href="#">20120630-25</a>	21:48	SteveG	ALEC
<a href="#">20120701-04</a>	08:55	Pam	Re: ALEC (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120701-05</a>	10:05	SteveG	Re: ALEC (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120701-08</a>	10:20	Pam	Re: ALEC (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120701-09</a>	10:45	SteveG	Re: ALEC (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120701-14</a>	12:49	Pam	Re: ALEC (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120701-18</a>	18:57	Dennis	Re: ALEC (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120702-24</a>	23:57	SteveG	Cartoon: No! No! No!
<a href="#">20120705-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Republican Patriotism: M.I.A.</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Patriotism July 4, 2012")
<a href="#">20120710-12</a>	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: The Republican Plan
<a href="#">20120715-08</a>	23:57	SteveG	Graphic: Our Republican Representatives
<a href="#">20120718-09</a>	15:44	Art	Fw: The B*tch Needs Bucks!
<a href="#">20120718-10</a>	15:56	Pam	Re: The B*tch Needs Bucks! (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120718-12</a>	16:10	SteveG	Re: The B*tch Needs Bucks! (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120718-13</a>	16:13	Art	Re: The B*tch Needs Bucks! (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120720-01</a>	06:30	MarthaH	"Are Bachmann and Sununu Attacks Part of a New McCarthyism?"
<a href="#">20120724-02</a>	08:26	SteveB	Un-American
<a href="#">20120724-23</a>	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Karl Rove on Education
<b>(08) STATE / LOCAL POLITICS</b>			
<b>(09) THIRD PARTIES</b>			
<b>(10) CONSTITUTION</b>			
<a href="#">20120724-06</a>	10:55	Dick	Fw: Proposed 28 <sup>th</sup> Amendment

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120724-10</a>	14:40	SteveB	Re: Proposed 28 <sup>th</sup> Amendment (reply to Dick, above)
<b>(11) CORRUPTION</b>			
<a href="#">20120705-14</a>	23:57	SteveG	Quote: Samuel Tilden on Congressmen
<b>(12) EDUCATION</b>			
<a href="#">20120703-07</a>	13:45	Jim	Pay Cuts for Teachers, Tax Cuts for Billionaires
<a href="#">20120716-12</a>	23:57	SteveG	Graphic: Paying for Higher Education
<a href="#">20120719-07</a>	10:59	MarthaH	Fw: What Do Teachers Make?
<a href="#">20120719-22</a>	22:48	SteveG	"It's Time for Schools to Seize Control of Athletic Programs & Penn State Should Lead the Way"
<a href="#">20120724-01</a>	06:50	MarthaH	"Trophy Backlash: Are We Rewarding Kids for Just Showing Up?"
<a href="#">20120724-04</a>	10:07	Pam	Re: "Trophy Backlash: Are We Rewarding Kids for Just Showing Up?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120727-06</a>	13:50	Pam	No 'College Democrats' at DePauw
<a href="#">20120727-09</a>	15:30	SteveG	Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120729-05</a>	11:53	SteveB	Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to Pam & SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120729-06</a>	12:02	Pam	Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to SteveG & SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120729-07</a>	12:23	Art	Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120729-10</a>	13:25	SteveG	Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to Pam, above)
<b>(13) ELECTION REFORM</b>			
<a href="#">20120629-04</a>	14:28	SteveB	"The Republican War on Elections"
<a href="#">20120703-12</a>	16:08	SteveB	Fw: USAction Action: Stop the GOP's War on Voting!
<a href="#">20120706-01</a>	07:51	MarthaH	"The Ten Companies Making the Biggest Political Donations"
<a href="#">20120710-01</a>	07:12	MarthaH	"The GOP's Crime Against Voters"
<a href="#">20120720-07</a>	13:46	Pam+	Sen. Marco Rubio's View of 'Free Speech'
<a href="#">20120720-11</a>	16:10	SteveG	Re: Sen. Marco Rubio's View of 'Free Speech' (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120726-04</a>	12:50	SteveB	"Million-Dollar Donation in Indiana Race May Skirt Limits on Corporate Giving"
<a href="#">20120727-07</a>	14:22	SteveB	"Overturn <i>Citizens United</i> " (incl. Video)
<a href="#">20120730-02</a>	06:23	SteveB	"What Super PAC Donors Really Want Is a Return on Their Investment"
<a href="#">20120730-17</a>	23:58	Dennis	Graphic: Shooting vs. Voting
<b>(14) EXECUTIVE BRANCH</b>			
<a href="#">20120718-30</a>	22:48	Tom	Photo: South Austin, Texas Humor
<b>(15) GUNS / INSURRECTION / CRIME</b>			
<a href="#">20120716-01</a>	13:01	Tom	"Bikini-Clad, Gun-Toting Israeli Woman Becomes an Internet Sensation"
<a href="#">20120717-03</a>	10:43	Ben	Re: "Bikini-Clad, Gun-Toting Israeli Woman Becomes an Internet Sensation" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #183)
<a href="#">20120718-23</a>	18:55	SteveG	Cartoon: Too Many Idiots...
<a href="#">20120718-29</a>	22:04	Tom	Photo: My Kinda Team!
<a href="#">20120724-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Blessed Be Thy Killing Guns</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Congress Cowers to Terrorist-Enabling NRA")

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<a href="#">20120725-00</a>		SteveB	<b>A Raygun of Hope?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Gun Owners Surveyed by Frank Luntz Express Broad Support for Gun Control Policies")
<a href="#">20120726-01</a>	05:24	MarthaH	"Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'"
<a href="#">20120726-02</a>	09:28	Pam	Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120726-09</a>	22:26	Art	Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to MarthaH & Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120727-05</a>	13:44	Pam	Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #191)
<a href="#">20120729-08</a>	12:31	Art	"Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise"
<a href="#">20120729-09</a>	13:05	SteveB	Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120729-11</a>	13:30	SteveG	Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120729-12</a>	15:06	Pam	Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120729-13</a>	17:30	Art	Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120729-15</a>	17:36	Beth	Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120729-16</a>	17:43	Art	"Scalia Suggests 'Hand-Held Rocket Launchers' Are Protected Under Second Amendment"
<a href="#">20120729-20</a>	19:18	Pam	Re: "Scalia Suggests 'Hand-Held Rocket Launchers' Are Protected Under Second Amendment" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120730-12</a>	20:16	SteveG	"We Won't Know the Cause of Gun Violence Until We Look for It"
<b>(16) IMMIGRATION</b>			
<a href="#">20120629-11</a>	22:03	Marci	Fw: On Becoming Illegal
<a href="#">20120704-05</a>	13:53	MarthaH	98 Americans
<a href="#">20120704-08</a>	15:00	Pam	Re: 98 Americans (reply to Martha, above)
<b>(17) JUDICIAL BRANCH</b>			
<a href="#">20120702-00</a>		SteveB	<b>'Be Careful What You Wish For'</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Did John Roberts Give Mitt Romney a Gift?")
<a href="#">20120702-01</a>	10:51	MarthaH	"Roberts' Health Care Ruling Sends a Message to Politicians"
<a href="#">20120725-18</a>	11:58	SteveG	Graphic: SCOTUS Sponsors
<b>(18) LEGISLATIVE BRANCH</b>			
<a href="#">20120711-08</a>	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Congress Unmasked
<a href="#">20120713-07</a>	14:18	Ben	Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012 (to Debbie)
<a href="#">20120713-09</a>	14:20	Ben	Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012
<a href="#">20120713-10</a>	14:35	SteveB	Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012 (reply to Ben, above)
<a href="#">20120716-04</a>	13:17	Art	Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012 (reply to Ben, FotM Newsletter #182)
<a href="#">20120716-09</a>	19:34	SteveB	Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012 (reply to Art, above)
<b>(19) MISC. GOVERNMENT / CORRESPONDENCE w/ OFFICIALS</b>			
<a href="#">20120708-07</a>	22:53	SteveG	Video: "The American People Are Angry"
<a href="#">20120709-03</a>	10:52	Pam	Re: Video: "The American People Are Angry" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #177)
<a href="#">20120709-05</a>	11:12	SteveG	Re: Video: "The American People Are Angry" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120709-12</a>	23:17	Marci	Cartoons: The American Ship of State

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<b>(20) REPRODUCTION / WOMEN / LGBT</b>			
<a href="#">20120715-05</a>	12:11	SteveG	"The Woman Who Stood Up to Joe Paterno"
<a href="#">20120726-10</a>	23:01	Tom	Note from Wife
<a href="#">20120730-14</a>	23:55	SteveG	Graphic: Vaginas
<b>(21) SOCIAL SECURITY / RETIREMENT</b>			
<a href="#">20120708-06</a>	16:59	Marci	Fw: 1960's Hits Renamed for Older Baby Boomers
<a href="#">20120709-01</a>	08:20	SteveB	Fw: Black & White
<b>(22) STATE / LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>			
<a href="#">20120705-03</a>	09:48	SteveB	Fw: Florida MoveOn Petition: Make Rick Scott Implement Obamacare!
<a href="#">20120705-04</a>	15:36	SteveG	Medicaid
<a href="#">20120705-05</a>	16:14	Dennis	Re: Medicaid (reply to SteveG, above) & Cartoon: Rick Scott
<a href="#">20120705-06</a>	16:47	Pam	Re: Medicaid (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120705-08</a>	16:58	SteveG	Re: Medicaid (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120705-10</a>	18:06	Art	Re: Medicaid (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120705-11</a>	18:34	SteveG	Re: Medicaid (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120705-13</a>	23:10	Art	Re: Medicaid (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120710-05</a>	14:28	SteveG	"Surplus Scrutiny" [in Indiana]
<a href="#">20120710-06</a>	15:10	Art	Re: "Surplus Scrutiny" [in Indiana] (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120710-07</a>	16:21	SteveG	Re: "Surplus Scrutiny" [in Indiana] (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20120718-06</a>	15:23	SteveG	"Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program"
<a href="#">20120718-08</a>	15:39	Pam	Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120718-14</a>	16:14	SteveG	Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120718-18</a>	16:30	Pam	Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120718-20</a>	18:15	Beth	Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120718-22</a>	18:50	SteveB	Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120718-26</a>	19:24	Beth	Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120718-24</a>	19:04	Art	Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120718-25</a>	19:22	SteveG	Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to Art, above)
<b>(23) TAXES</b>			
<a href="#">20120702-09</a>	14:08	Dennis	Graphic: Wall St. Deadbeats
<a href="#">20120702-21</a>	16:32	Art	Re: Graphic: Wall St. Deadbeats (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120704-04</a>	11:30	SteveB	"France Slaps 7 Billion Euros in Taxes on Rich and Big Firms"
<a href="#">20120704-10</a>	23:57	SteveG	Graphic: President Obama's Tax Cuts for the Middle-Class
<a href="#">20120708-02</a>	22:28	SteveG	Quote: O.W. Holmes on Taxes
<a href="#">20120708-01</a>	22:24	SteveG	Quote: Adam Smith on Taxes

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<a href="#">20120711-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Taxes: Not a 'Bad Word'</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Facts About Obama's Tax Proposal" & "Obama Nailed It on Taxes, Except for One Itty-Bitty Part...")
<a href="#">20120711-01</a>	10:42	Art	Re: Taxes: Not a 'Bad Word' (FotM Newsletter #179)
<a href="#">20120711-02</a>	11:02	Pam	Re: Taxes: Not a 'Bad Word' (FotM Newsletter #179)
<a href="#">20120711-04</a>	14:57	SteveB	"Boy, Are Americans Not Overtaxed"
<a href="#">20120716-03</a>	13:10	SteveB	"Poll: Tax Hike for Rich Supported by Majority of Americans"
<a href="#">20120720-04</a>	13:16	SteveB	"Obscuring a Debate Over Butlers" ('Competing' Tax Proposals)
<b>(24) TRADE / INT'L RELATIONS</b>			
<b>(25) WAR / SECURITY</b>			
<a href="#">20120718-28</a>	21:14	Tom	"TSA Let 25 Illegal Aliens Attend Flight School Owned by Illegal Alien"
<a href="#">20120723-10</a>	19:29	Marci	Fw: Quotes & Navy Seals
<a href="#">20120728-02</a>	15:52	Tom	"Strategy for an Unthinkable Conflict"
<a href="#">20120729-14</a>	17:33	SteveB	Re: "Strategy for an Unthinkable Conflict" (reply to Tom, above)
<b>(26) ART / LITERATURE / WRITING / MOVIES / MUSIC</b>			
<a href="#">20120719-10</a>	13:37	Marci	Video: Amazing 6 Year Old Ethan Bortnick - Piano Prodigy on 'Tonight Show'
<a href="#">20120719-17</a>	17:31	SteveB	Gomez Concert in Indy
<a href="#">20120719-18</a>	18:02	SteveG	Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120719-20</a>	19:42	SteveB	Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120719-21</a>	19:44	Art	Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120724-22</a>	23:57	Tom	Graphic: The Dark Knight Answers
<b>(27) BUSINESS / MONEY / ECONOMICS</b>			
<a href="#">20120708-03</a>	13:20	SteveG	"Why Adam Smith Is Important"
<a href="#">20120711-05</a>	15:49	Marty	Fw: Two Cows
<a href="#">20120713-02</a>	08:14	SteveG	Graphic: Our #14.3 Trillion National Debt
<a href="#">20120716-06</a>	14:01	SteveB	From the Right: "An Astounding Read on Housing"
<a href="#">20120718-00</a>		SteveB	<b>National Debt Mythology</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Four Dangerous Myths About Government Spending")
<a href="#">20120717-10</a>	23:41	SteveM	Re: National Debt Mythology—Bush Graphic (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120720-09</a>	14:31	Dennis	"David Stockman: Austerity Is Not Discretionary"
<a href="#">20120720-10</a>	15:50	Pam	Re: "David Stockman: Austerity Is Not Discretionary" (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120720-12</a>	16:30	Dennis	Re: "David Stockman: Austerity Is Not Discretionary" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120720-13</a>	16:43	Pam	Re: "David Stockman: Austerity Is Not Discretionary" (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120731-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Dismal Science</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Escape from Economics" & "Nationalize Money, Not Banks")
<b>(28) CLASS WAR / POVERTY / RICH &amp; POOR</b>			
<a href="#">20120630-07</a>	09:16	SteveG	Fw: Bear Beer Market
<a href="#">20120630-19</a>	16:47	Art	Re: Bear Beer Market (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120630-08</a>	10:30	SteveG	Graphic: Trickle-Down Economics: Down to Where?
<a href="#">20120630-10</a>	12:24	SteveG	"Trickle-Down Economics: Four Reasons Why It Just Doesn't Work"

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<a href="#">20120702-11</a>	14:59	SteveG	"Income Inequality is America's Biggest Challenge: United Nations Economist"
<a href="#">20120702-13</a>	15:35	Dennis	Re: "Income Inequality is America's Biggest Challenge: United Nations Economist" (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120702-14</a>	15:43	SteveG	Re: "Income Inequality is America's Biggest Challenge: United Nations Economist" (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120702-23</a>	18:15	Dennis	"A Lesson from Crazy Horse"
<a href="#">20120703-01</a>	10:16	Pam	Re: "A Lesson from Crazy Horse" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #173)
<a href="#">20120703-13</a>	21:16	SteveM	Re: "A Lesson from Crazy Horse" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #173)
<a href="#">20120702-25</a>	23:58	Dennis	Graphic: We Are the 99%
<a href="#">20120712-17</a>	19:17	SteveG	Quote: Bill Moyers on the Poor & 'Free Speech'
<a href="#">20120718-01</a>	06:57	MarthH	"Five Reasons the Super-Rich Need Government More Than the Rest of Us"
<a href="#">20120718-32</a>	23:23	SteveB	Re: "Five Reasons the Super-Rich Need Government More Than the Rest of Us" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20120722-04</a>	17:04	SteveG	Graphic: Capitalism Isn't Working!
<a href="#">20120723-03</a>	13:15	SteveB	"Banks, Global Elite Confirmed to Hold \$32 Trillion in Offshore Accounts"
<a href="#">20120727-12</a>	17:24	SteveG	Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts
<a href="#">20120727-13</a>	18:46	SteveM	Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveB's forward of SteveG's email, above)
<a href="#">20120727-14</a>	19:33	SteveB	Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveM, above)
<a href="#">20120727-15</a>	23:13	SteveM	Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20120728-03</a>	18:20	SteveB	Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveM, above)
<b>(29) DAILY PHOTOS / PHOTOGRAPHY</b>			
<a href="#">20120629-10</a>	21:53	Marci	Photo: Spear Fishing
<a href="#">20120702-26</a>	23:59	Marci	Photo: Tables Turned
<a href="#">20120703-17</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Fireworks (and How to Photograph)
<a href="#">20120704-12</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Miss Liberty Against Declining Day
<a href="#">20120705-16</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Seeds of Today Sown in the Wilderness
<a href="#">20120708-08</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: "Hark, now hear the sailors cry, / Smell the sea, and feel the sky / Let your soul & spirit fly, into the mystic..." — Van Morrison
<a href="#">20120709-14</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: The Moors
<a href="#">20120710-13</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Sonoran Desert ("Desert Sounds" by Howard Altman)
<a href="#">20120711-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Cayman Islands
<a href="#">20120712-19</a>	23:58	Marci	Photobomb #1 (Everything's OK...)
<a href="#">20120712-20</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Refreshing Hoosier Cloudburst
<a href="#">20120715-10</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: After Some Time — New Life!
<a href="#">20120716-14</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Canada
<a href="#">20120717-14</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Baby Bolivian Llama
<a href="#">20120718-34</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Purdue
<a href="#">20120719-26</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Waterfalls
<a href="#">20120722-07</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Cookies!
<a href="#">20120723-16</a>	23:59	Marci	Photo: Monkey Orchid
<a href="#">20120724-24</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: DISINTEGRATOR Rubber Band Gun
<a href="#">20120725-19</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Finger Monkey (Bolivia)
<a href="#">20120726-13</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Tower Bridge, London
<a href="#">20120729-25</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Weeki Wachee Springs, Florida

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<a href="#">20120730-18</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Live Oaks with Spanish Moss
<b>(30) ENERGY / TRANSPORTATION / WATER</b>			
<a href="#">20120718-17</a>	16:24	Mark	Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K."
<a href="#">20120718-33</a>	23:33	SteveB	Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to Mark, above)
<a href="#">20120718-21</a>	18:51	SteveG	Fw: Photo: 'Dinner with Veggies': Delicious-Looking Bloody Mary [from Jim Reeves, gracias!]
<a href="#">20120719-08</a>	13:29	Ben	Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #185)
<a href="#">20120719-11</a>	13:38	Mark	Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #185)
<a href="#">20120719-16</a>	17:04	SteveB	Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to Mark, above)
<a href="#">20120719-12</a>	13:42	Mark	Bonneville 2012
<a href="#">20120719-14</a>	16:55	SteveB	Re: Bonneville 2012 (reply to Mark, above)
<a href="#">20120723-12</a>	20:58	SteveBA	Keystone Pipeline
<a href="#">20120723-14</a>	23:04	SteveB	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveBA, above)
<a href="#">20120724-03</a>	09:53	SteveG	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveBA, FotM Newsletter #188)
<a href="#">20120724-05</a>	10:25	Pam	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveBA, FotM Newsletter #188)
<a href="#">20120724-07</a>	11:07	Art	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #188)
<a href="#">20120724-11</a>	16:49	Bill	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #188)
<a href="#">20120724-12</a>	17:54	Dennis	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Bill, above) & "Preventable Errors Led to Pipeline Spill, Inquiry Finds"
<a href="#">20120724-13</a>	18:20	Clark	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120724-16</a>	20:07	Bill	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Clark, above)
<a href="#">20120724-18</a>	21:05	Clark	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Bill, above)
<a href="#">20120724-14</a>	18:29	Jim	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120724-15</a>	19:23	Pam	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20120724-17</a>	20:15	Bill	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20120724-19</a>	21:34	SteveB	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to all, above) / CANADA
<a href="#">20120725-02</a>	08:10	Pam	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Bill, FotM Newsletter #189)
<a href="#">20120725-06</a>	13:26	SteveB	"What Five Oil Companies Did with Their \$375 Million in Daily Profits"
<a href="#">20120729-22</a>	20:19	SteveG	"Camry Edges Out F-150 for 'Most American'"
<b>(31) FOOD / DRINK</b>			
<a href="#">20120629-09</a>	21:31	Marci	Fw: Key to Preventing Moldy Fresh Berries!!!!
<a href="#">20120701-20</a>	20:09	SteveB	Fw: Roadfood Eating Tour 2012
<a href="#">20120703-15</a>	23:57	Marci	Graphic: The Zen of Thin
<a href="#">20120710-11</a>	23:57	Marci	Cartoon: "You Are What You Eat"
<a href="#">20120722-05</a>	17:11	SteveB	Passion Fruit (to Marci)
<a href="#">20120724-20</a>	22:22	SteveB	Fw: The Roadfood Tour of Connecticut
<b>(32) FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE</b>			
<a href="#">20120709-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Bolivian Baking Biz</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB
<a href="#">20120709-02</a>	10:40	Art	Re: Bolivian Baking Biz (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #177)
<a href="#">20120709-04</a>	11:12	Phil	Re: Bolivian Baking Biz (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #177)
<a href="#">20120709-10</a>	23:05	SteveB	Re: Bolivian Baking Biz (reply to Phil, above)
<a href="#">20120709-11</a>	23:10	SteveB	Bolivian Baking Biz—Saved by Jesus!
<a href="#">20120715-01</a>	05:30	SteveB	Bolivian Bakery Biz
<a href="#">20120722-01</a>	06:05	SteveB	Bolivian Bakery Biz — Update
<a href="#">20120730-01</a>	06:03	SteveB	Bolivian Bakery Biz — Update

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<a href="#">20120723-07</a>	15:20	Pam	Accountability vs. Greed
<a href="#">20120723-08</a>	16:05	SteveB	Re: Accountability vs. Greed (reply to Pam, above)
<b>(33) FUN / DIVERSION</b>			
<a href="#">20120630-03</a>	08:10	MarthaH	Fw: 50's Car Test
<a href="#">20120704-11</a>	23:58	Marci	Graphic: Bad Dream
<a href="#">20120711-06</a>	16:23	SteveB	"Pauline Potter Weight Loss: World's Heaviest Woman Loses 98 Pounds With Marathon Sex"
<a href="#">20120711-07</a>	23:57	Marci	Cartoon: Stray Bar
<a href="#">20120715-09</a>	23:58	Marci	Amazing Animal Photobomb
<a href="#">20120716-05</a>	13:35	Tom	Graphic: A Better Pain Chart
<a href="#">20120716-13</a>	23:58	Marci	Graphic: Labrador Retrievers
<a href="#">20120717-13</a>	23:58	Marci	Another Animal Photobomb
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<a href="#">20120702-16</a>	16:09	Art	Re: "Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To" (reply to LarryK, above)

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<a href="#">20120710-04</a>	13:19	SteveB	Fw: Ultraviolet Petition: Tell Congress It's Time to Move On!
<a href="#">20120710-08</a>	16:27	SteveB	Fw: US Action Action: Tell Congress to Get to Work!
<a href="#">20120710-09</a>	16:59	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Contribute to Ads Defining Mitt Romney as the Candidate of the 1%!
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<a href="#">20120723-02</a>	12:13	SteveB	Fw: FMF Action: Help Keep Embattled Clinics Open!
<a href="#">20120725-01</a>	07:45	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Ban Assault Weapons!
<a href="#">20120726-07</a>	16:00	SteveB	Fw: Kucinich Action!
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<a href="#">20120704-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Fireworks of the Gods</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("What is the Higgs Boson?")
<a href="#">20120704-06</a>	14:07	SteveG	"Hawking Says He Lost \$100 Bet Over Higgs Discovery"
<a href="#">20120704-09</a>	16:21	Art	Re: "Hawking Says He Lost \$100 Bet Over Higgs Discovery" (reply to SteveG, above)
<a href="#">20120702-05</a>	12:49	Art	Colorado Burning
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<a href="#">20120706-00</a>		MarthaH & SteveB	<b>The Little Place Where Together We Live</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Searing Sun & Drought Shrivels Corn in Midwest" & "Drought Hits 56 Percent of Continental U.S.; 'Significant Toll' on Crops" & "Borderline Crazy")
<a href="#">20120705-01</a>	07:55	Pam	Re: The Little Place Where Together We Live (reply to MarthaH, above)
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<a href="#">20120705-15</a>	23:58	Marci	Cartoon: How Ecological! Go Hire the Cow Whisperer!
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<a href="#">20120726-11</a>	23:52	SteveB	Re: Latest Midwest Drought Map (reply to MarthaH, above)

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<a href="#">20120702-04</a>	12:26	Art	Re: "Bail Out The Bankers? Iceland ARRESTED Them & Look What Happened" (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120702-07</a>	13:00	Pam	Re: "Bail Out The Bankers? Iceland ARRESTED Them & Look What Happened" (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120717-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Why Can't the U.S. Be as Rich as Canada?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Hardheaded Socialism Makes Canada Richer Than U.S.")
<a href="#">20120720-05</a>	13:35	Dennis	Who Rules America? (and see "Morocco" below)
<a href="#">20120723-06</a>	15:17	Dennis	Re: Morocco (reply to SteveB)
<a href="#">20120723-09</a>	18:02	SteveB	Re: Morocco (reply to Dennis, above)
<a href="#">20120728-01</a>	00:25	Charis	"Coca Cola Booted from Bolivia" & Graphic: Cola vs. Marijuana (from SteveG)



## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #172 — JULY 2, 2012**

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **'Be Careful What You Wish For'**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 2, 2012)

Now that you've had a little time to celebrate (or cry), let's look at some possible implications of last week's historic decision on the Affordable Health Care Act, though I think there will be important tweaking performed before full implementation is reached. If government were not corrupted by health care industry money, we could have a good bill. If Republicans wanted a good bill, we could all have one, but they will probably continue to obstruct for a while longer...until they self-destruct or wake-up.



"Did John Roberts Give Mitt Romney a Gift?" by Marcia Angell, M.D., Huffington Post (Photo: AP)

June 29, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marcia-angell-md/roberts-romney-health-care\\_b\\_1637397.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marcia-angell-md/roberts-romney-health-care_b_1637397.html))

The Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act, aka Obamacare, puts me in mind of the old proverb: Be careful what you wish for. Democrats on a victory lap should watch their step, because John Roberts may have given Mitt Romney a gift. The impact on the health system will be much smaller than the political fallout, because with or without Obamacare, the American health system will continue to unravel -- quickly if Romney is elected, slowly if Obama is re-elected.

First the policy, then the politics:

Obamacare is simply incapable of doing what it is supposed to do -- provide nearly universal care at an affordable and sustainable cost. The problem is that three years ago, in his futile efforts to win over Republicans (remember the embarrassing courtship of Olympia Snowe?), Obama gutted the law before it was even passed. He made the private insurance companies the linchpin of the new system, and promised them millions of additional customers and billions of taxpayer dollars. He also did nothing to rein in the profit-oriented delivery system that rewards providers on a piecework basis for doing tests and procedures. So with all the new dollars flowing into the system and no restraints on the way medicine is practiced, the law is inherently inflationary.

Although there are some provisions to curb the worst abuses of the insurance companies, such as excluding people with preexisting conditions, there is nothing in the law that would stop insurers from raising premiums. A senior executive of the industry's trade association, America's Health Insurance Plans, told me privately that that's exactly what the companies will do if regulations cut into their profits. Thus, costs under Obamacare will almost certainly rise even faster than at present. No reform can work well or very long if its costs are unsustainable.

In fact, it is unlikely that Obamacare will ever be fully implemented as it stands. If Romney is elected, with a Republican Congress, it will be quickly overturned. If Obama is re-elected (and I hope he is, despite my disappointment in his health plan), it will come apart more slowly. But unravel it will, as costs rise and it becomes clear that there are still tens of millions of Americans priced out of the system.

Here's how the unraveling will look:

- Many of the uninsured who are subject to the mandate to purchase private insurance will choose to pay the penalty/tax instead. That will lead the insurance companies to raise their premiums, demand that the penalties be greater, or both. Deductibles and co-payments will increase to the point that many people will have insurance they can't afford to use. (This is the case in Massachusetts.) Many employers will simply stop offering health insurance, since our high unemployment means workers no longer have the leverage to demand it, or they will stop insuring dependents (thus avoiding having to cover grown children to age 26). In addition, because insurers have a strong financial incentive to evade the new regulations requiring them to take all comers, it will take a huge bureaucracy to monitor them.
- Next year, states are supposed to set up insurance exchanges to pool risks and offer a menu of approved insurance plans for individuals and small businesses. But they are unlikely to be functioning by 2014, as called for in the law, either because Republican states simply refuse to set them up and hamper federal efforts to step in, or because of the administrative complexities. Some states may also refuse to accept the funds to expand Medicaid, as called for in the law, since the Supreme Court found that they could opt out without losing their existing federal Medicaid funding. Here again, the bureaucracy necessary to aid and monitor state compliance will be huge, diverting resources from health care. In addition, there are likely to be multiple legal challenges to nearly all provisions of the law.
- Obamacare partially offsets the costs of federal subsidies to insurance companies and Medicaid costs by cutting Medicare reimbursement to providers. That means hospitals and other health facilities will take a hit, and many are already struggling.

So that's how it will unravel. There will be efforts to patch it up as we go along, but because Obamacare leaves our current inflationary system largely in place, they are unlikely to be successful.

Now for the politics. Even though the Supreme Court decision will have little long-term effect on our health system, the political ramifications will be great. To be sure, it's a victory for Obama, but that will be evanescent. Now the Republicans are on the offensive, and greatly strengthened by John Roberts' insistence that the mandate is a tax, not a penalty. Remember how hard Obama tried to avoid the T-word? Republicans are adept at painting Democrats as tax-happy, and Roberts has helped them to do just that. Pundits wonder what got into the Chief Justice. Was he just trying to make the Supreme Court appear to be above politics, given all the recent evidence that it's not? Or did he do a favor for Romney and the Republicans?

It's very hard to read, but I think the Democrats would have been better off if the Supreme Court had overturned Obamacare, and I think it would have been better for our health system, as well. The base would be energized, and Democrats would take the offensive. More important, no one would be under the illusion that the health system has been successfully reformed, as many good liberals now are. That mistake will become clear as the system unravels. Democrats will suffer the death of a thousand cuts, rather than a quick blow that could be blamed on our politicized Supreme Court. If the law had been struck down, we could have started right away to work on an effective reform.

The only way to provide health care to all Americans at an affordable cost is by instituting some form of publicly-administered nonprofit system like those in other advanced countries. After all, they manage to provide universal care at less than half the cost, on average, and their costs are rising more slowly. I have long advocated expanding Medicare (which is a single-payer program) gradually by lowering the eligibility age one decade at a time, while phasing out for-profit health facilities and changing doctors' fees to reward primary care more and specialist care less.

On July 22, 2009, Obama said in a press conference, "Now, the truth is that unless you have what's called a single-payer system in which everybody is automatically covered, then you're probably not going to reach every single individual." Bingo. Too bad he didn't hang on to that insight, and use his rhetorical skills to make the case strongly to the American public. If he had fought for single-payer health care at the beginning of his administration, while he had both houses of Congress, and mobilized public opinion behind it, he might have made it. After all, the only thing members of Congress need more than industry money is votes.

<a href="#">20120629-02</a>	09:08	Pam	Re: Progressives Stomp Regressives! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #171)
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Don't you love the way Romney stands there telling what he would do about health care--and it's everything that's in the ACA?! He's like a gasping fish.

<a href="#">20120629-08</a>	20:52	MarthaH	"How Verrilli May Have Won Over Roberts"
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"How Verrilli May Have Won Over Roberts" by Domenico Montanaro, NBC/MSNBC

June 29, 2012 (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/06/29/12481922-how-verrilli-may-have-won-over-roberts?lite>)

After the Supreme Court's second day of oral arguments, back on March 27, there was a sense that the justices were not sold on the health care law.

"I think it's very doubtful that court is going to find the health care law constitutional," NBC's Pete Williams said at the time. "I don't see five votes to find the law constitutional."

And with good reason. The justices were very skeptical of the thrust of the government's case -- that the mandate was justified under the so-called "commerce clause" of the Constitution and the government's right to regulate markets. It was clear Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Anthony Kennedy, usually a swing vote, were skeptical of the "commerce clause" argument, especially how it could be limited to the health care market. And star conservative lawyer Paul Clement, who argued for the states that filed suit against the law, focused his case on it.

The rough day in court for the government led some to criticize the government's lawyer, Solicitor General Donald Verrilli. The Republican National Committee went so far as to mock Verrilli with this video, focusing on style -- a pause and stammer.

But court arguments are not television anchor tryouts; they're about the merits of an argument, and a review of the transcript of the oral arguments from that day (with the benefit of hindsight, of course) finds Verrilli made a strong case for the government's taxing power. While the taxing power argument was certainly not the focus of post-oral arguments analyses, it was the one that eventually won the day. And though Chief Justice John Roberts gave few clues that he might be leaning toward the argument, there were some signs he might have been warmer to the government's case than some thought.

The heart of Verrilli's argument, that the mandate should be considered justified under the Congress' taxing power, seemed to center on this point, which he made twice that day -- that the mandate would be administered by the Internal Revenue Service, the agency responsible for taxation.

"With respect to the question of characterization," Verrilli told Justice Scalia, "the -- this is -- in the Internal Revenue Code, it is administered by the IRS; it is paid on your Form 1040 on April 15th."

A few minutes later, pressed by Justice Roberts, he reiterated the point. "[I]t is in the Internal Revenue Code," Verrilli said. "It is collected by the IRS on April 15th."

Verrilli fended off tough questions from nearly all the justices on the taxing power argument, from the court's conservatives to liberals.

Some of the toughest questioning came as it related to the president and members of Congress arguing the mandate was not a tax. But Verrilli countered that: (1) Some members of Congress did argue that the mandate would be valid under the taxing power, and (2) that shouldn't matter; that it's up to the court to decide what's justified under the law, not the rhetoric of politicians.

With Scalia:

**JUSTICE SCALIA:** The president said it wasn't a tax, didn't he?

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** Well, Justice Scalia, what the -- two things about that. First, as it seems to me, what matters is what power Congress was exercising. And they were -- and I think it's clear that the -- they were exercising the tax power as well as --

**JUSTICE SCALIA:** You're making two arguments. Number one, it's a tax; and number two, even if it isn't a tax, it's within the taxing power. I'm just addressing the first.

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** What the president said --

**JUSTICE SCALIA:** Is it a tax or not a tax? The president didn't think it was.

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** The president said it wasn't a tax increase because it ought to be understood as an incentive to get people to have insurance. I don't think it's fair to infer from that anything about whether that is an exercise of the tax power or not.

With Kagan:

**JUSTICE KAGAN:** I suppose, though, General, one question is whether the determined efforts of Congress not to refer to this as a tax make a difference. I mean, you're suggesting we should just look to the practical operation. We shouldn't look at labels. And that seems right, except that here we have a case in which Congress determinedly said, this is not a tax, and the question is why should that be irrelevant?

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** I don't think that that's a fair characterization of the actions of Congress here, Justice Kagan. On the -- December 23rd, a point of constitutional order was called, too, in fact, with respect to this law. The floor sponsor, Senator Baucus, defended it as an exercise of the taxing power. In his response to the point of order, the Senate voted 60 to 39 on that proposition. The legislative history is replete with members of Congress explaining that this law is constitutional as an exercise of the taxing power. It was attacked as a tax by its opponents. So I don't think this is a situation where you can say that Congress was avoiding any mention of the tax power.

It would be one thing if Congress explicitly disavowed an exercise of the tax power. But given that it hasn't done so, it seems to me that it's -- not only is it fair to read this as an exercise of the tax power, but this Court has got an obligation to construe it as an exercise of the tax power, if it can be upheld on that basis.

Scalia again pressed Verrilli in a somewhat testy exchange. But Verrilli held his own. Ultimately, Scalia backed down, albeit with a sarcastic conclusion:

**JUSTICE SCALIA:** You're saying that all the discussion we had earlier about how this is one big uniform scheme and the Commerce Clause, blah, blah, blah, it really doesn't matter. This is a tax and the Federal Government could simply have said, without all of the rest of this legislation, could simply have said, everybody who doesn't buy health insurance at a certain age will be taxed so much money, right?

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** It -- it used its powers together to solve the problem of the market not --

**JUSTICE SCALIA:** Yes, but you didn't need that.

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** -- providing affordable coverage --

**JUSTICE SCALIA:** You didn't need that. If it's a tax, it's only -- raising money is enough.

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** It is justifiable under its tax power.

**JUSTICE SCALIA:** Okay. Extraordinary.

And perhaps most telling, here's Verrilli's most extended exchange with Roberts on taxing authority in which Verrilli admits the likely political considerations for the president and members of Congress not calling it a tax.

That admission may have clarified things and won the day.

Note Roberts' conclusion:

**CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS:** Why didn't Congress call it a tax, then?

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** Well --

**CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS:** You're telling me they thought of it as a tax, they defended it on the tax power. Why didn't they say it was a tax?

**GENERAL VERRILLI:** They might have thought, Your Honor, that calling it a penalty as they did would make it more effective in accomplishing its objectives. But it is in the Internal Revenue Code, it is collected by the IRS on April 15th. I don't think this is a situation in which you can say --

**CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS:** Well, that's the reason. They thought it might be more effective if they called it a penalty.

If Verrilli did pull this out, he redeemed himself for his performance before the SC. I'm sure he'll sleep better now.

[20120630-18](#) 16:44 Art Re: "How Verrilli May Have Won Over Roberts" (reply to Pam, above)

I'm really not sure Verrilli had much to do with it either way. These are the Supreme's and hopefully they are all (well maybe not Thomas) pretty familiar with Constitutional law. Not sure some lawyer's arguments would make much difference.

[20120630-26](#) 22:00 SteveG Graphic: The U.S. Stands Almost Entirely Alone Among Developed Nations That Lack Universal Health Care



From our partners at *The Atlantic*: The U.S. stands almost entirely alone among developed nations that lack universal health care. (<http://wapo.st/MJE0Cu>.)

[20120630-01](#) 06:10 SteveB "Why Economic Conservatives Should Support the Individual Mandate in Health Care"

"Why Economic Conservatives Should Support the Individual Mandate in Health Care" by Regina E. Herzlinger, *Huffington Post*

June 29, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/28/average-health-care-tax-n\\_1635119.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=business](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/28/average-health-care-tax-n_1635119.html?utm_hp_ref=business))

Although many conservatives are gnashing their teeth about the Supreme Court's upholding the individual mandate, had it not been upheld, their worst nightmares would have occurred: government would have required hundreds of billions in additional taxes to pay for the health care of the sick.

#### Why We Need an Individual Mandate

- Health care expenditures roughly follow Pareto's Law: 20 percent of users spend 80 percent of the money. If the healthy 80 percent do not buy health insurance, the sick 20 percent will not be able to afford it. In 2009, the average expenses of the sick enrolled in State high-risk pools ranged from \$8,000 to \$24,000. Even the top 10 percent of taxpayers, with incomes over \$110,000, could barely afford these sums.

- Sick people are insured presently because 40 percent of them are in Medicare and 97 percent of the rest are covered by employers or Medicaid .The healthy people in these insurance pools subsidize the costs of the sick ones. But many employers, weary of uncontrolled and unpredictable health care costs, will likely soon switch to a pension-like defined contribution system, cashing out employees with the value of employer-sponsored insurance -- \$4,500 in 2011. Absent the requirement that healthy people buy insurance, it is likely that the individual insurance market will consist primarily of sick people. They will have \$4,500 to buy a policy with average expenses of up to \$24,000. Good luck with that one.
- Absent an individual mandate, instead of buying their own insurance, most of the sick will qualify for subsidized coverage either in the public health insurance exchanges created under health care reform or in Medicaid. Staggering sums, hundreds of billions, in additional tax revenues will be required to support them.
- Further, government payment for sick people's health care expenses will diminish the massive venture capital investment needed for developing genomically -- derived therapies. We stand at the brink of a revolution in medicine which may well replace current barbaric therapies (painful, invasive surgery; radiation; and chemotherapy for cancer, for example) with drugs which can palliate and perhaps cure genetically -- linked diseases. But, like most new technologies, these are hugely expensive to develop, and, initially, to manufacture. Remember the prices of the first cell phones? Savvy private equity investors will be leery of funding this sector when the primary customer for its products is a government. They all know that the UK, with its government-controlled National Health Service, buys expensive cancer drugs at rates like those of far smaller and poorer nations.

#### Why an Individual Mandate Is Feasible

- Some also claim that enforcing the individual mandate is infeasible, but Switzerland's 97% enrollment rate for its version of the individual mandate indicates its feasibility. The Swiss achieve this compliance through straight forward techniques: tax filings indicate whether health insurance was purchased (it is tax-deductible there); the canton buys health insurance for the uninsured and bills them; and welters are sued under laws that allow confiscations of property.
- Some may view the Swiss as more law-abiding than we, but a 2011 cross-country analysis of the percentage of the GDP in the shadow economy found the U.S. to have the lowest percentage.
- Fiscal conservatives have plenty of reasons to deplore other aspects of the health care reform legislation. By expanding coverage, it will add trillions to our already bloated, uncompetitive health care system and the cost -- controls in the legislation are either worrisome (as, for example, with the Independent Payment Advisory Board, which allows a handful of people, rather than the American public, to cap health care expenses), or unrealistic, relying on a rearrangement of the deck chairs of the *Titanic*, the present U.S. health care delivery system, to control costs.

But the individual mandate deserves economic conservatives' support, not their dissention.

<a href="#">20120630-02</a>	06:15	SteveB	"Health Care 'Tax' Would Average \$1,000 a Year, Though Few Americans Will Pay"
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"Health Care 'Tax' Would Average \$1,000 a Year, Though Few Americans Will Pay" by Ben Hallman, Huffington Post

June 28, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/28/average-health-care-tax-n\\_1635119.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=business](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/28/average-health-care-tax-n_1635119.html?utm_hp_ref=business))

It's a mandate, it's a penalty -- no, wait, it's a tax.

In upholding the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act as a tax, the Supreme Court on Thursday framed how the giant health care law is likely to be characterized throughout the 2012 election.

So how much will the mandate cost the uninsured and who will be forced to pay? We looked at estimates provided by the Congressional Budget Office for 2016, when the penalties will be in full effect.

The short answer, for readers allergic to lots of numbers: not many people. In 2010, the CBO estimated that about 4 million Americans would be subject to a penalty or a tax. That's about how many Filipino-Americans there are or residents of Los Angeles. The average tax penalty will be \$1,000 per year.

So who won't be paying a penalty in 2016? The biggest group will be the 159 million people who receive health insurance through an employer. Next in the lineup will be the 49 million Americans whose insurance will be paid by Medicaid (including 15 million new enrollees as a result of the new law) and the 28 million people who will buy health insurance on the private market (an uptick from the 25 million today). Another 20 million taxpayers will buy insurance on the new exchanges, according to the CBO. (Here's a nifty graphic from The New York Times showing projections for 2020.)

According to the CBO's most recent estimates, that leaves 26 million Americans in 2016 who will be uninsured and thus possibly liable for paying a penalty. But there are exemptions -- lots and lots of them. American Indians will be exempt, as will be prisoners and illegal immigrants. So, too, will be people opposed for religious reasons. Workers with an income low enough that they don't have to file a tax return will be exempt as will be anyone whose premium would exceed a specific share of their income -- initially 8 percent.

Collections from penalties will total about \$4 billion a year, according to the CBO. The penalty in 2016 will be a flat \$695 or 2.5 percent of household income, whichever is higher.

Wealthier people who forgo insurance will pay the most. Households with an income above 400 percent of the poverty level, currently about \$96,000, will have to chip in 66 percent of the total penalty amount, according to the CBO. A family would not be required to pay more than \$2,085, regardless of the circumstances.

There are two important qualifiers to this analysis: The CBO's estimates of how many taxpayers will pay a penalty was based on a 2010 estimate that 21 million Americans in 2016 won't have insurance. A more recent estimate, from earlier this year, projected that 26 million taxpayers won't have insurance but did not calculate the expected penalties or how many would pay one. The difference could skew the numbers, with the most likely result that the estimate of 4 million penalty payers by 2016 is a little low.

The Supreme Court also ruled that states can opt out without risk of losing federal support for Medicaid; this means that some may do so, thus lowering the number of new Medicaid enrollees. It isn't clear how or whether that might influence how many individuals will have to pay the penalty. The CBO website noted on Thursday that the agency is evaluating the impact of the Supreme Court's decision.

20120630-09	11:14	MarthaH	"What Health Ruling Means Next for Patients"
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"What Health Ruling Means Next for Patients" by Mary Agnes Carey, KHN/MSNBC

June 28, 2012, ([http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/48000032/ns/health-health\\_care/t/what-health-ruling-means-next-patients/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/48000032/ns/health-health_care/t/what-health-ruling-means-next-patients/))

The Supreme Court Thursday upheld the 2010 federal health care law, dismissing the challenge by states to the law's requirement that individuals get insurance. The justices, however, did give states the right to opt out of a critical provision requiring them to expand Medicaid programs for the poor and disabled.

The decision will have sweeping ramifications for consumers, state officials, employers and health care providers, including hospitals and doctors.

While some of the key features don't kick in until 2014, the still-controversial law has already altered the health care industry and established a number of consumer benefits.

Here's an FAQ about some of the law's provisions that are already up and running as well as major features of what's to come.

**Q: I don't have health insurance. Under the law, will I have to buy it and what happens if I don't?**

**A:** Right now, you are not required to have health insurance. But beginning in 2014, most people will have to have it or pay a fine. For individuals, the penalty would start at \$95 a year, or up to 1 percent of income, whichever is greater, and rise to \$695, or 2.5 percent of income, by 2016.

For families the penalty would be \$2,085 or 2.5 percent of household income, whichever is greater by 2016 and beyond. The requirement to have coverage can be waived for several reasons, including financial hardship or religious beliefs.

Millions of additional people will qualify for Medicaid or federal subsidies to buy insurance under the law.

**Q: I get my health coverage at work and I'd like to keep my current plan. Will I be able to do that? How will my plan be affected by the health law?**

**A:** If you get insurance through your job, it is likely to stay that way. But, just as before the law was passed, your employer is not obligated to keep the current plan and may change premiums, deductibles, co-pays and network coverage.

You may have seen some law-related changes already. For example, most plans now ban lifetime coverage limits and include a guarantee that an adult child up to age 26 who can't get health insurance at a job can stay on her parents' health plan.

**Q: What are some other parts of the law that are now in place?**

**A:** You are likely to be eligible for preventive services with no out-of-pocket costs, such as breast cancer screenings and cholesterol tests.

Health plans can't cancel your coverage once you get sick – a practice known as "rescission" – unless you committed fraud when you applied for coverage.

Children with pre-existing conditions cannot be denied coverage. This will apply to adults in 2014.

Insurers will have to provide rebates to consumers if they spend less than 80 to 85 percent of premium dollars on medical care.

Some existing plans, if they haven't changed significantly since passage of the law, do not have to abide by certain parts of the law. For example, these "grandfathered" plans can still charge beneficiaries part of the cost for preventive services.

If you're currently in one of these plans, and your employer makes significant changes, such as raising your out-of-pocket costs, the plan would then have to abide by all aspects of the health law.

**Q: I want health insurance but I can't afford it. What will I do?**

**A:** Depending on your income, you might be eligible for Medicaid. Currently, in most states nonelderly adults without minor children don't qualify for Medicaid. But beginning in 2014, the federal government is offering to pay the cost of an expansion in the programs so that anyone with an income at or lower than 133 percent of the federal poverty level, (which based on current guidelines would be \$14,856 for an individual or \$30,656 for a family of four) will be eligible for Medicaid. The Supreme Court said that states cannot be forced to make that change.

**Q: What if I make too much money for Medicaid but still can't afford to buy insurance?**

**A:** You might be eligible for government subsidies to help you pay for private insurance sold in the state-based insurance marketplaces, called exchanges, slated to begin operation in 2014. Exchanges will sell insurance plans to individuals and small businesses.

These premium subsidies will be available for individuals and families with incomes between 133 percent and 400 percent of the poverty level, or \$14,856 to \$44,680 for individuals and \$30,656 to \$92,200 for a family of four (based on current poverty guidelines).

**Q: Will it be easier for me to get coverage even if I have health problems?**

**A:** Insurers will be barred from rejecting applicants based on health status once the exchanges are operating in 2014.

**Q: I own a small business. Will I have to buy health insurance for my workers?**

**A:** No employer is required to provide insurance. But starting in 2014, businesses with 50 or more employees that don't provide health care coverage and have at least one full-time worker who receives subsidized coverage in the health insurance exchange will have to pay a fee of \$2,000 per full-time employee. The firm's first 30 workers would be excluded from the fee.

However, if you have a firm with 50 or fewer people you won't face any penalties.

In addition, if you own a small business, the health law offers a tax credit to help cover the cost. Employers with 25 or fewer full-time workers who earn an average yearly salary of \$50,000 or less today can get tax credits of up to 35 percent of the cost of premiums. The credit increases to 50 percent in 2014.

**Q: I'm over 65. How does the legislation affect seniors?**

**A:** The law is narrowing a gap in the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan known as the "doughnut hole." That's when seniors who have paid a certain initial amount in prescription costs have to pay for all of their drug costs until they spend a total of \$4,700 for the year. Then the plan coverage begins again.

That coverage gap will be closed entirely by 2020. Seniors will still be responsible for 25 percent of their prescription drug costs.

The law also has expanded Medicare's coverage of preventive services, such as screenings for colon, prostate and breast cancer, which are now free to beneficiaries. Medicare will also pay for an annual wellness visit to the doctor.

The health law reduced the federal government's payments to Medicare Advantage plans, run by private insurers as an alternative to the traditional Medicare. Medicare Advantage costs more per beneficiary than traditional Medicare. Critics of those payment cuts say that could mean the private plans may not offer many extra benefits, such as free eyeglasses, hearing aids and gym memberships that they now provide.

**Q: Will I have to pay more for my health care because of the law?**

**A:** No one knows for sure. Even supporters of the law acknowledge its steps to control health costs, such as incentives to coordinate care better, may take a while to show significant savings. Opponents say the law's additional coverage requirements will make health insurance more expensive for individuals and for the government.

That said, there are some new taxes and fees. For example, starting in 2013, individuals with earnings above \$200,000 and married couples making more than \$250,000 will pay a Medicare payroll tax of 2.35

percent, up from the current 1.45 percent, on income over those thresholds. In addition, higher-income people will face a 3.8 percent tax on unearned income, such as dividends and interest.

Starting in 2018, the law will also impose a 40 percent excise tax on the portion of most employer-sponsored health coverage (excluding dental and vision) that exceeds \$10,200 a year and \$27,500 for families. The tax has been dubbed a "Cadillac" tax because it hits the most generous plans.

20120701-15 15:00 Pam From the Right: "The Healthcare Myths We Must Confront"

Here is an article my conservative friend sent me. It's an interesting read, if only to clarify what I, for one, argue against. I want to do a complete, thoughtful rebuttal to this, but that will take me some time. Meanwhile, have at it.

"The Healthcare Myths We Must Confront" by Cliff Asness, The American

June 29, 2012, (<http://www.american.com/archive/2012/june/the-healthcare-myths-we-must-confront>)

As debate about whether ObamaCare is a good idea continues, rejecting four major misconceptions about healthcare is crucial to any chance of our eventually emerging with a better system.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's ObamaCare decision, we must refocus. The Court's decision was never about whether ObamaCare was a good idea, only about whether it was constitutional. The Court found a convoluted way to uphold the law.

That's done, but the debate on whether ObamaCare's provisions are good ideas will continue. To date, this debate has been unable to shake off a lot of mythology—things believed about healthcare and our healthcare system in general, or ObamaCare specifically—that simply are not so.

The goals of healthcare reform—covering more Americans, improving outcomes, and doing so more cost effectively—are all laudable, but are all hampered by the continued belief in these myths. Rejecting these misconceptions is crucial to any chance of our eventually emerging with a better system.

Myth #1: Healthcare prices have soared in the recent past.

If we choose to subsidize a portion of the population we should do so openly, using taxation and government spending, which at least shines sunlight on the cost, not through tricky regulation that hides it.

Everyone knows that healthcare prices have soared, but everyone may well be wrong. The statistics we see are always about the amount we spend on healthcare, not the price of healthcare. Consider a comparison of healthcare in the 1950s versus today. In the 1950s, you had none of the subsequent developments in pharmaceuticals, surgery, diagnosis, etc. How much would you pay for that versus today's healthcare? Not so much, I'm guessing. In fact, if you look around the world, in impoverished countries you can probably find a reasonable facsimile of this 1950s healthcare at a low cost. While this example is intentionally extreme, the measurement problem it illustrates is important. The quality of the best healthcare has soared over time. This measurement problem is not unique to healthcare. Measuring the price inflation in computers is incredibly difficult. If the price of a laptop today is the same as 20 years ago, but the laptop is ridiculously better now, hasn't the price really fallen dramatically?

Consider another hypothetical. Imagine we develop a cure for all cancers that costs a flat \$1 million per person and works perfectly. Let's assume this is more than the total cost to treat these cancers otherwise. In this case, the amount we spend on healthcare will likely rise dramatically, because it just got much better and we chose to spend more on it. The cure we are talking about did not exist before now, so it does not make sense to ask whether the price rose. Here's a better question. Are we better off even though we are spending much more on healthcare? Yes, we are, although some will cite the dramatic rise in our healthcare spending and demand that action be taken.

One more, and let's get really simple. In the olden days, our great-grandparents might have had one pair of reading glasses. Now, many of us have one pair at home, one in the car, one at work, etc. Because we are more prosperous we spend more on reading glasses than our forebears, even though the price has not necessarily changed. Again, there is a gigantic difference between what we spend on something and its price. And again, the comparison of old and new prices is particularly vexing in healthcare because most of the healthcare we buy was not even invented when our great-grandparents were ill.

In these days of horrible discord, partisanship, and uncivil discourse (actually very much like the other 200+ years of the Republic) it is nice to know we can all still get together to rally around a really dumb idea.

The above is highly relevant to our ongoing debate because the "soaring price of healthcare" is often cited as a reason we desperately need reform, perhaps radical reform. Even if correctly referred to as the "soaring cost of healthcare," this is presented as an unambiguously bad thing, when that is certainly false. It's bad when it's a function of waste or monopoly power gained through cronyism—undoubtedly part of our system and, as usual, with government the main culprit—but not bad when it's the result of improvement, undoubtedly a huge component over time. The price of healthcare over time is hard to accurately measure, but those screaming about the price soaring are probably wrong.

### Myth #2: The pre-ObamaCare system was 'insurance'.

It was not a system of insurance. Insurance, as practiced everywhere else but healthcare, is about catastrophes. What we had was a government-subsidized payment plan funneled through insurance companies.

OK, this part is going to sting a bit. I never promised you there would be no math. Let's step back a bit and talk about how insurance works. Few of us buy insurance because we expect to make money on the deal. No, the insurance company expects to profit and we expect to lose a bit. Free marketers and socialists can both surely agree that the insurance companies expect to profit. Well, how do they profit? It's statistics (I told you it would sting). If they sell 1,000 policies that pay out \$100,000 but only 1 percent of the time, they on average pay out \$1,000,000 (1,000 policies times a \$100,000 payoff times 1 percent, as 99 percent of the time they don't pay). If they sell them for \$1,100 each they take in 1,000 x \$1,100 or \$1,100,000 and will make a profit of \$100,000. But despite the insurance company profiting, insurance can often be a great deal for you. You take out insurance because there are events that would cause you severe financial hardship—for instance, the totaling of a car you can't afford to replace, the death of your family's bread winner, or the destruction of your house. It's worth overpaying a bit to avoid catastrophic financial consequences. We often call insurance like this "catastrophic," as you're only paying a small amount to insure against improbable but devastating events. Actually, we usually don't bother to even call it "catastrophic insurance." We usually just call it "insurance," as that's how it almost always works... except in healthcare!

The insurance companies' expected profits are not without risk. Companies compete on premiums to see who can sell the insurance for the lowest price while still being profitable, and, importantly, they compete on "underwriting." Underwriting is attempting to assess risks and charge consumers most accurately, charging more for expensive, more probable risks, and less for the opposite (in my example above, I pretended we knew these risks; in reality, the insurance company has to guess at them). The insurance companies that predict more accurately are generally more profitable, and those that are woefully inaccurate go out of business.

Everyone knows that healthcare prices have soared, but everyone may well be wrong. The statistics we see are always about the amount we spend on healthcare, not the price of healthcare.

Let's get back to healthcare. Due primarily to the tax subsidy given to employer-provided healthcare (a bipartisan, so-far-untouchable disaster), catastrophic health insurance is not Americans' norm. Rather, employers provide essentially all healthcare from basic health maintenance and symptom relief to the most expensive life-saving procedures, and they do it because the government massively subsidizes this approach.

This is odd. You don't go to your car insurer to fill your car with gas or to your homeowner's insurance company to change a light bulb. Why do you go to your health insurance company for everyday medical services? That is not insurance, it is tax-subsidized provision of all your healthcare needs, and it causes two of our system's biggest

problems. 1) Health coverage is not portable, as it's employer-provided, and 2) consumers are insulated from the cost of basic healthcare because they don't pay directly for services. Educated consumers spending their own money would be far better shoppers for healthcare. Also, I wish I wasn't asked for a \$5 co-pay after a doctor's appointment. Ask me to pay at least \$200 or nothing. Paying \$5 for a prostate exam is demeaning to both parties.

Why does this matter? ObamaCare sets out to fix health insurance, and to provide it to more people. Laudable goals. But the system we had was not badly managed health insurance. It wasn't insurance at all. ObamaCare does not throw out the crazy system we had in favor of real insurance, which would actually work, but rather enshrines and extends all the problems of an insane healthcare payment system masquerading as insurance and built as a tax dodge.

Myth #3: Stopping insurance companies from charging based on pre-existing conditions is the one good part of ObamaCare.

Even many Republicans fall for this one, perhaps because it polls well. In these days of horrible discord, partisanship, and uncivil discourse (actually very much like the other 200+ years of the Republic) it is nice to know we can all still get together to rally around a really dumb idea.

The comparison of old and new prices is particularly vexing in healthcare because most of the healthcare we buy was not even invented when our great-grandparents were ill.

Most of the economic function of any insurance company is precisely about assessing the expected economic cost of a pre-existing condition, and charging based on it. Whether your house is a firetrap or fireproof is a pre-existing condition for homeowner's insurance. Whether you're 90 years old or 20 years old is a pre-existing condition for life insurance. Whether you have a good driving record in a modern car with airbags and that cool new blind-spot indicator thingy, or you are Lindsay Lohan, is a pre-existing condition for auto insurance.

If it's affordable to them, people should pay the cost of their own pre-existing conditions in all these instances. After all, sad or happy as their state may be, it is their state and not other people's. Furthermore, economic efficiency is enhanced as, among other reasons, consumers have some control over many, though not nearly all, pre-existing conditions. An insurance company of any kind exists mainly to price these pre-existing conditions accurately, diversify across customers, and then do a lot of paperwork. This accurate pricing is the hard and economically valuable part of what an insurance company does. It's really their main economic function. Yet ObamaCare bizarrely seeks to remove this benefit, while retaining insurance companies for, what, their famous customer service?

I snuck in something above, and I can sense the progressive reader ready to pounce: the phrase "if it's affordable to them." The trillion dollar question is what about those who can't afford it? Well, society should debate that openly. Progressives can argue for a lot of help for those who can't afford paying for their own pre-existing conditions, libertarians can argue for much less, and conservatives, if they haven't learned from their recent history, can base their argument on whether they are currently running the government and will get credit for providing the goodies. But, if we decide to subsidize the unfortunate, as is likely to some degree, we should do so directly through taxation and government largesse. No matter what the final decision on the amount of subsidy, this way is at least honest. In contrast, ObamaCare hides a massive government transfer program from those without these conditions to those with them. Besides basic dishonesty, hiding costs always leads to bad decisions.

ObamaCare is asking some Americans to pay large amounts for others, and is trying to hide it as private insurance premiums rather than admit it is bigger government. It's simply a scam for ObamaCare to not count programs like these, which force some Americans to pay for others, as government spending. The mafia keeps two sets of books, the government should only be allowed one.

The other very popular ObamaCare feature, "stay on your parents' insurance until you are 26" (65 if you're named Julia) follows the same idea. Comparing a family that wants that benefit to one that doesn't (because they don't have kids or their kids have their own insurance or they just don't like their kids!), the family that wants it should pay more, as they are consuming more valuable services. Economically, a tax on everyone to pay for those who want to keep their kids on their insurance until they are 26 would essentially do the same thing as ObamaCare here, but we'd recognize it as a large growth in government spending, a burden on those who do not desire this

benefit, and a brand new entitlement for those who do. But, again, ObamaCare hides this transfer payment through regulating what different people pay their insurance company. Again, if we choose to subsidize a portion of the population we should do so openly, using taxation and government spending, which at least shines sunlight on the cost, not through tricky regulation that hides it.

Those who would call the above mean-spirited (or worse), please remember that I'm leaving wide open the question of how generous to be, and how much government should or should not directly subsidize things like pre-existing conditions and 25-year-olds without insurance, while you are intentionally hiding it.

This theme of hiding costs is consistent throughout the progressive march to bigger and bigger government. Step number one, present great "benefits" you will bestow on the populace and present them as if you are nicer people than the other side who want to deny these benefits. Step two, hide the costs, either through the complexities of the tax system, or more overtly through off-the-books regulation like ObamaCare. Step three, continue to advance the progressive myth that if government provides something, or mandates something, it's "free." Step four, get the people hooked on the freebie until they are too scared to give it up even if it costs them well more than it's worth to them. Step five, move on to destroying the next part of our economy and freedom.

Educated consumers spending their own money would be far better shoppers for healthcare.

Finally, note that the issue with pre-existing conditions is also an artifact of the government distorting the market away from insurance and towards employer-provided total healthcare (remember myth #2!). Consider your life insurance. You buy it on your own, not through your employer, and it's usually "guaranteed renewable." When you change employers, get sick, or just get older, you keep your policy and your premiums stay steady. This is the type of policy the free market, without massive government distortion, has produced. It would produce an analogous successful market in health insurance if left alone. People would buy insurance when young, and that insurance would include the right to keep buying insurance with no increase in rates due to getting sick. It's only because you lose your coverage when you leave an employer that we even have this problem at all. If you are getting the sense that government is the root of our problems, not the solution, you have been paying attention.

#### Myth #4: Healthcare costs are very high in the United States compared to socialized countries.

Like the opening myth about soaring prices, this one is used to undermine faith in our system and open us to radical change for the worse (ObamaCare or worse).

The statistics often cited by progressives seem to show that we spend a larger fraction of our GDP on healthcare and don't get better outcomes than other countries. I won't argue over whether we actually spend more, but will argue about why we sometimes spend a lot, and whether the outcomes often cited are measured fairly. Spending more is not always bad, and is not always only because we have (somewhat) private markets.

- Many of the surveys of "outcomes" that show other countries spend less for similar or better healthcare than the United States are just intentionally disingenuous (i.e., they lie). The ultimate example is the U.N.'s 2000 World Health Report, which has been extensively cited by progressives and the media. Yet there are concrete examples of its anti-American bias. For instance, the study included high-speed auto fatalities and murders in their assessment of a country's life expectancy, and then progressives cited that life expectancy to indict the U.S. healthcare system. Well, Americans drive more often on a more extensive highway system than most others, and we sadly have more crime than many. Reputable studies exclude these fatalities as, while tragic, they are not the fault of the healthcare system and should not be used to judge or modify the healthcare system. With these fatalities excluded, the U.S. ranks 1st in the world on life expectancy. With them included, we rank 19th, as reported in the 2000 study cited so often by ObamaCare advocates. The studies of infant mortality may be even worse, with the comparisons of what constitutes a live birth (and thus an opportunity for mortality) substantially different across countries, with the United States holding itself to the highest standard (and thus producing worse statistics). But, this does not stop enemies of free-market healthcare from citing warped statistics showing the United States to rank well below the truth, while to a person they'd all opt to have their babies in the United States, particularly if it was a complex or premature situation. That kind of hypocrisy is simply breathtaking.

Perhaps even more insidiously, most of the U.N.'s 2000 World Health Report does not really even rank healthcare outcomes. The actual oft-quoted final rankings, with the United States ranking poorly, are an average of many different ratings, many of them explicitly about how "socialized" or "progressive" a healthcare system is. For instance, their rating system gives 25 percent weight to "financial fairness," and if one goes through their other categories you find they again are not rating who lives or dies or lives better (you know, healthcare outcomes), but how much the healthcare system has such things as "respect for persons" (this is part of the 12.5 percent weight they gave to "responsiveness," which is separate from the 12.5 percent weight they gave to "responsiveness distribution," whatever on Earth that is). The report goes further, judging these things with such objective measures as "respect for dignity" and "autonomy." In total, more than 60 percent of a country's score in this survey was some measure of progressive desires, not what you or I would call a healthcare outcome. And, as in our auto example above, much of the rest contained expressly anti-American flaws. That we pay for the United Nations to lie about us is a topic for another day.

In other words, in this often-cited study, and in many others created by the international progressive community, the U.S. healthcare system has been ranked low solely for not being one of socialized medicine. Personally, when I am told how the United States ranks on healthcare "outcomes," I want it to be about whether my kids get good treatment, not about where we stand on the U.N.'s politically correct progressive agenda. But it's this and other similar nonsense that the Obama team cited again and again to denigrate the U.S. system and push the case for radical reform. In summary, they say "we have done a survey and found we must reform our system and become more socialist, because the survey says we are not socialist enough." That's how they argue. Really.

- Part of the reason we spend more is other countries have price controls and we don't. For instance, they restrict the amount drug companies can charge much more than we do. That sounds great; price controls save us money! But if nobody pays for new drugs, they don't ever get created. Without these controls, our consumers here indeed pay more, but that funds much of the life-saving and life-extending healthcare innovation available for Americans and the rest of the world. It is frankly unfair that the world is free-riding off us. Free-riding means they let us pay for the innovation that benefits them at lower cost. But if nobody pays for the innovation, the innovation just does not happen. If we try to free-ride off ourselves, it doesn't work—innovation dies for us too. U.S. consumers paying fair prices (not government restricted artificially low prices) does lead to higher U.S. healthcare costs, but the alternative is far worse: Joining the world in severely limiting prices, and not seeing the next generations of new innovations and improvements.

ObamaCare does not throw out the crazy system we had in favor of real insurance, which would actually work, but rather enshrines and extends all the problems of an insane healthcare payment system masquerading as insurance and built as a tax dodge.

- Americans lead less healthy lifestyles than much of the developed world. Americans historically value freedom more than other countries and cultures. We value it for its own sake, even if it sometimes leads to a worse outcome. But we mostly value it because these choices are personal. Frankly, some would sacrifice some health to eat what they want and avoid the StairMaster. Freedom isn't always sugar-free. Our American choices are costing us more, and raising the healthcare cost figures progressives love to cite. But they are our choices to make, not theirs to gainsay.

I have to add that the progressive version of healthcare, where people don't pay their own way, where someone else pays for their healthcare, actually pushes people to less healthy choices because they don't bear the financial cost themselves. The market solution would impose much more of these voluntary costs on the individuals making them, and besides economic efficiency, would also make us healthier. Of course, the progressives have a solution for this, too. They just go around banning some things, forcing you to do some other things, and scheduling our mandatory jumping jacks for 5 a.m.! It's all for our own good, of course. Finally, if you think the recently much-discussed "can they make you eat broccoli?" hypothetical is a crazy, extreme notion, you just have not paid any attention to progressives for the last 80 years...

- We spend more on end-of-life care than more regulated societies with socialized medicine or systems closer to it. That's our choice. It's that pesky freedom thing again. How is this cost going to be reduced by ObamaCare without introducing, how do I say it without prodding the progressive beast too sharply, well, it

rhymes with “meth manels”? But again, that those in a free system choose to spend more than those in other less free systems on the end of their lives is not an indictment of freedom or a call for government intervention. But it does raise our costs (and invalidates comparing these costs to others).

- The cost of a healthcare system is not just what we spend directly on it, it is also how much the healthcare system helps or hurts the overall economy. If socialized medicine slows economic growth, then this is part of its cost, perhaps a big part, and is left out of the simple analyses (looking at direct expenditure divided by GDP) that are so common.
- Lawyers. We got lots, they have far fewer. We can separately debate how to design our legal system (some of my libertarian friends advocate for a large role for lawyers), but the size and scope of legal action here dwarfs most of the world. It leads to doctors practicing tremendous amounts of “defensive medicine.” That is, prescribing procedures and drugs not medically called for but done to “cover their assets” in the event they are sued. That adds a lot to our costs and can and should be addressed and debated completely separately from much of the above. But, rather than address it directly, progressives instead simply cite how much we spend here versus other countries, a cost driven up by trial lawyers. Of course, progressives are tremendously supported by the trial lawyer lobby, the very group driving up these costs that progressives then cite as an indictment of our system. It’s really quite beautiful logic, if you can learn to appreciate the qualities of exceptionally well-designed evil.

So, the “we pay more but get nothing in return” story is simply not true. It’s beyond me to do a more thorough job and make a perfect comparison across countries, but it’s enough to know that their story, like the story that healthcare prices are absolutely soaring, is propaganda, and propaganda with a purpose.

In conclusion, we must remember that there are many vital things our more free American healthcare system gets right, and more right than the less free rest of the world. If you have an adequate health plan, you often get better care with shorter wait times here than elsewhere. If you have a truly devastating illness, you—like the rest of the world who flocks here—get the best care possible, and healthcare a more socialized system will often declare not cost effective and phase out. You live in the country that makes far and away the most productive innovations in pharmaceuticals and healthcare in general—innovations made possible by the profit motive. It may sometimes be cold comfort, but you are footing a bill that saves a lot of lives here and worldwide. And, while you might pay a lot, getting those innovations, and also having the right to live your life as you—not as Mike Bloomberg, Barack Obama, or a team of academics from Harvard see fit—might raise costs, but is your right as an American.

So, with the Supreme Court ruling that ObamaCare is constitutional, we’re all going to be working on fixing, repealing, or replacing ObamaCare. Frankly, fixing our system is not as complicated as many make it out to be. There are lots and lots of specifics I won’t cover (e.g., allowing interstate competition, the role of health savings accounts, whether individual policies should be some level of deductible) but the big ones are 1) removing employer deductibility and getting back to a system of individuals buying catastrophic insurance, and 2) deciding through open debate, not sneaky regulation, how much we want to subsidize those who can’t afford adequate healthcare or insurance, whether they are poor, have pre-existing conditions, or are adults under 26 who can’t yet pay their own way.

Finally, as a basic input to the whole discussion, we need to understand myths #1 and #4: The rising amount we spend on healthcare is not the same thing as rising prices, and often reflects good not bad developments, and the costs of our system versus others are often exaggerated, and the benefits of our system often minimized, for political purposes.

We can fix all this and maintain what’s very right about our system, and retain our freedoms, but we have to let go of our myths first.

(Clifford S. Asness is managing and founding principal of AQR Capital Management.)

(Author’s note: Most of this essay was written before the Supreme Court decision. The Court’s convoluted logic did one thing. It made it even clearer that, as this essay contends, the “mandate” is no such thing, but rather a giant expansion of the tax-and-spend state.)

(This article is new, but reprises some of a related, unpublished Internet working paper, "Health Care Mythology," available at <http://www.stumblingontruth.com/>, particularly myth #1 and myth #4. I'd like to thank Laurel Asness, Aaron Brown, John Cochran, Chris Culp, Richard Epstein, Ken French, John Liew, and Scott Metzger for some incredibly helpful comments (though please don't assume they all agree with every word!))

20120701-16 17:41 MarthaH "The States That Are Dying for Health Care Coverage"

The list gets backwards at some point for some reason. [Fixed it, Martha.] Quite a list that has many of the anti-mouths on it, if you will. What are the powers that be thinking to want/try to deprive their fellow citizens of what they take for granted. Drives me NUTS...

"The States That Are Dying for Health Care Coverage" by Alexander E.M. Hess and Samuel Weigley, 24/7 Wall St.

The lack of medical coverage in America is a serious problem as approximately 50 million people were uninsured all through 2010. But the U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday ruled the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which was passed in 2010, was constitutional. The legislation, once implemented in its entirety, is expected to cover 30 million Americans currently lacking coverage.

The lack of medical insurance has had grave consequences for individuals and the nation. In 2010 alone, 26,100 people died because they had no health insurance — that amounts to 502 preventable deaths a week. However, some states fared better than others. Based on the latest report by Families USA, a health care consumer advocacy group, 24/7 Wall St. identified the 10 states with the highest number of deaths per 100,000 people due to a lack of insurance.

Not surprisingly, nearly all of the states with the most residents dying due to a lack of insurance also had high numbers of uninsured residents. Seven of the states on the list were among the 10 states with the highest percentage of people without health coverage. Seven of the states were also in the bottom 10 for the lowest rates of private insurance coverage.

People without health insurance often forgo medical treatment for different reasons. According to Families USA, a supporter of President Obama's health care reform law, uninsured adults are nearly four times more likely than insured adults to delay or avoid preventive care screening due to cost. Uninsured adults are also nearly seven times more likely to go without needed care due to cost than privately insured adults.

"You still see a very, very strong correlation between uninsurance and poor health-care outcomes — including mortality — and [that is] because people aren't getting the type of care that they need," Kim Bailey, the research director for Families USA, told 24/7 Wall St.

Many of the states with high death rates due to a lack of insurance also were among the poorest states in the country. The top seven states on this list also are among the 10 states with the highest poverty rates. Every state on this list is in the top half.

Poor health also appears to play an important role. States with high death rates due to lack of insurance had a high percentage of people with lifestyle-related risk factors for poor health. Of the states on our list, five of them have among the 10 highest percentages of smokers and among the 10 lowest percentages of people who eat vegetables at least three times a day. Four have among the 10 highest proportions of overweight or obese adults. Seven states on the list were in the bottom 10 in terms of life expectancy.

24/7 Wall St.: Countries that spend the most on health care: <http://247wallst.com/2012/03/29/countries-that-spend-the-most-on-health-care/>. [May answer one of the points in Pam's article, above. —SteveB]

Based on Families USA's report, "Dying for Coverage: The Deadly Consequences of Being Uninsured," 24/7 Wall St. identified the 10 states with the highest number of deaths from being uninsured per 100,000 residents. 24/7 Wall

St. reviewed the methodology used by Families USA, first developed in 2002 by the Institute of Medicine, to determine excess mortality from being uninsured. This method considers the proportion of people who are insured and uninsured, the mortality risks for the uninsured and the number of expected deaths from a hypothetical fully insured population. 24/7 Wall St. also identified poverty rates and median income by state, provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Kaiser Family Foundation's website — Statehealthfacts.org — provided health-related data, including life expectancy, obesity and diabetes rate.

These are the 10 states dying for health coverage:

### 1. Mississippi

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 15.82
- Percent of population uninsured: 18.2 percent (ninth highest)
- Percent living below the poverty line: 22.4 percent (tied for the highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 74.81 years (The lowest)

Many residents of Mississippi cannot afford insurance. The state has the lowest median income in the nation and the highest percentage of residents living below the poverty line. As a result, Mississippi has the second-lowest percentage of residents with private health insurance coverage, at 56.49 percent. Exacerbating the problem, residents are especially unhealthy. Among all states, Mississippi has the second-highest obesity rate, the second-highest percentage of adults with diabetes and the fifth-highest percentage of adult smokers in the nation. Probably on account of both high uninsurance rates and poor personal health, Mississippi is the only state where life expectancy was below 75 years at birth in 2010. Mississippi's excess death rate was the highest among all states and twice that of 28 states in 2010.

### 2. Louisiana

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 14.94
- Percent of population uninsured: 17.8 percent (10th highest)
- Percent living below the poverty line: 18.7 percent (sixth highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 75.39 years (fourth lowest)

Louisiana has one of the lowest life expectancies at birth in the U.S. at 75.4 years. Though much of this certainly can be attributed to poor health choices — the state has a higher number of smokers and its residents eat comparatively little fruit or vegetables — the inability of many residents to receive proper care due to lack of insurance is also a contributing factor. In Louisiana, 17.8 percent of the population goes without health insurance, despite the fact that 21.9 percent of the population qualifies for Medicaid — the fifth-highest proportion among all 50 states. The high uninsurance rate is partly due to the relative economic disadvantage of the state's residents. With 18.7 percent of residents living below the poverty line — the sixth-highest rate in the nation — and a median income that is more than \$5,000 lower than the U.S. average, just 58.39 percent of state residents have private insurance. That is the fourth-lowest such rate in the nation.

### 3. Arkansas

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 13.49
- Percent of population uninsured: 17.5 percent (tied for 12th highest)
- Percent living below the poverty line: 18.8 percent (fifth highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 76.09 years (sixth lowest)

According to the Council for Community and Economic Research's ACCRA Cost of Living Index, Arkansas had the second-lowest cost of health care in the United States. However, with 18.8 percent of the population living below the poverty line and a median annual household income of just \$38,307 — both among the lowest figures for any state — many Arkansans cannot afford private health coverage. As a result, just 58.78 percent of the population has private insurance, the sixth-lowest figure in the country.

#### 4. South Carolina

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 13.48
- Percent of population uninsured: 17.5 percent (tied for 12th highest)
- Percent living below the poverty line: 18.2 percent (seventh highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 76.57 years (ninth lowest)

South Carolina is not a particularly healthy state: 67.4 percent of the state's residents are either overweight or obese, just 23.3 percent eat proper amounts of fruit, only 22.9 percent eat proper amounts of vegetables and 10.7 percent are diabetic. All of these are among the highest rates in the country. Meanwhile, much of the cost of health care falls to private individuals. The state spent about \$6,300 per person on health care in 2009, among the lowest levels, and just 51.9 percent of residents have employer-based health coverage. Unfortunately, South Carolinians have trouble affording insurance on their own: Median income was just \$42,000 in 2010, significantly lower than the \$50,000 national average, 18.2 percent of residents live below the poverty line and the cost of health care is higher than is the case in many states.

#### 5. New Mexico

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 12.15
- Percent of population uninsured: 19.6 percent (sixth highest)
- Percent living below the poverty line: 20.4 percent (tied for the highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 78.21 years (20th lowest)

New Mexico has a fairly healthy population, with relatively low heart disease and obesity rates. However, just 55.8 percent of residents have private health insurance — the lowest rate of any state in the country. One possible reason is that few employers provide insurance — just 45.6 percent of the population has employer-based health coverage. The relative poverty of the state also means many residents cannot afford medical coverage. The median income in the state was just above \$42,000 in 2010, far below the national median of about \$50,000, while 20.4 percent of people live below the poverty line — the highest rate in the country.

#### 6. Florida

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 12.06
- Pct. of population uninsured: 21.3% (3rd highest)
- Pct. living below the poverty line: 16.5% (16th highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 79.7 years (12th highest)

The sheer number of excess deaths from a lack of insurance in Florida is staggering: 12,336 from 2005 through 2010. The driving factor for this imposing total is that 21.3% of the population is uninsured — the third-highest rate among all states. Floridians may have difficulty affording health insurance — median income was just \$44,400 in 2010. Meanwhile, only 45.7% of residents have employer-based health insurance, while just 15.6% of residents received Medicaid benefits. Both of these rates are among the lowest in the country.

#### 7. West Virginia

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 12.03
- Pct. of population uninsured: 14.6% (24th highest)
- Pct. living below the poverty line: 18.1% (8th highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 75.16 years (2nd lowest)

West Virginia residents have the second-shortest life expectancy among all 50 states. Contributing to shorter life spans are the 26.8% of West Virginians who smoke, a higher rate than in any other state. Additionally, the Mountain State has some of the highest rates of heart disease deaths, adult obesity and

diabetes in the U.S. Perhaps indicative of the cost of such poor health factors is that there are more prescription drugs filled per capita in West Virginia than in any other state.

## 8. Oklahoma

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 12.02
- Pct. of population uninsured: 18.9% (7th highest)
- Pct. living below the poverty line: 16.9% (14th highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 75.6 years (5th lowest)

It can hardly be said that Oklahomans are healthy. Among all states, Oklahoma has the third-highest percentage of adults who smoke, the sixth-highest rate of heart disease death, the seventh-highest obesity rate and a lower proportion of adults who consume fruit twice a day than any other state. Making matters worse, Oklahoma spends just over \$6,500 per capita on health care — one of the lowest amounts in the United States. Relatively few residents have employer-based health coverage, and many residents cannot otherwise afford private insurance because the median household income in the state is just \$42,072 — one of the lowest figures in the country.

## 9. Georgia

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 11.95
- Pct. of population uninsured: 19.7% (5th highest)
- Pct. living below the poverty line: 17.9% (tied for 9th highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 77.09 years (10th lowest)

With a 10.2% unemployment rate in 2010 and 17.9% of residents living below the poverty line, many Georgians simply cannot afford health care. Additionally, the state of Georgia spent just \$5,467 on health care in 2009, the third-lowest figure among all states that year. The state's ability to provide for its residents is limited. Just 16% of Georgians were in the state Medicaid program in 2010, far lower than many other states.

## 10. Nevada

- Excess deaths from a lack of insurance (per 100,000): 11.83
- Pct. of population uninsured: 22.6% (2nd highest)
- Pct. living below the poverty line: 14.9% (tied for 23rd highest)
- Life expectancy at birth: 77.59 years (14th lowest)

Nearly 23% of Nevadans lack health insurance, the second-highest proportion of all the states in the country. At the same time, the state also has comparatively few people who are eligible for either Medicare (13.44%) or Medicaid (11%). Few states spend less per capita on health care than Nevada, which spent \$5,735 per person in 2009. The state also had the nation's highest average unemployment rate in 2010 at 13.7%, which may help contribute to residents' inability to obtain insurance.

[And I guess we all should notice that Texas, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and even Indiana are not on the "worst" list. —SteveB]

20120629-01	09:07	SteveB	Fw: CREDO Action Action: End Secret Election Spending!
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The U.S. Supreme Court's disastrous *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling has unleashed a torrent of anonymous campaign spending into our political system. And the Supreme Court just reaffirmed their terrible decision by overturning a Montana ban on corporate spending in elections.

Since the passage of *Citizens United*, political organizations like Karl Rove's Crossroads GPS, powered by tens of millions of dollars in anonymous contributions, have spent alarming amounts of money to elect their preferred candidates.

And corporations have been able to exert a massive influence on our electoral process without being subject to any accountability for that influence.

Progressive champion Senator Sheldon Whitehouse is fighting back by pushing Congress to pass the DISCLOSE Act. And he has asked the public to join him as citizen co-sponsors.

As Sen. Whitehouse said, "We need a groundswell of support to show Congress that the American people want an end to the secret election spending that is threatening our democracy."

To be clear, what we really need is to get all corporate money out of politics, to roll back *Citizens United*, end corporate personhood and institute public financing of elections. And we are working hard toward those long term goals.

But we must move the ball forward in the interim.

The Supreme Court is highly unlikely to undo *Citizens United* anytime soon. Indeed, the Supreme Court recently doubled-down on *Citizens United* by overturning Montana's 100-year-old ban on corporate spending of elections. And passing a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*, while one of our highest priorities, will take years to achieve.

In the meantime, the DISCLOSE Act would force most groups spending money on elections to reveal the corporations, individuals and entities who fund them.

As the Washington trade publication *The Hill* explains:

The new version of the Disclose Act would require any group that spends \$10,000 or more on election ads, or any other political activity, to file a disclosure report with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) within 24 hours. Groups would also have to file a new report for each additional \$10,000 spent, disclose donors who gave \$10,000 or more and provide a statement from the group's head ratifying that there was no coordination with any campaign, which is illegal.<sup>1</sup>

While it won't end unlimited corporate election spending, the DISCLOSE Act at least brings this spending out of the shadows — where we can expose it, and fight back.

Become a citizen co-sponsor of the DISCLOSE Act of 2012 to end secret election spending. Click here to add your name:

[http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/disclose\\_citizen\\_cosponsor/?p=disclose\\_citizen\\_cosponsor&r=6902764&id=42536-5766577-uK9Ev3x](http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/disclose_citizen_cosponsor/?p=disclose_citizen_cosponsor&r=6902764&id=42536-5766577-uK9Ev3x)

The DISCLOSE Act is the first step to restoring the voice of everyday citizens in our elections, and restoring a small measure of sanity to a system of campaign finance that has become completely insane.

And even taking this first step will require a massive outcry by the American public to make sure Congress does not sweep this issue under the rug.

Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

<sup>1</sup>Senate Dems push 'Disclose Act 2.0', *The Hill*, March 21, 2012

For any of you tea party types who still think global warming is a President Obama inspired hoax. Over 1000 heat records broken in a week!

How'd he do this?

from Environmental Defense Action Fund:

The National Weather Service is forecasting dangerous heat this weekend for the entire Southeast, from Maryland to Texas. And, The USA Today reports that 1,011 heat records have already been broken across the country this week alone.

First of all, please be safe out there, stay hydrated, and be alert.

Secondly, we need to stabilize our climate now. That's why I urge you to take advantage of our special \$1-for-\$1 matching gift offered by an anonymous EDAF Trustee funding our climate and energy programs.

So your \$35 investment becomes \$70, your \$50 investment becomes \$100, and so on. Please help us get the full benefit of the special matching gift opportunity by making a gift now:

[https://secure2.edf.org/site/SPageNavigator/CustomDonationPages/c3donate\\_7462.html?subsrc=web\\_donate\\_header\\_nav\\_button\\_how-you-can-help-1](https://secure2.edf.org/site/SPageNavigator/CustomDonationPages/c3donate_7462.html?subsrc=web_donate_header_nav_button_how-you-can-help-1).

Wildfires in the West have grown so large that smoke and haze can be seen from the International Space Station orbiting the Earth.

In Florida, at least seven deaths have been linked to flooding from Tropical Storm Debbie, which dumped two feet of rain in parts of the state.

Can this pattern of wild and often violent weather patterns — which climate scientists have long predicted — simply be coincidence?

Incredibly, that's what the anti-science politicians in Congress and big energy companies like Koch Industries would have you believe.

Really? This spring was the hottest ever recorded in the lower 48 and in March an astonishing 15,000 heat records were set across the country, with some records shattered by more than 30 degrees.

The last 12 months have been the hottest ever recorded in American history.

And all of this follows last year's record breaking \$55 billion in natural disasters in the U.S. Everywhere you look, the extreme is becoming the norm.

That's why I am outraged by the Dirty Energy Lobby's continued disregard for our planet.

Consider this: more than 80 percent of 2012 Super PAC spending by groups like the Koch Industries has gone to ads about energy. Not health care, not jobs, not government spending — energy.

The goliaths of the fossil fuel industries, with their backs against history's wall, know this could be their last chance to knock out the clean energy movement.

Unless you're willing to chance more and more of these freakish and punishing storms, floods, droughts, and record heat waves, please help protect our shared environment today.

Thank you for your support, Sam Parry, Director of Membership

from MoveOn:

For the last two days, I've been in Washington, D.C., helping deliver over 1 million signatures to Congress in support of the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012—a bill to extend a helping hand to those struggling under massive amounts of student loan debt.

It's an amazing moment—the culmination of a huge movement for student debt forgiveness. Please take a moment to make sure your voice is counted among those demanding action from Congress.

Click here to sign the petition for student debt forgiveness now.

Since 1999, average student loan debt has increased by a shameful 511%. In 2010, total outstanding student loan debt exceeded total outstanding credit card debt in America for the first time ever. In 2012, total outstanding student loan debt is expected to exceed \$1 trillion.

In response to this crisis, U.S. Representative Hansen Clarke of Michigan has just introduced H.R. 4170, the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012, which would extend a helping hand to those struggling under massive amounts of student loan debt.

Armed with stacks of petitions demanding sweeping student debt relief, we're showing Congress that this is an issue they can't ignore any longer.

The petition says:

Total outstanding student loan debt in America is expected to exceed \$1 TRILLION this year. Millions of hardworking, taxpaying, educated Americans are being crushed under the weight of their educational debts, while the economy continues to sputter. Support a REAL economic stimulus and jobs plan. Support the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012 (H.R. 4170).

Will you sign the petition? Click here to add your name, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=272847&id=44965-20195165-oR5Xk0x&t=3>.

Thanks! –Robert Applebaum

"The Republican War on Elections" by Thomas Magstadt, NationofChange

June 29, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/republican-war-elections-1340978741>)

They wrap themselves in a constitution we were taught to revere, a constitution they secretly hold in contempt. They are subversives in Armani suits, and they are far more dangerous to the survival of this creaky, old republic than communists and terrorists ever were.

News that a Republican leader recently boasted that Pennsylvania's new voter identification law will boost Willard Mitt Romney's chances of winning that key state in the November election is causing a stir among progressives and liberals. Why?

First, a few facts: The loquacious protagonist in this story is a tool named Mike Turzai. Not exactly a household name, unless you happen to live in the state founded by William Penn – you know the state where the "Miracle at

Philadelphia" (aka the Constitutional Convention of 1787) happened, where the Liberty Bell proudly displays its crack, and where the likes of Benjamin Franklin and Betsy Ross famously helped launch a revolution.

Turzai is the Republican House Majority Leader in Pennsylvania's state legislature. As such, he was instrumental in getting House Bill 934 – otherwise known as the Pennsylvania Voter Identification Protection Act – passed. The bill, which was recently signed into law by Republican Governor Tom Corbett, will require Pennsylvanians to show valid photo identification each and every time they vote. Think of it as a form of contraception: like safe sex, this bill is for the voters' "protection".

Imagine: Ben Franklin and Betsy Ross could not vote in Pennsylvania without a valid ID. Something tells me that under the new rules few of Franklin's contemporaries could have voted back then. One can't help but wonder how many eligible white male property owners would have remembered to bring a birth certificate to the polling place. Of course, Betsy Ross and her lot would not get the right to vote in the Land of Liberty until 1920. Likewise, many Pennsylvanians will be turned away from the polls in the upcoming November general election. At least that's the expectation, as none other than Republican Majority Leader Mike Turzai has confirmed.

Turzai was speaking at a meeting of the Republican State Committee in Hershey when he made the loose-lipped comments that have lately landed him in the national spotlight. Here's are the words that actually spilled out of his spleen, passed through his larynx, and came out his oral cavity:

Pro-Second Amendment? The Castle Doctrine, it's done. First pro-life legislation—abortion facility regulations—in 22 years, done. Voter ID, which is going to allow Gov. (Mitt) Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania, done.

Allegheny County's three-member election board has voted to file a lawsuit challenging the new law. The vote was 2 to 1. The two Democrats voted to sue. Republican Heather Heidelbaugh voted against the measure.

So there it is, the Republican strategy for staging a quiet coup by first putting the right to buy votes and bribe politicians in the hands of billionaires (think Supreme Court and Citizens United), then using control of state legislatures thus gained to deny some citizens (the ones least likely to support a proto-fascist party) the right to vote. All the while claiming that the aim of restrictive voter ID laws designed to keep the turnout low is to create the fairest possible playing field for all candidates.

"The fact is, fraud does exist," declared Turzai spokesman, Steve Miskin. "The idea is to stop fraud before it happens." In fact, the fraud has already happened. And it will happen again and again if this new breed of rightwing subversives prevails. It happened in Florida in 2000 when the Republicans stole a presidential election. It's what just happened in Pennsylvania where the new voter ID law is designed to disenfranchise voters in order to steal another presidential election.

Another fact that can't be overemphasized: to target elections with the intention of predetermining the outcome it to strike at the very heart of the republic. Republics are not democracies in the strictest, purest sense. A true republic is always based on a "scheme of representation" to borrow a phrase from Madison's Federal #10. In the United States, the genius of this system has been its progressive movement toward ever more popular representation – representation, in other words, that is truly representative. The integrity of the system, therefore, depends entirely on the integrity of elections.

But the killer fact, the fact behind the facts, the one the mainstream news media dares not report is this: the new Republican party, financed by billionaires like the Koch Brothers and the Adelsons and radicalized by anti-government Tea Party fanatics, has transformed itself into a subversive organization seeking to undermine elections while hiding behind patriotic rhetoric and the very symbols Americans associate with this nation's birth – ironically, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Don't be fooled when tools like Turzai and the tools of tools like Miskin make soothing noises about protecting voters and the "integrity of the process". That's how it's done, that's how the Big Lie becomes a bludgeon to destroy Truth, discredit Reason, and deny Justice. And that's how historians may someday record that the brave little republic launched at Philadelphia in 1787, having expanded into a vast empire over the next two centuries,

died in 2012; how a subversive organization in the guise of a traditional political party seized power by stealth; and how a dysfunctional old republic called the United States came to be replaced by an aggressive, militaristic corporate-state oligarchy – the Citizens United of America.

[20120629-06](#) 16:48 SteveG Graphic: GOP on USA



[20120629-07](#) 17:02 Dennis "Conservative Southern Values Revived: How a Brutal Strain of American Aristocrats Have Come to Rule America"

If you should happen to believe that America's wealthy elite is monolithic, the following provocative article will provide a historical perspective on the subject that may change the way you think....

"Conservative Southern Values Revived: How a Brutal Strain of American Aristocrats Have Come to Rule America"  
by Sara Robinson, AlterNet

June 28, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/156071/>)

It's been said that the rich are different than you and me. What most Americans don't know is that they're also quite different from each other, and that which faction is currently running the show ultimately makes a vast difference in the kind of country we are.

Right now, a lot of our problems stem directly from the fact that the wrong sort has finally gotten the upper hand; a particularly brutal and anti-democratic strain of American aristocrat that the other elites have mostly managed to keep away from the levers of power since the Revolution. Worse: this bunch has set a very ugly tone that's corrupted how people with power and money behave in every corner of our culture. Here's what happened, and how it happened, and what it means for America now.

#### North versus South: Two Definitions of Liberty

Michael Lind first called out the existence of this conflict in his 2006 book, *Made In Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics*. He argued that much of American history has been characterized by a struggle between two historical factions among the American elite -- and that the election of George W. Bush was a definitive sign that the wrong side was winning.

For most of our history, American economics, culture and politics have been dominated by a New England-based Yankee aristocracy that was rooted in Puritan communitarian values, educated at the Ivies and marinated in an ethic of *noblesse oblige* (the conviction that those who possess wealth and power are morally bound to use it for the betterment of society). While they've done their share of damage to the notion of democracy in the name of profit (as all financial elites inevitably do), this group has, for the most part, tempered its predatory instincts with a code that valued mass education and human rights; held up public service as both a duty and an honor; and

imbued them with the belief that once you made your nut, you had a moral duty to do something positive with it for the betterment of mankind. Your own legacy depended on this.

Among the presidents, this strain gave us both Roosevelts, Woodrow Wilson, John F. Kennedy, and Poppy Bush -- nerdy, wonky intellectuals who, for all their faults, at least took the business of good government seriously. Among financial elites, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet still both partake strongly of this traditional view of wealth as power to be used for good. Even if we don't like their specific choices, the core impulse to improve the world is a good one -- and one that's been conspicuously absent in other aristocratic cultures.

Which brings us to that other great historical American nobility -- the plantation aristocracy of the lowland South, which has been notable throughout its 400-year history for its utter lack of civic interest, its hostility to the very ideas of democracy and human rights, its love of hierarchy, its fear of technology and progress, its reliance on brutality and violence to maintain "order," and its outright celebration of inequality as an order divinely ordained by God.

As described by Colin Woodard in *American Nations: The Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*, the elites of the Deep South are descended mainly from the owners of sugar, rum and cotton plantations from Barbados -- the younger sons of the British nobility who'd farmed up the Caribbean islands, and then came ashore to the southern coasts seeking more land. Woodward described the culture they created in the crescent stretching from Charleston, SC around to New Orleans this way:

It was a near-carbon copy of the West Indian slave state these Barbadians had left behind, a place notorious even then for its inhumanity...From the outset, Deep Southern culture was based on radical disparities in wealth and power, with a tiny elite commanding total obedience and enforcing it with state-sponsored terror. Its expansionist ambitions would put it on a collision course with its Yankee rivals, triggering military, social, and political conflicts that continue to plague the United States to this day.

David Hackett Fischer, whose *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* informs both Lind's and Woodard's work, described just how deeply undemocratic the Southern aristocracy was, and still is. He documents how these elites have always feared and opposed universal literacy, public schools and libraries, and a free press. (Lind adds that they have historically been profoundly anti-technology as well, far preferring solutions that involve finding more serfs and throwing them at a problem whenever possible. Why buy a bulldozer when 150 convicts on a chain gang can grade your road instead?) Unlike the Puritan elites, who wore their wealth modestly and dedicated themselves to the common good, Southern elites sank their money into ostentatious homes and clothing and the pursuit of pleasure -- including lavish parties, games of fortune, predatory sexual conquests, and blood sports involving ritualized animal abuse spectacles.

But perhaps the most destructive piece of the Southern elites' worldview is the extremely anti-democratic way it defined the very idea of liberty. In Yankee Puritan culture, both liberty and authority resided mostly with the community, and not so much with individuals. Communities had both the freedom and the duty to govern themselves as they wished (through town meetings and so on), to invest in their collective good, and to favor or punish individuals whose behavior enhanced or threatened the whole (historically, through community rewards such as elevation to positions of public authority and trust; or community punishments like shaming, shunning or banishing).

Individuals were expected to balance their personal needs and desires against the greater good of the collective -- and, occasionally, to make sacrifices for the betterment of everyone. (This is why the Puritan wealthy tended to dutifully pay their taxes, tithe in their churches and donate generously to create hospitals, parks and universities.) In return, the community had a solemn and inescapable moral duty to care for its sick, educate its young and provide for its needy -- the kind of support that maximizes each person's liberty to live in dignity and achieve his or her potential. A Yankee community that failed to provide such support brought shame upon itself. To this day, our progressive politics are deeply informed by this Puritan view of ordered liberty.

In the old South, on the other hand, the degree of liberty you enjoyed was a direct function of your God-given place in the social hierarchy. The higher your status, the more authority you had, and the more "liberty" you could exercise -- which meant, in practical terms, that you had the right to take more "liberties" with the lives, rights and

property of other people. Like an English lord unfettered from the Magna Carta, nobody had the authority to tell a Southern gentleman what to do with resources under his control. In this model, that's what liberty is. If you don't have the freedom to rape, beat, torture, kill, enslave, or exploit your underlings (including your wife and children) with impunity -- or abuse the land, or enforce rules on others that you will never have to answer to yourself -- then you can't really call yourself a free man.

When a Southern conservative talks about "losing his liberty," the loss of this absolute domination over the people and property under his control -- and, worse, the loss of status and the resulting risk of being held accountable for laws that he was once exempt from -- is what he's really talking about. In this view, freedom is a zero-sum game. Anything that gives more freedom and rights to lower-status people can't help but put serious limits on the freedom of the upper classes to use those people as they please. It cannot be any other way. So they find Yankee-style rights expansions absolutely intolerable, to the point where they're willing to fight and die to preserve their divine right to rule.

Once we understand the two different definitions of "liberty" at work here, a lot of other things suddenly make much more sense. We can understand the traditional Southern antipathy to education, progress, public investment, unionization, equal opportunity, and civil rights. The fervent belief among these elites that they should completely escape any legal or social accountability for any harm they cause. Their obsessive attention to where they fall in the status hierarchies. And, most of all -- the unremitting and unapologetic brutality with which they've defended these "liberties" across the length of their history.

When Southerners quote Patrick Henry -- "Give me liberty or give me death" -- what they're really demanding is the unquestioned, unrestrained right to turn their fellow citizens into supplicants and subjects. The Yankee elites have always known this -- and feared what would happen if that kind of aristocracy took control of the country. And that tension between these two very different views of what it means to be "elite" has inflected our history for over 400 years.

### The Battle Between the Elites

Since shortly after the Revolution, the Yankee elites have worked hard to keep the upper hand on America's culture, economy and politics -- and much of our success as a nation rests on their success at keeping plantation culture sequestered in the South, and its scions largely away from the levers of power. If we have to have an elite -- and there's never been a society as complex as ours that didn't have some kind of upper class maintaining social order - - we're far better off in the hands of one that's essentially meritocratic, civic-minded and generally believes that it will do better when everybody else does better, too.

The Civil War was, at its core, a military battle between these two elites for the soul of the country. It pitted the more communalist, democratic and industrialized Northern vision of the American future against the hierarchical, aristocratic, agrarian Southern one. Though the Union won the war, the fundamental conflict at its root still hasn't been resolved to this day. (The current conservative culture war is the Civil War still being re-fought by other means.) After the war, the rise of Northern industrialists and the dominance of Northern universities and media ensured that subsequent generations of the American power elite continued to subscribe to the Northern worldview -- even when the individual leaders came from other parts of the country.

Ironically, though: it was that old Yankee commitment to national betterment that ultimately gave the Southern aristocracy its big chance to break out and go national. According to Lind, it was easy for the Northeast to hold onto cultural, political and economic power as long as all the country's major banks, businesses, universities, and industries were headquartered there. But the New Deal -- and, especially, the post-war interstate highways, dams, power grids, and other infrastructure investments that gave rise to the Sun Belt -- fatally loosened the Yankees' stranglehold on national power. The gleaming new cities of the South and West shifted the American population centers westward, unleashing new political and economic forces with real power to challenge the Yankee consensus. And because a vast number of these westward migrants came out of the South, the elites that rose along with these cities tended to hew to the old Southern code, and either tacitly or openly resist the moral imperatives of the Yankee canon. The soaring postwar fortunes of cities like Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Houston, Dallas, and Atlanta fed that ancient Barbadian slaveholder model of power with plenty of room and resources to launch a fresh and unexpected 20th-century revival.

According to historian Darren Dochuk, the author of *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*, these post-war Southerners and Westerners drew their power from the new wealth provided by the defense, energy, real estate, and other economic booms in their regions. They also had a profound evangelical conviction, brought with them out of the South, that God wanted them to take America back from the Yankee liberals -- a conviction that expressed itself simultaneously in both the formation of the vast post-war evangelical churches (which were major disseminators of Southern culture around the country); and in their takeover of the GOP, starting with Barry Goldwater's campaign in 1964 and culminating with Ronald Reagan's election in 1980.

They countered Yankee hegemony by building their own universities, grooming their own leaders and creating their own media. By the 1990s, they were staging the RINO hunts that drove the last Republican moderates (almost all of them Yankees, by either geography or cultural background) and the meritocratic order they represented to total extinction within the GOP. A decade later, the Tea Party became the voice of the unleashed id of the old Southern order, bringing it forward into the 21st century with its full measure of selfishness, racism, superstition, and brutality intact.

### Plantation America

From its origins in the fever swamps of the lowland south, the worldview of the old Southern aristocracy can now be found nationwide. Buttressed by the arguments of Ayn Rand -- who updated the ancient slaveholder ethic for the modern age -- it has been exported to every corner of the culture, infected most of our other elite communities and killed off all but the very last vestiges of *noblesse oblige*.

It's not an overstatement to say that we're now living in Plantation America. As Lind points out: to the horror of his Yankee father, George W. Bush proceeded to run the country exactly like Woodard's description of a Barbadian slavelord. And Barack Obama has done almost nothing to roll this victory back. We're now living in an America where rampant inequality is accepted, and even celebrated.

Torture and extrajudicial killing have been reinstated, with no due process required.

The wealthy and powerful are free to abuse employees, break laws, destroy the commons, and crash the economy -- without ever being held to account.

The rich flaunt their ostentatious wealth without even the pretense of humility, modesty, generosity, or gratitude.

The military -- always a Southern-dominated institution -- sucks down 60% of our federal discretionary spending, and is undergoing a rapid evangelical takeover as well.

Our police are being given paramilitary training and powers that are completely out of line with their duty to serve and protect, but much more in keeping with a mission to subdue and suppress. Even liberal cities like Seattle are now home to the kind of local justice that used to be the hallmark of small-town Alabama sheriffs.

Segregation is increasing everywhere. The rights of women and people of color are under assault. Violence against leaders who agitate for progressive change is up. Racist organizations are undergoing a renaissance nationwide.

We are withdrawing government investments in public education, libraries, infrastructure, health care, and technological innovation -- in many areas, to the point where we are falling behind the standards that prevail in every other developed country.

Elites who dare to argue for increased investment in the common good, and believe that we should lay the groundwork for a better future, are regarded as not just silly and soft-headed, but also inviting underclass revolt. The Yankees thought that government's job was to better the lot of the lower classes. The Southern aristocrats know that its real purpose is to deprive them of all possible means of rising up against their betters.

The rich are different now because the elites who spent four centuries sucking the South dry and turning it into an economic and political backwater have now vanquished the more forward-thinking, democratic Northern elites. Their attitudes towards freedom, authority, community, government, and the social contract aren't just confined to the country clubs of the Gulf Coast; they can now be found on the ground from Hollywood and Silicon Valley to Wall Street. And because of that quiet coup, the entire US is now turning into the global equivalent of a Deep South state.

As long as America runs according to the rules of Southern politics, economics and culture, we're no longer free citizens exercising our rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as we've always understood them. Instead, we're being treated like serfs on Massa's plantation -- and increasingly, we're being granted our liberties only at Massa's pleasure. Welcome to Plantation America.

(Sara Robinson, MS, APF is a social futurist and the editor of AlterNet's Vision page. Follow her on Twitter, or subscribe to AlterNet's Vision newsletter for weekly updates.)

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[20120630-11](#) 13:25 Pam Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Dennis, above)

This is fantastic. I'm a mid-westerner who's lived in New England and now in the South, and a lifetime's experience tells me that this essay is absolutely on target. I read "Albion's Seed" many years ago and thought it explained so well the different strains of American culture--at least the ones derived from Britain. The author traces mindsets from their original geographical location to the areas they ended up in America. Elites and aristocrats settled around tidewater Virginia, Scottish wild folk settled in Appalachia, the Puritans in New England and so on. It's a fascinating study. Another good book is W.J. Cash's "The Mind of the South." It was written back in the forties, but it still rings true. When I read it, so many things fell into place for me, including things about my family. My mother's mother was from Richmond, VA, and I was brought up to revere the South. My mother always said she thought damn Yankees was one word until she was an adult. Sadly, Cash committed suicide after writing this book. It is beautifully written, a real gem.

I feel like we're turning into the old South Africa. There is no guarantee at all that the right (side) will prevail. Many noble civilizations have fallen to lesser peoples. I've talked before about my best friend, who is as southern as they come. She criticizes liberals for fomenting "class warfare," and says she thinks that's so wrong; she idealizes money and is ornery about maintaining her independence. Her rebelliousness and mine are one of the bases of our friendship. She's a good person, better than the Tea Baggers, whom she disdains, but she reflects the southern mentality described here, and she always will. It amazes me that this southern influence has come to dominate our culture, at least our politics. I think there's more than a little racism behind it as well. (My friend is not a racist.) It's not so much the illegal immigrants that upset folks as it is their brown skin and funny way of talking. At least that's my humble opinion. Rather than attack Obama's race, the Tea Baggers went after his Americanness and tried to turn him into a foreigner, an outsider. His was a victory that scared the bejeebers out of them. There's an expression I used to hear a lot when I was young. If you wanted to do something a little out of the way, you might be told, "You're free, white, and twenty-one." In other words, you can do what you like; it's a free country--if you're free, white, and 21. I feel like I'm watching America crumble a little more everyday. I don't know if the comparison is apt, but I feel like the Jews must have when the enlightened country they thought they knew (Germany) was taken over by brutes. I feel it's now or never. Truth, justice, and the American way were never in such jeopardy.

[20120630-20](#) 16:50 Art Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam, above)

And the Germans had a history of being brutes towards the Jews. South=slavery? HmMMMM

[20120630-12](#) 14:08 SteveB Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam & Dennis, above)

Just got this...I love southern humor!!!!

Sumb\*tch....

A large jet plane crashed on a farm in the middle of rural Kentucky . Panic stricken, the local sheriff mobilized and descended on the farm in force. By the time they got there, the aircraft was totally destroyed with only a burned hull left smoldering in a tree line that bordered the farm.

The sheriff and his men entered the smoking mess but could find no remains of anyone. They spotted the farmer plowing a field not too far away as if nothing had happened. They hurried over to the man's tractor.

"Hank," the sheriff yelled, panting and out of breath. "Did you see this terrible accident happen?" "Yep. Sure did," the farmer mumbled unconcerned, cutting off the tractor's engine. "Do you realize that is Air Force One, the airplane of the President of the United States?"

"Yep."

"Were there any survivors?"

"Nope. They's all kilt straight out," the farmer answered. "I done buried them all myself. Took me most of the morning."

"President Obama is dead?" the sheriff asked.

"Well," the farmer grumbled, restarting his tractor.

"He kept a-saying he wasn't... But you know how bad that sumb\*tch lies..."

From "Rick Perry's Battle Against Federal Government Leads to More Oversight"

([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/29/rick-perry-texas\\_n\\_1638607.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/29/rick-perry-texas_n_1638607.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)):

**"We're very conservative and we're very stubborn,"** said Bill Miller, a lobbyist in Austin for HillCo who has represented both Republicans and Democrats. He described the Texas mindset this way: **"We're not going to be smart. We're going to be pure. It's a point of pride and if there's something else we're proud of, it's our pride."**

[20120630-15](#) 16:40 Pam Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)

Great. What a recipe for disaster: Proud to be pure; unashamed to be stupid.

[20120630-21](#) 16:59 Art Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam, above)

The new tea party motto????

[20120630-22](#) 17:16 Art Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)

Well, they certainly seem to live up to the "We're not going to be smart" part.

[20120630-23](#) 19:20 LarryK Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)

Bill Miller [quoted above] would probably have advised William Travis to surrender the Alamo to Santa Anna -- "it would be the smart thing to do".

[20120630-24](#) 20:13 SteveB Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to LarryK, above)

:-)

Well, we love Texas anyway and are proud to have her be part of US! Spent quite a bit of time working from Houston to Dallas, myself.

[20120630-27](#) 22:46 SteveG Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to LarryK, above)

Lived in Texas twice, should have remained a part of Mexico.

[20120701-01](#) 05:29 SteveB Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveG, above)

I feel exactly the same way about Tennessee!

[20120701-03](#) 08:32 Art Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)

And then there's Rhode Island!

[20120701-06](#) 10:05 Pam Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Art, above)

What's wrong with Rhode Island?! I was born there.

[20120701-07](#) 10:08 SteveG Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam, above)

Really don't like South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Louisiana either. Southern accents and the s l o w t a l k e r s really bother me. O h yeah, Florida too – lived there twice and since they drained the swamps, it isn't what it used to be.

[20120701-12](#) 12:36 Art Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Pam, above)

They're small and can't fight back?

By the way, no offense but not sure the action at the Alamo directly had much to do with Texan independence. It was a pretty fumbled defense and the reality was probably a far cry from what the movies would have us believe. Santa Anna's decision to massacre the prisoners at the Alamo and Goliad may have given the remaining Texans a nice battle cry but that was about it.

Of course, at San Jacinto the Texans caught the Mexican napping, literally, and the rest is history.

[20120701-10](#) 11:09 SteveB Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Art, above)

Careful...I used to live in Rhode Island. So does...Beth???

[20120701-11](#) 11:44 Beth Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to SteveB, above)

Nope. NJ.

[20120701-13](#) 12:46 SteveB Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Beth, above)

Darn, that's right, we talked about Christie... Somebody in the group lives there...I'll find out tomorrow. Anyway, I liked Rhode Island.

[20120701-17](#) 18:35 LarryK Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Art, above)

I don't want to bore you with too much Texas history, but let me clarify a couple of points.

First, your description of a "fumbled defense" suggests that Travis' plan during the Alamo's siege was flawed. I'm certainly not an expert on 19th century military tactics, but in light of his overwhelming manpower, arms and ammunition disadvantage, I don't think any other strategy would have changed the eventual outcome for the better for the Alamo's defenders.

Second, don't underestimate the motivational influence of revenge, (i.e. "remember the Alamo"; "remember Goliad"). Sam Houston needed to recruit, inspire and train an army once Texas declared its independence from Mexico. The stories of the Alamo and later Goliad were major direct factors in building that army.

Finally, maybe just as important, and certainly a direct influence was that the Texians delayed Santa Anna's army in San Antonio for an additional two weeks giving Houston the time he desperately need to prepare his army, also the fighters at the Alamo inflicted as many as 600 casualties on the Mexican army which, in spite of the reinforcements Santa Anna later received, did somewhat even-out the strength of the two armies.

Obviously, the ultimate outcome at San Jacinto was decided by Houston's tactic of attacking the Mexicans at siesta time and Santa Anna's foolish mistake of failing to post lookouts, but the events leading up to April 21st, 1836, including the resistance at the Alamo, made it possible for Houston to exploit that opportunity.

[20120701-19](#) 19:24 Art Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to LarryK, above)

Well pretty much agree, but defending the Alamo in the first place with only what 125 men, was a mistake. Nothing I can read from any serious histories says the two weeks made any difference. Think about it. In any case it really wasn't a defense of two weeks. Santa Anna just had to get his army up there.

As to the Mexican casualties, I seriously doubt that number. What was significant was Santa Anna split his army up into 3 columns and so lost any significant numbers advantage when he met Houston at San Jacinto. I do agree, as part of the law of unintended consequences, the decision to massacre prisoners at Goliad and the Alamo, may well have added inspiration to the remaining Texans.

Most heroic military actions are wrapped in myth. This one is no different. People love it.

[20120629-09](#) 21:31 Marci Fw: Key to Preventing Moldy Fresh Berries!!!!

We already use this tip, but thought I'd pass it on. Kills all kinds of germs easily, quickly, cheaply, and safely. Don't know if this would work for mushrooms, Anne. :-)

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Berries are delicious, but they're also kind of delicate. Raspberries in particular seem like they can mold before you even get them home from the market. There's nothing more tragic than paying \$4 for a pint of local raspberries, only to look in the fridge the next day and find that fuzzy mold growing on their insides. Well, with fresh berries just starting to hit farmers markets, we can tell you that how to keep them fresh! Here s a tip I m sharing on how to prevent them from getting there in the first place: Wash them with vinegar.

When you get your berries home, prepare a mixture of one part vinegar (white or apple cider probably work best) and ten parts water. Dump the berries into the mixture and swirl around. Drain, rinse if you want (though the mixture is so diluted you can't taste the vinegar,) and pop in the fridge. The vinegar kills any mold spores and other bacteria that might be on the surface of the fruit, and voila! Raspberries will last a week or more, and strawberries go almost two weeks without getting moldy and soft. So go forth and stock up on those pricey little gems, knowing they'll stay fresh as long as it takes you to eat them. You're so berry welcome!

20120629-11	22:03	Marci	Fw: On Becoming Illegal
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Also see: <http://articles.superhunky.com/4/485>.

Get your Forms NOW!! Call your Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-289-1040. FORMS ARE GOING FAST- SIGN UP TODAY!

Becoming Illegal (Actual letter from an Oregon resident to his senator.)

The Honorable Wyden  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Phone: (202) 224 3254, (202) 224 3254  
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

As a native Oregonian and excellent customer of the Internal Revenue Service, I am writing to ask for your assistance. I have contacted the Department of Homeland Security in an effort to determine the process for becoming an illegal alien and they referred me to you.

My primary reason for wishing to change my status from U.S. Citizen to illegal alien stems from the bill which was recently passed by the Senate and for which you voted. If my understanding of this bill is accurate, as an illegal alien who has been in the United States for five years, all I need to do to become a citizen is to pay a \$2,000 fine and income taxes for only three of the last five years. I know a good deal when I see one and I am anxious to get the process started before everyone figures it out.

Simply put, those of us who have been here legally have had to pay taxes every year so I'm excited about the prospect of avoiding two years of taxes in return for paying a \$2,000 fine. Is there any way that I can apply to be illegal retroactively? This would yield an excellent result for me and my family because we paid heavy taxes in 2004 and 2005.

Additionally, as an illegal alien I could begin using the local emergency room as my primary health care provider Once I have stopped paying premiums for medical insurance, my accountant figures I could save almost \$10,000 a year.

Another benefit in gaining illegal status would be that my daughter would receive preferential treatment relative to her law school applications, as well as 'in-state' tuition rates for many colleges throughout the United States for my son.

Lastly, I understand that illegal status would relieve me of the burden of renewing my driver's license and making those burdensome car insurance premiums. This is very important to me, given that I still have college age children driving my car.

If you would provide me with an outline of the process to become illegal (retroactively if possible) and copies of the necessary forms, I would be most appreciative. Thank you for your assistance.

Your Loyal Constituent, Dale B. Rilyeu, Lebanon, OR (hoping to reach 'illegal alien' status rather than just a bonafide citizen of the USA)

20120630-03 08:10 MarthaH Fw: 50's Car Test

50's Car Test

All right you young & older whipper-snappers, let's see how you do. Be honest with yourself....no cheating. See how you do. The average score is 73% of 48 questions. This will really rattle the cobwebs in the 'ol brain.

<http://www.americantorque.com/game/car-show-50s/>

**MarthaH:** ENJOY this! The 10 I missed had a few I knew better on...but it was such fun to TRY to Remember, as the song goes!

**PhilH:** This is fun. I got 92%. In all but one set of questions I got 4 of 4. In one set I got 0 of 4.

**Art:** I got 2 right!!!

**SteveB:** That's just because you're a youngster, Artemus.

**SteveB:** *Only got 79% (38) right.* and I think that's the second time I've taken it. Now, show me '50's Playmates of the Month and I'll tell you what month. haha I'm just too young (like Art)!

**Frank:** I got 39 which was 81%.

20120630-04 08:20 MarthaH "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?"

I should never have looked at this. THEY are the contemptable ones! Now my choices for senator are between Murdock, who beat Lugar, and Donnelly, who kowtows to the NRA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Is the NRA in the constitution (with Romney's repealing power on Day 1)????? I am beginning to wonder what we are becoming even more... NOTE THEIR STATES...They need to stand up and be contrary to the bullies...unless they REALLY believe in their votes...but no, they fear them. GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR....How dishonorable this list is!

"Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" by Ed O'Keefe, *The Washington Post* June 29, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/2chambers/post/which-democrats-voted-to-hold-eric-holder-in-contempt-of-congress/2012/06/28/gJQAUkV9V\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/2chambers/post/which-democrats-voted-to-hold-eric-holder-in-contempt-of-congress/2012/06/28/gJQAUkV9V_blog.html))

The House of Representatives voted 255 to 67 Thursday to hold Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. in contempt of Congress, capping months of partisan bickering over an ongoing congressional investigation into Operation "Fast and Furious."

More than 100 Democrats left the House floor before the vote, but 17 moderate Democrats stayed behind and joined with Republicans in voting for contempt, robbing the Obama administration and congressional Democrats of

its main argument that the vote was a blatant partisan maneuver to discredit Holder and the White House in an election year.

All but one of the 17 Democrats has previously been endorsed by the National Rifle Association, which said it would be tracking Thursday's vote in determining future endorsements. In a letter to lawmakers last week, the NRA said, "It is no secret that the NRA does not admire Attorney General Holder." But the gun rights group said it supported the contempt resolution because the Justice Department was obstructing a congressional investigation.

So which Democrats voted for contempt? And which Republicans bucked the party line? Check out the listings below — with links to each's members bio pages from The Washington Post Congressional Votes Database.

#### ON THE HOLDER CRIMINAL CONTEMPT CHARGE:

Final vote count: 255 to 67. According to the Office of the House Republican Whip, 110 members did not vote; 108 were Democrats and two were Republicans.

Two Republicans voted no, or against the Holder criminal contempt charge: Scott Rigell (R-Va.), Steven LaTourette (R-Ohio).

One Democrat voted present: Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.).

17 Democrats voted yes — with most Republicans — to hold Holder in criminal contempt. A \* denotes a previous NRA endorsement: Jason Altmire (D-Pa.)\*, John Barrow (D-Ga.)\*, Dan Boren (D-Okla.)\*, Leonard Boswell (D-Iowa)\*, Ben Chandler (D-Ky.)\*, Mark Critz (D-Pa.)\*, Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.)\*, Kathleen Hochul (D-N.Y.), Ron Kind (D-Wis.)\*, Larry Kissell (D-N.C.)\*, Jim Matheson (D-Utah)\*, Mike McIntyre (D-N.C.)\*, William Owens (D-N.Y.)\*, Collin Peterson (D-Minn.)\*, Nick Rahall (D-W. Va.)\*, Mike Ross (D-Ark.)\*, Timothy Walz (D-Minn.)\*.

#### ON THE HOLDER CIVIL CONTEMPT CHARGE:

Final vote count: 258 to 95. According to the office of the House Majority Whip, 75 members did not vote and five members voted present.

Five Democrats voted present on the civil contempt charge: Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), Jim Costa (D-Calif.), Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.), Edolphus Towns (D-N.Y.).

Twenty-one Democrats voted yes — with all Republicans — on the Holder civil contempt charge: Altmire, Ron Barber (D-Ariz.), Barrow, Boren, Boswell, Chandler, Critz, Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), Donnelly, Hochul, Kind, Kissell, Matheson, McIntyre, Michael Michaud (D-Maine)\*, Brad Miller (D-N.C.)\*, Owens, Peterson, Rahall, Ross, Walz.

<a href="#">20120630-05</a>	08:59	Pam	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I'm glad to know about McIntyre from NC. He won't get my vote. I don't know what to think about the Fast and Furious program, but from what I've heard it sounds like a nutty idea to me. I just read an article on Mexico and its drug criminals that is chilling and scary. I can't imagine how it could ever be a good idea to sell those lunatics assault weapons, and tracking them seems next to impossible. What were they thinking? That aside, it's clear these Democrats voted their pocketbooks. The NRA, Big Oil, Big Pharma, Big Insurance--they all call the shots in Washington, whatever the party. Thank god Justice Roberts voted as he did. Otherwise, the SC would look like the Republican tool it is.

<a href="#">20120630-14</a>	16:35	Art	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to Pam, above)
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Fast and Furious was a sting operations. The Mexican Drug Cartels were getting the guns by the thousands just fine from American dealers in the SW. The idea was to let some guns go that the ATF possibly could have picked up (don't worry thousands were getting through anyway) and possibly trace them to the top Mexican Drug Cartel leaders who were buying them and cut off the head of the snake instead of just picking off little small time runners. Of course, it would have severely crimped the business of gun dealers in the SW so they cried foul to the NRA and the rest is history. One Federal agent was later killed in an unrelated shootout and one of the guns was traced back to F&F.

A similar sting operation was tried under the Bush Administration call "Wide Receiver". The Republicans aren't interested in the "guns going to Mexico issue", and have not asked for any papers about that. They are strictly focused on the statement that Holder made that he did not know anything about the operation. This, despite the fact that Holder has publicly stated he takes responsibility since he is Attorney General, is apparently irrelevant. This is purely political public theater of the most despicable kind.

Remember these are the guys that invaded Iraq over a questionable issue of WMDs and cost 4000 lives. Guess that was OK. The NRA approved.

<a href="#">20120630-17</a>	16:43	Pam	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to Art, above)
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Thanks for the explanation, Art. I find it astounding that it wasn't the selling of guns that brought the big guns out (so to speak), but a perceived chink in Holder's armor. Despicable.

<a href="#">20120630-13</a>	16:20	Art	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Between the NRA and Norquist's bunch, whatever their name, you have to wonder who really runs this country.

<a href="#">20120630-16</a>	16:40	Pam	Re: "Which Democrats Voted to Hold Eric Holder in Contempt of Congress?" (reply to Art, above)
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I think I have a pretty good idea.

<a href="#">20120630-07</a>	09:16	SteveG	Fw: Bear Beer Market
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[Source of original email unknown. Believe it or not, this joke has been debunked by Snopes.com: <http://www.snopes.com/humor/business/beer.asp>. --SteveB]

If you had purchased \$1,000 of shares in Delta Airlines one year ago, you would have \$49.00 today!

If you had purchased \$1,000 of shares in AIG one year ago, you would have \$33.00 today.

If you had purchased \$1,000 of shares in Lehman Brothers one year ago, you would have \$0.00 today.

But, if you had purchased \$1,000 worth of beer one year ago, drank all the beer, then turned in the aluminum cans for the recycling refund, you would have received \$214.00.

Based on the above, the best current investment plan is to drink heavily & recycle.

It is called the 401-Keg.

And, as a bonus... A recent study found that the average American walks about 900 miles a year. Another study found that, on average, Americans drink 22 gallons of alcohol a year.

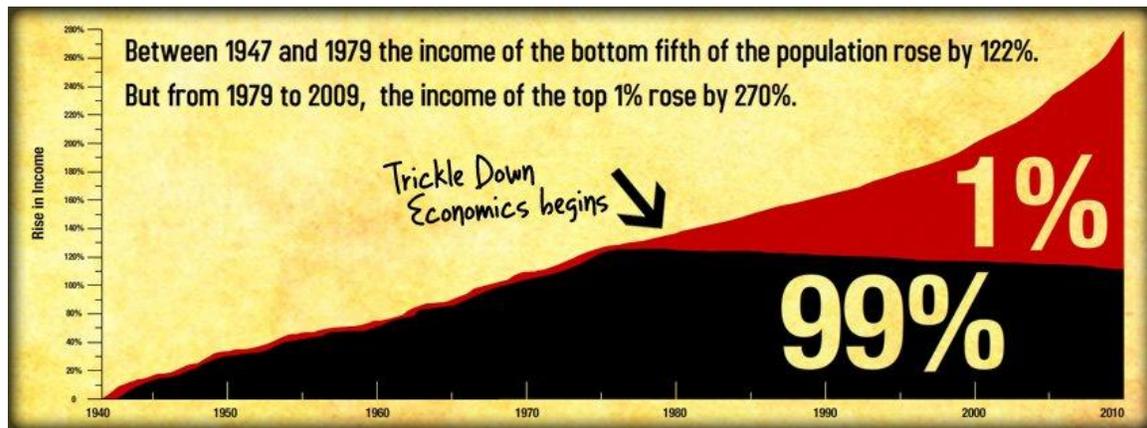
That means that the average American gets about 41 miles to the gallon!

Wow! Makes you darned proud to be an American!

[20120630-19](#) 16:47 Art Re: Bear Beer Market (reply to SteveG, above)

At last, a retirement plan that works!

[20120630-08](#) 10:30 SteveG Graphic: Trickle-Down Economics: Down to Where?



[20120630-10](#) 12:24 SteveG "Trickle-Down Economics: Four Reasons Why It Just Doesn't Work"

"Trickle-Down Economics: Four Reasons Why It Just Doesn't Work" by Mehrun Etebari, UFE

July 17, 2003, (<http://www.faireconomy.org/research/TrickleDown.html>)

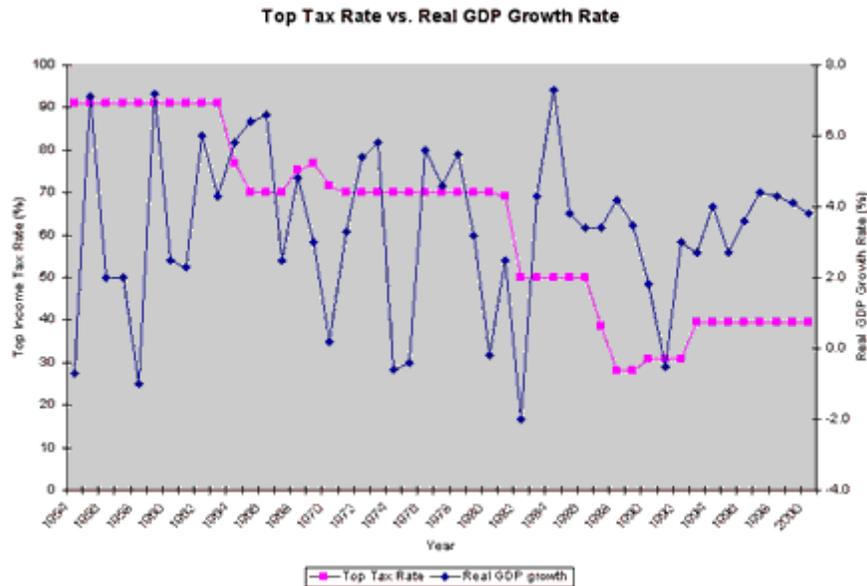
We've all heard the claims that cutting tax rates for the richest Americans will improve the standard of living for the working class. Supposedly, top-bracket tax breaks will result in more jobs being created, higher wages for the average worker, and an overall upturn in our economy. It's at the heart of the infamous trickle-down theory.

The past 40 years have seen a gradual decrease in the top bracket's income tax rate, from 91% in 1963 to 35% in 2003. It went as low as 28% in 1988 and 1989 due to legislation passed under Reagan, the trickle-down theory's most famous adherent. The Clinton years saw the top bracket hold steady at a higher rate of 39.6%, but under the younger Bush's tax-cut policies, the rich are once again paying less. The drastic change in tax policy that has taken place since the early 1960s gives us a great opportunity to study and evaluate the claims that lower taxes for the rich translate to more wealth for the average American.

We can compare changes in the top tax rate with the real GDP growth rate (a measure of the growth of the entire U.S. economy), and three measures of how life is for the average working American: annual median income growth, annual average hourly wage growth, and job creation. If cuts for the rich were really the magic elixir for the economy and the middle class that the Republican consensus claims it is, we would see an increase in the four indicators whenever the tax rate dropped. However, this is not the case. Such a trend occurs sometimes, but the opposite happens at other times!

Let's look one by one at comparisons of key economic indicators to the top tax rate.

## 1. Cutting the top tax rate does not lead to economic growth.



This graph shows the fluctuations of the real GDP growth rate over the period, indicating the performance of the U.S. economy as a whole. It is true that growth increased drastically after the 1982 tax cut, reaching as high as 7.3% in 1984. However, as the Reagan-Bush, Sr. administrations went on and taxes for the rich were slashed even further, growth fell to negative levels during 1991, at the heart of the last recession. And, two of the three years with the highest growth were during the 1950s, when the top tax rate was 91%. Overall, there seems to be no close relationship between the top tax rate and the GDP growth rate, and statistical analysis backs this up: the correlation coefficient between the two variables is 0.03, meaning that there is essentially no connection. (If tax cuts were strongly related to GDP growth, we would see a coefficient close to -1.) So much for upper-class tax cuts boosting the economy; now it's on to median income growth.

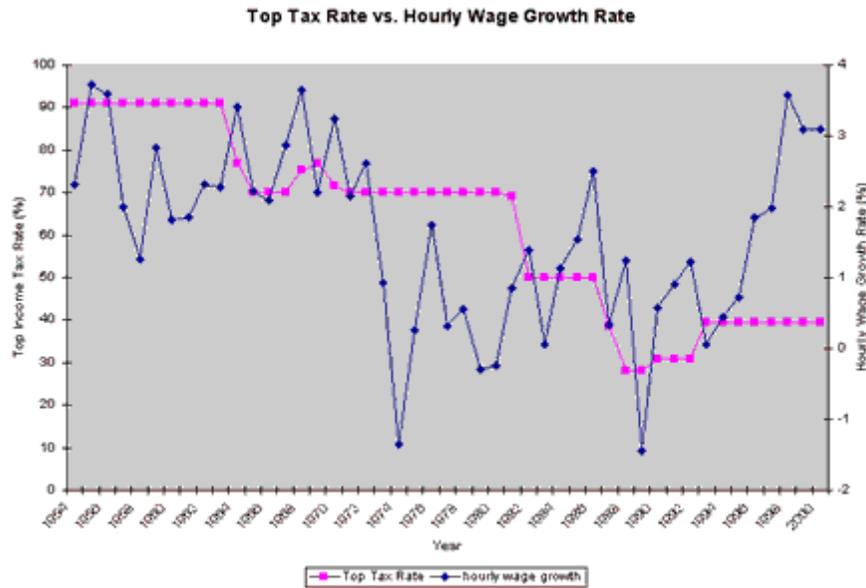
## 2. Cutting the top tax rate does not lead to income growth.



Again, we see inconclusive evidence for the power of tax cuts. We do see small peaks in median income growth, a good measure of how the average American household is doing, after top-bracket tax cuts in the mid-1960s and early 1980s, but we also actually see income decreases after the tax cuts of the late 1980s, and strong growth after the tax increase of 1993. It is true that in the year with the worst median income decrease (3.3% in 1974), the top

tax rate was 70%. However, it was also 70% in the year with the highest median income growth (4.7% in 1972)! Once again, the lack of connection between the two measures is backed up by a correlation coefficient near zero: 0.06, to be exact. And yes, yet again, the coefficient is positive, indicating that income has gone up slightly (though negligibly) more in years with higher taxes. Two strikes. How about hourly wages?

3. Cutting the top tax rate does not lead to wage growth.

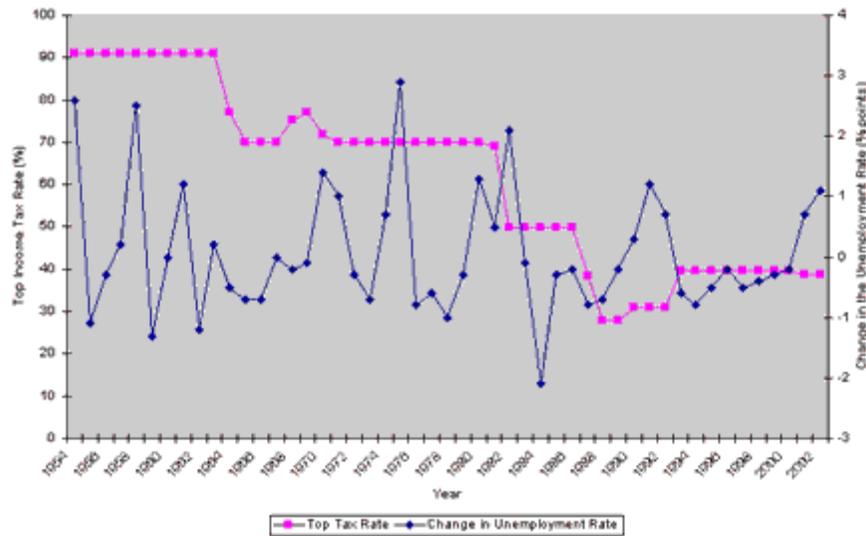


Not surprisingly, we have mixed results yet again! Growth in average hourly wages did increase during the 1980s following the first Reagan tax cuts, albeit two years after the cuts took effect. But, just like GDP growth and median income growth, hourly wages decreased following the late 1980s tax cuts, and spiked upwards after the 1993 tax increase.

Furthermore, wages grew at a level of at least 1%, and usually much more, all throughout the period when the top income tax rate was 91%. In fact, it isn't until 1972 that we see a wage growth rate of less than 1%. However, if we look at the 19 years of the study period when the top tax rate was 50% or less, we see that 8 of the years saw an increase in wages of less than 1%. Thus, it seems that hourly wages grew more when taxes were higher -- indeed, the correlation coefficient is 0.34, indicating a mild positive relationship between higher taxes for the rich and higher hourly wages. This finding flies in the face of the conservative theory. As if that's not enough, now let's see about what President Bush claimed would be the biggest result of tax cuts -- job creation.

4. Cutting the top tax rate does not lead to job creation.

Top Tax Rate vs. Change in Unemployment



Here, we see the change in the unemployment rate laid against the top tax rate from 1954 to 2002. Thus, negative values signify a decrease in unemployment -- in essence, job creation. Once again, while the top tax rate trends downward over the period, the annual change in unemployment doesn't seem to trend at all! Although the largest increase (2.9%) did occur in 1975, when the top marginal tax rate was 70%, three of the four largest decreases in unemployment occurred in years when the top rate was 91%. The mixed results do not bode well for those who see tax cuts for the richest as a sparkplug to incite job growth. The correlation coefficient between the variables here is 0.11 -- meaning that there have been slightly more jobs created in years with lower top tax rates, but this pattern is negligible -- nowhere near strong enough to signify a relationship.

So, can you tell what our conclusion is yet?

Overall, data from the past 50 years strongly refutes any arguments that cutting taxes for the richest Americans will improve the economic standing of the lower and middle classes or the nation as a whole. To be sure, the economic indicators examined in this report are dependent on a variety of factors, not just tax policy. However, what this study does show is that any attempt to stimulate economic growth by cutting taxes for the rich will do nothing -- it hasn't worked over the past 50 years, so why would it work in the future? To put it simply and bluntly, Bush's top-bracket tax cut is an ineffective attempt at stimulus that will not cause any growth -- unless, of course, if you're talking about the size of the deficit.

[Excellent, excellent article. A must read! --SteveB]

20120630-25 21:48 SteveG ALEC

A nonprofit that has 300+ members and writes templates for laws to decrease regulations, for smaller government, decrease taxation, decrease environmental regulations, etc.

It seems extremely right wing/Republican oriented to me.

What thoughts do others have?

<http://www.alec.org/>

20120701-04 08:55 Pam Re: ALEC (reply to SteveG, above)

I saw that piece on ALEC on the news as well, and my despair got a little deeper.

[20120701-05](#) 10:05 SteveG Re: ALEC (reply to Pam, above)

It is amazing the number of corporations involved in the process. Looked up some of them and trying to think of ways to boycott products of the companies, at least as many as I can. I know it will only make me feel a little better and not cause them a problem in the long run, unless we can get 1 million to do the same.

[20120701-08](#) 10:20 Pam Re: ALEC (reply to SteveG, above)

Wal Mart pulled out, which redeems them somewhat in my eyes. All the big ones belong; it will be hard to avoid all of them. It's just one more sign of how big business owns everything. At least it's not the drug cartels, like in Mexico.

[20120701-09](#) 10:45 SteveG Re: ALEC (reply to Pam, above)

In some respects it may be worse. Drug cartels just want to sell drugs and the problem is everyone wants to stop them. ALEC members want to control our working environment, our environment, our taxes, the essence of how we live and they are legally/slowly/methodically doing it under our noses.

[20120701-14](#) 12:49 Pam Re: ALEC (reply to SteveG, above)

At least they're not shooting us in the street. Yet.

[20120701-18](#) 18:57 Dennis Re: ALEC (reply to all, above)

Here's the latest on the ColorOfChange organized boycott of ALEC:

Today, tech industry giant Dell dropped its membership in the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the group that has pushed discriminatory voter ID legislation throughout the country. A representative confirmed that the company would no longer fund ALEC in an email obtained by ColorOfChange.

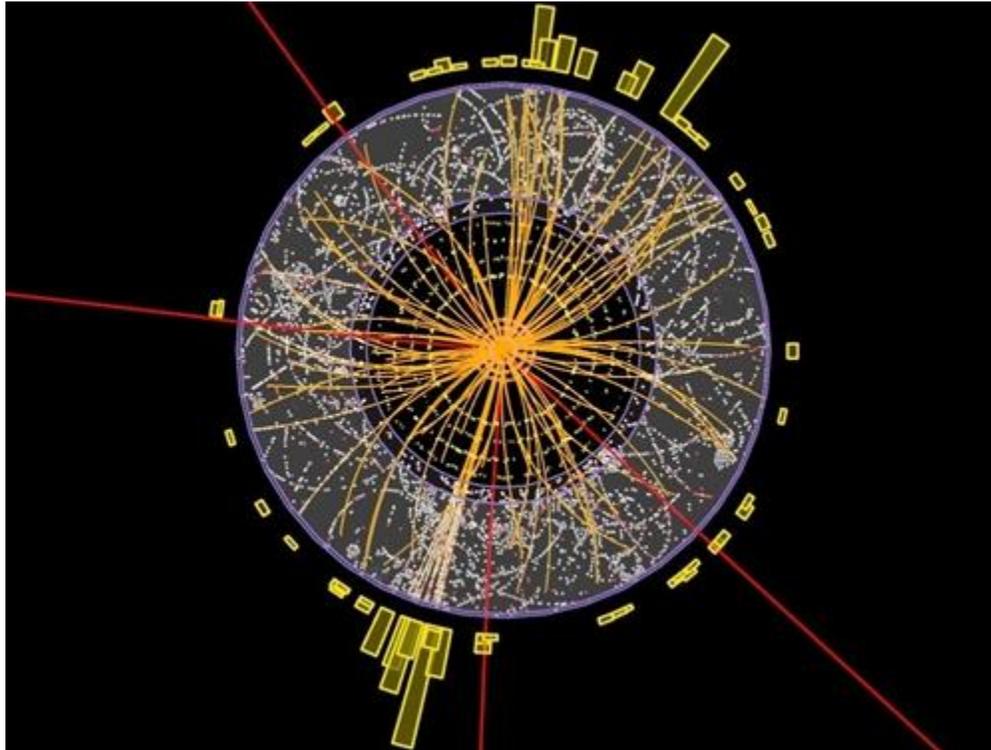
With its decision, Dell becomes the 20th corporation to announce that it's left ALEC since ColorOfChange launched its campaign to stop corporate-funded voter suppression. We applaud the company for doing the right thing and encourage corporations still standing by ALEC to follow suit.

[20120630-28](#) 23:41 SteveG "Higgs Boson Buzz Hits New High"

[‘God particle’ becomes a star? Hey, what’s that boson smokin’??? –SteveB]

"Higgs Boson Buzz Hits New High" by Alan Boyle, MSNBC

June 29, 2012, (<http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/06/29/12488155-higgs-boson-buzz-hits-new-high?lite>)



This diagram shows the results of a proton-on-proton collision in the Large Hadron Collider's ATLAS detector last September, with four muons indicated by red tracks. Such a result could be consistent with the Standard Model with or without the Higgs boson, depending on the analysis of multiple events. (ATLAS Collaboration / CERN)

Has the Higgs boson finally been detected? It's almost gotten to the point that if a discovery of some sort doesn't come out of next week's update on the multibillion-dollar subatomic search, it'll be a big surprise. But how far will the announcement go, and what will it mean for the future of physics?

To refresh your memory, the Higgs boson is the only fundamental subatomic particle predicted by theory but not yet detected. It's thought to play a role in endowing some particles, such as the W and Z boson, with mass ... while leaving other particles, such as the photon, massless. The Higgs mechanism, proposed by British physicist Peter Higgs and others in the 1960s, could have played a role in electroweak symmetry breaking, which was a key event in the rise of the universe as we know it.

The Higgs boson is so key to the current understanding of fundamental physics that Nobel-winning scientist Leon Lederman nicknamed it the "God Particle" — a term that has been making other physicists wince ever since. Another religion-tinged cliché would be to call it the "holy grail of particle physics," as CERN physicist John Ellis has. He says finding the Higgs is a key goal for the \$10 billion Large Hadron Collider.

"That's one thing that we're really looking forward to with the LHC," Ellis told me five years ago. "In fact, back when we persuaded the politicians to stump up the money to build the thing, that's probably what we told them."

Last December, the teams reported that they saw "tantalizing hints" of the Higgs' existence at a mass of around 125 billion electron volts, or 125 GeV. But the confidence in those results was not yet high enough to claim a discovery. Now the teams behind the collider's CMS and ATLAS experiments have collected higher piles of data, at higher energy levels, sparking higher expectations.

An hour-long BBC Horizon documentary focuses on the hunt for the Higgs boson: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raKNORddL3A&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raKNORddL3A&feature=player_embedded).

[The 5-sigma fetish](#)

When physicists talk about their confidence, they talk in terms of statistical "sigma" levels. The higher the sigma, the less likely that the results are just a fluke. In particle physics, 3 sigma constitutes strong evidence, but it takes 5 sigma to accept the results as a discovery. At the 5-sigma level, statisticians say there's roughly one chance out of 3 million that you're leaping to the wrong conclusion, as opposed to a 1-in-1,000 chance at the 3-sigma level. That distinction makes a big difference when you're sifting through billions upon billions of proton-on-proton collision reports.

Last year, the best that the LHC teams could do was 3.6 sigma for ATLAS, and 2.6 for CMS. Now physicists are looking for a 5.

For three weeks, the teams have been running the numbers on their experimental results in secret, so as to avoid any chance that one analysis will influence the other. Their results are to be announced during a presentation at the CERN nuclear research center in Geneva, which will be webcast starting at 9 a.m. CEST (3 a.m. ET) on July 4. Although no official word has leaked out, the unofficial word is that someone looking for a discovery could get to the magic number.

"Reports from the experiments indicate that at least one of them, if not both, will reach the 5 sigma level of significance for the Higgs signal, when they combine 2011 and 2012 data and the most sensitive channel. So, this will definitely be the long-awaited Higgs discovery announcement, and party time for HEP [high-energy physics] physicists," Columbia mathematician Peter Woit wrote on his Not Even Wrong blog a week ago.

Since then, other physicist-bloggers have been fine-tuning the expectations. Here's a selection:

- On the Resonances blog, physicist Adam Falkowski (a.k.a. Jester) has a countdown clock ticking toward the Higgs discovery. "It is not clear, at least to me, if either of the two experiments will pass the 5-sigma fetish. But it does not really matter. ... What's going to change next Wednesday is that the status of the Higgs will be upgraded from 'almost certain' to 'beyond reasonable doubt.'"
- On Quantum Diaries, Southern Methodist University physicist Aidan Randle-Conde advises against trying to combine the data from the two teams to get to 5 sigma. "With all this pressure to get as much out of the data as possible, it's tempting to move too quickly and do what we can to get a discovery, but now is not the time to rush things," he writes.
- On the ViXra Log, Philip Gibbs says that when CERN's researchers report their progress, "it is likely that the main question they are investigating will switch from 'Is there a Higgs Boson?' to 'Is it the Standard Model Higgs boson?'"
- On a blog titled "Of Particular Significance," Rutgers physicist Matt Strassler advises caution, but also suggests getting "the cases of champagne ready, in case the time has finally come to pop the corks." He points out that a discovery announcement would by no means be the end of the story. "Even if we see strong evidence of a Higgs-like particle ... the correct understanding of that particle — in particular, determining whether it is or isn't a 'simplest Higgs' — may take years."
- As we approach H-Hour, you can expect to hear more via all these outlets as well as other blogs such as Cosmic Variance and "A Quantum Diaries Survivor."

Physicist Gigi Rolandi discusses the Higgs search in a CERN video:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=eL1u0AIOGRO](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=eL1u0AIOGRO).

### Hedging on the Higgs

What Strassler and Gibbs are saying is important: Technically speaking, CERN is unlikely to announce that the Higgs boson has been definitively discovered. It's more likely that physicists will talk about a new particle that has a signature consistent with the Higgs but has to be investigated further.

CERN hinted at that approach last week in the news release announcing Wednesday's webcast. "It's a bit like spotting a familiar face from afar," said the center's director general, Rolf Heuer. "Sometimes you need closer inspection to find out whether it's really your best friend, or actually your best friend's twin."

Gigi Rolandi, a senior research physicist at CERN, used a similar analogy in a video released this week, referring to crops of corn (which he calls maize, as most Europeans do), wheat (which he calls corn) and poppy flowers. Some particles are as easy to spot as a red poppy in a wheat field, he said. But not the Higgs. "The search for the Higgs is more similar to looking for a single plant of maize among many, many corn plants, than looking for a poppy among the corn," he said.

We'll get a foretaste of Wednesday's proceedings on Monday, when Fermilab is due to provide its final update on the Higgs boson search, based on the full set of data from the now-closed Tevatron. Will Fermilab try to steal some of CERN's thunder, at least for a couple of days? Stay tuned....

**Update for 12:05 p.m. ET June 30:** Some commenters are asking whether there are practical applications for the discoveries that could be made at the Large Hadron Collider. I addressed that question in a story I wrote four years ago, headlined "Discovery or Doom? Collider Stirs Debate." Please check out the article, as well as the Flash interactive on "Nightmares and Dreams" at the LHC.

**Update for 6 p.m. ET July 1:** To watch streaming video of the Fermilab Higgs update at 9 a.m. CT (10 a.m. ET) Monday, click through to this Web link: [http://vms-db-srv.fnal.gov/fmi/xsl/VMS\\_Site\\_2/000Return/video/r\\_live.xsl](http://vms-db-srv.fnal.gov/fmi/xsl/VMS_Site_2/000Return/video/r_live.xsl).

The buzz leading up to H-Hour is getting even louder, as expected. The Daily Mail reports that some of the theorists behind the Higgs boson concept have been invited to the CERN briefing on Wednesday, which some observers see as another sign that something definitive will be announced. Also, Reuters' Robert Evans keeps the buzz humming in a dispatch published today.

Previous episodes in the Higgs hunt:

- Ups and downs for Higgs boson buzz: <http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/06/21/12345552-ups-and-downs-for-higgs-boson-buzz?lite>.
- Cartoons visualize the Higgs boson: <http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/05/04/11542567-cartoons-visualize-the-higgs-boson?lite>.
- Can physicists crack the big puzzle? <http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/11/30/9124154-can-physicists-crack-the-big-puzzle>.
- Flash graphic: Inside the Big Bang Machine: [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26562876/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/large-hadron-collider/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26562876/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/large-hadron-collider/).
- Flash graphic: Michio Kaku on LHC nightmares and dreams: [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25356219/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-science/t/nightmares-dreams-surrounding-lhc/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25356219/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/nightmares-dreams-surrounding-lhc/).
- Msnbc.com's special report on the Large Hadron Collider: <http://lhc.msnbc.com/>.

<a href="#">20120701-02</a> 06:04 SteveB Re: "Higgs Boson Buzz Hits New High" (reply to SteveG, above)
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This is very exciting news, SteveG. Thank you. And you got the scoop on it! I love this Higgs stuff and I was caught nappin'. Your article above is very good and here's another for those with a deeper interest in how God does all the stuff he has to do and not lose his freakin' mind!

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2012/jun/29/higgs-boson-rumours-fly-cern-results?newsfeed=true>

Hey, what's that boson smokin'???

20120701-20 20:09 SteveB Fw: Roadfood Eating Tour 2012

from Roadfood.com:

Connecticut Eats



Save the dates: September 29-30, 2012. The Roadfood eating tour this year is going to explore Connecticut, home of the hot lobster roll and (maybe) the hamburger but definitely the steamed cheeseburger, Neapolitan *apizza*, ice cream, fried clams, donuts, and superb weenies. Above: a well-dressed Blackie's hot dog and a cup of Big Dipper turtle ice cream.

FOODFEST: America's Hometown Eats



The eating extravaganza formerly known as the New Orleans Roadfood Festival has a new name. **FOODFEST: America's Hometown Eats**. Pictured above is the crowd cheering on contestants in last year's beignet eating contest. The 2013 Festival will take place March 22-24. See you there! User "Howard" is the winner of our naming contest and will receive some BBQ from Louie Muellers.

## Summer Travels



A summer eating adventure on one tank of gas? That was the challenge *Parade* magazine handed us: to come up with delicious one-tank-of-gas road trips from 10 major cities. The hard part was winnowing down the list to only 10. Every city we know has good things to eat in it or near it. (READ MORE: <http://www.dashrecipes.com/blogs/dashboard/2012/06/24-great-road-food-destinations.html>)

## Tomato Harvest



Good tomatoes are a joy of summer. At Stanziato's pizzeria in Danbury, Connecticut, flavor-bursting grape tomatoes star along with fresh basil and house-made mozzarella on the occasionally available *summer love* pizza.

You think there was beer involved????

I've never been spear fishing, but I'm fairly certain this isn't how it's done.



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

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #173 — JULY 3, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Health Care Myths**

(posted by Pam McRae, July 3, 2012)

"Health care expenditures roughly follow Pareto's Law: 20 percent of users spend 80 percent of the money. If the healthy 80 percent do not buy health insurance, the sick 20 percent will not be able to afford it. In 2009, the average expenses of the sick enrolled in State high-risk pools ranged from \$8,000 to \$24,000. Even the top 10 percent of taxpayers, with incomes over \$110,000, could barely afford these sums." — Regina E. Herzlinger, Huffington Post, June 29, 2012

"The Healthcare Myths We Must Confront" by Cliff Asness, The American

June 29, 2012, (<http://www.american.com/archive/2012/june/the-healthcare-myths-we-must-confront>)

As debate about whether ObamaCare is a good idea continues, rejecting four major misconceptions about healthcare is crucial to any chance of our eventually emerging with a better system.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's ObamaCare decision, we must refocus. The Court's decision was never about whether ObamaCare was a good idea, only about whether it was constitutional. The Court found a convoluted way to uphold the law.

That's done, but the debate on whether ObamaCare's provisions are good ideas will continue.

**Pam:** *Yes, the debate continues, as it certainly needs to do. Obamacare is an attempt to improve our health care delivery system, not a complete answer by any means. Because radical change is apparently impossible in this country, Obama was forced to cobble together a plan that could get enough support to pass. That meant making many compromises and foregoing many benefits that would serve the public interest.*

To date, this debate has been unable to shake off a lot of mythology—things believed about healthcare and our healthcare system in general, or ObamaCare specifically—that simply are not so.

**Pam:** *The goals of healthcare reform—covering more Americans, improving outcomes, and doing so more cost effectively—are all laudable, but are all hampered by the continued belief in these myths. Rejecting these misconceptions is crucial to any chance of our eventually emerging with a better system.*

*I believe we can all agree that covering more Americans (I would argue ALL Americans), improving outcomes (with early interventions and preventative care), and cost effectiveness are things we can all agree on. The question is, how do we achieve these things?*

Myth #1: Healthcare prices have soared in the recent past.

If we choose to subsidize a portion of the population we should do so openly, using taxation and government spending, which at least shines sunlight on the cost, not through tricky regulation that hides it.

**Pam:** *I couldn't agree more. We should use taxation and government spending to provide the foundation for our nation's health care. There are many things individual citizens cannot do for themselves: build highways across the country; provide electricity; organize a police force or army; provide rescue from fires (in urban areas especially); assure a safe food supply; assure a safe prescription drug supply; develop the technology to land a man on the moon. Government has the ability to spend money on research and development that private industry is not prepared to commit to. The space program is a case in point. It was government spending that provided the funds for NASA and brought about the dazzling technical innovations we are all aware of. Private industry did not do that. It would have taken far too long to have realized a profit, a profit that was by no means guaranteed. Who would have believed in 1950 that the Hubble telescope would penetrate the depths of space? Private industry and competition can accomplish great things, when profit is immediate and difficulty of implementation not overwhelming. The automobile, the airplane, the telephone--all were invented by individuals, alone or in concert, who were able to start small and build empires. No individual built the interstate highway system, created the FDA and the EPA, organized the construction of thousands of schools and universities, or insures air safety through the FTA. I submit that health care is one of those things that cannot be had at a reasonable cost, with advanced medical treatments, by relying on private industry. Insurance is, as this article, points out, a for-profit business. Insurance companies do not fund research, underwrite expensive labs, or build hospitals. (Kaiser Permanente MAY be an exception; I'm not sure.) Where do scientists look for funding? They apply for government grants. These grants provide the resources for innovation and development of all kinds, and where do these grants come from? Taxes. Health care rightly comes under the government purview for all the reasons I have stated above, and if tax revenue is going to be the ultimate source of funding, then it makes sense to eliminate as many middle men (insurance companies) as possible. Private industry (health insurance providers) drain off a tremendous amount of money that goes to investors and employees that could be better spent on health care itself. It is the shibboleth of socialism that ends debate before it has a chance to get started. It is Euro-phobia that makes Americans reluctant to learn from other countries' successes.*

Everyone knows that healthcare prices have soared, but everyone may well be wrong. The statistics we see are always about the amount we spend on healthcare, not the price of healthcare. Consider a comparison of healthcare in the 1950s versus today. In the 1950s, you had none of the subsequent developments in pharmaceuticals, surgery, diagnosis, etc. How much would you pay for that versus today's healthcare? Not so much, I'm guessing. In fact, if you look around the world, in impoverished countries you can probably find a reasonable facsimile of this 1950s healthcare at a low cost. While this example is intentionally extreme, the measurement problem it illustrates is important. The quality of the best healthcare has soared over time. This measurement problem is not unique to healthcare. Measuring the price inflation in computers is incredibly difficult. If the price of a laptop today is the same as 20 years ago, but the laptop is ridiculously better now, hasn't the price really fallen dramatically?

Consider another hypothetical. Imagine we develop a cure for all cancers that costs a flat \$1 million per person and works perfectly. Let's assume this is more than the total cost to treat these cancers otherwise. In this case, the amount we spend on healthcare will likely rise dramatically, because it just got much better and we chose to spend more on it. The cure we are talking about did not exist before now, so it does not make sense to ask whether the price rose. Here's a better question. Are we better off even though we are spending much more on healthcare? Yes, we are, although some will cite the dramatic rise in our healthcare spending and demand that action be taken.

One more, and let's get really simple. In the olden days, our great-grandparents might have had one pair of reading glasses. Now, many of us have one pair at home, one in the car, one at work, etc. Because we are more prosperous we spend more on reading glasses than our forebears, even though the price has not necessarily

changed. Again, there is a gigantic difference between what we spend on something and its price. And again, the comparison of old and new prices is particularly vexing in healthcare because most of the healthcare we buy was not even invented when our great-grandparents were ill.

**Pam:** *I agree that we spend more on health care because there is better and more care available to us in the 21st c. than in the 19th or 20th. But if you removed a lot of the non-medical things that are paid for out of private insurance, the cost of actual medicine would be much more transparent. I saw a documentary comparing the Canadian system with the American system. Granted, this was many years ago, but the point remains: two hospitals of comparable size, serving similar populations, one Canadian, one American were compared. The Canadian one had an office staff of 300. The American had a staff of 3,000, housed in a separate building.*

*One argument given above is that our great-grandparents had one pair of glasses, where we have perhaps three or four. What the author does not say is that government insurance plans for eyeglasses do not cover more than one pair. More than that, and you pay for them yourself. That is fair. His argument is specious. I have heard of patients being charged \$600 for an MRI in one hospital, while the same test is performed at a different hospital for as little as \$50. That is not fair, especially when the patient has no clue that there is a choice of hospitals available. It is reasonable to expect a customer to shop around for an automobile; it is not reasonable to expect someone injured in a car accident or stricken with a heart attack to shop around for the cheapest hospital or doctor.*

In these days of horrible discord, partisanship, and uncivil discourse (actually very much like the other 200+ years of the Republic) it is nice to know we can all still get together to rally around a really dumb idea.

The above is highly relevant to our ongoing debate because the “soaring price of healthcare” is often cited as a reason we desperately need reform, perhaps radical reform. Even if correctly referred to as the “soaring cost of healthcare,” this is presented as an unambiguously bad thing, when that is certainly false. It’s bad when it’s a function of waste or monopoly power gained through cronyism—undoubtedly part of our system and, as usual, with government the main culprit—but not bad when it’s the result of improvement, undoubtedly a huge component over time. The price of healthcare over time is hard to accurately measure, but those screaming about the price soaring are probably wrong.

**Pam:** *“Government cronyism”? It takes two to crony, and it's usually a duet with a politician on one side and a business interest on the other. Government is undoubtedly wasteful, and there is plenty of incompetence there, I'm sure, but nothing the government does can compare to the stranglehold big business and big money have on the American people and the American government. ALEC, the lobbying organization that advises and even writes the legislation for state legislatures across the country, that represents many, if not most, of our biggest corporations, engages in more cronyism in an afternoon than all the politicians, culpable though they are, in a week of Sundays.*

#### Myth #2: The pre-ObamaCare system was ‘insurance’.

It was not a system of insurance. Insurance, as practiced everywhere else but healthcare, is about catastrophes. What we had was a government-subsidized payment plan funneled through insurance companies.

OK, this part is going to sting a bit. I never promised you there would be no math. Let’s step back a bit and talk about how insurance works. Few of us buy insurance because we expect to make money on the deal. No, the insurance company expects to profit and we expect to lose a bit. Free marketers and socialists can both surely agree that the insurance companies expect to profit. Well, how do they profit? It’s statistics (I told you it would sting). If they sell 1,000 policies that pay out \$100,000 but only 1 percent of the time, they on average pay out \$1,000,000 (1,000 policies times a \$100,000 payoff times 1 percent, as 99 percent of the time they don’t pay). If they sell them for \$1,100 each they take in 1,000 x \$1,100 or \$1,100,000 and will make a profit of \$100,000. But despite the insurance company profiting, insurance can often be a great deal for you. You take out insurance because there are events that would cause you severe financial hardship—for instance, the totaling of a car you can’t afford to replace, the death of your family’s bread winner, or the destruction of your house. It’s worth overpaying a bit to avoid catastrophic financial consequences. We often call insurance like this “catastrophic,” as

you're only paying a small amount to insure against improbable but devastating events. Actually, we usually don't bother to even call it "catastrophic insurance." We usually just call it "insurance," as that's how it almost always works... except in healthcare!

**Pam:** *I agree that private insurance that balances risks and benefits should be in the business of catastrophe management. But it doesn't take a catastrophe to send a child with an ear infection to a doctor. What is a potential catastrophe is when that child's mother can't afford a doctor, waits until the infection spreads, and the child ends up needing expensive surgery, when if treated early a course of antibiotics would have done the trick. There are many, many, many Americans with no health insurance or inadequate insurance who delay seeking treatment because they can't afford it, or who skip their meds because they can't pay for both food and prescription drugs. I lived for many years without health insurance; I couldn't afford it, plain and simple. I was raising three children, and I lived in fear of illness or accident. My daughter did have a bicycle accident when she was in second grade and had to be rushed to the hospital, where she received X-rays and treatment. The bill came to several hundred dollars, money I did not have. It took me over four years to pay that off at \$5.00 a month. I now have insurance, thank god, but I remember what it was like to go without. I don't wish that on anyone. Our health is not a choice. I know, I know, smoking, over-eating, and risky behavior consume a lot of our health dollars, but denying coverage or under-insuring people is not the way to address those issues.*

The insurance companies' expected profits are not without risk. Companies compete on premiums to see who can sell the insurance for the lowest price while still being profitable, and, importantly, they compete on "underwriting." Underwriting is attempting to assess risks and charge consumers most accurately, charging more for expensive, more probable risks, and less for the opposite (in my example above, I pretended we knew these risks; in reality, the insurance company has to guess at them). The insurance companies that predict more accurately are generally more profitable, and those that are woefully inaccurate go out of business.

Let's get back to healthcare. Due primarily to the tax subsidy given to employer-provided healthcare (a bipartisan, so-far-untouchable disaster), catastrophic health insurance is not Americans' norm. Rather, employers provide essentially all healthcare from basic health maintenance and symptom relief to the most expensive life-saving procedures, and they do it because the government massively subsidizes this approach.

This is odd. You don't go to your car insurer to fill your car with gas or to your homeowner's insurance company to change a light bulb. Why do you go to your health insurance company for everyday medical services? That is not insurance, it is tax-subsidized provision of all your healthcare needs, and it causes two of our system's biggest problems. 1) Health coverage is not portable, as it's employer-provided, and 2) consumers are insulated from the cost of basic healthcare because they don't pay directly for services. Educated consumers spending their own money would be far better shoppers for healthcare.

**Pam:** *"Shopping" for health care is not like shopping for a new pair of shoes. "Consumers" of health care under a universal/single payer system do pay for services-- with their tax dollars. A mother who takes her sick child to a doctor at the first sign of an ear infection (kids have lots of ear infections) is going to cost the system far less than a mother who waits until the child has a temp. of 105 before seeking medical help. When people are not reluctant to seek treatment, they don't wait as long. Critics say people will abuse the system if they can see a doctor anytime they want for any reason, however trivial. Having lived for four years in Canada, with a universal/single payer system, I can attest that that is simply not true. If someone is the type to make a career out of going to the doctor, that person needs a psychiatrist and should be referred. Most people don't go unless they need to or it's time for their annual check-up, which more people would have if it were covered for everyone. To call patients "shoppers" is so misleading as to be absurd.*

Also, I wish I wasn't asked for a \$5 co-pay after a doctor's appointment. Ask me to pay at least \$200 or nothing. Paying \$5 for a prostate exam is demeaning to both parties.

Why does this matter? ObamaCare sets out to fix health insurance, and to provide it to more people. Laudable goals. But the system we had was not badly managed health insurance. It wasn't insurance at all. ObamaCare does

not throw out the crazy system we had in favor of real insurance, which would actually work, but rather enshrines and extends all the problems of an insane healthcare payment system masquerading as insurance and built as a tax dodge.

**Pam:** *We do indeed have a "crazy system," and it needs reform badly. The only solution that has a chance of working is a universal/single payer system, funded by taxes and distributed equally to all citizens and legal residents. Will we have to raise taxes? Probably. I was shocked when I moved to Canada and learned what taxes were like there. They were higher than in the U.S., but they were based on income, the way Social Security is here. The Canadian government I knew was in the business of serving its citizens, fairly and equally. Taxes are the price we pay for living in a society. Whether that society favors the ordinary Joe or whether it favors the profit-makers is up to us. It's a choice we're going to have to make and soon.*

Myth #3: Stopping insurance companies from charging based on pre-existing conditions is the one good part of ObamaCare.

Even many Republicans fall for this one, perhaps because it polls well. In these days of horrible discord, partisanship, and uncivil discourse (actually very much like the other 200+ years of the Republic) it is nice to know we can all still get together to rally around a really dumb idea.

The comparison of old and new prices is particularly vexing in healthcare because most of the healthcare we buy was not even invented when our great-grandparents were ill.

Most of the economic function of any insurance company is precisely about assessing the expected economic cost of a pre-existing condition, and charging based on it. Whether your house is a firetrap or fireproof is a pre-existing condition for homeowner's insurance. Whether you're 90 years old or 20 years old is a pre-existing condition for life insurance. Whether you have a good driving record in a modern car with airbags and that cool new blind-spot indicator thingy, or you are Lindsay Lohan, is a pre-existing condition for auto insurance.

If it's affordable to them, people should pay the cost of their own pre-existing conditions in all these instances. **After all, sad or happy as their state may be, it is their state and not other people's.**

**Pam:** *Talk about cold. Whatever happened to "no man is an island?" If people were covered from cradle to grave, many of those pre-existing conditions would not exist or at least not to the same degree. It's a cruel culture that tells a person, "You've got leprosy? Sorry. Coverage denied." Nowhere in the Bible does it say, "Blessed are the profit-makers, for they shall see God."*

Furthermore, economic efficiency is enhanced as, among other reasons, consumers have some control over many, though not nearly all, pre-existing conditions. An insurance company of any kind exists mainly to price these pre-existing conditions accurately, diversify across customers, and then do a lot of paperwork. **This accurate pricing is the hard and economically valuable part of what an insurance company does. It's really their main economic function.** Yet ObamaCare bizarrely seeks to remove this benefit, while retaining insurance companies for, what, their famous customer service?

**Pam:** *Really? Their main function is deciding what things should cost? Aren't we fortunate to have such a humongous, bloated, expensive, profit-driven entity to do this hard work for us? We need a CEO, making a couple million dollars a year, to do what a government accountant could do for a reasonable salary? "Consumers" (there's that word again) "have some control over many...pre-existing conditions?" I did not ask for my acne; my friend did not ask for her lymphoma; my brother did not ask to eat himself into obesity because of a disastrous marriage. We're all to blame for something. Was it Dr. Johnson who said, "If it were all about blame, who among us would escape whipping?" (Not an exact quote, but along those lines.) Yes, we are all responsible, and we are all human. And that means we should help each other, not throw the slowest hiker to the wolves.*

I snuck in something above, and I can sense the progressive reader ready to pounce: the phrase "if it's affordable to them." The trillion dollar question is what about those who can't afford it? Well, society should debate that

openly. Progressives can argue for a lot of help for those who can't afford paying for their own pre-existing conditions, libertarians can argue for much less, and conservatives, if they haven't learned from their recent history, can base their argument on whether they are currently running the government and will get credit for providing the goodies. **But, if we decide to subsidize the unfortunate, as is likely to some degree, we should do so directly through taxation and government largesse.**

**Pam:** *Couldn't have said it better myself. We MUST subsidize the unfortunate. That is as necessary as the military's mandate to protect the nation, which includes old women, little children, the disabled, even the criminal. Isn't protecting and defending the citizenry in the same camp with alleviating and preventing illness and suffering? The Army is not a for-profit institution. Why should health care be?*

No matter what the final decision on the amount of subsidy, this way is at least honest. In contrast, ObamaCare hides a massive government transfer program from those without these conditions to those with them. Besides basic dishonesty, hiding costs always leads to bad decisions.

ObamaCare is asking some Americans to pay large amounts for others, and is trying to hide it as private insurance premiums rather than admit it is bigger government. It's simply a scam for ObamaCare to not count programs like these, which force some Americans to pay for others, as government spending. The mafia keeps two sets of books, the government should only be allowed one.

The other very popular ObamaCare feature, "stay on your parents' insurance until you are 26" (65 if you're named Julia) follows the same idea. Comparing a family that wants that benefit to one that doesn't (because they don't have kids or their kids have their own insurance or they just don't like their kids!), the family that wants it should pay more, as they are consuming more valuable services. Economically, a tax on everyone to pay for those who want to keep their kids on their insurance until they are 26 would essentially do the same thing as ObamaCare here, but we'd recognize it as a large growth in government spending, a burden on those who do not desire this benefit, and a brand new entitlement for those who do. But, again, ObamaCare hides this transfer payment through regulating what different people pay their insurance company. Again, if we choose to subsidize a portion of the population we should do so openly, using taxation and government spending, which at least shines sunlight on the cost, not through tricky regulation that hides it.

Those who would call the above mean-spirited (or worse), please remember that I'm leaving wide open the question of how generous to be, and how much government should or should not directly subsidize things like pre-existing conditions and 25-year-olds without insurance, while you are intentionally hiding it.

**Pam:** *If everyone were covered from birth (pre-birth actually), the issue of whether 26-yr. olds could stay on their parents' policy would be moot.*

Educated consumers spending their own money would be far better shoppers for healthcare.

This theme of hiding costs is consistent throughout the progressive march to bigger and bigger government. Step number one, present great "benefits" you will bestow on the populace and present them as if you are nicer people than the other side who want to deny these benefits. Step two, hide the costs, either through the complexities of the tax system, or more overtly through off-the-books regulation like ObamaCare. **Step three, continue to advance the progressive myth that if government provides something, or mandates something, it's "free."**

**Pam:** *I don't know any progressive who imagines that what the government provides is free. That is simply ludicrous and insults this progressive's intelligence.*

Step four, get the people hooked on the freebie until they are too scared to give it up even if it costs them well more than it's worth to them. **Step five, move on to destroying the next part of our economy and freedom.**

**Pam:** *Does anyone seriously believe that progressives want to destroy our economy and our freedom? What nonsense! I would rather pay a fair tax for universal coverage, even if that meant paying more, than*

*the gigantic sums the insurance industry pulls in. I do not call it freedom when I am a pregnant woman whose husband has lost his job and I can't afford pre-natal care. What's free about that? In Canada, our doctor was our choice. We weren't forced to do anything or go anywhere we didn't want to. My husband wasn't earning much money, and I couldn't afford to buy new baby clothes for my daughter, but I never had to worry about taking a sick child to the doctor. That, to me, is freedom.*

Finally, note that the issue with pre-existing conditions is also an artifact of the government distorting the market away from insurance and towards employer-provided total healthcare (remember myth #2!). Consider your life insurance. You buy it on your own, not through your employer, and it's usually "guaranteed renewable." When you change employers, get sick, or just get older, you keep your policy and your premiums stay steady. This is the type of policy the free market, without massive government distortion, has produced. It would produce an analogous successful market in health insurance if left alone. People would buy insurance when young, and that insurance would include the right to keep buying insurance with no increase in rates due to getting sick. It's only because you lose your coverage when you leave an employer that we even have this problem at all. If you are getting the sense that government is the root of our problems, not the solution, you have been paying attention.

#### Myth #4: Healthcare costs are very high in the United States compared to socialized countries.

Like the opening myth about soaring prices, this one is used to undermine faith in our system and open us to radical change for the worse (ObamaCare or worse).

The statistics often cited by progressives seem to show that we spend a larger fraction of our GDP on healthcare and don't get better outcomes than other countries. I won't argue over whether we actually spend more, but will argue about why we sometimes spend a lot, and whether the outcomes often cited are measured fairly. Spending more is not always bad, and is not always only because we have (somewhat) private markets.

- Many of the surveys of "outcomes" that show other countries spend less for similar or better healthcare than the United States are just intentionally disingenuous (i.e., they lie). The ultimate example is the U.N.'s 2000 World Health Report, which has been extensively cited by progressives and the media. Yet there are concrete examples of its anti-American bias. For instance, the study included high-speed auto fatalities and murders in their assessment of a country's life expectancy, and then progressives cited that life expectancy to indict the U.S. healthcare system. Well, Americans drive more often on a more extensive highway system than most others, and we sadly have more crime than many. Reputable studies exclude these fatalities as, while tragic, they are not the fault of the healthcare system and should not be used to judge or modify the healthcare system. With these fatalities excluded, the U.S. ranks 1st in the world on life expectancy. With them included, we rank 19th, as reported in the 2000 study cited so often by ObamaCare advocates. The studies of infant mortality may be even worse, with the comparisons of what constitutes a live birth (and thus an opportunity for mortality) substantially different across countries, with the United States holding itself to the highest standard (and thus producing worse statistics). But, this does not stop enemies of free-market healthcare from citing warped statistics showing the United States to rank well below the truth, while to a person they'd all opt to have their babies in the United States, particularly if it was a complex or premature situation. That kind of hypocrisy is simply breathtaking.

Perhaps even more insidiously, most of the U.N.'s 2000 World Health Report does not really even rank healthcare outcomes. The actual oft-quoted final rankings, with the United States ranking poorly, are an average of many different ratings, many of them explicitly about how "socialized" or "progressive" a healthcare system is. For instance, their rating system gives 25 percent weight to "financial fairness," and if one goes through their other categories you find they again are not rating who lives or dies or lives better (you know, healthcare outcomes), but how much the healthcare system has such things as "respect for persons" (this is part of the 12.5 percent weight they gave to "responsiveness," which is separate from the 12.5 percent weight they gave to "responsiveness distribution," whatever on Earth that is). The report goes further, judging these things with such objective measures as "respect for dignity" and "autonomy." In total, more than 60 percent of a country's score in this survey was some measure of progressive desires, not what you or I would call a healthcare outcome. And, as in our auto example above, much of the rest contained expressly anti-American flaws. That we pay for the United Nations to lie about us is a topic for another day.

In other words, in this often-cited study, and in many others created by the international progressive community, the U.S. healthcare system has been ranked low solely for not being one of socialized medicine. Personally, when I am told how the United States ranks on healthcare "outcomes," I want it to be about whether my kids get good treatment, not about where we stand on the U.N.'s politically correct progressive agenda. But it's this and other similar nonsense that the Obama team cited again and again to denigrate the U.S. system and push the case for radical reform. In summary, they say "we have done a survey and found we must reform our system and become more socialist, because the survey says we are not socialist enough." That's how they argue. Really.

- Part of the reason we spend more is other countries have price controls and we don't. For instance, they restrict the amount drug companies can charge much more than we do. That sounds great; price controls save us money! But if nobody pays for new drugs, they don't ever get created. Without these controls, our consumers here indeed pay more, but that funds much of the life-saving and life-extending healthcare innovation available for Americans and the rest of the world. It is frankly unfair that the world is free-riding off us. Free-riding means they let us pay for the innovation that benefits them at lower cost. But if nobody pays for the innovation, the innovation just does not happen. If we try to free-ride off ourselves, it doesn't work—innovation dies for us too. U.S. consumers paying fair prices (not government restricted artificially low prices) does lead to higher U.S. healthcare costs, but the alternative is far worse: Joining the world in severely limiting prices, and not seeing the next generations of new innovations and improvements.

ObamaCare does not throw out the crazy system we had in favor of real insurance, which would actually work, but rather enshrines and extends all the problems of an insane healthcare payment system masquerading as insurance and built as a tax dodge.

- Americans lead less healthy lifestyles than much of the developed world. Americans historically value freedom more than other countries and cultures. We value it for its own sake, even if it sometimes leads to a worse outcome. But we mostly value it because these choices are personal. Frankly, some would sacrifice some health to eat what they want and avoid the StairMaster. Freedom isn't always sugar-free. Our American choices are costing us more, and raising the healthcare cost figures progressives love to cite. But they are our choices to make, not theirs to gainsay.

**I have to add that the progressive version of healthcare, where people don't pay their own way, where someone else pays for their healthcare, actually pushes people to less healthy choices because they don't bear the financial cost themselves.** The market solution would impose much more of these voluntary costs on the individuals making them, and besides economic efficiency, would also make us healthier. Of course, the progressives have a solution for this, too. **They just go around banning some things, forcing you to do some other things, and scheduling our mandatory jumping jacks for 5 a.m.!** It's all for our own good, of course. Finally, if you think the recently much-discussed "can they make you eat broccoli?" hypothetical is a crazy, extreme notion, you just have not paid any attention to progressives for the last 80 years...

**Pam:** *It is not being a "nanny" for government, or any group, to educate the public about health issues. Michelle Obama's emphasis on childhood obesity has not "forced" anyone to eat broccoli. Government-mandated education made the dangers of smoking abundantly clear, and many, many people quit smoking. Those who still smoke find themselves outside in the rain, apologizing for their nasty habit. We learn more about the dangers of obesity every day. The Right focuses on the costs incurred; the progressives focus more on individual well being. Everyone wants Americans to be healthier, and education--public service announcements, warning labels, whatever--is the way to go. I don't know a single person who decides to get fat because he knows the insurance company will pay the medical bills. Thin people love to blame fat people. Fat people have more trouble landing a job, finding a mate, fitting into an airplane seat, wearing stylish clothes. To suffer the opprobrium of others just adds to the list of difficulties they face everyday. People make unhealthy choices all the time when they drive over the speed limit, go sky-diving, race cars around a track, ride a steeplechase. Eating that extra slice of pie should be no more punishable than bungee jumping. As the freshman told the comp teacher, "I don't need criticism; I need help."*

- We spend more on end-of-life care than more regulated societies with socialized medicine or systems closer to it. That's our choice. It's that pesky freedom thing again. How is this cost going to be reduced by ObamaCare without introducing, how do I say it without prodding the progressive beast too sharply, well, it rhymes with "meth manels"?

**Pam:** *What's in a name? "Death panels" sounds like a grand tribunal, where grim-faced bureaucrats send some to the hospital for more tests and the rest to the grave. If it is indeed true that the last few months of a person's life are likely to cost more than a lifetime of care, then we do need a public discussion of how we manage the end of life. Americans are not good at this. We're either in denial or else frightened out of our wits. "Triage" is a good word. The firefighters in Colorado are performing triage on the homes they're trying to save. If a house is too far gone, they move on to the next one that still has a chance of not burning to the ground. Same thing on the battlefield. The no-hopers must give way to the could-be-saved. It is not a tragedy or a loss of freedom to limit end-of-life care for an 80-yr. old if it means those health dollars could be spent on childhood vaccinations, pre-natal care, blood pressure management in a 40-yr. old, or a cardiac ablation for a 35-yr old.*

But again, that those in a free system choose to spend more than those in other less free systems on the end of their lives is not an indictment of freedom or a call for government intervention. But it does raise our costs (and invalidates comparing these costs to others).

**Pam:** *It may not be an indictment of freedom, but spending appreciably more on drastic treatments for the dying rather than making preventive care the priority apparently does call for government intervention, as that's the only way we're likely to set reasonable priorities.*

- The cost of a healthcare system is not just what we spend directly on it, **it is also how much the healthcare system helps or hurts the overall economy. If socialized medicine slows economic growth, then this is part of its cost, perhaps a big part, and is left out of the simple analyses** (looking at direct expenditure divided by GDP) that are so common.

**Pam:** *This argument is as much about philosophy as it is about policy. For some, "socialism" is a dirty word that conjures up Stepford wives and gulags and not enough toilet paper. Does an American see the same thing when he thinks of socialism as a Swede or a German does? Does an Arab in a souk see the same thing when he thinks of democracy as a Tea Partyer? The real question is whom do we want to help? Every American, who by law has the same rights as every other (god willing), or those whose luck in life has been rewarded with enough money for a week's stay in a hospital. Are some Americans "deserving," as in the "deserving poor" in Victorian England. Is there a hierarchy of worth when it comes to human beings? Is money to be the only measure of that worth? Conservatives sneer at progressives for their touchy-feely approach to difficult issues, but progressives are not naive about the costs of a first-rate health care system. We prefer to pay higher taxes, cut out the middle men, and send those tax revenues directly to doctors and medical centers. Universal coverage/single payer. Let the Dept. of Health manage the health care budget, and let Congress (not THIS one) decide what that budget should be, as it does with defense.*

- Lawyers. We got lots, they have far fewer. We can separately debate how to design our legal system (some of my libertarian friends advocate for a large role for lawyers), but the size and scope of legal action here dwarfs most of the world. It leads to doctors practicing tremendous amounts of "defensive medicine." That is, prescribing procedures and drugs not medically called for but done to "cover their assets" in the event they are sued. That adds a lot to our costs and can and should be addressed and debated completely separately from much of the above. But, rather than address it directly, progressives instead simply cite how much we spend here versus other countries, a cost driven up by trial lawyers. Of course, progressives are tremendously supported by the trial lawyer lobby, the very group driving up these costs that progressives then cite as an indictment of our system. It's really quite beautiful logic, if you can learn to appreciate the qualities of exceptionally well-designed evil.

**Pam:** *Malpractice insurance for doctors is exorbitantly expensive, or so I am told by my doctor friends. Many obstetricians stop delivering babies because of the high premiums for their specialty. It's not bad for doctors to practice "defensive medicine" if that care is in defense of the patient's well being. I agree that trying to do good work with a team of lawyers breathing down your neck does no one but the lawyers any good. The huge settlements awarded by juries should be reined in. If punishment is needed for a particular doctor, punish the doctor appropriately; don't give the poor patient a mega-lottery win and the lawyers a vacation in the Bahamas.*

So, the "we pay more but get nothing in return" story is simply not true. It's beyond me to do a more thorough job and make a perfect comparison across countries, but it's enough to know that their story, like the story that healthcare prices are absolutely soaring, is propaganda, and propaganda with a purpose.

In conclusion, we must remember that there are many vital things our more free American healthcare system gets right, and more right than the less free rest of the world. If you have an adequate health plan, you often get better care with shorter wait times here than elsewhere. If you have a truly devastating illness, you—**like the rest of the world who flocks here**—get the best care possible, and healthcare a more socialized system will often declare not cost effective and phase out. **You live in the country that makes far and away the most productive innovations in pharmaceuticals and healthcare in general—innovations made possible by the profit motive.**

**Pam:** *The U.S. government footed the bill for space exploration, so obviously innovation does not depend solely on the profit motive. Dictators and international billionaires may "flock" to the U.S. for treatment, but more and more Americans are seeking medical care abroad, where it is cheaper. I know of at least one case personally, where the individual goes to South America for even routine care and checkups, and many are going to India for heart operations. They're cheaper there and just as safe. The Canadians developed a plastic device that vastly improves the detection of lumps in the breast. Women, as well as doctors, can prevent serious illness by discovering it earlier with this simple, inexpensive tool, but insurance companies lobbied hard and long to prevent its import into the United States. Many medicines that have been used routinely in Europe are not available here. I've had babies in the U.S. and in Canada, and the Canadian experience was by far superior. Europe has led the way in improving obstetrics. Babies born in France or Holland have a better chance than a baby born in Cleveland, whose mother doesn't have health insurance or who is unmarried. The last time I looked a woman had to have been married for at least nine months before her policy would cover her. Perhaps this has changed, but if it has, I haven't heard about it. The artificial heart was invented in South Africa, the birth control pill was developed by a French doctor. America does not corner the market on innovation.*

It may sometimes be cold comfort, but you are **footing a bill** that saves a lot of lives here and worldwide. And, **while you might pay a lot, getting those innovations, and also having the right to live your life as you—not as Mike Bloomberg, Barack Obama, or a team of academics from Harvard see fit—might raise costs, but is your right as an American.**

**Pam:** *It's our right to life as we wish. Can't argue with that. It's your right to support a system that favors certain populations above others? It's your right to spend a gigantic amount of insurance money to extend a loved ones life by a few days or weeks? Our rights have to be balanced against those of others.*

*Life is not fair, but we can work to make it a bit more fair that it is now.*

So, with the Supreme Court ruling that ObamaCare is constitutional, we're all going to be working on fixing, repealing, or replacing ObamaCare. Frankly, fixing our system is not as complicated as many make it out to be. There are lots and lots of specifics I won't cover (e.g., allowing interstate competition, the role of health savings accounts, whether individual policies should be some level of deductible) but **the big ones are 1) removing employer deductibility and getting back to a system of individuals buying catastrophic insurance, and 2) deciding through open debate, not sneaky regulation, how much we want to subsidize those who can't afford adequate healthcare or insurance, whether they are poor, have pre-existing conditions, or are adults under 26 who can't yet pay their own way.**

**Pam:** *Health insurance should not be tied to employment. Employers should have nothing to do with it. They shouldn't have to worry about it, made business decisions based upon it, fire people because of it. Universal coverage/single payer. Most Americans will not need catastrophic insurance, but all need good lifetime health care. I don't have to fly to Boston. I could drive there much more cheaply. But I wouldn't have that choice if the government hadn't built our nation's highway system. That is NOT something I could have done on my own. Let the rich buy their Cadillac plans, but let's have a health care system that benefits the entire country, not just the lucky few.*

Finally, as a basic input to the whole discussion, we need to understand myths #1 and #4: The rising amount we spend on healthcare is not the same thing as rising prices, and often reflects good not bad developments, and the costs of our system versus others are often exaggerated, and the benefits of our system often minimized, for political purposes.

We can fix all this and maintain what's very right about our system, and retain our freedoms, but we have to let go of our myths first.

**Pam:** *One of the most persistent myths propagated by the Right is that "socialized" medicine curtails freedom. Not so. Every other developed country in the world has some form of socialized medicine. We are way behind the curve on this one, all because insurance companies, drug manufacturers, and lawyers make a ton of money the way things are now. On NPR this morning I heard a man talk about his factory that makes cutting edge (!) surgical instruments. There are many companies doing this sort of thing apparently. His complaint was taxes levied against small companies that are not yet profitable, but are likely to become so. Give them some breathing space. I couldn't agree more. Many states make up their budget shortfalls by increasing sales taxes, putting a greater burden on the poor. I couldn't disagree more with that. Like it or not, the fairest, most efficient, most productive tax structure is a progressive wealth tax. At the very least, investment income and capital gains should be taxed at the same rate as earned income. That is not socialism, communism, barbarism, or any other --ism. That's just fair.*

20120702-01	10:51	MarthaH	"Roberts' Health Care Ruling Sends a Message to Politicians"
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"Roberts' Health Care Ruling Sends a Message to Politicians" by Dan Balz, *The Washington Post*

June 30, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/robertss-health-care-ruling-sends-a-message-to-politicians/2012/06/30/gJQAc4BzDW\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/robertss-health-care-ruling-sends-a-message-to-politicians/2012/06/30/gJQAc4BzDW_story.html))

Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. delivered more than a historic ruling with his opinion upholding the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. Deliberately or not, he sent a message to politicians about the importance of protecting the vitality and reputation of public institutions.

That's a message badly needed in Washington and nowhere more so than in the Capitol building that sits across the broad lawn from the Supreme Court. Congress is an institution designed to represent the people. It has become a body where too often its members act as if they represent only Republicans or only Democrats. No wonder so many Americans hold it in such low regard.

It is useful to remember that, in the run-up to the health-care ruling, one strong subtext of discussion and analysis was what a decision striking down President Obama's health-care law would do to the court itself. Would the court, under those circumstances, be vulnerable to the charge that it had become as politicized as the other branches of government?

Fearing defeat, Democrats were preparing to make the court a target in the fall election. They were connecting the dots, from the *Bush v. Gore* ruling that handed the presidency to George W. Bush, to the *Citizens United* decision that helped unleash a torrent of big-money contributions in this year's election cycle (a huge share of the money going to Republican super PACs), and, finally, to health care and a decision that would have been seen as toppling the president's signature first-term accomplishment.

No Supreme Court is immune from the political currents swirling at any given time. But the assumption of most Americans is that the court, of the three branches of government, should be insulated from partisan politics and careful to protect itself from being seen as aiding or abetting those partisan wars. Its decisions may offend one side or the other, but its legitimacy should remain inviolate.

Had a majority of the justices struck down Obamacare, the court — fairly or unfairly — would have become a bigger issue in the presidential campaign than usual and in ways that could have been damaging to its authority.

How much the court's place and reputation entered into Roberts's thinking may never be known. Someday, the full story of how he found his way to writing a majority opinion on the health-care case with the four liberal justices may become known. Legal and political scholars would love to know how it happened and have been speculating in the absence of hard information.

The opinion Roberts wrote was, in the estimation of some legal experts, either tortured or fiendishly clever in maneuvering toward an outcome that upheld the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act while attempting to adhere to conservative principles aimed at restraining the power of the federal government.

One can only imagine how Obama, the former constitutional law professor at the University of Chicago, analyzed the health-care opinion on Thursday and how he evaluated the motivations of the chief justice who, surprising to some, handed him a major legal and political victory in the middle of his tight reelection campaign.

That was all the more intriguing because the president and the chief justice have had a particularly testy relationship. It began with Obama's speech outlining his opposition to Roberts's nomination in 2005. He said Roberts had the intellect and temperament to sit on the court but questioned whether he had the values and heart not to side with the strong over the weak.

Their relationship may have reached its nadir when Obama publicly rebuked Roberts and the court for the *Citizens United* decision as the justices sat uncomfortably before him in the House chamber during his 2010 State of the Union address.

Roberts's detractors believe that he reinterpreted what Congress said in the legislation to find a legal justification for upholding it — by defining the individual mandate, the most controversial part of the act, as a tax. For that, he is taking considerable heat from conservatives. Coincidentally, he handed GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney and the Republicans a new justification to attack Obama for raising taxes.

Roberts said in his opinion that he was not making a judgment about the wisdom of the policy; he said only that it was constitutionally permissible. He has thrown the debate over health care back into the political arena for adjudication in November and perhaps beyond. Those who looked to the court to redress political grievances over a health-care law that was passed on a party-line vote have the opportunity to win their case in the court of public opinion, which is the right place given all its history.

In his act of judicial activism, as some of his critics have described it, Roberts demonstrated restraint of a different kind — a bow to the political branches of government to exercise their powers within the broad framework of the Constitution. If it was judicial activism, it was in the service of institutional deference.

The ruling was handed down at the close of a week in which Congress finally approved a transportation bill and a measure that prevented student-loan interest rates from rising. The actions came after months of discord and against strict deadlines that would have imposed hardship on students and transportation workers had Congress not found agreement.

The passage of the two bills is an exception in an institution that is a forum more often used to advance partisan agendas or to seek political advantage in the next election. The public image of Congress is historically low. The successes of the past few days aren't likely to do much to enhance its dismal image in the eyes of the public.

The chief justice helped remind the country that each branch of government has particular powers, responsibilities and obligations. The legislative branch is designed for partisan debate — occasionally, angry partisan debate — but, ultimately, it is there to make laws and solve problems that it alone can solve. On many big issues, Congress has ducked or deferred, with members hoping that with the next election, they will be given a mandate — and the majorities required — to do what they want with minimal compromise.

That the country is polarized is beyond question. Obama has proved to be a divisive president, despite his insistence that he is open to compromise and accommodation. Congress reflects and feeds that polarization. As a result, as an institution, it enjoys little public confidence or respect. Congress has become an arena not to solve problems, but to avoid solving them. Even Americans with sharply partisan views find that distasteful.

Congress will get another chance to show leadership after the election, when a series of fiscal issues come to a head. If, for political reasons, the leaders choose to postpone some of the hard decisions, they will have to face them in 2013.

On one of the most politically charged cases in years, the chief justice chose to exercise the leadership that goes with his position. He may have protected his institution at the same time. The members of Congress have not done that very often in recent years. That is one lesson they can take away from the court's historic ruling.

<a href="#">20120702-06</a>	12:57	Dennis	"Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To"
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"Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To" by Dan Treadway, Huffington Post

June 29, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-treadway/hate-obamacare-dont-worry\\_b\\_1634706.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-treadway/hate-obamacare-dont-worry_b_1634706.html))

On the heels of the announcement of the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the majority of the Affordable Care Act, Buzzfeed released a compilation of tweets by outraged citizens claiming that they were going to move to Canada in an effort to avoid Obamacare.

While I may not agree with their utter disappointment at the prospect of roughly 40 million uninsured Americans being granted access to affordable health care, as a dual citizen of the U.S. and Canada, I feel somewhat of a responsibility to inform these people, in addition to those who have similar feelings but somehow held back from voicing them on Twitter, that Canada probably isn't the best place to go to avoid universal health care. In fact, it hasn't been since 1966.

While this may come as a disappointment to some who were hoping to blissfully drink Tim Horton's coffee while observing impoverished people die from treatable ailments, fear not: There are plenty of countries that you can move to where you'll have absolutely no government-mandated access to health care.

Perhaps you might consider moving to Haiti. Not only would you be able to dodge socialist doctors, but you might be able to avoid medical professionals altogether: The country only has 25 physicians per 100,000 people. While access to clean water may be a bit spotty, this is more than made up for by the short life expectancy and the absence of Barack Obamas. Pack your swimsuit!

But maybe Haiti is still a little too close to our socialist empire for comfort. (Dear God, what if America's newfound brand of Marxist, fascist dictatorship were to spread?!) Don't worry, because the majority of the continent of Africa is far away from both Obamacare -- and any sort of care whatsoever. In fact, for you diehard libertarians who hate having your government provide things, there aren't many places better-suited for you than Liberia. Not only will the Liberian government not provide you with health care, but it will also fail to provide for just about every other basic human need. It's no coincidence that the country's motto is, "The love of liberty brought us here," because nothing represents the anti-Obamacare brand of liberty than a very high risk of catching a serious infectious disease and a low likelihood of finding the resources to treat it. As a bonus for you fans of the Second Amendment who feel that it's necessary to have a gun on you at all times, you're going to love this beautiful land where that's probably a pretty good idea.

Now, I know what you're thinking: "But what if I hate Obamacare and also love human-rights violations? Where can I live to satisfy both these passions?" Worry not, friend, because I have four beautiful syllables for you: Turkmenistan. The former Soviet region not only abolished its free public health care in 2004, but it was also once again named as a chronic abuser of human rights by the United States State Department this past May.

There's really no reason to suffer through the grave injustice of universal health care when there is such a robust sampling of countries that (are not industrialized and) will happily allow you to not experience Obamacare. Granted, many have been plagued by poverty, unemployment, and civil war, but how is living in those conditions that different from life under the Obama administration? Have you seen that Rick Santorum ad? Spooky!

Of course, your other option is to continue to utilize your private health-care plan, as you are entitled to do, while taking pride in the fact that your country, which currently spends much more per capita on health care than any other nation in the world, has found a way to increase coverage for its citizens while reducing the deficit.

On the other hand, I hear Bangladesh is lovely this time of year.

<a href="#">20120702-15</a>	16:03 Art	Re: "Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To" (reply to Dennis, above)
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Good one, but I fear these just pass over the heads of conservatives.

<a href="#">20120702-10</a>	14:16 LarryK	Re: "Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To" (reply to Dennis, above)
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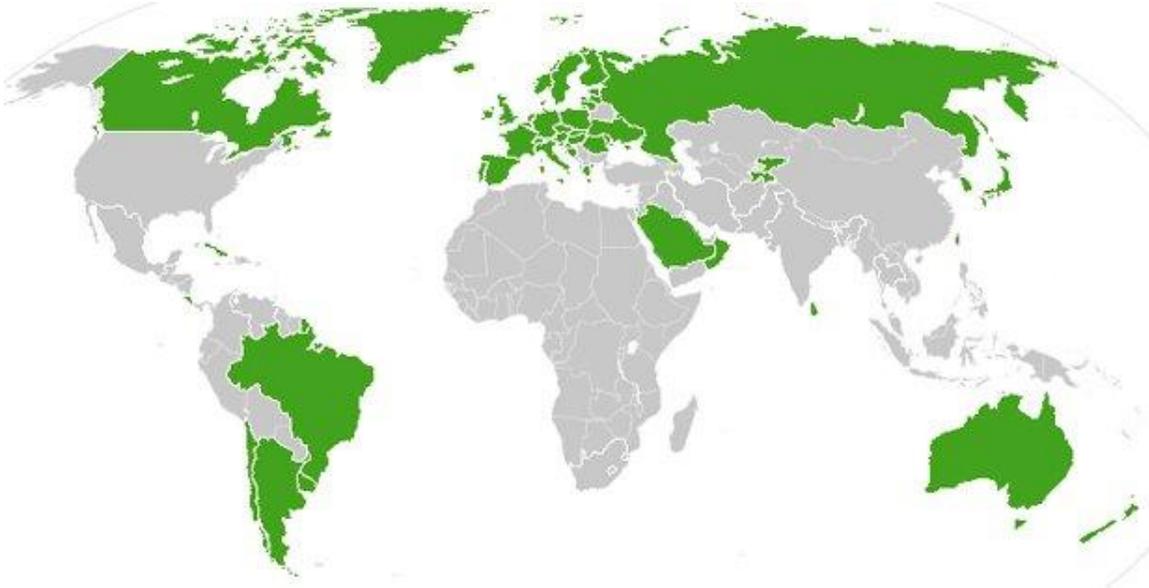
Saying that Haiti or Liberia is a model for Libertarianism, is like saying Cuba, Venezuela and North Korea are models for health care.

[20120702-12](#) 15:34 SteveB Re: "Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To" (reply to LarryK, above)

Mmmm...but Cuba is a model for healthcare, Larry

To me, it's more like saying that if a person believes the government should provide no services for its citizens, he or she should move to one of the countries where the government provides only a level of services acceptable to Ron Paul, rather than trying to destroy the U.S.

From FotM Newsletter #172. Which part of the world does it look like the U.S. belongs with—not Cuba or Europe or Japan—Haiti, Bangladesh, India, Africa?



From our partners at *The Atlantic*: **The U.S. stands almost entirely alone among developed nations that lack universal health care.** (<http://wapo.st/MJE0Cu>.)

[20120702-16](#) 16:09 Art Re: "Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To" (reply to LarryK, above)

Actually, Cuba does have pretty good health care. I think in aggregate, they have longer life spans than we do.

[20120702-18](#) 16:14 Dennis Re: "Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To" (reply to Art, above)

Yes, Art, Cuba ranks 36th in life expectancy. The U.S. ranks 38th. So why are we lower than a pi\*s poor thrid world totalitarian state?

[20120702-20](#) 16:20 SteveG Re: "Hate Obamacare? Don't Worry, Here Are Some Countries You Can Move To" (reply to all, above) & "Cuba Life Expectancy at Birth"

"Cuba Life Expectancy at Birth" Index Mundi/CIA World Factbook

Life expectancy at birth: total population: 77.7 years.  
Male: 75.46 years.  
Female: 80.08 years (2011 est.).

Definition: This entry contains the average number of years to be lived by a group of people born in the same year, if mortality at each age remains constant in the future. The entry includes total population as well as the male and female components. Life expectancy at birth is also a measure of overall quality of life in a country and summarizes the mortality at all ages. It can also be thought of as indicating the potential return on investment in human capital and is necessary for the calculation of various actuarial measures.

[http://www.indexmundi.com/cuba/life\\_expectancy\\_at\\_birth.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/cuba/life_expectancy_at_birth.html)

[20120702-17](#) 16:11 Dennis Health Reform Quiz

Take this ten question quiz to see how much you know about Obamacare. I just got all ten correct, better than 99.6% of all Americans. So please do not anyone ever tell me again that I have my head up my a\*s!

<http://healthreform.kff.org/quizzes/health-reform-quiz/>

[20120702-19](#) 16:15 SteveG Re: Health Reform Quiz (reply to Dennis, above)

I got 10 right also, so we must know what we are talking about!

[20120702-22](#) 17:03 SteveB Re: Health Reform Quiz (reply to Dennis, above)

I'm a rebel. You still have your head up your ass, Dennis. (I couldn't resist such an opportunity!)

Just kidding. I only got 9 out of 10, but beat 97% of Americans, 100% of Republicans.

Good quiz.

We've all been educated by Friends of the Middle (each other!) by this point in time, I guess...

[20120702-02](#) 11:42 Dennis Re: "Conservative Southern Values Revived..." (reply to Art & LarryK, FotM Newsletter #172)

The real significance of the Alamo is that it became a profitable tourist attraction, not to mention a profitable stock photo subject.



©DennisCox/WorldViews

[20120702-03](#) 12:23 Dennis Video: "Bail Out The Bankers? Iceland ARRESTED Them & Look What Happened"

Justice Denied: Bailing out Wall Street failed. This is what should have been done with the bankers....

"Bail Out The Bankers? Iceland ARRESTED Them and Look What Happened" by Rollie Williams, Upworthy

June 28, 2012, Video: ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt4Z3rm4r-4&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt4Z3rm4r-4&feature=player_embedded)) or (<http://www.upworthy.com/bail-out-the-bankers-iceland-arrested-them-and-look-what-happened>)

[20120702-04](#) 12:26 Art Re: "Bail Out The Bankers? Iceland ARRESTED Them & Look What Happened" (reply to Dennis, above)

Thanks, Good stuff and follows the line we all have been thinking that, if you have money in the hands of actual people, things go pretty well economically. Of course, the downside is how are we going to keep those corporate jets flying?

[20120702-07](#) 13:00 Pam Re: "Bail Out The Bankers? Iceland ARRESTED Them & Look What Happened" (reply to Dennis, above)

This is terrific. I hate to admit it, but I think there's a log of corruption in Washington, and it's hiding behind the American flag.

Little tidbit from a *Washington Post* article today on the Colorado fires. The article claimed the fires were an outcome of Global Warming, so I am sure all Republicans consider it a Communist planted article.

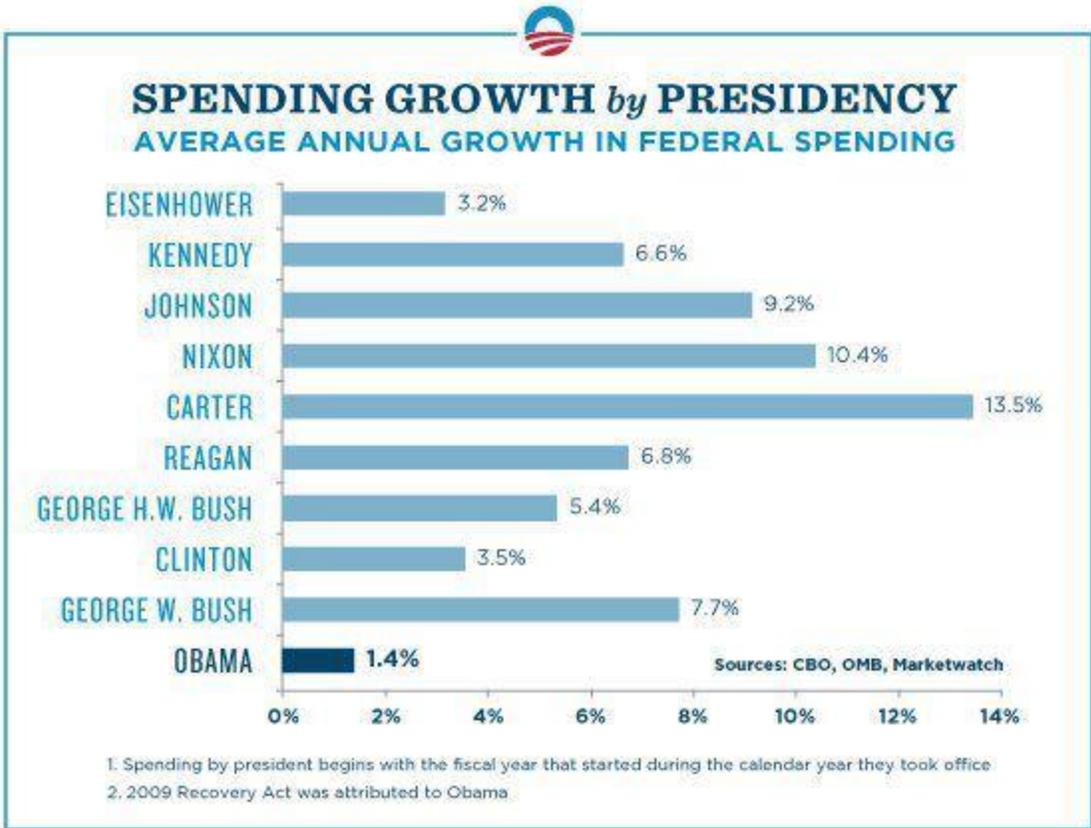
At any rate, the below caught my eye.

"Colorado is in the middle of 'a terrible dry period,'" Henson said. "The snowpack statewide was less than 3 percent of the normal level on June 1, about the time the fires started."

Less than 3 % of normal levels!!!!!!

If this was an anomaly, that would be one thing but it is all part of a growing pattern. We have a problem. Republican solution: the Keystone pipeline.

Conservative in the White House...This is not what Fox News says about Obama:



The bottom 40% of Americans own 2% of the nation's wealth. How is having them carry nearly twice the tax burden of corporations going to reduce the federal deficit?



Now here's an interesting little fact. I do hear all the time from my conservative that half the Americans don't pay taxes. Of course, that begs the question to me, are they so poor that they fall out of the grid? Also, it's not really true since payroll taxes aren't included in that figure.

Anyone dispute this?

"Income Inequality is America's Biggest Challenge: United Nations Economist" by Morgan Korn, Yahoo! News

July 1, 2012, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/daily-ticker/income-inequality-america-biggest-challenge-says-united-nations-162328171.html>) (w/ video)

In *The Measure of a Nation: How to Regain America's Competitive Edge and Boost Our Global Standing* statistician and United Nations health economist Howard Friedman compares the United States to 13 other wealthy nations in five key categories: health, education, safety, democracy and equality. His analysis and conclusions are alarming: the U.S. has fallen far behind in most of these areas, causing the nation to become "the Dog" when juxtaposed to its Asian and Western European competitors.

He backs up his assertions with sobering examples: the U.S. health care system — widely touted as the best in the world by the U.S. health care industry — ranks 37th in the world by the World Health Organization. France and Italy hold the top two spots. The U.S. also spends two to four times more on health care than any other country but the

U.S. also has the lowest life expectancy. "That's the worst ROI you can imagine," Friedman says in the accompanying video.

The U.S. also used to "enjoy the highest rate of college education in the world but has become the Middle Child today," Friedman writes in the book.

America even ranks poorly in levels of voter participation.

The data Friedman tested and measured may show the U.S. lagging in these cross-country comparisons but our track record can change, he says, if Americans are willing to seriously observe and learn from other countries. Part of the problem stems from the U.S. political process "which really does prevent a lot of meaningful change from happening" and from jaded Americans who have become ignorant of the country's economic and societal decline, Friedman argues.

"Americans don't realize that a lot of our practices aren't normal," he says. "And they're not typical of wealthy countries. They're really far behind the curve. So I think awareness is an issue. I think there is some complacency that goes on as well. We're not at a point where people feel the need for change."

According to Friedman, the biggest challenge for the U.S. centers on the nation's rising income inequality, a problem that led to the Occupy Wall Street protests and one that has become a central theme of President Obama's reelection campaign. The U.S. "has substantially higher levels of income and wealth inequality than our competition," according to Friedman, and Americans' "staunch faith" in U.S. meritocracy is a misconception derived from false notions.

"The U.S. has far less social mobility than other wealthy countries," he says. "The American dream of this social mobility actually turns out to be a myth. The top student from a poor neighborhood has roughly the same chance of graduating college as the worst student from a wealthy neighborhood. That's not a meritocracy. And that leads us to a system where those who have the most will continue to have more and more and the rest will struggle."

<a href="#">20120702-13</a>	15:35	Dennis	Re: "Income Inequality is America's Biggest Challenge: United Nations Economist" (reply to SteveG, above)
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from SteveG:

"The U.S. has far less social mobility than other wealthy countries...."

Actually social mobility has been accelerating....downward. Doesn't that count?

<a href="#">20120702-14</a>	15:43	SteveG	Re: "Income Inequality is America's Biggest Challenge: United Nations Economist" (reply to Dennis, above)
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Nice Republican twist/spin you sarcastically placed on the information. It really is scary and unless something major happens I really don't see it changing. The House is going to have its 31st vote to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Persistent SOB's aren't they?

You right-wingers will like the part about being lied to by Barack Obama.

"A Lesson from Crazy Horse" by Chris Hedges, Truthdig

July 2, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/10107-chris-hedges-time-to-get-crazy>)



Chief Crazy Horse (Image: [Jared Rodriguez / Truthout](#))

Native Americans' resistance to the westward expansion of Europeans took two forms. One was violence. The other was accommodation. Neither worked. Their land was stolen, their communities were decimated, their women and children were gunned down and the environment was ravaged. There was no legal recourse. There was no justice. There never is for the oppressed. And as we face similar forces of predatory, unchecked corporate power intent on ruthless exploitation and stripping us of legal and physical protection, we must confront how we will respond.

The ideologues of rapacious capitalism, like members of a primitive cult, chant the false mantra that natural resources and expansion are infinite. They dismiss calls for equitable distribution as unnecessary. They say that all will soon share in the "expanding" wealth, which in fact is swiftly diminishing. And as the whole demented project unravels, the elites flee like roaches to their sanctuaries. At the very end, it all will come down like a house of cards.

Civilizations in the final stages of decay are dominated by elites out of touch with reality. Societies strain harder and harder to sustain the decadent opulence of the ruling class, even as it destroys the foundations of productivity and wealth. Karl Marx was correct when he called unregulated capitalism "a machine for demolishing limits." This failure to impose limits cannibalizes natural resources and human communities. This time, the difference is that when we go the whole planet will go with us. Catastrophic climate change is inevitable. Arctic ice is in terminal decline. There will soon be so much heat trapped in the atmosphere that any attempt to scale back carbon emissions will make no difference. Droughts. Floods. Heat waves. Killer hurricanes and tornados. Power outages. Freak weather. Rising sea levels. Crop destruction. Food shortages. Plagues.

ExxonMobil, BP and the coal and natural gas companies—like the colonial buffalo hunters who left thousands of carcasses rotting in the sun after stripping away the hides, and in some cases carrying away only the tongues—will never impose rational limits on themselves. They will exploit, like the hustlers before them who eliminated the animals that sustained the native peoples of the Great Plains, until there is nothing left to exploit. Collective suicide is never factored into quarterly profit reports. Forget all those virtuous words they taught you in school about our

system of government. The real words to describe American power are "plunder," "fraud," "criminality," "deceit," "murder" and "repression."

Those native communities that were most accommodating to the European colonists, such as the peaceful California tribes—the Chilulas, Chimarikos, Urebures, Nipewais and Alonas, along with a hundred other bands—were the first to be destroyed. And while I do not advocate violence, indeed will seek every way to avoid it, I have no intention of accommodating corporate power whether it hides behind the mask of Barack Obama or Mitt Romney. At the same time, I have to acknowledge that resistance may ultimately be in vain. Yet to resist is to say something about us as human beings. It keeps alive the possibility of hope, even as all empirical evidence points to inevitable destruction. It makes victory, however remote, possible. And it makes life a little more difficult for the ruling class, which satisfies the very human emotion of vengeance.

"Whenever the legislators endeavor to take away and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power," wrote the philosopher John Locke, "they put themselves into a state of war with the people who are thereupon absolved from any further obedience."

The European colonists signed, and ignored, some 400 treaties with native tribes. They enticed the native leaders into accords, always to seize land, and then repeated the betrayal again and again and again until there was nothing left to steal. Chiefs such as Black Kettle who believed the white men did not fare much better than those who did not. Black Kettle, who outside his lodge often flew a huge American flag given to him in Washington as a sign of friendship, was shot dead by soldiers of George Armstrong Custer in November 1868 along with his wife and more than 100 other Cheyenne in his encampment on the Washita River.

The white men "made us many promises, more than I can remember," Chief Red Cloud said in old age, "but they kept but one. They promised to take our land, and they took it."

Native societies, in which people redistributed wealth to gain respect, and in which those who hoarded were detested, upheld a communal ethic that had to be obliterated and replaced with the greed, ceaseless exploitation and cult of the self that fuel capitalist expansion. Lewis Henry Morgan in his book "League of the Iroquois," written in 1851 after he lived among them, noted that the Iroquois' "whole civil policy was averse to the concentration of power in the hands of any single individual, but inclined to the opposite principle of division among a number of equals. ..." This was a way of relating to each other, as well as to the natural world, that was an anathema to the European colonizers.

Those who exploit do so through layers of deceit. They hire charming and eloquent interlocutors. How many more times do you want to be lied to by Barack Obama? What is this penchant for self-delusion that makes us unable to see that we are being sold into bondage? Why do we trust those who do not deserve our trust? Why are we repeatedly seduced? The promised closure of Guantanamo. The public option in health care. Reforming the Patriot Act. Environmental protection. Restoring habeas corpus. Regulating Wall Street. Ending the wars. Jobs. Defending labor rights. I could go on.

There are few resistance figures in American history as noble as Crazy Horse. He led, long after he knew that ultimate defeat was inevitable, the most effective revolt on the plains, wiping out Custer and his men on the Little Big Horn. "Even the most basic outline of his life shows how great he was," Ian Frazier writes in his book "Great Plains," "because he remained himself from the moment of his birth to the moment he died; because he knew exactly where he wanted to live, and never left; because he may have surrendered, but he was never defeated in battle; because, although he was killed, even the Army admitted he was never captured; because he was so free that he didn't know what a jail looked like." His "dislike of the oncoming civilization was prophetic," Frazier writes. "He never met the President" and "never rode on a train, slept in a boarding house, ate at a table." And "unlike many people all over the world, when he met white men he was not diminished by the encounter."

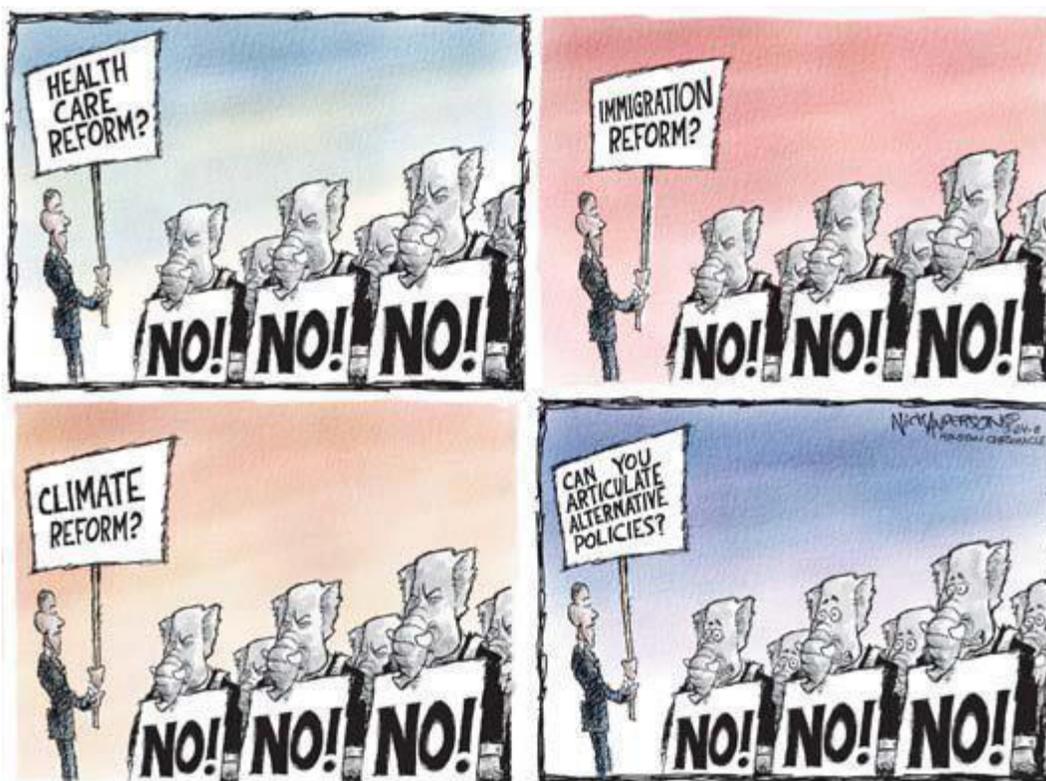
Crazy Horse was bayoneted to death on Sept. 5, 1877, after being tricked into walking toward the jail at Fort Robinson in Nebraska. The moment he understood the trap he pulled out a knife and fought back. Gen. Phil Sheridan had intended to ship Crazy Horse to the Dry Tortugas, a group of small islands in the Gulf of Mexico, where a U.S. Army garrison ran a prison with cells dug out of the coral. Crazy Horse, even when dying, refused to lie on the white man's cot. He insisted on being placed on the floor. Armed soldiers stood by until he died. And

when he breathed his last, Touch the Clouds, Crazy Horse's seven-foot-tall Miniconjou friend, pointed to the blanket that covered the chief's body and said, "This is the lodge of Crazy Horse." His grieving parents buried Crazy Horse in an undisclosed location. Legend says that his bones turned to rocks and his joints to flint. His ferocity of spirit remains a guiding light for all who seek lives of defiance.

(Chris Hedges spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for *The Christian Science Monitor*, National Public Radio, *The Dallas Morning News*, and *The New York Times*, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years.)

[MARVELOUS, DENNIS! I have always loved Native American culture and history and have always found lessons applicable to life and art. So many great people so despised... "Pesky Redskins!" --SteveB]

20120702-24 23:57 SteveG Cartoon: No! No! No!





<http://www.snopes.com/photos/accident/mooseheads.asp>



—Friends of the Middle,

Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #174 — JULY 4, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

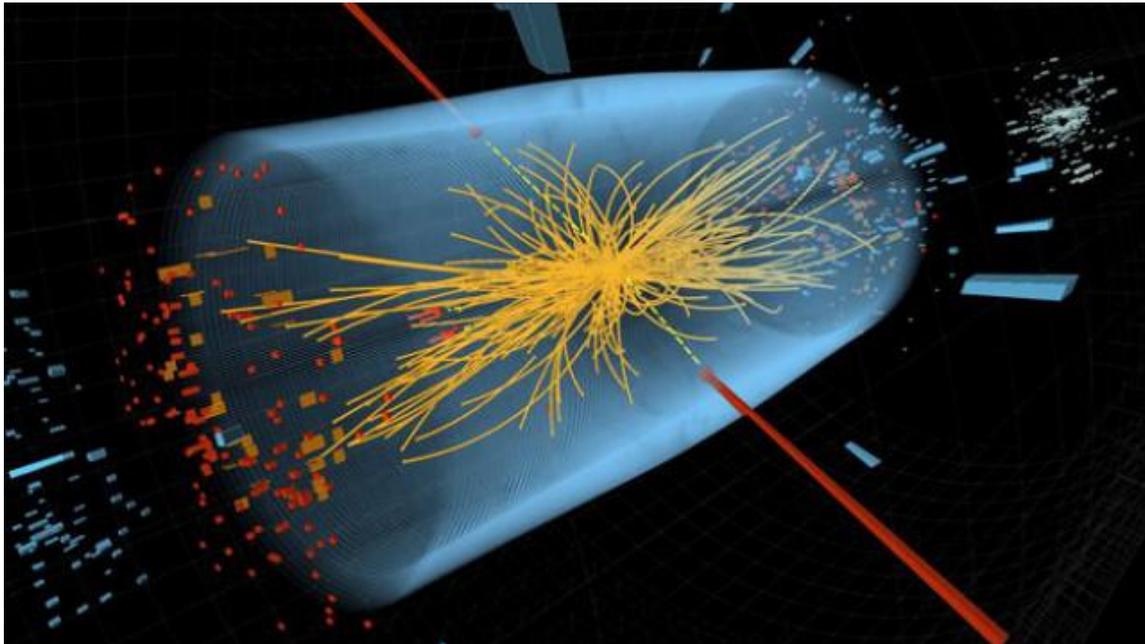
### **Fireworks of the Gods**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 4, 2012)  
HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!

Scientists have announce that they have, perhaps, found the Higgs boson, the sub-atomic "particle" that is thought to hold the universe together so it could sustain stars, planets, and, eventually, life.

The much anticipated, though disappointing, announcement came this morning that scientists have found a new particle that is "probably" the Higgs, but they still can't say for sure, and, so far, they know nothing more about the god particle than they knew before the LHC was constructed.

What's that boson smokin'?



If they have found the Higgs, then the universe is truly a strange place...containing, probably, eleven dimensions, most of them completely unperceived by us. The "energy" required to keep this place going comes from somewhere else, the result of tensions between the dimensions and the multiverse (infinite universes, our limited understanding of which comes from quantum physics, string theory, and modern cosmology).

"Scientists at Cern, the European particle physics laboratory in Switzerland, believe they have seen a hint of the Higgs boson. The results are inconclusive. But confirming the existence of the so-called God particle would confirm how elementary particles acquire mass, and would be the most coveted prize in physics."

"What is the Higgs Boson?" by Ian Sample and James Randerson, *The Guardian*

June 29, 2012, (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2011/dec/13/higgs-boson-lhc-explained>)

Video: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/video/2012/jul/03/what-is-a-higgs-boson-video>.

Physicists are set to announce the latest results from the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), but what exactly is the Higgs boson, why do people call it the 'god particle' and what would its discovery mean for physics?

What is the Higgs boson?

Named after Peter Higgs, an Edinburgh University physicist, the Higgs boson is crucial to understanding the origin of mass. Shortly after the big bang, it is thought that many particles had no mass, but became heavy later on thanks to the Higgs field. Any particles that interact with this field are given mass. The Higgs boson is the signature particle of the field.

What exactly is the Higgs field?

A theoretical, invisible energy field that stretches throughout the universe. It clings to fundamental particles wherever they are, dragging on them and making them heavy. Some particles find the field more "sticky" than others. Particles of light – photons – are oblivious to it. Other particles have to wade through it like an elephant in tar. So, in theory, particles can weigh nothing, but as soon as the field switched on shortly after the big bang, they got their mass.

Why do people call it the 'god particle'?

Its theistic nickname was coined by Nobel prizewinning physicist Leon Lederman, but Higgs himself is no fan of the label. "I find it embarrassing because, though I'm not a believer myself, I think it is the kind of misuse of terminology which I think might offend some people."

According to Higgs, it wasn't even Lederman's choice to call it the god particle: "He wanted to refer to it as that 'goddamn particle' and his editor wouldn't let him."

What would finding the Higgs boson mean for physics?

It would vindicate the so-called Standard Model of physics which envisages that the universe is made from 12 basic building blocks called fundamental particles and governed by four fundamental forces. The existence of the Higgs boson is predicted by the Standard Model but it has yet to be found by experiments. Even if the Higgs is discovered, the Standard Model does not explain everything.

You can read more about the menagerie of particles predicted by the Standard Model here: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2008/jun/30/cern.elementary.particles>.

How was the data collected?

The data comes from smashing protons together at very high energy in the Large Hadron Collider at the European particle laboratory, Cern. The collisions recreate conditions that have not existed in the universe since just after the big bang. The Astronomer Royal, Sir Martin Rees, put it like this: "the LHC will generate, in a microscopic region where beams of particles collide, a concentration of energy that has never been

achieved before – a concentration that mimics, in microcosm, the conditions that prevailed in the universe during the first trillionth of a second after the big bang."

After each impact, giant detectors scour the subatomic wreckage looking for evidence of new physics.

I thought the LHC had broken down?

Engineers threw the switch to start up the LHC in September 2008 to global fanfare. All went well until it had to be shut down again 36 hours later. The incident – which led to a helium leak into the tunnel housing the superconductor ring – is thought to have been caused when a faulty electrical wire between two magnets was melted by the high current passing through it. Repairs and a new safety system cost an estimated £24m. The LHC was restarted in November 2009 and became the most powerful particle accelerator in the world later that month.

What else is the LHC looking for?

There's lots on the menu including supersymmetry (which predicts that every fundamental particle has an invisible, overweight twin), dark matter (which makes up around 25% of the matter in the universe but does not emit light or any other kind of radiation), extra dimensions and black holes.

20120703-01 10:16 Pam Re: "A Lesson from Crazy Horse" (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #173)

Great article! Conservatives had worried about a one-world government for decades, but that was because they wanted America to stay on top. I think we're moving toward a one-world (maybe two) "government," and it being run by the banks, the financiers, and the big corporations. They are as blind as those early settlers who decimated the Indians, who thought they were creating something grand and noble. The wheels of progress always grind somebody up, always have, always will. Somebody talk me out of believing that "resistance is futile."

20120703-13 21:16 SteveM Re: "A Lesson from Crazy Horse" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #173)

Here's a whole page of videos about the effects the government and socialism have done to Native Americans.

They have become more affirmative action whiners than braves, thanks to their Federal lord protectors, and PC advocates. They have been dominated by so many Indian Affairs bureaus, state programs, and other governmental agencies which help (overregulate) every aspect of Indian life, so much so that their culture is not so much now perceived as brave, self sufficient warriors as much as politically correct dependents on Big Government.. You say you've learn lessons from native culture, but seem to be blind to the effects of socialism.

I've lived among, observed, them in AZ ,CO, New Mex. Nev, Cal, Montana, So Dakota, Wy, et al, for the past 42 years. Can you say the same, dumby?

20120703-02 10:57 SteveM Video: "Make Mine Freedom"

Video: 50 YEAR OLD CARTOON PREDICTS THE FUTURE !!! NWO !!!

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=se8c-wN35M&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=se8c-wN35M&feature=player_embedded)

20120703-09 13:57 SteveB Re: Video: "Make Mine Freedom" (reply to SteveM, above)

The propaganda goes way, way back, doesn't it? Have a great 4th!

An amazing series of photos showing the destructive force of nature. an insurance agent's nightmare. I commend the firefighters and law enforcement officers for their courage and selfless disregard of personal safety on behalf of others. I thought this would be a respite from the political discord. Please keep these unfortunate people in your thoughts.

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/captured/2012/06/27/colorado-wildfires-waldo-canyon-fire-colorado-springs/5732/>



The Waldo Canyon fire burns an entire neighborhood in near the foothills of Colorado Springs, Colo. Tuesday, June 26, 2012. Colorado has endured nearly a week of 100-plus-degree days and low humidity, sapping moisture from timber and grass, creating a devastating formula for volatile wildfires across the state and punishing conditions for firefighters. ( *The Denver Post*, Helen H. Richardson)

Great analysis on healthcare, Pam, and I loved the picture at the end [of FotM Newsletter #173].

I believe Republicans will come to regret the day they started calling the Affordable Healthcare Act (and consequences) "Obamacare". It will make him more of a hero—maybe immortalize the guy Republicans hate so much.

For, lo and behold, what hath Obama care wrought already:

1. Insurance for people with pre-existing conditions.

2. Lower insurance rates.
3. The 80/20 rule (Republicans think accountability is bad!).
4. And now, ALREADY, CASH IN PEOPLE'S POCKETS!

Long live Obamacare (even if it ain't perfect—yet)! What do Republicans have to say now? Mark, where is your "Obamacare has sunk the economy" line? The reality is always different than the Republican lie-machine makes it out to be. Witness the current "Obamacare is just a tax" gambit. More stupid lies!

What a "tax"!!! Maybe even the word "tax" will come to have good connotations, as it should, like Social Security, Medicare, Obamacare, Socialism, and Redistribution of Wealth. :-)

Have a nice day.

"Affordable Care Act Means \$1.1 Billion Insurance Rebate" by Herb Weisbaum, MSNBC

July 3, 2012, (<http://bottomline.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/07/03/12525490-affordable-care-act-means-11-billion-insurance-rebate?lite>)

**The nation's health insurance companies will refund approximately \$1.1 billion dollars to their customers this summer. It's one of the new benefits of the health care reform law.**

The U.S. Health and Human Services Department expects 12.8 million Americans to get some of this money – although in the majority of cases that refund will be sent to employers.

Under the Affordable Care Act, health insurance companies are required to disclose how much of your premium dollar they actually spend on health care and how much they spend on administration, such as salaries and marketing. In the past, consumers did not have a right to this information.

But here's the real game-changer: The 80/20 rule. If the insurance company spends less than 80 percent of premiums on medical care it must rebate the excess. For large group plans (the kind provided by companies that employ 50 people or more), health insurance companies must spend 85 percent of the premiums on medical care.

"The 80/20 rule helps ensure consumers get fair value for their health care dollar," Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said in a statement.

Any rebates must be paid by Aug. 1 each year. For those with individual policies, the refund can be a check, a lump-sum reimbursement to the credit or debit card used to pay the bill, or a discount on future premiums.

Rebates for group plans will go the employer, but some of that money is supposed to be passed along to employees or used in a way that benefits them in the future – such as lower premiums.

The new law also requires health insurance companies to tell customers whether they hit, exceeded or missed the 80/20 mark. If they missed the goal, they must say by how much and what percentage of your premium will be rebated. This new transparency is unprecedented.

All of this information will be available on HealthCare.gov later this summer.

Health and Human Services says it expects the average rebate for a family that buys its own insurance to be \$151. The states with the highest average rebates per family in the individual market are: Mississippi (\$651), Alabama (\$582), Maryland (\$496), Delaware (\$461) and West Virginia (\$383). The average rebate in the individual insurance market is zero for families in Arkansas, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Vermont.

Based on information submitted by the insurance companies in June, Health and Human Services says a majority of Americans are covered by companies that meet or exceed the 80/20 rule: 62 percent of people in the individual market, 83 percent in the small group market and 89 percent in the large group market.

The bottom line: The new 80/20 rule is a major step forward in making health insurance companies responsible to their policy holders. It is hoped it will motivate insurers to lower prices and/or improve their coverage to meet the new standard.

So what about this summer's rebates? Any way you look at it, a billion dollars is a lot of money. But it won't solve the problem of skyrocketing medical bills. It's just a drop in the bucket.

To solve the health care crisis, we must find a way to reduce the ever-increasing cost of medical care in the U.S. The current path is simply unsustainable and will devastate our economy. The national health care system needs a major overhaul. And it needs it STAT!

<a href="#">20120703-06</a>	13:27	SteveG	Re: "Affordable Care Act Means \$1.1 Billion Insurance Rebate" (reply to SteveB, above)
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It seems there is a daily poll indicating the American public is gradually warming to the idea of the Affordable Healthcare Act. Daily the % liking the law is increasing.

<a href="#">20120703-08</a>	13:54	Dennis	Re: "Affordable Care Act Means \$1.1 Billion Insurance Rebate" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Witness the current "Obamacare is just a tax" gambit. More stupid lies!

If a penalty for not buying health insurance is now a tax, according to Chief Justice Roberts, shouldn't parking meter fines now be tax deductible on federal returns as local and state taxes paid? Is this another gift to creative tax accountants, or what?

<a href="#">20120703-10</a>	14:05	Jim	Re: "Affordable Care Act Means \$1.1 Billion Insurance Rebate" (reply to all, above)
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I suppose all the right-thinking objectors to Obamacare are going to refuse the rebate if their insurance company sends them one.

Maybe they could contribute it to help care for indigents.

<a href="#">20120703-11</a>	14:14	SteveB	Re: "Affordable Care Act Means \$1.1 Billion Insurance Rebate" (reply to Jim, above)
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Great "idea", Jim. An "idea" (as opposed to an idea) is a possibly brilliant, invaluable idea with no chance of happening.

(Thanks to that mysterious conservative mind...)

**“What sort of person thinks there is nothing wrong with asking the folks tasked with teaching our children to take a 20% cut on a \$50,000 annual salary, but thinks it’s a terrible idea to ask millionaires to pay an additional 3% more in taxes?”**

from USAction:

The right to vote is under attack! Protect the right to vote for all Americans. Tell Congress to pass the Voter Empowerment Act now.

Since the 2010 election, Republicans have approved laws to restrict the right to vote in more than a dozen states despite the fact that only 13 cases of credible voter fraud occurred in a ten-year period. Compare that to the 441 Americans who were killed by lightning or the 47,000 UFO sighting during the same period and you see just how much the GOP is pulling at straws to legitimize suppressing millions from the right to vote.<sup>1</sup>

They say it’s about fraud, which you and I know is a lie, but recent comments by a Pennsylvania lawmaker prove otherwise.

While listing off a string of right-wing legislative accomplishments at a political event in Pennsylvania, state House majority leader Mike Turzai (R) stated, “Voter ID, which is gonna allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania, done.”

So there you have it. The Republican party was never concerned about counteracting fraud, only about ensuring their victory — even if they have to prevent tens of millions of Americans from voting to do it.

On the eve of Independence Day, it’s more important than ever that we protect the right to vote for each and every one of us. Will you tell Congress to stop suppressing Americans from voting and pass the Voter Empowerment Act today?

[http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/index.sjs?action\\_KEY=412](http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/index.sjs?action_KEY=412)

A key component of the GOP’s campaign has been orchestrated by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which receives substantial funding from the Koch brothers. Already, the Koch brothers have poured up to \$245,550 in campaign contributions to politicians supporting new voter ID laws, such as Scott Walker and Rick Perry.<sup>2</sup>

And boy has their investment paid off! According to the Brennan Center for Justice, this year, over five million eligible voters could be negatively impacted by the new laws — and it’s no surprise that the majority of which tend to vote Democratic.<sup>3</sup>

These voter suppression laws are designed for one purpose and one purpose only: to prevent minorities, seniors and young people from voting. That's not just wrong, it's downright un-American.

On this Independence Day, let's remember why we're here and how far we've come. The right to vote is a basic, fundamental right in our country. And since the Declaration of Independence was signed, we've strived as a nation to increase access to voting to more and more people. That is, until now.

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

<sup>1</sup><http://bit.ly/N8uGZS>

<sup>2</sup><http://bit.ly/MR01Rh>

<sup>3</sup><http://bit.ly/ol8iIO>

20120703-14 21:57 SteveG "Jonathan Krohn, Reformed Conservative Boy Wonder, Responds to Criticism"

"Jonathan Krohn, Reformed Conservative Boy Wonder, Responds to Criticism" (incl. video), by Melissa Jeltsen, Huffington Post

July 3, 2012 ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/03/jonathan-krohn-conservatism\\_n\\_1647827.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/03/jonathan-krohn-conservatism_n_1647827.html))

How quickly the fall from grace begins.

After Politico revealed that Jonathan Krohn, the 17-year-old who achieved internet fame in 2009 with a fiery CPAC speech, is a fire-breathing conservative no longer, attacks on his character sprung up on the web.

During an appearance on MSNBC's "Hardball" on Tuesday, Krohn discussed his shift away from the right side of the aisle and addressed where he now stands on several political issues.

"Well, I am in favor of Obamacare," he said. "I mean Obamacare and gay marriage, and I am pro-choice now. You know, it was social conservatism that was really the first thing to go."

Reflecting on his encounters at social conservative gatherings, he continued, "It's very much a very fundamentalist, strong Evangelical core that you have there. And, if you stray from that, a lot of the people in that area of conservatism have a problem with that, if you reach out a little bit and don't agree with them on one issue. They're very restrictive."

Asked about blowback he's experienced from conservatives in response to his political shift, Krohn acknowledged that some of the reaction has been critical, but stressed, "I changed my mind." Referring to coverage on Fox News he said, "They started making fun of me. I think one of the guys said if it was up to him he would have left me in the woods as a baby. On the Daily Caller, they have written three articles about me, all of which called me names I can't repeat on television in 5:00 in the afternoon."

One Daily Caller article published earlier in the day quoted an anonymous source who attended the Conservative Political Action Conference in 2009, who called Krohn "smug, condescending, and obviously completely ignorant of what he was saying." The source added, "To be clear, the fact that he was being used did not make the kid any less of a douche."

Krohn, who authored the book *Defining Conservatism: The Principles that will Bring our Country Back*, signaled on Tuesday that if he were old enough to vote in this year's presidential election he would cast a ballot in favor of President Barack Obama.



<http://www.digitalpicturezone.com/digital-pictures/35-spectacular-examples-of-fireworks-photography/>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #175 — JULY 5, 2012

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

### **Republican Patriotism: M.I.A.**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 5, 2012)

Where has the patriotism of the Right gone? Where is that fervor to create a great nation by doing the unthinkable—paying a little more taxes? Read my lips: NEW TAXES! It's what a great nation needs to stay great. It always worked in the past, until the great Republican "conservative" experiment in deficit government inspired by Ronald Reagan, but mainly implemented by George W. Bush.

Today, I thought Robert Reich's Independence Day words were almost equally pertinent to the day after. Doesn't true patriotism, after all, demand something other than selfishness and self-aggrandizement?

"Patriotism July 4, 2012" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

July 4, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/patriotism-july-4-2012-1341408560>)



In the last two weeks, the Supreme Court has allowed police in Arizona to demand proof of citizenship from people they stop on other grounds (while throwing out the rest of Arizona's immigration law), and has allowed the federal government to require everyone buy health insurance — even younger and healthier people — or pay a penalty.

What do these decisions — and the national conversations they've engendered — have to do with patriotism? A great deal. Because underlying them are two different versions of American patriotism.

The Arizona law is aimed at securing the nation from outsiders. The purpose of the healthcare law is to join together to provide affordable health care for all.

The first version of patriotism is protecting America from people beyond our borders who might otherwise overrun us — whether immigrants coming here illegally or foreign powers threatening us with aggression.

The second version of patriotism is joining together for the common good. That might mean contributing to a bake sale to raise money for a local school or volunteering in a homeless shelter. It also means paying our fair share of taxes so our community or nation has enough resources to meet all our needs, and preserving and protecting our system of government.

This second meaning of patriotism recognizes our responsibilities to one another as citizens of the same society. It requires collaboration, teamwork, tolerance, and selflessness.

The Affordable Care Act isn't perfect, but in requiring younger and healthier people to buy insurance that will help pay for the healthcare needs of older and sicker people, it summons the second version of patriotism.

Too often these days we don't recognize and don't practice this second version. We're shouting at each other rather than coming together — conservative versus liberal, Democrat versus Republican, native-born versus foreign born, non-unionized versus unionized, religious versus secular.

Our politics has grown nastier and meaner. Negative advertising is filling the airwaves this election year. We're learning more about why we shouldn't vote for someone than why we should.

As I've said before, some elected officials have substituted partisanship for patriotism, placing party loyalty above loyalty to America. Just after the 2010 election, the Senate minority leader was asked about his party's highest priority for the next two years. You might have expected him to say it was to get the economy going and reduce unemployment, or control the budget deficit, or achieve peace and stability in the Middle East. But he said the highest priority would be to make sure the President did not get a second term of office.

Our system of government is America's most precious and fragile possession, the means we have of joining together as a nation for the common good. It requires not only our loyalty but ongoing vigilance to keep it working well. Yet some of our elected representatives act as if they don't care what happens to it as long as they achieve their partisan aims.

The filibuster used to be rarely used. But over the last decade the threat of a filibuster has become standard operating procedure, virtually shutting down the Senate for periods of time.

Meanwhile, some members of the House have been willing to shut down the entire government in order to get their way. Last summer they were even willing to risk the full faith and credit of the United States in order to achieve their goals.

In 2010 the Supreme Court opened the floodgates to unlimited money from billionaires and corporations overwhelming our democracy, on the bizarre theory that corporations are people under the First Amendment. Congress won't even pass legislation requiring their names be disclosed.

Some members of Congress have signed a pledge — not of allegiance to the United States but of allegiance to a man named 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 and protect it. They may not like everything it does, and they justifiably worry then special interests gain too much power over it. But true patriots work to improve the U.S. government, not destroy it.

But these days some Americans 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. 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, some wealthy Americans claim "it's my money." They forget it's their nation, too. And unless they pay their fair share of taxes, American can't meet the basic needs of our people. True patriotism means paying for America.

So when you hear people talk about patriotism, be warned. They may mean securing the nation's borders, not securing our society. Within those borders, each of us is on our own. These people don't want a government that actively works for all our citizens.

Yet true patriotism isn't mainly about excluding outsiders seen as our common adversaries. It's about coming together for the common good.

[20120704-01](#) 09:04 Pam

Re: "Jonathan Krohn, Reformed Conservative Boy Wonder, Responds to Criticism" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #174)

Who is this kid? I never heard of him. It's appalling to me that any national news show (any news show) would call a person names and say terrible things about him. Could the kid sue for slander? Someone needs to get Fox where it lives.

"Paid Leave and Paid Public Holidays in OECD Countries" by Rebecca Ray and John Schmitt, ETUI-REHS (2007)

July 2, 2012, ([http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/lwp/papers/No\\_Holidays.pdf](http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/lwp/papers/No_Holidays.pdf))

([http://images.alternet.org/images/managed/storyimages\\_1341274350\\_screenshot20120702at4.20.42pm.png](http://images.alternet.org/images/managed/storyimages_1341274350_screenshot20120702at4.20.42pm.png))

**Table 1: Paid leave and paid public holidays in OECD countries**

Country	Statutory minimum annual leave	Paid public holidays
Australia <sup>1</sup>	4 weeks (5 for shift workers)	7
Austria <sup>2</sup>	30 calendar days (22 work days); 36 after 6 years	13
Belgium <sup>2</sup>	20 work days	10
Canada <sup>*1</sup>	2 weeks (3 with seniority)	8
Denmark <sup>2</sup>	30 work days	9
Finland <sup>*1</sup>	4 weeks (5 after 1 year)	9
France <sup>2</sup>	30 work days	1
Germany <sup>*1</sup>	4 weeks (up to 5 weeks for young workers)	10
Greece <sup>2</sup>	4 weeks (plus 1 work day after the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> years)	6
Ireland <sup>2</sup>	4 weeks	9
Italy <sup>4</sup>	4 weeks	13
Japan <sup>1</sup>	10 work days (plus 1 work day after the 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> years)	0
Netherlands <sup>1</sup>	4 weeks	0
New Zealand <sup>1</sup>	4 weeks	7
Norway <sup>2,6</sup>	25 work days	2
Portugal <sup>2</sup>	22 work days (20 in the first year)	13
Spain <sup>1,7</sup>	30 calendar days (22 work days)	12
Sweden <sup>2</sup>	25 work days	0
Switzerland <sup>2</sup>	4 weeks (5 for young workers)	0
United Kingdom <sup>2</sup>	4 weeks	0
United States <sup>8</sup>	0	0

Be afraid, very afraid!

"Bachmann on VP Spot: 'Not for Me to Make That Decision'" (incl. video) by Ashley Killough, CNN

July 3rd, 2012, (<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/07/03/bachmann-on-vp-spot-not-for-me-to-make-that-decision/>)

Former presidential candidate Michele Bachmann did not deny Monday whether she was being vetted for the job of Mitt Romney's running mate.

"Whoever it is that he chooses to bring in as his V.P., it will be a highly competent person who could step in at a moment's notice and assume the responsibilities of the White House," the Minnesota congresswoman said on CNN's "Piers Morgan Tonight."

Pressed further if she was being considered for the gig, Bachmann, whose name has not been frequently mentioned as a potential contender, left it up to the presumptive GOP nominee and his team to make a comment.

"Well, that's something for the campaign to answer on," she said. "That's not for me to make that decision, and that announcement."

While veep-talk has certainly been a swirling force on the campaign trail in recent weeks, Romney has only confirmed his campaign was vetting Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, though many more are expected to be on his list.

The former Massachusetts governor announced he was considering Rubio in mid-June after some Republicans grew upset over a report claiming the senator was not in the running.

Other potential candidates have kept mum on the veepstakes, refusing to say whether or not they may have a hat in the ring.

For her part, Bachmann was critical of Romney when the two competed for the Republican presidential nomination. As a candidate, Bachmann initially ran with large tea party appeal, frequently bucking what she described as the more establishment faction of the party that Romney represented.

The congresswoman did not endorse Romney until early May, several weeks after former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum dropped out of the race, a move that essentially locked up the nomination for Romney.

Asked repeatedly why she had held out in her support for Romney, Bachmann declined to go into specifics but maintained she was working "behind the scenes, bringing together all factions of our party."

20120704-04	11:30	SteveB	"France Slaps 7 Billion Euros in Taxes on Rich and Big Firms"
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You have to ask yourself this one, simple question: Is the U.S. government too corrupt to take necessary, decisive action such as the French have done? Personally, I applaud their courage. Sales of Alka-Seltzer, poison, and handguns must be through the roof in France, as their richer class attempt to deal with the loss of a little of what they hold most dear, oh my!

Maybe that \$1 trillion plus that American business is sitting on in the U.S., rather than investing, and the \$1 trillion plus more sitting overseas should be taxed and invested in the U.S. That would help Mr. Obama's deficit numbers, huh? Now, if he were a true socialist, would he not at least make the proposal? Yet you will never hear such words from his lips, that would be my guess, even though it's essentially this lack of investment that has caused our problems...over time, it has destroyed our manufacturing base and left our infrastructure, as the media likes to say, crumbling. While the places where those same businesses and individuals do invest thrive!

"France Slaps 7 Billion Euros in Taxes on Rich and Big Firms" by Daniel Flynn, Reuters/Yahoo! News

July 4, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/french-budget-adds-7-billion-euros-taxes-rich-100603279--business.html>)

(PARIS) France's new Socialist government announced tax rises worth 7.2 billion euros on Wednesday, including heavy one-off levies on wealthy households and big corporations, to plug a revenue shortfall this year caused by flagging economic growth.

In the first major raft of economic measures since Francois Hollande was elected president in May promising to avoid the painful austerity seen elsewhere in Europe, the government singled out large companies and the rich.

An extraordinary levy of 2.3 billion euros (\$2.90 billion) on wealthy households and 1.1 billion euros in one-off taxes on large banks and energy firms were central parts of an amended 2012 budget presented to parliament.

The law, which includes tax increases on stock options and dividends and the scrapping of an exemption on overtime, should easily receive approval by a July 31 deadline after the Socialists won a comfortable parliamentary majority at elections last month.

Hollande says the rich must pay their share as France battles to cut its public deficit from 5.2 percent of GDP last year to an EU limit of 3 percent in 2013 despite a stagnant economy and rising debt.

"We are in an extremely difficult economic and financial situation," Finance Minister Pierre Moscovici told a news conference. "In 2012 and 2013, the effort will be particularly large. The wealthiest households and big companies will have to contribute."

The budget followed a grim assessment of public finances on Monday by the state auditor, which warned that 6-10 billion euros of deficit cuts were needed in 2012 and a hefty 33 billion in 2013 for France to avoid a surge in public debt dragging it into the centre of the euro crisis.

One of the highest state spending levels in the world has raised France's debt by 800 billion euros in the last 10 years to 1.8 trillion - equivalent to 90 percent of GDP, the level at which economists say debt starts to hinder economic growth.

Budget Minister Jerome Cahuzac said that, while the initial focus this year was on tax rises for the wealthy, the government would progressively rein in its expenditure from 2013 onwards.

"Cutting spending is like slowing down a supertanker: it takes time," he told Reuters.

Having promised to freeze central government spending without cutting staffing levels, Hollande will now face the difficult task of convincing France's powerful public sector unions to accept a cap on pay rises and promotions.

This is likely to figure on the agenda of a "social conference" next week with unions and employers.

"I think the unions accept this idea of rigor," Civil Service Minister Marylise Lebranchu told RTL radio, insisting that the measures would not amount to draconian austerity.

The Socialists accused the previous government of President Nicolas Sarkozy of deliberately overestimating economic growth and tax revenues by several billion euros to improve his chances in presidential elections in April and May.

Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault on Tuesday slashed this year's official GDP growth forecast to 0.3 percent from a previous estimate of 0.7 percent, and to 1.2 percent in 2013 from 1.75 percent previously.

The amended budget eliminated a number of reforms introduced by Sarkozy, such as the tax exemption on overtime for companies with more than 20 employees. Scrapping that measure should raise 980 million euros this year, the Socialists said.

Repealing a law which shifted labor charges onto a rise in VAT sales tax will also have a net positive effect of 800 million euros, and a doubling of a tax on financial transactions to 0.2 percent will bring in 170 million euros.

"There's a sharp break, politically and to a lesser extent economically, with Mr Sarkozy's more business-friendly fiscal policies," said Nicholas Spiro of Spiro Sovereign Strategy.

"As long as there's no pressure on France's bond market, the government is unlikely to pursue the kind of product and labor market reforms which France requires."

France's 10-year bond yield was 2.5 percent on Wednesday, less than half the 6.4 percent yield of peripheral Spanish bonds, as investors continue to regard its debt as a safe haven.

The Medef employers union has already said that measures such as a new 3 percent tax to be paid by companies on dividends distributed to shareholders would strangle already weak profit margins. The Socialists say this levy is aimed at encouraging firms to use their cash flow for capital investment.

"We are sorry to see an increase in corporate taxes at a time when they need to be lowered, as the only way to make our economy more competitive," said Medef chief Laurence Parisot.

Some 300,000 people are likely to be affected by the one-off rise in wealth tax on households with net worth of more than 1.3 million euros, which rolls back a tax shield on the rich introduced by Sarkozy, officials said.

The conservative UMP party said that measures such as the end of the overtime tax exemption would hurt ordinary French.

"It is completely false to say that the tax increases will just hit the rich," said Gilles Carrez, president of the National Assembly's finance commission. "The bulk of the new taxes will hit the middle class and today we have the proof."

(\$1 = 0.7933 euros) (Additional reporting by Leigh Thomas, Catherine Bremer, Jean-Baptiste Vey; Editing by Catherine Bremer)

20120704-05 13:53 MarthaH 98 Americans

Yesterday at Harrison's home in Indianapolis, 98 immigrants swore an oath to be American citizens. It brings me to tears every year, but it's even more touching when so many take so much for granted and so many others are so ignorant about what it takes to be a good citizens. One non-English speaking new citizen studied ten months with Spanish tapes to learn what he needed to know to pass his exam. What if we all had to take an exam to renew our citizenship every so many years? Maybe we'd appreciate our rights, privileges, and duties more if we didn't receive the title citizen automatically as natural born citizens. Doing our homework means we understand how the puzzle comes together from many sources; the truths set us free while the lies bind us to disaster. If the majority doesn't do its homework, the rest of us go down with them.

And a thank you to our Founding Fathers for our amazing Constitution, brief, full of mystery, but so cleverly constructed with checks and balances and divisions of power. To me, many who want to rape it have little proper knowledge of it. Let's vow to educate the folks we know the best we can.

20120704-08 15:00 Pam Re: 98 Americans (reply to Martha, above)

Well said, Martha. Count me in.

20120704-06 14:07 SteveG "Hawking Says He Lost \$100 Bet Over Higgs Discovery"

Got to love Hawking's humor.

"Hawking Says He Lost \$100 Bet Over Higgs Discovery" by AFP / Yahoo! News

July 4, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/hawking-says-lost-100-bet-over-higgs-discovery-151710271.html>)

Renowned British physicist Stephen Hawking said Wednesday the Nobel Prize should be given to Peter Higgs, the man who gave his name to the Higgs boson particle.

Former Cambridge University professor Hawking also joked that the discovery had actually cost him \$100 in a bet.

In an interview with the BBC Wednesday, Hawking, who has motor neurone disease, said: "This is an important result and should earn Peter Higgs the Nobel Prize.

"But it is a pity in a way because the great advances in physics have come from experiments that gave results we didn't expect.

"For this reason I had a bet with Gordon Kane of Michigan University that the Higgs particle wouldn't be found. It seems I have just lost \$100."

After half a century of research, physicists announced at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) Wednesday they had found a new sub-atomic particle consistent with the elusive Higgs boson which is believed to confer mass.

Hawking said the discovery was of major importance.

"If the decay and other interactions of this particle are as we expect, it will be strong evidence for the so-called standard model of particle physics, the theory that explains all our experiments so far," Hawking said.

<a href="#">20120704-09</a>	16:21	Art	Re: "Hawking Says He Lost \$100 Bet Over Higgs Discovery" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Great stuff. And the search for knowledge goes on.

<a href="#">20120704-07</a>	14:58	SteveG	Declaration of Independence
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Below is the last paragraph of the declaration of independence. I am puzzled, in the light of 2012 politics, the meaning of the last sentence and how it is defined or discarded in today's terms. Please help me understand.

**WE, THEREFORE, THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN GENERAL CONGRESS, ASSEMBLED, APPEALING TO THE SUPREME JUDGE OF THE WORLD FOR THE RECTITUDE OF OUR INTENTIONS, DO, IN THE NAME, AND BY AUTHORITY OF THE GOOD PEOPLE OF THESE COLONIES, SOLEMNLY PUBLISH AND DECLARE, THAT THESE UNITED COLONIES ARE, AND OF RIGHT OUGHT TO BE FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; THAT THEY ARE ABSOLVED FROM ALL ALLEGIANCE TO THE BRITISH CROWN, AND THAT ALL POLITICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM AND THE STATE OF GREAT BRITAIN, IS AND OUGHT TO BE TOTALLY DISSOLVED; AND THAT AS FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES, THEY HAVE FULL POWER TO LEVY WAR, CONCLUDE PEACE, CONTRACT ALLIANCES, ESTABLISH COMMERCE, AND TO DO ALL OTHER ACTS AND THINGS WHICH INDEPENDENT STATES MAY OF RIGHT DO. AND FOR THE SUPPORT OF THIS DECLARATION, WITH A FIRM RELIANCE ON THE PROTECTION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, WE MUTUALLY PLEDGE TO EACH OTHER OUR LIVES, OUR FORTUNES AND OUR SACRED HONOR.**

[It certainly sounds like an unselfishness rarely seen today, especially in certain circles. Circle the wagons and buzzards fly in circles, defense and offense both the same. -SteveB]



..... FACT .....

President Obama has signed 21 tax cuts to support middle-class families.

.....

FACEBOOK.COM/BARACKOBAMA | @BARACKOBAMA



**I HAD A BAD DREAM, CAN I SLEEP WITH YOU GUYS?**

<http://beyondborders.wordpress.com/2010/01/12/revised-patriotism/>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #176 — JULY 6, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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**INDEX: Click here.**

### **The Little Place Where Together We Live**

(posted by MarthaH and Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 6, 2012)

Harbinger?

"Searing Sun and Drought Shrivels Corn in Midwest" by Monica Davey, *The New York Times*

July 4, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/05/us/for-midwest-corn-crop-the-pressure-rises-like-the-heat.html>)



Stunted corn plants in Hartford City, Ind., struggling to grow out of dry soil. (Aaron P. Bernstein for *NYT*)

(Fears of new Dust Bowl as heat, drought shrivel corn in Midwest.)

(HARTFORD CITY, Ind.) Across a wide stretch of the Midwest, sweltering temperatures and a lack of rain are threatening what had been expected to be the nation's largest corn crop in generations.

Already, some farmers in Illinois and Missouri have given up on parched and stunted fields, mowing them over. National experts say parts of five corn-growing states, including Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio, are experiencing severe or extreme drought conditions. And in at least nine states, conditions in one-fifth to one-half of cornfields have been deemed poor or very poor, federal authorities reported this week, a notable shift from the high expectations of just a month ago.

Crop insurance agents and agricultural economists are watching closely, a few comparing the situation with the devastating drought of 1988, when corn yields shriveled significantly, while some farmers have begun alluding, unhappily, to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Far more is at stake in the coming pivotal days: with the brief, delicate phase of pollination imminent in many states, miles and miles of corn will rise or fall on whether rain soon appears and temperatures moderate.

"It all quickly went from ideal to tragic," said Don Duvall, a farmer in Illinois who, in what was a virtually rainless June, has watched two of his cornfields dry up and die as others remain in some uncertain in-between.

"Every day that passes, more corn will be abandoned," Mr. Duvall said. "But even if it starts raining now, there will not be that bumper crop of corn everyone talked about."

For farmers, especially those without insurance, the pressure mounts, they say, with each check on the morning weather forecast, with every stifling walk through a cloudless field. But the worries have quickly spread: corn prices have risen on the Chicago Board of Trade in recent days on the likelihood of a smaller crop, as analysts weigh the broader prospect of rising prices for food and effects on ethanol production.

"You wake up every morning with that churning in your stomach," said Eric Aulbach, a farmer here in central Indiana, who gazed out across a field of corn he ought not to be able to gaze across by now.

The plants are short, leaves curling unhappily and with a telltale pale yellow hue rising from stems. Down the road, another farmer's cornfield is still more shrunken, looking like rows of house plants better suited for a kitchen window.

Some experts are less pessimistic, saying the fate of the nation's corn crop, the largest in the world, cannot be known until later in the summer, after pollination, when it is clear whether kernels or empty spaces fill the ears of corn and whether enough ears appear at all. They note that the driest, hottest conditions have steered clear of some crucial Corn Belt states, including Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and western Iowa, the nation's most prolific corn producer. In those states, the crop appears healthy and strong — not to mention increasingly valuable. And while much of the nation's corn is not protected by irrigation, some of it, especially in Nebraska and Kansas, is, though those areas have felt the effects of drought, too, requiring more water and, potentially, driving up costs.

"This is a moving target," said Darrel L. Good, a professor emeritus of agricultural and consumer economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "But what we know is this: There's been some permanent and substantive yield reduction already, and we're on the cusp, depending on the weather, of taking that down quite a bit more." In its most recent assessment, released on Monday, the Department of Agriculture reported that 48 percent of corn crops nationally were in good or excellent condition, a drop from 56 percent of crops a week earlier. In some states, though, the circumstances were far worse. In Indiana, half of corn crops were designated poor or very poor, and in Illinois, another state among the nation's top corn producers, only 26 percent of crops were considered good or excellent.

John Hawkins, a spokesman for the Illinois Farm Bureau, said those in the southernmost sections of his state "are close to or past that point of no return," while elsewhere, "there's a lot of praying; it's hanging on by a thread."

"These 100-degree temperatures are just sucking the life out of everything," he said.

American farmers had high expectations for corn this year, planting 96.4 million acres of it — a number 5 percent more than the previous year. High prices and an expectation of strong returns made this year's planting the largest corn acreage in 75 years. Those were heady times in farm country, with farmland prices rising on and on, even as the recovery moved sluggishly in other realms. An uncharacteristically warm March in the Midwest sent hopes still higher, allowing farmers to plant corn weeks earlier than usual. For some crops, including some cherries in Michigan and apples in Indiana, unexpected April frosts then caused damage, but the corn, said Randy Anderson, a farmer in Southern Illinois, went right along beautifully.

And then very little rain fell, and temperatures soared. By last week around corn country, scores of triple-digit heat records were being broken: Jefferson County, Mo., 111 degrees; Evansville, Ind., 107 degrees. That left corn, including Mr. Anderson's crop, shriveling.

"We're talking five-foot-tall corn with no ears, no shoots and no tassels," he said. "It wears on your nerves to even look."

For much of the region, the next few weeks — as the plants' tassels shed pollen to fertilize the silks and create kernels — are crucial. The endless fields of soybeans are at risk in the Midwestern heat, too, though they are seen as more resilient and able to pollinate later.

But a stressed, withered corn plant may not pollinate at all. "This is a very narrow window for corn, and there's little room for error," said Brad Rippey, an agricultural meteorologist for the United States Department of Agriculture. "Whatever happens in that window, it is what it is — that cob is made or broken."

By midday Wednesday, temperatures hovered in the 100s in St. Louis and Indianapolis. While some forecasts suggested relief in the form of lower temperatures in parts of the Midwest next week, some rain, but not the deluge many here say they need, was predicted.

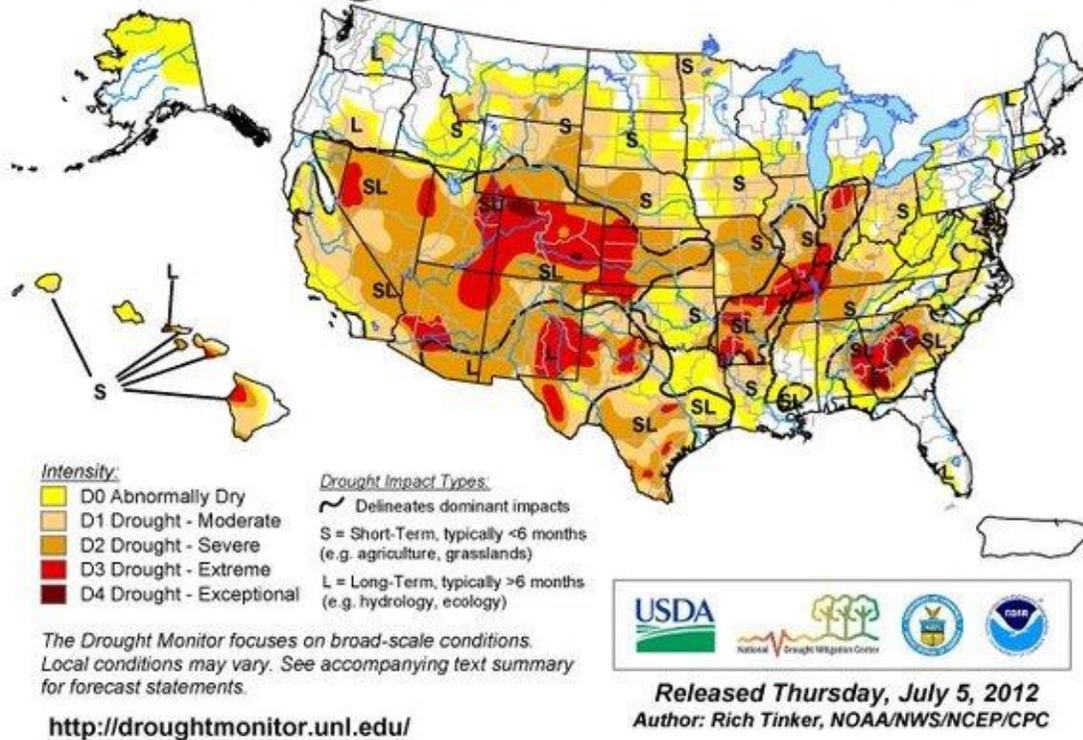
"All we can do is hope and wait," Mr. Aulbach said, lifting a handful of Indiana soil and trying to shape it in his fingers, only to watch it slip away, a dusty powder.

"Drought Hits 56 Percent of Continental U.S.; 'Significant Toll' on Crops" by Miguel Llanos, MSNBC

July 5, 2012, (<http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/07/05/12579687-drought-hits-56-percent-of-continental-us-significant-toll-on-crops?lite>)

# U.S. Drought Monitor

July 3, 2012  
Valid 7 a.m. EDT



The prolonged heat across the Midwest has not only set temperature records, it is also expanding and intensifying drought conditions -- and relief isn't on the horizon for most areas, the National Weather Service reported Thursday.

Drought conditions are present in 56 percent of the continental U.S., according to the weekly *Drought Monitor*.

That's the most in the 12 years that the data have been compiled, topping the previous record of 55 percent set on Aug. 26, 2003. It's also up five percentage points from the previous week.

An Arkansas auction house has seen a jump in the number of cattle put up for sale as many ranchers are unable to afford to feed the animals due to an ongoing drought.

The drought hasn't been long enough to rank up there with the 1930s Dust Bowl or a bad stretch in the 1950s, David Miskus, a meteorologist at the weather service's Climate Prediction Center, told msnbc.com.

"We don't have that here yet," he said. "This has really only started this year."

But for a single year it's still pretty significant, not far behind an extremely dry 1988.

While 1988 saw much drier conditions and an earlier start to the drought than this year, said Brad Rippey, a meteorologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2012 has its own interesting qualities.

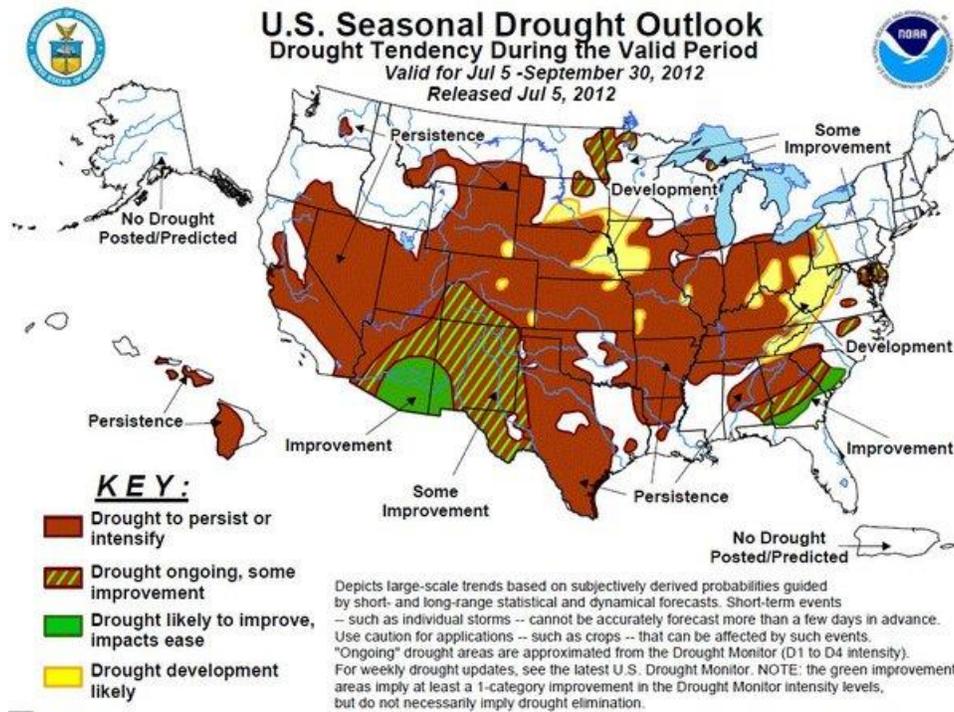
"This year the high temperatures have certainly played into this drought," he told msnbc.com. "There's a lot more evaporation ... and crop demands for water."

The *Drought Monitor* noted that the drought is starting to "take a significant toll" on food supplies. "In the primary growing states for corn and soybeans, 22 percent of the crop is in poor or very poor condition, as are 43 percent of the nation's pastures and rangelands and 24 percent of the sorghum crop."

More than half the nation is caught in an intensifying drought, with record-high temperatures and thousands still without power. The deadly heat has taken an especially big toll on corn crops, sending prices skyward. NBC's John Yang reports.

"July 4–8, 2012, doesn't look promising in terms of relief," it added. "Modest improvement is forecast for most areas that have endured the recent heat wave, but most locations from the Plains eastward are still expected to be warmer than normal."

Rain and cooler temps are forecast for many areas in mid-July but over the summer "drought is likely to develop, persist or intensify" across much of the Ohio and Tennessee valleys, the Corn Belt region, the Mississippi Valley and much of the Great Plains, the weather service said Thursday in its latest Seasonal Drought Outlook.



In Tennessee, the severity of the drought has been reported by county farm agents sending comments to the National Agricultural Statistics Service office in Nashville, the Associated Press reported.

"Crops have really begun to suffer and go backwards this week. Rain is needed yesterday," wrote agent Richard Buntin in Crockett County.

Crops and pastureland are "burnt to a crispy crunch," wrote Kim Frady of Bradley County.

"Need rain," in Loudon County, added John Goddard. "Saw a farmer digging a waterline about 4-5' deep. Nothing but powder!"

The weather service on Thursday did say there's a better chance that the El Nino weather system would return by winter.

If it's a typical El Nino, that would mean better than average rainfall for the southern tier of the U.S., Miskus noted. "Maybe there's some hope," said Rippey, "but that's way on out in the future. That's not a short term relief."

"Borderline Crazy" by Conor Mihell, *Canoe & Kayak*

June 28, 2012, (<http://www.canoekayak.com/touring-kayak/borderline-crazy/>)

(Border security land grab threatens paddling's sacred ground.)



Canada? The U.S.? Morning in canoe country. (by Brett Hochmuth)

The U.S. House of Representatives has voted to support an omnibus bill that would waive environmental legislation like the Endangered Species Act, the Wilderness Act and the Clean Water Act and transfer full control of a 100-mile-wide strip of land along the United States' northern and southern boundaries to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The so-called National Security and Federal Land Protection Act (HR 1505) was rolled into the larger Republican-backed Conservation and Economic Growth Act (HR 2578), which passed by a margin of 232 to 188 on June 19. As reported in Canoe & Kayak magazine's March issue (see article below), the "border bill" threatens paddling hotspots like the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Olympic National Park, the Adirondacks and Northern Forest Canoe Trail, and Texas' Big Bend National Park, among countless other wilderness areas, by facilitating fence- and road-building and other developments. The Pew Environmental Trust has mapped out all of the lands included in this sweeping legislation.

Now it's the Democrat-controlled senate's turn to review legislation that has already been denounced by the Department of Homeland Security and labeled a "conservation low point" by environmental groups like the Pew Trust and the Sierra Club. The proposal affects a whopping 600 million acres of national parks, monuments, Indian reservations, wilderness, wildlife refuges, and other lands managed by U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture. Speaking out against the bill, representative Ed Markey (D-Mass) called it a Republican ploy to cater to big polluters. Indeed, the General Accounting Office report recently concluded that existing federal laws do not impede border protection.

The Sierra Club's Scott Nicol describes border security as a "convenient Trojan horse" to eliminate environmental impediments to development. "The irony is that the Border Patrol has not asked for the power to ignore environmental laws but instead has sent officials to testify against the bill in Congress," says Nicol. "Environmental laws have nothing to do with our economic crisis, but the bad economy provides cover for efforts to repeal or rewrite them...Waiving environmental laws would not make our nation any safer."



Border Patrol on the Rio Grande. (by Alan Pogue)

The canoe route from Lake of the Woods to Lake Superior is as familiar to Dave and Amy Freeman as it was to the Voyageurs who used it to explore the heart of the continent more than 200 years ago. For 15 years, the Minnesotan wilderness guides have traversed the border country, a labyrinthine network of lakes, rivers and portages encompassing Voyageurs National Park, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA), and Ontario's Quetico Provincial Park. Traveling by canoe in the summer and dogsled in winter, they follow a border-hopping tradition that began with the continent's early explorers and continues today.

Now, that free-rambling tradition faces a stark challenge. This summer, the Freemans caught a glimpse of what may come. "It seemed like there was a push to have a bigger presence along the border," says Dave, who spotted dozens of new survey markers driven into bedrock along the international boundary.

At home in Ely, Minn., the Freemans heard about a bill introduced in Congress last April that, if passed, would allow the Department of Homeland Security to ignore environmental laws anywhere in the United States within 100 miles of an international border or coastline—including the Boundary Waters, as well as Big Bend, Olympic, Glacier and hundreds of other wilderness areas. HR 1505, dubbed the National Security and Federal Lands Protection Act, would waive 36 environmental protection statutes to make way for roads, walls, surveillance stations and any other infrastructure the federal government deems necessary.

Introduced by Utah Rep. Rob Bishop, who chairs the House Committee on Natural Resources, the bill would "prohibit the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture from taking action on public lands which impede border security"—broad language designed to punch enormous loopholes in the National Environmental Policy Act., the Wilderness Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and dozens of other landmark environmental laws. Congress has been down this road before. The 2005 Real ID Act waived dozens of environmental laws to clear the way for 650 miles of border walls in south Texas. The barriers carve up endangered ocelot habitat in the Lower Rio Grande National Wildlife Refuge and threaten paddlers' access to the river.

Bishop says environmental protection laws hamper security efforts, but many of those charged with securing the border don't agree. According to a 2010 report from the nonpartisan U.S. Government Accountability Office, "22 of 26 Border Patrol stations reported that land management laws had no effect on Border Patrol's overall measure of border security."

In contrast, the Department of the Interior—which includes the National Park Service—told lawmakers that HR 1505 would likely have a “significant impact” on its core mission of protecting natural and cultural resources on federally managed lands.

To groups like the Sierra Club, the bill looks suspiciously like a backhanded effort to undercut environmental laws.

Boundary Waters outfitter Mike Prom says Bishop’s bill is laughable to anyone who’s familiar with the rugged wilderness along much of the U.S.-Canada border. “What’s ridiculous is that it’s a three-day paddle for strong canoeists to get from Atikokan [the nearest road on the Canadian side] to the border,” says Prom, whose Voyageur Canoe Outfitters is on Saganaga Lake, five miles from the border. “The wilderness in itself is a fence.”

U.S. Customs and Border Protection statistics confirm Prom’s view. A mere 78 people were apprehended crossing illegally from Canada into Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota—an 860-mile stretch of border—during 2008, the last year for which records are available. In the BWCA, Prom says, park staff, outfitters and canoe-trippers play key roles in border enforcement. “We’re the guys who are living here and we know when something’s fishy,” Prom says. “We want to build a relationship with [Border Patrol] like we have with game wardens and other law enforcement officials. We can go to them if we see or hear something. That’s the best solution.”

Canoeing across the border is still fairly simple—Americans use a mail-in permit from Canada Customs and report to the nearest U.S. Customs and Immigration office in Grand Marais, Minn., on their return. Prom says that about 40 percent of his clients cross the border to paddle in Quetico Park. If crossing the border legally became more difficult, his business would likely suffer. That’s no small thing: The Boundary Waters attracts over 200,000 wilderness-seeking visitors each year, contributing a whopping \$1.6 billion to the economy of northeastern Minnesota, according to the nonprofit Friends of the Boundary Waters.

As a canoeist who has experienced the joy of roaming the seamless wilderness utopia of the BWCA and Quetico, Bishop’s bill strikes close to home. The House Natural Resources Committee, which Bishop chairs, reported HR 1505 to the floor of the House. Given the strong Republican majority and plenty of strong-on-security Blue Dogs on the Democratic side of the aisle, there’s a good chance the House will pass it. Calmer heads prevail in the Senate, but that’s scant solace. This bill is much more than political posturing. “It’s scary,” Prom says. “I give it a 50-50 chance of going through.”

Whether HR 1505 ever becomes law or not, the wilderness along the border has already changed. That was clear last summer, when Dave and Amy Freeman finally crossed home into the United States near the end of a 2,700-mile canoe expedition from Canada’s Northwest Territories to Lake Superior. They were met by a Coast Guard patrol boat manned by officers “all decked out” with firearms and combat vests. “It felt really weird, like we’d done something wrong,” Dave says. “It was like we were suspects just because we were in a canoe.”

[20120705-01](#) 07:55 Pam Re: The Little Place Where Together We Live (reply to MarthaH, above)

I was hoping all the devastation would begin after I'm long gone, like in a hundred years or so. Maybe the mid-west will be the next Sahara desert. Very scary. We should be preparing for the worst--building underground shelters, indoor fields with circulating irrigation, wind farms, etc., etc. Life is changing, whether we admit it or not. Too bad our money is going to the banks and not to the farmers

[20120705-02](#) 09:08 Art Re: The Little Place Where Together We Live (reply to MarthaH, above)

I say it's all Obama's fault.

[20120705-03](#) 09:48 SteveB Fw: Florida MoveOn Petition: Make Rick Scott Implement Obamacare!

from Florida MoveOn:

Governor Rick Scott has refused to implement the Affordable Care Act.

He turned down millions of dollars and refuses to set up insurance exchanges. The result: thousands in Florida will be deprived of medical care and the costs of providing care to people without insurance will keep getting moved onto you and me. This is illegal and immoral. We need to tell Gov. Scott to put politics aside and implement the law as he is sworn to do.

That's why I created a petition on SignOn.org to Gov. Scott, which says:

Implement the Affordable Care Act. It is the law.

Click here to add your name to this petition, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://signon.org/sign/governor-scott-accept?source=mo&id=45412-20195165-Yqjt25x>.

Thanks! –Ellen Levett

20120705-04	15:36	SteveG	Medicaid
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Question:

When I was working in Indiana Medicaid was about \$.32 state money and \$.68 federal money. Medicaid was used to provide medical services for the poor, elderly, and people with disabilities – that meant agencies/hospitals/MD's/etc. provided services and were paid by Medicaid through the state. The providers of the services paid staff, bought the necessary supplies, etc. to provide the services.

The Affordable Healthcare Act was to increase Medicaid to provide more services – the first three years entirely funded by federal money and then 90% federal and 10% state money.

Medicaid money into a state, increased Medicaid money would therefore increase purchasing within a state, increase employment within a state, and have a positive impact on the economy.

Besides politically, why would anyone or any state be against increased employment and having a positive impact on the economy?

20120705-05 16:14 Dennis Re: Medicaid (reply to SteveG, above) & Cartoon: Rick Scott

Ask the guy below politically posturing with the sign:



20120705-06 16:47 Pam Re: Medicaid (reply to SteveG, above)

Isn't Bobby Jindal (sp?) returning all the fed. money that came to his state, LA, I believe? Good move, Bobby. Throw your people under a bus while you stick to your principles.

20120705-08 16:58 SteveG Re: Medicaid (reply to Pam, above)

There are several states besides Florida and Louisiana are stating they will not take or will return the money. Scott said that he wouldn't take the money for Medicaid because it would take money away from education. I really did not follow his thinking.

20120705-10 18:06 Art Re: Medicaid (reply to SteveG, above)

SteveG: Why would anyone or any state be against increased employment and having a positive impact on the economy?

Republicans?

20120705-11 18:34 SteveG Re: Medicaid (reply to Art, above)

If increased Medicaid would increase services and increase jobs there would be increased taxes going back to the state, federal gov't, and to Medicaid – the initial investment then of the Medicaid dollars would actually be lower given the returns.

Seems like a win to me.

20120705-13 23:10 Art Re: Medicaid (reply to SteveG, above)

But not under President Obama.

<a href="#">20120705-07</a>	16:53	SteveG	"Alabama Pastor Holds 'Whites Only' Conference"
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"Alabama Pastor Holds 'Whites Only' Conference" by Ron Recinto, Yahoo! News

July 5, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/lookout/alabama-pastor-hold-whites-only-conference-162845760.html>)

A controversial pastor's conference welcoming only "white Christians" is underway in Lamar County, Ala., upsetting residents of the nearby town of Winfield in the western part of the state.

Christian Identity Ministries is holding a three-day conference for so-called "white Christians" who contend they have been treated unfairly, the Rev. Mel Lewis told local TV station WSFA. Lewis, the organizer and keynote speaker, says they have the right, like any other Americans, to worship how they wish.

Ku Klux Klan flags and white supremacy slogans surround the conference, which will conclude with a cross being set on fire Friday night. Organizers say it's not a cross-burning, but rather sacred Christian cross lighting.

"We are not breaking any laws. We're not violating any ordinances. We're bringing the Word of God to people who want it, obviously, or they wouldn't be here," Lewis told the TV station.

Lewis said of the conference-goers: "They are part of the chosen race."

The mayor of nearby Winfield said residents are upset, and the event does not represent their town in any way.

"Business people are upset. The city is upset. The city of Winfield does not condone this," Winfield Mayor Wayne Silas told another local TV station, WECT.

"It's surprising to see something like that in our town," said Tyler Cantrell. "I know it's been here in the past."

Organizers say their ministry is not a hate group and that although there is a strong KKK presence, the Klan did not sponsor the event.

<a href="#">20120705-09</a>	17:07	SteveG	Fw: Working America Action: Tell Your Senator to Stop Destroying American Jobs!
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from Working America:

Are you outraged that American small businesses that pay their fair share of taxes are subsidizing large corporations that ship jobs overseas to dodge taxes?

Small businesses create many new jobs, so if we care about seeing "Made in the USA" again, we need your help to level the playing field.

Now you can help stop big corporations from being rewarded for shipping jobs overseas and bring jobs back to America.

Please urge your two U.S. senators to vote for the Bring Jobs Home Act, which the Senate is scheduled to consider soon. Tell your senators: Stop rewarding big corporations for shipping jobs overseas:

[http://action.workingamerica.org/c/575/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action\\_KEY=4653](http://action.workingamerica.org/c/575/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=4653).

The Bring Jobs Home Act would:

- Eliminate tax loopholes that encourage them to ship manufacturing jobs and profits overseas.
- Give businesses a tax credit for bringing jobs back to America.

No more loopholes. No more coddling. No more rewarding rich corporations for shipping jobs overseas while working families who play by the rules suffer.

But make no mistake: Big corporations and their lobbyists don't want to lose their special treatment.

So it's critical that your senators hear from as many regular Americans like you as soon as possible before this all-important vote on the Bring Jobs Home Act.

Our tax code needs to reflect the interests of the middle class, not the special interests of corporate CEOs and their lobbyists.

It's not right that the rich and big corporations get special breaks and loopholes the rest of us don't, and it's about time they started living by the same rules as the rest of us.

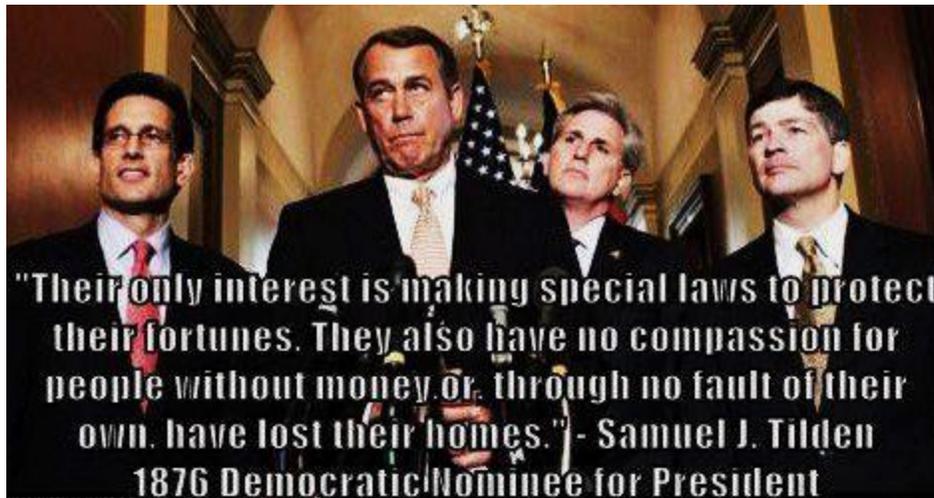
Thanks for speaking out, Christian Norton, Communications Director

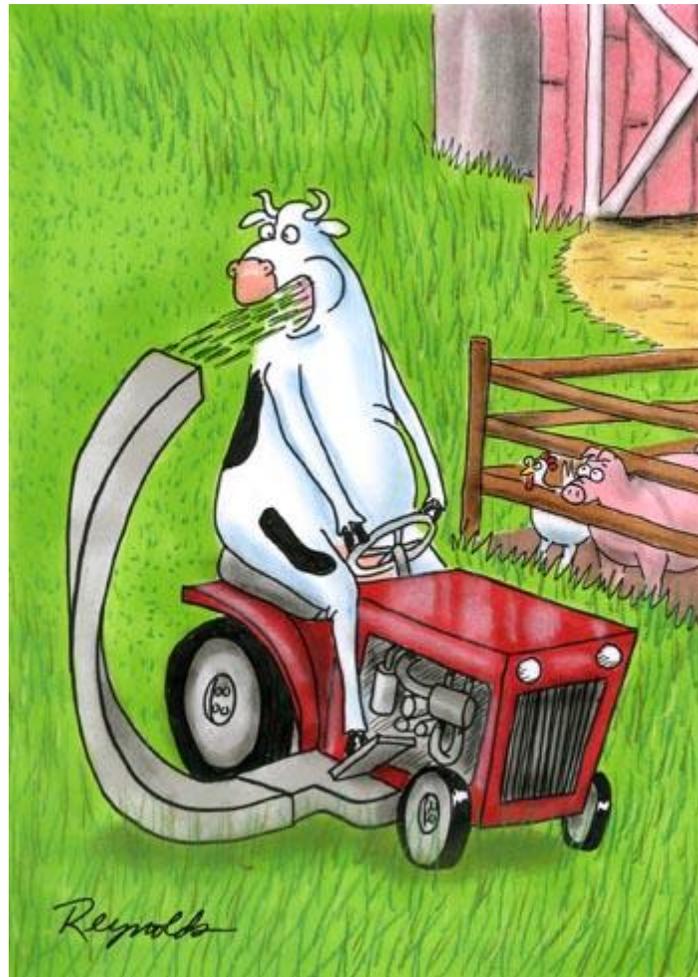
[20120705-12](#) 20:46 SteveG From the Right: Exposing & Combating Liberal Media Bias

<http://newsbusters.org/>

[20120705-14](#) 23:57 SteveG Quote: Samuel Tilden on Congressmen

Times don't change much do they?????????????





[http://www.artchive.com/web\\_gallery/F/Frances-Flora-Bond-\(Fanny\)-Palmer/Pioneers-home-in-the-American-wilderness,-1867.html](http://www.artchive.com/web_gallery/F/Frances-Flora-Bond-(Fanny)-Palmer/Pioneers-home-in-the-American-wilderness,-1867.html)

Pioneers' Home in the American Wilderness, 1867 (painting by Frances "Fanny" Flora Bond Palmer)



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

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

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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #177 — JULY 9, 2012

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

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

### **Bolivian Baking Biz**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 9, 2012)

Starting any business is exciting and demanding. Starting a legal business in the Third World can also be a bit exasperating at times. (Maybe you can say the same about an illegal business, but I wouldn't know.)

I have written in the FotM Newsletter before about the little cookie business we've been trying to launch here in Santa Cruz, a city of about 2 million people. The place we thought was right, on a great corner, turned out to be just too small. I lost my \$100 deposit, but no biggie. Then Marci's father died unexpectedly. After a while, we decided to travel some, maybe Buenos Aires, but before we left, we found the perfect cookie store/bakery for only \$350/month and two great new partners, Marci's sister Patti and Patti's daughter, Alejandra. The latter two are my sales team. Marci is in charge of cookie production.

And to answer the obvious question: No, none of us have ever run or worked in a cookie business or a bakery business, even though my name is Baker. (Though I once designed factory automation for Nabisco.) But the cookies Marci and I bake are truly fit for the gods, and I have Third World business start-up experience with my little bar/restaurant in Cul de Sac Village, St. Lucia. Business start-up conditions in St. Lucia resemble Bolivia in many respects.

In later issues, I'll detail my business plan as it develops and keep you updated on anything interesting or unusual that comes up. After the pictures (below), you'll find a couple of examples of the trials and tribulations of a Third World start-up. It's the challenges that make it interesting, right?

**Snicker-Doodle**

Gourmet Cookies

Steven W. Baker, Pres.  
C. La Riva #124  
Santa Cruz, Bolivia  
7-558-9914  
[Snicker-Doodle124@hotmail.com](mailto:Snicker-Doodle124@hotmail.com)

Anyway, what we call "The Store" is just down the street from us, four short, old central city blocks. We already love the walk to "work" from our condo. Don't need or own a car here, since a taxi anywhere is \$1-2, but walking is better. Here are some pictures. This time it's for real. (It had better be, since I'm sinking \$15,000 into it!)



The nearest corner: C. Independencia & C. La Riva. We have a statue.



A wider angle view showing more of our neighborhood. (Note paving stones.)



The blank front of "The Store" (center). Clean. A "before" picture. (Note tile roof.)



The arched doorway we needed duplicated in the same foot-thick wall.



Oscar's Doorway (see story below)

Let me say off the bat that our problems may not be (I hope!) typical of most small business start-ups, even in the Third World, but, anywhere in the world, problems are typical, so if you don't get one kind, you'll get another. Hopefully, none of them will be "killers". Here are the chronicles of a couple of our most recent "bumps".

#### Bolivian Catch-22 ("You Can't Get There from Here")

Taxes in Bolivia work very differently than in the U.S., but, for a business owner, there is an annual income tax of 25% on net income that is much like we are used to at home. I won't bore you (now) with the complexities of the rest of the system, but suffice it to say that, as a foreigner, I go out of my way to obey the laws here because I know I will be subjected to additional scrutiny. In order to pay taxes and receive tax credits, all businesses must, by law, have a special government tax I.D. number and collect a 13% tax on sales, retail or wholesale. This magical government-issued number is called a NIT.

Bolivia has a huge, thriving underground non-NIT, non-taxed economy, but we don't want to be part of that.

We need a NIT before we can buy equipment or even make the first payment to the landlord, a very patient rich lady. Otherwise, we would pay a 13% tax on thousands of dollars and not be able to claim that money as a deduction on our annual income taxes. We also need the NIT before we can obtain our city permits, and we need it so we can collect taxes and pay them from the start.

This week, we went to the NIT office with all the proper papers and waited in line for two days before they would accept our application to become lawful taxpayers. Later, some petty official came to inspect our business, to make sure it was legitimate or something, and found "The Store" empty. We weren't there at the time.

When we returned to get our NIT, we were told we couldn't have one because we didn't have a business. There was nothing going on at the location we had given them, let alone any baking. What she wanted us to do—an

official in the government tax office—was to operate illegally before she would permit us to operate legally. We were amazed. Marci told the woman that we just wanted to pay our taxes, but we got nowhere with the idiot. She kept insisting she had a new directive on the subject. The government was refusing to let us (and thousands of others?) be taxpayers!!!

Fortunately, a more reasonable mind overheard the increasingly loud conversation and, seemingly, solved the problem for us. We shall learn for sure on Monday or Tuesday, but are certain we will ultimately prevail. Joseph Heller, where are you now?

### Oscar vs. the Wall

To survive and thrive in the Third World you need people, especially if you are a Gringo. One of the most important people to know is a skilled contractor/construction guy. And we have one. His name is don Joaquín, and he's very short but very good. He built Marci's house. We're important enough to each other that we attend weddings and funerals in each other's families. The perfect man for the renovations and redecorating at "The Store". Nope. Too busy.

We needed the work fast, with no one to do it. One of the major tasks was to punch a large arched doorway through a 12" thick solid brick wall. (Why anyone ever built such a wall, I don't know, but it's obviously very old, so maybe it was built at one time to defend the city. Just kidding.) Anyway, we decided to separate out that task and find someone who could begin like yesterday. We started looking for referrals from brothers and sisters, then aunts, then friends, and finally cousins. Now, no offense to cousins, especially my own, but perhaps we went one level too far... :-)

One of Marci's cousin's came up with Oscar, who came to the store confident and happy to find work. Certainly, he would make short work of the wall, he said, in one day for about \$50, half in advance. We essentially met his price and he came the next day with another worker, only a half hour late, good by Bolivian standards. They started in with chisels and hammers. We returned a couple of times and the work seemed to be going, but slowly. We were hopeful. Oscar had instructions to call if anything came up. We were away from the work from about lunch time until 5:00. When we returned, both Oscar and his helper were gone, with the small hole left in the wall you see above—hardly a doorway. They even left all their trash on the floor. Oscar never called and, that night and the next morning, was unreachable on his cell phone. We guessed they worked until they figured they'd earned the down payment, then just left. The wall had defeated them, and so did their shame.

Now we have new guys starting Monday morning and we are hopeful. No cousins were involved! I found these guys myself, and am knocking on wood and tossing salt as I write this..

<a href="#">20120706-01</a> 07:51 MarthaH "The Ten Companies Making the Biggest Political Donations"
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"The Ten Companies Making the Biggest Political Donations" by Douglas A. McIntyre and Alexander E. M. Hess, 24/7 Wall St./Yahoo! News

July 5, 2012, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/news/the-ten-companies-making-the-biggest-political-donations.html>)

With the U.S. presidential election heating up, 24/7 Wall St. decided to examine public companies' political contributions in the current election cycle. The donations include monies given to political parties, candidates, and political action committees. The figures are staggering and have prompted many to ask whether money can buy a seat in the House, Senate, or even the presidency itself.

The Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, the Romney Victory Fund, and the Republican National Committee raised more than \$76.8 million in May alone. This one month does not include what Romney and his supporters raised for the primaries, or the growing amount he will need as the presidential election shifts into high gear. While President Obama has raised more overall, his campaign and the Democratic party only raised \$60 million for his re-election effort in May.

Political contributions, which used to go directly to candidates, now often flow to Super PACs, independent organizations that can raise money to either help or defeat a political candidate. Historically, traditional political action committees have been prohibited from accepting donations from unions and companies. However, following rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals, Super PACs are now allowed to accept unlimited donations from unions and companies, provided the money does not go directly to the campaign.

The rise of the Super PAC has opened the door to a new generation of fundraising, changing how money is used to elect candidates and increasing the amount candidates need to raise to be competitive as they seek office.

Already, there is evidence of the influence large corporations and their senior managements can have. At one point in January, Las Vegas Sands' CEO, billionaire Sheldon Adelson, gave then GOP's presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich \$5 million. Gingrich could not have remained a candidate for the Republican nomination without the money. Adelson went so far in February as to say he might pass an additional \$100 million to Gingrich and the PACs that supported him. Adelson, with his activist posture, won't likely go away this political season as Gingrich did. His total contributions this election cycle already total nearly \$12 million. Some of his contributions have been given through a tiny methadone clinic owned by him and his wife Miriam. It is perhaps not surprising then to find Las Vegas Sands, which is run by Adelson, at the top of the list of the 10 public companies with the largest political contributions.

The 10 companies on our list operate in different industries. While one might think financial firms, tethered to the federal government by the financial crisis bailout, and defense companies, which count on billions of dollars in government contracts, would dominate the list, they do not entirely. Microsoft is on the list, as is AT&T, cable company Comcast, and film studio Dreamworks. In addition to the sums each company donated and to which political party, we also added how much these companies have spent on lobbying, which is counted separately from political donations. As tempting as it is, we did not speculate on the reasons behind the companies' contributions.

Based on data collected and published by the Center for Responsive Politics on its website, [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org), 24/7 Wall St. has identified the 10 publicly traded companies contributing the most to candidates, political parties, and PACs. The Center for Responsive Politics calculates total political contributions made by either companies' PACs or employees within a given election cycle (beginning in January 1, 2011 for the 2012 cycle) that are over \$200. 24/7 Wall St. also examined lobbying expenditure data, also published by the Center for Responsive Politics. Finally, we relied on the 2012 Washington Technology Top 100 for revenue earned by the top government contractors.

These are the companies making the biggest political donations:

[Interesting that the oil companies are missing, yet they seem to get anything they want... Good article, Martha! — SteveB]

#### 1. Las Vegas Sands Corp. (LVS)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$11,738,600
- Donations to Democratic Party: 0%
- Donations to Republican Party: 100%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$30,000
- Industry: Resorts and Casinos

So far in this election cycle, political contributions from casino and resort operator Las Vegas Sands have exceeded donations from any publicly traded company, including those in the defense, financial, and telecom industries, which usually make up the nation's largest corporate political contributors. The majority of company's contributions, \$10 million, came from Sands' CEO Sheldon Adelson. In addition, Adelson and his wife Miriam made individual contributions totaling \$15 million through the Adelson Drug Clinic, a methadone clinic managed by Miriam Adelson. Most of this money has gone to outsider groups, rather than directly to candidates or parties, with the Gingrich-backing Winning Our Future PAC receiving donations of \$5 million and \$2.5 million.

#### 2. The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. (GS)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$4,769,994
- Donations to Democratic Party: 29%
- Donations to Republican Party: 71%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$1,380,000
- Industry: Diversified Investments

Over the past decade many of the largest corporate donors have been financial firms. And no financial company has contributed as much money or as consistently as Goldman Sachs, which has given \$39 million since 1989. Since 2000, Goldman has been one of the 10 largest political donors among publicly traded companies in every election cycle, a distinction unique to the company. Twice, in 2004 and 2008, the company contributed more to political campaigns than any other business in the U.S. In the 2008 election cycle, Goldman spent slightly more than \$7 million, the most it has ever contributed.

### 3. Comcast Corporation (CMCSA)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$2,774,151
- Donations to Democratic Party: 64%
- Donations to Republican Party: 36%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$4,600,000
- Industry: Cable TV

Three times in the past twelve years cable company Comcast has been one of the largest corporate political donors in the U.S. Since 2008, election cycle contributions by the company and its employees have totaled more than \$9 million. In the present cycle, contributions from Comcast have come in almost equal measure from private individuals within the company and from the organization's own PAC, called the Comcast Corporation Political Action Committee. Of particular note, Executive Vice President David Cohen was the largest direct donor at the company, contributing \$194,650.

### 4. AT&T, Inc. (T)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$2,504,219
- Donations to Democratic Party: 35%
- Donations to Republican Party: 65%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$7,050,000
- Industry: Telecom Services

Since SBC Communications bought AT&T Corp. in 2005, the newly formed AT&T, Inc. has been one of the largest political donors in the country, with more than \$18 million in contributions since the acquisition. The telecom was the largest political contributor among all public companies in 2006 and in 2010. For 2012, the board of directors approved a maximum amount of \$6.5 million in total contributions to political candidates, parties, PACs and other groups. AT&T also lobbies extensively, having spent more than \$7 million on lobbying so far in 2012 — more than any publicly traded company.

### 5. Dreamworks Animation SKG Inc. (DWA)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$2,370,150
- Donations to Democratic Party: 99%
- Donations to Republican Party: 1%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): N/A
- Industry: Movie Production

Though Dreamworks Animation is a relatively small business, with just about 2,100 full-time employees and a \$1.6 billion market capitalization, the company is an extremely large contributor to the Democratic Party and related organizations. Most of the movie production company's contributions — \$2,125,000, or 90% of donations — support outside spending groups, including PACs, instead of individual campaigns. And almost all of this support is

from CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg. He became one of the largest donors in the country after giving \$2 million to Priorities USA Action, an organization committed to the reelection of President Obama.

#### 6. Microsoft Corporation (MSFT)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$2,253,565
- Donations to Democratic Party: 68%
- Donations to Republican Party: 32%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$1,790,000
- Industry: Software

Microsoft has a long history of political contributions, donating a total of \$24 million since 1988. Only once over the last seven election cycles has the software company not been one of the 10 largest political donors among public companies. Though the company's chairman, Bill Gates, is one of the world's wealthiest individuals, he has exclusively contributed smaller, incremental donations directly to party groups and candidates, rather than providing PACs with large contributions. In addition to Gates, CEO Steve Ballmer has made more than 20 political contributions ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000. Donations from these and other employees accounted for 67% of the money raised in the present election cycle.

#### 7. Huntsman Corporation (HUN)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$2,250,389
- Donations to Democratic Party: 0%
- Donations to Republican Party: 100%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$100,000
- Industry: Specialty Chemicals

Chemical company Huntsman Corporation donated \$2.25 million to political campaigns in the present election cycle. Almost all of this came from the company's founder and chairman, Jon Huntsman Sr., whose donations made him one of the nation's largest individual contributors. In the span of four months, from October 2011 through January 2012, Huntsman donated \$2.2 million over 10 payments to Our Destiny PAC, a group that supported the presidential candidacy of his son, Jon Huntsman Jr. Roughly 99% of the donations was to Our Destiny, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, while direct contributions to candidates and parties accounted for the remaining 1%, or just \$28,350.

#### 8. Honeywell International Inc. (HON)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$2,222,605
- Donations to Democratic Party: 37%
- Donations to Republican Party: 63%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$1,750,000
- Industry: Aerospace/Defense Products and Services

In this election cycle, Honeywell has donated nearly \$2 million in contributions directly to political candidates and parties, most of which was given through the Honeywell International Political Action Committee (HIPAC), which allows employees to donate to candidates vetted by the company. In the current election cycle, no contribution to HIPAC has exceeded \$5,000 and just seven contributions were for \$2,500 or more. According to the diversified manufacturing company's corporate governance guidelines, PAC donations are intended to be the primary way in which the company is politically active. The company, however, is also very active in lobbying, having spent upwards of \$6 million annually from 2009 to 2011. Honeywell received \$725 million worth of government-contracts in fiscal year 2011.

#### 9. Bank of America Corporation (BAC)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$2,125,513
- Donations to Democratic Party: 26%

- Donations to Republican Party: 74%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$870,000
- Industry: International, Money Center Bank

Since 2004, Bank of America's political contributions have exceeded \$2 million in each election cycle. Following the bank's acquisition of financial institutions, including FleetBoston, MBNA, Countrywide Financial, and Merrill Lynch, the number of full-time employees rose to some 279,000. Donations from company's employees now make up over two-thirds of the bank's total contributions. In 2008 and 2009, the U.S. Department of the Treasury gave Bank of America \$45 billion in TARP bailout funds. In March 2012, the company agreed to pay \$11.8 billion in fines for abuses in home foreclosure proceedings.

#### 10. Lockheed Martin Corporation (LMT)

- Total contributions (2012-ongoing): \$1,927,900
- Donations to Democratic Party: 38%
- Donations to Republican Party: 62%
- Spending on lobbying (2012-ongoing): \$3,979,250
- Industry: Aerospace/Defense Products and Services

Lockheed Martin has been one of the largest political contributors of the past 20 years, and it has donated more than \$1 million in each election cycle dating back to 1996. In this current cycle, 83% of funds contributed by the company have come from the Lockheed Martin Employees Political Action Committee (LMEPAC), which has contributed \$570,000 to Democratic Party candidates and \$881,000 to Republican Party candidates. In fiscal 2011, the defense company received contracts worth over \$17 billion, more than any other company in the U.S. This was more than the government contracts received by the next two companies, Boeing and Northrop Grumman, combined.

<a href="#">20120706-02</a>	09:41	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Start Your Own Petition!
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from MoveOn:

Ever heard Margaret Mead's famous saying? "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

That's the story of MoveOn. In 1998, when a Republican Congress was focusing all its efforts on impeaching President Clinton, two people with no political experience started a simple online petition: "Censure President Clinton and Move On to Pressing Issues Facing the Nation."

They shared their petition with their friends, and within days they had hundreds of thousands of signatures. Today, MoveOn has over 7 million members—mostly folks who got involved by signing an online petition, and have stayed active in helping to fight for a progressive America.

That's why we've just launched a new website where you can start your own online petition and invite your friends to sign it. We'll send the most popular petitions to other MoveOn members to help build support for your cause. It's easy to get started—just click here:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=263094&id=45512-20195165-hjX41dx&t=1>.

Thanks! –Steven, Stefanie, Christine, Bobby, and the rest of the team

<a href="#">20120706-03</a>	14:12	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Tell the Navy to Stop Deafening & Killing Whales & Dolphins
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According to the U.S. Navy's own estimates, the use of high-frequency underwater sound for testing will deafen 15,900 whales and dolphins and kill 1,800 more over the next five years.

Whales and dolphins depend on sound to navigate and live. The Navy is required to include comments from the public on their Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), so your signature and comment on my SignOn.org petition could help stop this naval program and save the lives of these ocean creatures.

My petition says:

**Stop the killing of 1,800 whales and dolphins and the deafening of 15,900 more by ceasing the operation of the Navy's underwater sound system in the Hawaiian Islands, the California and Atlantic Coasts, and the Gulf of Mexico.**

Will you sign the petition? Click here to add your name, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=276609&id=45549-20195165-e4q5ABx&t=1>.

Thanks for your help. –Lyndia Storey

PS: The comments must be in by July 10, 2012, so please sign today.

<a href="#">20120707-01</a> 12:38 SteveB "No Future We Want Without the Ocean We Need"
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"No Future We Want Without the Ocean We Need" by Thalif Deen, NationofChange

July 6, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/no-future-we-want-without-ocean-we-need-1341636162>)



When South Korea, one of Asia's rising economic powerhouses, decided to host the international exhibition Expo 2012 in the coastal town of Yeosu, it picked a theme high on the agenda of the just-concluded Rio+20 summit on sustainable development: the living ocean.

The entire focus of Expo 2012, which completes its three month run Aug. 21, is on the protection of the world's maritime resources, including overfishing, chemical pollution and warming oceans.

And by accident or by design, the protection of the world's oceans was one of the few key success stories to come out of the Rio+20 summit in its final plan of action titled "The Future We Want" adopted by world leaders last month.

Nathalie Rey, political advisor on oceans at Greenpeace International, told IPS one of the few concrete things on the table at Rio that went beyond business-as-usual was an agreement to launch an "Oceans Rescue Plan" to protect the high seas.

"Despite the alarm bells ringing by scientists on the need to protect the oceans, Rio pressed the snooze button on agreeing to initiate a new agreement under the United Nations that would protect high seas marine life," she said.

However, the overwhelming support from the majority of countries – including Brazil (the host country), South Africa, Argentina, the Pacific Islands and members of the European Union (EU) – to give the green light for action was not enough to throw off the opposition from a handful of countries, she added.

With the United States leading the charge, and closely backed by Canada, Russia, Japan and Venezuela, these countries successfully blocked progress, Rey told IPS.

Instead of launching the agreement in Rio, governments postponed a decision for another two and a half years, booting the issue back to the U.N. General Assembly.

"Every day that we delay an oceans rescue plan, we bring our oceans ever closer to tipping points, jeopardising the health of the oceans and the future of the millions of people that depend on them for food and jobs," Rey said.

Those countries that stood in the way of progress at Rio must stop defending short-term economic interests and join the rest of the world in supporting high seas protection to benefit future generations, Rey added.

At the Expo 2012 U.N. Pavilion in Yeosu, about 20 U.N. agencies and international organisations are showcasing their collective work in helping to protect the world's oceans and maritime resources.

Under the theme "Oceans and Coasts: Connecting Our Lives, Ensuring Our Future", the United Nations is highlighting the various contributions made by marine life to humans, including biodiversity, food security and renewable energy.

"What we know is that oceans are fragile and that there are many signs that marine ecosystems are experiencing unprecedented environmental change driven by human activities and climate change," warns the United Nations.

A visit to the U.N. Pavilion ends up at a virtual "Pledge Wall" where visitors make a commitment to protect the world's oceans and coasts.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued at the end of the three-day summit in Rio Jun. 22, members of the High Seas Alliance (HSA) said the ocean received "an unprecedented level of attention during the Rio+20 Conference becoming one of the most high visibility issues and the last piece of text to be resolved".

In contrast to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, attention on the ocean was significant and led to protracted and heated debate within the negotiations.

"Some of the ocean outcomes were positive, while others fell a long way short of what marine scientists and campaigners had hoped and worked for, it was, nonetheless, a breakthrough year for the cause of conservation of 70 percent of our planet," HSA said.

Although much of the text is a re-affirmation of existing promises and commitments, Susanna Fuller, coordinator of the HSA said, "If Rio+20 achieves nothing else, it should mark the end of empty promises and the beginning of strong ocean action."

If it catalyses actual change, along with implementation of and compliance with the measures already promised, she said, then it will have achieved something.

The HSA identified six clear areas for international and national action:

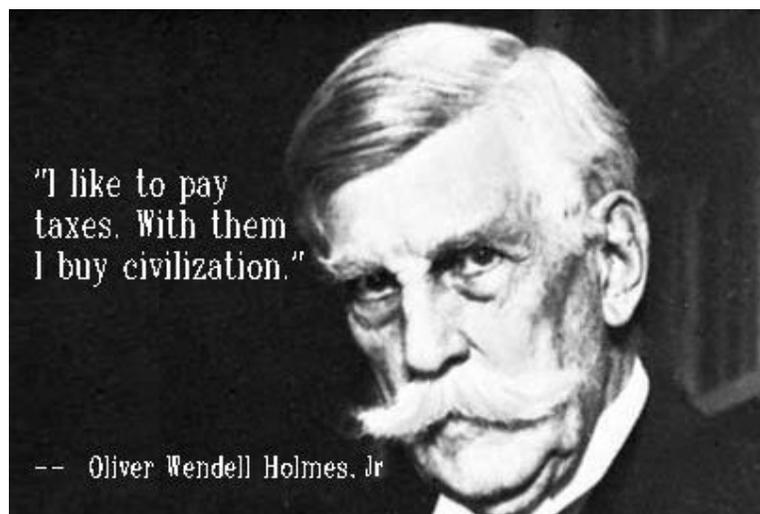
Fulfillment of the U.N. resolution to end deep sea bottom fishing; an end to overfishing, including the suspension of fishing in some cases until stocks have recovered; requirement that regional fisheries management bodies be accountable to the United Nations; national action to eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies; closure of ports to illegally obtained fish; and the establishment of national and high seas marine protected areas, including reserves.

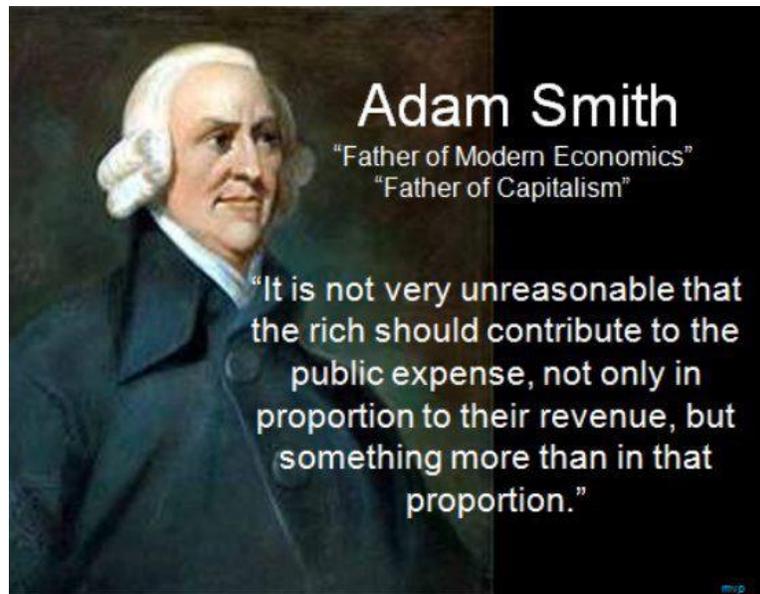
Professor Alex Rogers of the marine science body, International Programme on the State of the Ocean (IPSO), said: "There will never be the future we want without the ocean we need."

"We have to use Rio+20 to draw a line under the talking and start the doing. These decisions are all urgent, important and game changing measures which should be immediately implemented by governments as a direct response to the oceans text," he added.



20120708-02 22:28 SteveG Quote: O.W. Holmes on Taxes





"Why Adam Smith Is Important" by the Adam Smith Institute

undated, (<http://www.adamsmith.org/adam-smith>)

Adam Smith (1723-1790) was a Scottish philosopher and economist who is best known as the author of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth Of Nations* (1776), one of the most influential books ever written.

In Smith's day, people saw national wealth in terms of a country's stock of gold and silver. Importing goods from abroad was seen as damaging because it meant that this wealth must be given up to pay for them; exporting goods was seen as good because these precious metals came back.

So countries maintained a vast network of controls to prevent this metal wealth draining out – taxes on imports, subsidies to exporters, and protection for domestic industries. The same protectionism ruled at home too. Cities prevented artisans from other towns moving in to ply their trade; manufacturers and merchants petitioned the king for protective monopolies; labour-saving devices were banned as a threat to existing producers.

Smith showed that this vast 'mercantilist' edifice was folly. He argued that in a free exchange, both sides became better off. Quite simply, nobody would trade if they expected to lose from it. The buyer profits, just as the seller does. Imports are just as valuable to us as our exports are to others.

Because trade benefits both sides, said Smith, it increases our prosperity just as surely as do agriculture or manufacture. A nation's wealth is not the quantity of gold and silver in its vaults, but the total of its production and commerce – what today we would call gross national product.

*The Wealth of Nations* deeply influenced the politicians of the time and provided the intellectual foundation of the great nineteenth-century era of free trade and economic expansion. Even today the common sense of free trade is accepted worldwide, whatever the practical difficulties of achieving it.

Smith had a radical, fresh understanding of how human societies actually work. He realised that social harmony would emerge naturally as human beings struggled to find ways to live and work with each other. Freedom and self-interest need not produce chaos, but – as if guided by an 'invisible hand' – order and concord. And as people

struck bargains with each other, the nation's resources would be drawn automatically to the ends and purposes that people valued most highly.

So a prospering social order did not need to be controlled by kings and ministers. It would grow, organically, as a product of human nature. It would grow best in an open, competitive marketplace, with free exchange and without coercion.

*The Wealth of Nations* was therefore not just a study of economics but a survey of human social psychology: about life, welfare, political institutions, the law, and morality.

It was not *The Wealth Of Nations* which first made Smith's reputation, but a book on ethics, *The Theory Of Moral Sentiments*. Once again, Smith looks to social psychology to discover the foundation of human morality. Human beings have a natural 'sympathy' for others. That enables them to understand how to moderate their behaviour and preserve harmony. And this is the basis of our moral ideas and moral actions.

Some people wonder how the self-interest that drives Smith's economic system can be squared with the 'sympathy' that drive his ethics. Here is his answer:

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it.

In other words, human nature is complex. We are self-interested, but we also like to help others too. Smith's books are complementary: they show how self-interested human beings can live together peacefully (in the moral sphere) and productively (in the economic).

*The Wealth Of Nations* is no endorsement of economic greed, as sometimes caricatured. Self-interest may drive the economy, but that is a force for good – provided there is genuinely open competition and no coercion. And it is the poor that economic and social freedom benefits most.

20120708-04	14:00	MarthaH	"Obama Health Care Law Divides Supreme Court Conservatives"
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Dang!

"Obama Health Care Law Divides Supreme Court Conservatives" by Haylee Korn/David Jackson, *USA Today*

July 8, 2012, (<http://www.wltx.com/news/national/article/193348/142/Obama-Health-Care-Law-Divides-Supreme-Court-Conservatives>)

President Obama's health care law has divided the political world from the moment it was proposed.

Now it appears to have divided the Supreme Court's conservative bloc.

Jan Crawford of CBS News writes that "discord at the Supreme Court is deep and personal" after Chief Justice John Roberts switched his vote and upheld the Obama health care law, drawing criticism from conservative colleagues.

"This discord is going to affect this Court for a long time -- and no one has any idea how it will be resolved," writes Crawford, who detailed Roberts' vote switch last week after leaks from within the normally secretive Supreme Court.

Roberts' opinion on the health care law drawing a critical dissent from fellow conservatives Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito.

We can't help but think this is sweet music to Obama, who has clashed with the court's conservative majority over a high-profile campaign finance case and other issues.

Writes Crawford of the high court's troubles:

Conservatives feel a sense of betrayal. They feel that Roberts changed his mind for the wrong reasons.

If Roberts had been with the liberals from the beginning, sources tell me that would have been one thing; but switching his position - and relatively late in the process - infuriated the conservatives.

Of course it's unclear why he switched. He may have been focused solely on the law. But that is not what some of his colleagues believe. ...

It's not unheard of for the Court to erupt into conflict; Bush v. Gore in 2000 was a famous example. But some people say you would have to go back nearly 70 years to see this kind of tension, and almost bitterness, that now exists among the justices.

<a href="#">20120708-05</a>	14:59	Art	Re: "Obama Health Care Law Divides Supreme Court Conservatives" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I think Roberts like Huntsman finally just looked around at who and what he was associating with and said, "No more".

I simply cannot comprehend how any thinking adult can justify the tea party idiots and their like.

<a href="#">20120708-06</a>	16:59	Marci	Fw: 1960's Hits Renamed for Older Baby Boomers
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[I don't know anything about any of these, I'm too young to know what this is about. —SteveB]

### 1960 Hits Renamed

Some of the artists of the 60's are revising their hits with new lyrics to accommodate aging baby boomers who can remember doing the "Limbo" as if it were yesterday.

They include:

Bobby Darin --- Splish, Splash, I Was Havin' a Flash

Herman's Hermits --- Mrs. Brown, You've Got a Lovely Walker

Ringo Starr --- I Get By With a Little Help From Depends

The Bee Gees --- How Can You Mend a Broken Hip?

Roberta Flack --- The First Time Ever I Forgot Your Face

Johnny Nash --- I Can't See Clearly Now

Paul Simon --- Fifty Ways to Lose Your Liver

The Commodores --- Once, Twice, Three Times to the Bathroom

Procol Harum --- A Whiter Shade of Hair

Leo Sayer --- You Make Me Feel Like Napping

The Temptations --- Papa's Got a Kidney Stone

Abba --- Denture Queen

Tony Orlando --- Knock 3 Times on the Ceiling if You Hear Me Fall

Helen Reddy --- I Am Woman; Hear Me Snore

Leslie Gore --- It's My Procedure, and I'll Cry if I Want To

And Last, but NOT least:

Willie Nelson --- On the Commode Again

20120708-07	22:53	SteveG	Video: "The American People Are Angry"
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Anyone disagree with Bernie?

I don't care if you are left, right, conservative, liberal, progressive, independent, socialist, republican, or democrat you owe it to yourself and to the country to spend a half hour listening and then recheck your thinking.

Video: "The American People Are Angry" by Sen. Bernie Sanders

June 27, 2012, ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Y-u0UnKZ\\_U&sns=fb](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Y-u0UnKZ_U&sns=fb))

20120708-08 23:59 SteveB

Photo: "Hark, now hear the sailors cry, / Smell the sea, and feel the sky /  
Let your soul & spirit fly, into the mystic..." — Van Morrison

[http://www.sky-wallpaper.com/free-wallpaper/free\\_wallpapers\\_43135.html](http://www.sky-wallpaper.com/free-wallpaper/free_wallpapers_43135.html)



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #178 — JULY 10, 2012

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

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

### **He's Hiding Something!**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 10, 2012)

Can someone please explain to me how Mitt Romney is not the slimiest, sleaziest, most dishonest con-artist to ever actually run for President, barring, perhaps, Richard Nixon?

"Mitt's Gray Areas" by Paul Krugman, *The New York Times*

July 8, 2012, ([http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/09/opinion/krugman-mitts-gray-areas.html?\\_r=4&ref=opinion](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/09/opinion/krugman-mitts-gray-areas.html?_r=4&ref=opinion))

Once upon a time a rich man named Romney ran for president. He could claim, with considerable justice, that his wealth was well-earned, that he had in fact done a lot to create good jobs for American workers. Nonetheless, the public understandably wanted to know both how he had grown so rich and what he had done with his wealth; he obliged by releasing extensive information about his financial history.

But that was 44 years ago. And the contrast between George Romney and his son Mitt — a contrast both in their business careers and in their willingness to come clean about their financial affairs — dramatically illustrates how America has changed.

Right now there's a lot of buzz about an investigative report in the magazine *Vanity Fair* highlighting the "gray areas" in the younger Romney's finances. More about that in a minute. First, however, let's talk about what it meant to get rich in George Romney's America, and how it compares with the situation today.

What did George Romney do for a living? The answer was straightforward: he ran an auto company, American Motors. And he ran it very well indeed: at a time when the Big Three were still fixated on big cars and ignoring the rising tide of imports, Romney shifted to a highly successful focus on compacts that restored the company's fortunes, not to mention that it saved the jobs of many American workers.

It also made him personally rich. We know this because during his run for president, he released not one, not two, but 12 years' worth of tax returns, explaining that any one year might just be a fluke. From those returns we learn that in his best year, 1960, he made more than \$660,000 — the equivalent, adjusted for inflation, of around \$5 million today.

Those returns also reveal that he paid a lot of taxes — 36 percent of his income in 1960, 37 percent over the whole period. This was in part because, as one report at the time put it, he "seldom took advantage of loopholes to escape his tax obligations." But it was also because taxes on the rich were much higher in the '50s and '60s than

they are now. In fact, once you include the indirect effects of taxes on corporate profits, taxes on the very rich were about twice current levels.

Now fast-forward to Romney the Younger, who made even more money during his business career at Bain Capital. Unlike his father, however, Mr. Romney didn't get rich by producing things people wanted to buy; he made his fortune through financial engineering that seems in many cases to have left workers worse off, and in some cases driven companies into bankruptcy.

And there's another contrast: George Romney was open and forthcoming about what he did with his wealth, but Mitt Romney has largely kept his finances secret. He did, grudgingly, release one year's tax return plus an estimate for the next year, showing that he paid a startlingly low tax rate. But as the Vanity Fair report points out, we're still very much in the dark about his investments, some of which seem very mysterious.

Put it this way: Has there ever before been a major presidential candidate who had a multimillion-dollar Swiss bank account, plus tens of millions invested in the Cayman Islands, famed as a tax haven?

And then there's his Individual Retirement Account. I.R.A.'s are supposed to be a tax-advantaged vehicle for middle-class savers, with annual contributions limited to a few thousand dollars a year. Yet somehow Mr. Romney ended up with an account worth between \$20 million and \$101 million.

There are legitimate ways that could have happened, just as there are potentially legitimate reasons for parking large sums of money in overseas tax havens. But we don't know which if any of those legitimate reasons apply in Mr. Romney's case — because he has refused to release any details about his finances. This refusal to come clean suggests that he and his advisers believe that voters would be less likely to support him if they knew the truth about his investments.

And that is precisely why voters have a right to know that truth. Elections are, after all, in part about the perceived character of the candidates — and what a man does with his money is surely a major clue to his character.

One more thing: To the extent that Mr. Romney has a coherent policy agenda, it involves cutting tax rates on the very rich — which are already, as I said, down by about half since his father's time. Surely a man advocating such policies has a special obligation to level with voters about the extent to which he would personally benefit from the policies he advocates.

Yet obviously that's something Mr. Romney doesn't want to do. And unless he does reveal the truth about his investments, we can only assume that he's hiding something seriously damaging.

20120709-01	08:20	SteveB	Fw: Black & White
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[Source of original email unknown but appreciated. Written by a Brit? –SteveB]

Go all the way to the bottom past the pictures... I think you'll enjoy it. Whoever wrote this must have been my next door neighbor because it totally described my childhood to a 'T.' Hope you enjoy it.

Black and White (Under age 40? You won't understand.)

You could hardly see for all the snow. Spread the rabbit ears as far as they go. Pull a chair up to the TV set, 'Good Night, David. Good Night, Chet.'

My Mom used to cut chicken, chop eggs and spread mayo on the same cutting board with the same knife and no bleach, but we didn't seem to get food poisoning.

My Mom used to defrost hamburger on the counter and I used to eat it raw sometimes, too. Our school sandwiches were wrapped in wax paper in a brown paper bag, not in ice pack coolers, but I can't remember getting e. coli.

Almost all of us would have rather gone swimming in the lake instead of a pristine pool (talk about boring), no beach closures then.

The term cell phone would have conjured up a phone in a jail cell, and a pager was the school PA system.

We all took gym, not PE...and risked permanent injury with a pair of high top Ked's (only worn in gym) instead of having cross-training athletic shoes with air cushion soles and built in light reflectors. I can't recall any injuries but they must have happened because they tell us how much safer we are now.

Flunking gym was not an option... even for stupid kids! I guess PE must be much harder than gym.

Speaking of school, we all said prayers and sang the national anthem, and staying in detention after school caught all sorts of negative attention.

We must have had horribly damaged psyches. What an archaic health system we had then. Remember school nurses? Ours wore a hat and everything.

I thought that I was supposed to accomplish something before I was allowed to be proud of myself.

I just can't recall how bored we were without computers, Play Station, Nintendo, X-box or 270 digital TV cable stations.

Oh yeah... and where was the Benadryl and sterilization kit when I got that bee sting? I could have been killed!

We played 'king of the hill' on piles of gravel left on vacant construction sites, and when we got hurt, Mom pulled out the 48-cent bottle of mercurochrome (kids liked it better because it didn't sting like iodine did) and then we got our butt spanked.

Now it's a trip to the emergency room, followed by a 10-day dose of a \$49 bottle of antibiotics, and then Mom calls the attorney to sue the contractor for leaving a horribly vicious pile of gravel where it was such a threat.

We didn't act up at the neighbor's house either; because if we did we got our butt spanked there and then we got our butt spanked again when we got home.

I recall Donny Reynolds from next door coming over and doing his tricks on the front stoop, just before he fell off.

Little did his Mom know that she could have owned our house.

Instead, she picked him up and swatted him for being such a goof. It was a neighbourhood run amuck.

To top it off, not a single person I knew had ever been told that they were from a dysfunctional family.

How could we possibly have known that?

We needed to get into group therapy and anger management classes.

We were obviously so duped by so many societal ills, that we didn't even notice that the entire country wasn't taking Prozac!

How did we ever survive?

LOVE TO ALL OF US WHO SHARED THIS ERA; AND TO ALL WHO DIDN'T, SORRY FOR WHAT YOU MISSED. I WOULDN'T TRADE IT FOR ANYTHING!

Pass this to someone and remember that life's most simple pleasures are very often the best.

[20120709-02](#) 10:40 Art Re: Bolivian Baking Biz (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #177)

Good stuff. Another reason to put Bolivia on my bucket list!

[20120709-04](#) 11:12 Phil Re: Bolivian Baking Biz (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #177)

There is a bakery in Anderson that has been baking really, really good cookies for years - 20 or more. They do other baked goods, but cookies are their specialty. They ship all over the world. They might be a source for you—[zinszercookies.com](http://zinszercookies.com).

Hope they can help you. Good luck with the business.

[20120709-10](#) 23:05 SteveB Re: Bolivian Baking Biz (reply to Phil, above)

Thanks, Phil!

They must have been one of the early cookie companies. I don't know when Mrs. Fields started, but I didn't know about them more than about 20 years ago, I don't think.

It's good to know cookies can be a long-term, seemingly profitable business.

We are hopeful and having fun. Thanks for the encouragement. I like the cookie website and will keep this information at hand.

[20120709-11](#) 23:10 SteveB Bolivian Baking Biz—Saved by Jesus!

Well, not the original Jesus, but a modern-day construction worker who came in and saved the day yesterday. Where Oscar was daunted, Jesus was courageous. (And he also brought the right tools!) He and his two helpers cut the arched doorway in no time, and should finish that and several smaller chores today. Then the painting can start, possibly tomorrow, though we also have to run the city gas-line from the street to our big oven and little water heater.

We still didn't get the all-important NIT yesterday, but it is supposed to happen this afternoon. Our savior's name at the government NIT office is Christian.

[20120709-03](#) 10:52 Pam Re: Video: "The American People Are Angry" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #177)

This is a great speech, and Sanders is a great man. He's fighting the good fight, and I hope the American people are listening to what he has to say. If the uber-rich get even more entrenched in their wealth and power, I fear the great American experiment is about to fizzle out. Today's college students are focused on getting a well-paying job, buying a nice car, and owning the latest iPad. When their parents can no longer afford to support them in the style to which they have become accustomed, and they can't find a job that will pay for a cheap apartment, they will, I hope, wake up to the truth of their situation, figure they have nothing to lose, and rebel again the system. For the past decade or so, the best and brightest young minds have gone into finance. We need some of those Harvard and Princeton kids to raise a little rabble. I would really hate to see a return to the 'sixties. I don't think of that as a wonderful time at all. But I believe the time has come around again when the young need to stimulate

their social consciences. It's happened before; it can happen again. Bernie Sanders can't do it alone. I just hope his health is robust.

[20120709-05](#) 11:12 SteveG Re: Video: "The American People Are Angry" (reply to Pam, above)

Listening is a lost art. People seem to intent on talking, expressing their own views and do not take enough time to listen and process what is being said. Unless we can open at a minimum a two way dialogue, the status quo remains. We need to get back to hearing the words, having a common understanding of the words said, and progressing from there. Empathy, a word I first became aware of in the 7th grade, has become lost in development of a new language: WTF, LOL, LMAO, IMHO, etc.

[20120709-06](#) 13:28 SteveB "Rick Perry Announces Texas Won't Implement the Affordable Care Act, Leaving Millions of Texans Uninsured"

Texas leads the nation once again! God must have given specific instructions...

"Rick Perry Announces Texas Won't Implement the Affordable Care Act, Leaving Millions of Texans Uninsured" by Ben Sherman, Think Progress/NationofChange

July 9, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/rick-perry-announces-texas-won-t-implement-affordable-care-act-leaving-millions-texans-uninsured-134>)

Early Monday morning, Gov. Rick Perry (R) announced that Texas won't create a state insurance exchange nor accept expanded Medicaid funds outlined in the Affordable Care Act. In a statement, Perry said, "Neither a 'state' exchange nor the expansion of Medicaid under this program would result in better 'patient protection' or in more 'affordable care.'"

Perry's announcement is an especially harmful move because Texas will benefit more from the Affordable Care Act than any other state. **Texas was recently ranked worst in the country for health care delivery by the federal Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, scoring "weak" or "very weak" in nine of 12 categories.** Perry's office discounted the study as overly broad, and has argued that Texans' real problem is personal health choices, not lack of health insurance.

More than 25 percent of Texans – 6,234,900 people – are uninsured, the highest rate in the nation. After five years of the Affordable Care Act, Texas would be able to insure 1,798,314 more Americans under the Medicaid expansion alone – more than any state in the nation. Setting up a state health insurance exchange would enable the remaining millions of uninsured Texans to purchase affordable health insurance. Thus, despite Perry's claims, implementing the Affordable Care Act results in better patient protection and in more affordable care.

Though the Supreme Court ruled that states can reject the expanded Medicaid funds without any penalty, any state that refuses to set up a health insurance exchange will have one set up for them by the federal government. This doesn't lessen the impact of Perry's decision to deny 1.8 million uninsured Texans the opportunity to be covered under Medicaid. He joins other Republican governors across the country in pledging to or considering turning down \$258 billion in Medicaid funds and leaving 9.2 million Americans uninsured. A new study by the Brookings Institution found that states led by Republican governors have the most uninsured Americans, making political moves like Perry's particularly harmful to Americans' health.

[Oops! –SteveB]

[20120709-07](#) 14:38 SteveB From the Right: "Gingrich: President Obama Must Tell 'Grotesque Lies' to Get Re-Elected"

Republicans: Fear mongering as a way of life...

"Gingrich: President Obama Must Tell 'Grotesque Lies' to Get Re-Elected" by Audrey Hudson, *Human Events*

July 9, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/07/09/newt-gingrich-obama-must-tell-grotesque-lies-to-get-re-elected/>)

The keys to victory for Mitt Romney this fall against President Barack Obama are amassing a formidable campaign war chest, projecting an unshakable confidence in the country's future and marshalling conservative fear and anger.

That's according to former Republican presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich, who told editors and reporters at Human Events Monday that voters are fearful of economic uncertainty and are looking for a leader to put the country on solid footing.

"He has to find a confidence about the future so that when you hear him in his convention speech, it should be more about the world after Obama — not about Obama — but about why this is going to be better, why this is going to work," Gingrich said.

"He needs to find a way of focusing the fear and the anger of the conservative movement back on Obama and on the Democratic Senate," the former House Speaker from Georgia said.

Obama is already spending a lot of money and using up his ammunition against Romney early in the contest, putting the president in a vulnerable position, Gingrich said.

"Obama is pounding on Romney right now with desperation, and he's not breaking through. He ain't above 50," Gingrich said, in reference to recent polls. Rasmussen's daily presidential tracking poll showed Mitt Romney at 46 percent and President Obama at 45 percent.

In 2008, Obama beat former Republican presidential nominee John McCain in Indiana because he outspent him 10-1, and used the same successful strategy of massive spending to win in Montana and North Carolina. And, Gingrich pointed out that Romney raised \$4.3 million in the 24-hour period following the Supreme Court decision in favor of ObamaCare.

"All of a sudden you are going to have a campaign around Labor Day in which the president and his allies I think are going to be outspent three-to-one. Money does matter — Romney is going to come into the general election with massive more resources," Gingrich said.

Romney needs to consistently remind voters, that no matter what they think of the former Massachusetts governor, he has not caused them the pain Obama has, Gingrich said.

"You have a lot of people out there who are both angry with Obama and frightened of him," Gingrich said.

"The fact is, Barack Obama cannot tell the truth and get elected. Our goal should be to get to the point in early September where the average person goes, 'oh that's just another Obama lie.'"

"The only way he has a prayer of getting reelected ... is to tell grotesque lies," Gingrich said.

This probably explains a number of things:



from Daily Kos:

Please sign our petition asking Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to introduce legislation requiring corporations to get opt-in permission from shareholders in order to use company resources for political purposes.

Over 55,000 have already signed, but we need as many as possible before delivering the signatures.

Please, click here to add your name:

[http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=165](http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=165).

Keep fighting, Markos Moulitsas, Publisher, Daily Kos



*"Before we discuss destroying the competition, screwing our customers, and laughing all the way to the bank, let's begin this meeting with a prayer."*



<http://www.stat.ualberta.ca/people/schmu/walk2.html>

Out on the wiley, windy moors the stone path comes in handy. (Byron Schmuland)



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

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #179 — JULY 11, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Taxes: Not a 'Bad Word'**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 11, 2012)

Ya, I know! The cry-babies most able to pay more taxes, who have received windfalls year after year, have given taxes a very bad name. But let's be brutally honest: the alternative is no America (as we know it). Maybe that's what the rich Regressives really want...?

TAX RATES ON THE TOP TAX BRACKET	
1918	77%
1921	73%
1923	56%
1924	46%
1925	28%
1929	24%
<b>GREAT DEPRESSION</b>	
1945	94%
1955	91%
1965	70%
1975	70%
1980	70%
1982	50%
1987	38%
1993	38%
2003	35%
2008	<b>GREAT RECESSION</b>
2011	"EFFECTIVE" TAX RATE--17% AND STILL DECLINING.
2012	<b>GREAT DEPRESSION II?</b>

"Facts About Obama's Tax Proposal" by Robert Reich, Slate

July 10, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/07/10/the\\_truth\\_about\\_obamas\\_tax\\_proposal/](http://www.salon.com/2012/07/10/the_truth_about_obamas_tax_proposal/))

To hear the media report it, President Obama is proposing a tax increase on wealthy Americans. That's misleading at best. He's proposing that everyone receive a continuation of the Bush tax cuts on the first \$250,000 of their incomes. Any dollars they earn in excess of \$250,000 will be taxed at the old Clinton-era rates.

Get it? Everyone is treated exactly the same. Everyone gets a one-year extension of the Bush tax cut on the first \$250,000 of income. No "class warfare."

Yet regressive Republicans want Americans to believe differently. The editorial writers of the Wall Street Journal say the President wants to extend the Bush tax cuts only "for some taxpayers." They urge House Republicans to extend the Bush tax cuts for "everyone" and thereby put Senate Democrats on the spot by "forcing them to choose between extending rates for everyone and accepting Mr. Obama's tax increase."

Pure demagoguery.

Regressives also want Americans to think the President's proposal would hurt "tens of thousands of job-creating businesses," as the Journal puts it.

More baloney.

A small business owner earning \$251,000 would pay the Bush rate on the first \$250,000 and the old Clinton rate on just \$1,000.

Congress's Joint Tax Committee estimates that in 2013 about 940,000 taxpayers would have enough business income to break through the \$250,000 ceiling – and, again, they'd pay additional taxes only on dollars earned above \$250,000.

All told, fewer than 3 percent of small business owners would even reach the \$250,000 threshold.

A third lie is Obama's proposal will "increase uncertainty and further retard investment and job creation," as the Journal puts it.

Don't believe it.

The real reason businesses aren't creating more jobs is American consumers — whose purchases constitute 70 percent of U.S. economic activity — don't have the money to buy more, and they can no longer borrow as before. Businesses won't invest and hire without consumers. Even as executive pay keeps rising, the median wage keeps dropping — largely because businesses keep whacking payrolls.

The only people who'd have to pay substantially more taxes under Obama's proposal are those earning far in excess of \$250,000 — and they aren't small businesses. They're the fattest of corpulent felines. Their spending will not be affected if their official tax rate rises from the Bush 35 percent to the Bill Clinton 39.6 percent.

In fact, most of these people's income is unearned — capital gains and dividends that are now taxed at only 15 percent. If the Bush tax cuts expire on schedule, the capital gains rate would return to the same 20 percent it was under Bill Clinton (the Affordable Care Act would add a 3.8 percent surcharge).

Funny, I don't remember the economy suffering under Bill Clinton's taxes. I was in Clinton's cabinet, so perhaps my memory is self-serving. But I seem to recall that the economy generated 22 million net new jobs during those years, unemployment fell dramatically, almost everyone's income grew, poverty dropped, and the economy soared. In fact, it was the strongest and best economy we've had in anyone's memory.

In sum: Don't fall for these big lies — Obama wants to extend the Bush tax cut "only for some people," small businesses will be badly hit, businesses won't hire because of uncertainty this proposal would create, or the Clinton-era tax levels crippled the economy,

A ton of corporate and billionaire money is behind these lies and others like them, as well as formidable mouthpieces of the regressive right such as Rupert Murdoch's Wall Street Journal editorial page.

The truth is already a casualty of this election year. That's why it's so important for you to spread it.



"Obama Nailed It on Taxes, Except for One Itty-Bitty Part..." by Jared Burnstein, Slate

July 10, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/07/10/obama\\_on\\_taxes\\_salpart/](http://www.salon.com/2012/07/10/obama_on_taxes_salpart/))

I understand that politics trumps policy right now, such that targeting your opponent looks more important than targeting, say, the economy. But you might think that when there's a large tax cut on the table targeted at the bottom 98% of households, partisans would be able to agree. Of course, you'd be wrong.

Some background: think of the Bush tax cuts — isn't it a bit strange that we're still tussling about these tax cuts enacted a decade ago? — in two pieces: the upper income part that affect households above \$250K, and the rest, typically called the middle-class part. The full set expires at the end of this year. No one wants the middle-class part to expire and the R's want to extend them all.

Some numbers: extending the middle-class part for one year costs \$150 billion — the President said yesterday that if they expire, taxes for middle-income families will go up \$2,200 next year. The price tag for extending the whole package next year is \$210 billion, so the upper-income part alone is \$60 billion for one year. The ten year numbers are: \$3.3 trillion for the whole package, and about \$2.5t for the middle-class part.

Why not just extend them all? Because we simply won't achieve a sustainable fiscal outlook without new revenues in the mix, and the right place to start, both in terms of fairness and economics, is the top of the income scale. The upper-income cuts return \$850 billion over 10 years to the Treasury, simply by reverting to the top rates under Clinton, when the wealthy fared perfectly well, the budget balanced, and growth was much stronger and more broadly shared than in the Bush years.

The fact that these upper-income increases hit only the top 2% — and that's considering both households and small businesses — is also important. They won't hurt the wobbly recovery, as these folks are not income constrained in the first place. I don't expect them to like one bit that their after-tax incomes will be a bit lower under this plan, but the history of such tax changes suggests they'll continue to work, spend, and save in much the same way they would anyway, so I don't expect any macroeconomic impact.

Why not just let them all expire? Because a tax increase to all federal income-tax paying households is both economically worrisome — it would create too much fiscal drag right now — and too much to ask of middle- and upper-middle income families whose incomes were largely stagnant in the 2000s, fell sharply in the recession, and, unlike those at the top of the scale, still don't have much to show for the recovery.

There may well come a time when taxes need to rise below this artificial line in the sand of \$250,000, but it isn't now.

I know the odds of reasonable action here are non-existent, but it would be incredibly refreshingly for policy makers to say, "hey, we all go on about all the uncertainty created by the looming tax expirations. Since we agree on 98% of them, let's extend the middle-class part for a year and keep fighting over the rest."

Finally, if the Pres is being so reasonable here, what's the itty-bit part with which I disagree? It's this, from his remarks on this yesterday:

[Once we extend the middle-class part]...then next year, once the election is over, things have calmed down a little bit, based on what the American people have said and how they've spoken during that election, we'll be in a good position to decide how to reform our entire tax code in a simple way that lowers rates and helps our economy grow, and brings down our deficit..

This is too close to the tax reform trap for my comfort, where you start by agreeing on lower rates and then move on to base broadeners to make up the revenues you lose from lower rates. The risk, of course, is that you get a lot more of the former (lower rates) than the latter (broader base) and we're back in the same soup we're in now.

Also, the logic here is that we'll raise rates now (on folks above \$250K) and lower them next year — which isn't exactly the distant future. I don't think it's good for households, businesses, and economic stability to go tweaking tax rates up and down with that kind of frequency. Let's set them where they need to be, using the Clinton rates as a good template, and leave 'em there.

20120710-01 07:12 MarthaH "The GOP's Crime Against Voters"
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[This is a vitally important article for election year. I hope everyone will read it. –SteveB]

"The GOP's Crime Against Voters" by Eugene Robinson, *The Washington Post*

July 9, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/eugene-robinson-the-gops-crime-against-voters/2012/07/09/gJQAopcZW\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/eugene-robinson-the-gops-crime-against-voters/2012/07/09/gJQAopcZW_story.html))

Spare us any more hooey about "preventing fraud" and "protecting the integrity of the ballot box." The Republican-led crusade for voter ID laws has been revealed as a cynical ploy to disenfranchise as many likely Democratic voters as possible, with poor people and minorities the main targets.

Recent developments in Pennsylvania — one of more than a dozen states where voting rights are under siege — should be enough to erase any lingering doubt: The GOP is trying to pull off an unconscionable crime.

Late last month, the majority leader of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Mike Turzai, was addressing a meeting of the Republican State Committee. He must have felt at ease among friends because he spoke a bit too frankly.

Ticking off a list of recent accomplishments by the GOP-controlled Legislature, he mentioned the new law forcing voters to show a photo ID at the polls. Said Turzai, with more than a hint of triumph: "Voter ID, which is gonna allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania — done."

That's not even slightly ambiguous. The Democratic presidential candidate has won Pennsylvania in every election since 1992. But now the top Republican in the Pennsylvania House is boasting that, because of the new voter ID law, Mitt Romney will defy history and capture the state's 20 electoral votes in November.

Why on earth would Turzai imagine such a result? After all, the law applies to all voters, regardless of party affiliation. It is ostensibly meant only to safeguard the electoral process and eliminate fraud. Why would a neutral law have such partisan impact?

Thanks to figures released last week by state officials, we know the answer. It turns out that 758,939 registered Pennsylvania voters do not have the most easily obtained and widely used photo ID, a state driver's license. That's an incredible 9.2 percent of the registered electorate.

Most of the voters without driver's licenses live in urban areas — which just happen to be places where poor people and minorities tend to live. More than 185,000 of these voters without licenses, about one-fourth of the total, live in Philadelphia — which just happens to be a Democratic stronghold where African Americans are a plurality.

Could suppressing the urban minority vote really give Pennsylvania to Romney? It probably wouldn't have made a difference in 2008, when Obama trounced John McCain handily. But the statewide contest is often much closer — and turnout in Philadelphia typically is key to a Democratic candidate's prospects. In 2004, for example, John Kerry's margin over George W. Bush in the state was a mere 144,248.

Perhaps these numbers are so intoxicating that Turzai forgot the cover story about how voter ID is supposed to protect the franchise rather than selectively restrict it. His spokesman later explained that Turzai meant "the Republican presidential candidate will be on a more even keel thanks to voter ID" — in other words, there will be a level playing field once the new law eliminates all that pesky voter fraud.

That might be reasonable, except for one fact: There's no fraud to eliminate.

Prodded by GOP political activists, the Justice Department under Bush conducted an extensive, nationwide, five-year probe of voter fraud — and ended up convicting a grand total of 86 individuals, according to a 2007 New York Times report. Most of the cases involved felons or immigrants who may not have known they were ineligible to vote.

Not one case involved the only kind of fraud that voter ID could theoretically prevent: impersonation of a registered voter by someone else. Pennsylvania and other voter ID states have, in essence, passed laws that will be highly effective in eradicating unicorns.

The Pennsylvania law and others like it are under attack in the courts; this week, a federal three-judge panel in Washington is hearing arguments on Texas's year-old law, with a ruling expected next month. Meanwhile, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, a conservative Republican, broke with orthodoxy last week and vetoed bills that would have toughened an existing voter ID statute. Maybe the tide is turning. If it doesn't, these laws will potentially disenfranchise or discourage millions of qualified voters.

In a previous column, I wrote that voter ID was a solution in search of a problem. I was wrong: The problem seems to be that too many of the wrong kind of voters — low-income, urban, African American, Hispanic — are showing up at the polls. Republican candidates have been vowing to "take back" the country. Now we know how.

<a href="#">20120710-10</a>	23:10	Jim	Video: "Why America's Not the Greatest Country" (Jeff Daniels in HBO's "Newsroom")
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The most honest three & a half minutes of television, EVER...

HBO has just launched a new TV series called Newsroom. This brief clip is being referred to as the most honest three and a half minutes of TV. You may or may not agree. Nonetheless, it is worth your time...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16K6m3Ua2nw>

[AWESOME! –SteveB]

<a href="#">20120710-02</a>	11:10	SteveB	Debate: "American Exceptionalism & the Difference Between the Left & the Right" & "Leftists Continue to Misuse & Undermine American Exceptionalism"
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There are ideas which bear positive fruits, then there are the ideas which are destructive to our wellbeing as a nation...

View from the Right: "[American Exceptionalism and the Difference Between the Left and the Right](#)" by Jarrett Stepman, *Human Events*

July 10, 2012. (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/07/10/view-from-the-right-american-exceptionalism-and-the-difference-between-the-left-and-the-right/>)

The debate over the meaning and value of American exceptionalism is perhaps the greatest political battle of our time, and the national divide echoes the deep schism that tore America apart during the Civil War.

On taxes, government spending, regulation, public unions, federalism and adherence to the Constitution, there is currently an unbridgeable gulf between the Left and Right, creating gridlock in the American political system.

America's current problems can't be solved by simply taking the middle ground and creating a few "grand compromises". That strategy didn't work in the lead up to the Civil War, and it won't save the country today. The path to repair will come down to two competing philosophies, two visions for how the world and the United States are and should be.

My debate with Dr. Eli Zaretsky demonstrates at least several opinions in the ongoing debate between the Left and the Right, and, of course, do not represent all opinions on our respective sides.

While Zaretsky states correctly that America has had deep and lingering problems that have had to be corrected in American history, he both misidentifies the source of America's course correction and dismisses the critical elements that made America not only unique, but great.

Zaretsky states that the origin of the American Left is not in socialism, but in "equality". I believe that history proves that the Left does not believe in the natural rights doctrine that "all men are created equal," the principle that became the ideological underpinning of abolition, and that has no qualms about grievously violating the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God."

Zaretsky claims that there are three "crises" in which America has stumbled, and has needed the Left to be "fixed". The first crisis was that America was born with slavery still in existence, the second was the Great Depression and the third was in the cultural upheavals of the 1960's.

The New Deal programs of Roosevelt did not bring America out of the Great Depression. America suffered through over a decade of economic stagnation and backtracking until the end of WWII, and the economy only really turned around when government spending was cut and taxes were slashed.

The New Left of the 1960's not only became deeply anti-American in its outlook, but also paved the way for general cultural erosion. Crime rates, drug usage and out of wedlock births have soared, contributing to increased poverty and incarceration.

I would argue, however, that in the first of three crises, the crisis of the house divided, is in fact where Zaretsky's argument for the Left is most wildly off. It was American exceptionalism and American values that were based upon the timeless ideals of the founding that led to the emancipation of all slaves.

The United States of America was born with the institution of slavery still intact in many states, predominantly in the South where it was most lucrative and entrenched.

Zaretsky argues that the Left upholds the idea of "equality," rather than mere government control, and that this is the primary connection of the Left to the abolitionist movement. However, I contend that Zaretsky is not only wrong, but that the Left is ultimately disconnected to the belief in equality espoused by the founding generation, as well as that expounded upon by anti-slavery advocates before the Civil War and the Great Emancipator during the war, Abraham Lincoln.

Part of the foundation of American exceptionalism comes from the country's true founding document written and adopted in 1776, the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson said of the Declaration in 1825, "Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion."

The Declaration of Independence is based on the natural rights philosophy that is encapsulated in its most famous line:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Zaretsky makes the claim that Americans in the antebellum era were "adamant in their insistence that their freedom to own slaves was being interfered with by an intrusive federal government."

Human bondage in America was not sustained or exacerbated by limited, Constitutional government or free markets, far from it; slavery was sustained by the entirely closed command economy of the Southern plantation and extremely repressive pro-slavery laws on a widespread and eventually national scale. There were state laws that tightly controlled the ability of slaveholders from emancipating slaves even if they wished to do so.

For instance, the Virginia plantation owner, John Randolph of Roanoke was forced to emancipate his slaves after his death in Pennsylvania, because state laws prohibited emancipation in his state of residence.

Restrictive laws regarding slaves were not just instituted on the local or state level, but on the federal as well.

The Fugitive Slave Act, passed during the Compromise of 1850, forced government officials living in free-states to return slaves to their masters under threat of fine, and ensured that citizens aiding a slave's escape could be fined or imprisoned.

Senator Charles Sumner from Massachusetts explained the power of government to uphold slavery and the abomination of the national pro-slavery law in his brilliant "Freedom National; Slavery Sectional" speech delivered in 1852.

Sumner said "there is no national fountain from which slavery can be derived," and that slavery could not be sustained except "by virtue of positive sanction."

To prove that pro-slavery laws were a violation of the natural rights ideas of the founding, Sumner quoted the Supreme Court of Mississippi, "Slavery is condemned by reason, and the laws of nature. It exists and can exist only through municipal regulations."

In his speech, Sumner praised the American founders and American principles, attacking the politicians of his era for turning the American system upside down.

While Sumner and many other abolitionists may have been radical in speech and tone, their values were based in the traditional, natural rights ideas of the American founding and in the Christian morality that had always been present in American society.

This evidence runs counter to Zaretsky's assertion that Abraham Lincoln adopted the phrase "all men are created equal" from "an abstract proclamation of natural rights philosophy, which no one thought contradicted slavery."

The belief that natural rights extended to all mankind did not just belong to Lincoln and men of his era, but reached back to Americans before the separation of the American colonies from England.

James Otis of Massachusetts, who is credited with being the originator of the phrase, "taxation without representation is tyranny," said in 1764:

Does it follow that 'tis right to enslave a man because he is black? Nothing better can be said in favor of a trade that is the most shocking violation of the law of nature, has a direct tendency to diminish the idea of the inestimable value of liberty, and makes every dealer in it a tyrant, from the director of an African company to the petty chapman in needles and pins on the unhappy coast. It is a clear truth that those who every day barter away other men's liberty will soon care little for their own.

This anti-slavery argument was made on the eve of the founding of the United States. These ideas were not based simply on Lincoln's reconstituting and hijacking the phrase "all men are created equal," as Zaretsky claims, but were an expression of the revolutionary ideas of America's founding.

The Left, in contrast, rejects natural rights in favor of "positive rights" or "social justice". Positive rights obligate, or more correctly, force people to give to and work for others. These are not liberties grounded in the natural rights philosophy of the Founding Fathers, abolitionists or Lincoln, but in the class conscious, race conscious and collectivist ideologies of Karl Marx and, ironically, the ultimate defender of slavery, John C. Calhoun.

The Left does not believe that truths, like the equality of mankind or the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, are immutable and unchangeable.

For instance, the Left today extols the idea of "color-blind racism," which sounds like an oxymoron to most conservatives, but is based on the idea that those that do not support policies such as affirmative action, that "level" the economic and social distinctions between the races, are racists either consciously or subconsciously.

In his 1997 book, *Color-Blind Racism*, Leslie Carr states where "color-blind ideology" comes from. Leslie wrote, "The roots of color-blind ideology are found in classical liberal doctrines of freedom—the freedom of the individual created by the free capitalist marketplace."

Carr wrote:

But why is affirmative action so offensive to conservatives? It recognizes race, they say. But race is a term that ideologically disguises nation. What liberals are really saying whether they like it or not, is that to effectively bring the African American nation under control they had to weaken it, split it, and disperse it... Someday, African Americans will be so thoroughly dispersed throughout White America that no trace of them as a people will remain... It was not unlike President Lincoln's vision of the dispersal and colonization of the freed slaves.

Does the idea of "color-blind racism" echo the spirit of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, in which he declared that he wished that his children could live in an America where people could be judged by the "content of their character" instead of their skin color?

The Left, and indeed a faction of the Right (especially the European Right), views the idea of "nation" in the same way that Europeans do. Nationhood and nationalism are based on ethnic solidarity and history rather than principles and an allegiance to a shared system of governance, ideas and values.

The traditional American view of "nationalism" is based more on the civic republicanism of the founding, which stressed duty, loyalty and service to the nation as a whole, not just an ethnic group or "faction" as Madison described in Federalist No. 10.

America's founders attempted to build a love of country based on patriotism and not a loyalty to a specific "faction" or ethnic group. This is what conservatives talk about when they say they believe in "assimilation".

The racial, "color-blind racism" ideas of the Left are twisting and opposing the American values espoused by the Founding Fathers in the same way that the fathers of the Confederacy did.

The vice president of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens, once said that the Founders were wrong in that "They rested upon the assumption of the equality of the races. This was an error... Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite of this idea, its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man."

Stephens based his "truth" not on reason or religion, but on "science," modernity and progress.

If there is a modern day movement that can be compared to the abolitionists, it is the pro-life, anti-abortion advocates on the right who argue that abortion is not just morally wrong from the standpoint of religion, but also a violation of the natural rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

While there is a rational argument to be made that a fertilized egg is not exactly equal to a fully grown adult human life, it is also more than reasonable to state that human life, deserving of all the protections that natural rights should entail, begins well before natural birth takes place. That of course, only applies if one believes in natural rights as the Founding Fathers and abolitionists did.

Just as slaveholders cried foul that their "Southern Rights" had been under assault by "agitators" in the North, pro-abortion advocates on the Left try to shut down debate on the issue and make a national policy out of a practice that many Americans find abhorrent.

Just as Chief Justice Roger Taney tried to inaccurately codify slavery and the principle of inequality between the races in the Constitution in the Dred Scott v. Sanford case, so too have those on the Left tried to twist the meaning of the Constitution in the Griswold v. Connecticut and then the Roe v. Wade cases that created a "right to privacy" and nationalized abortion through the "emanations" and "penumbras" of the Bill of Rights.

The best example on the Left who opposes natural rights and rhetorically aligns herself with slaveholders, is Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Tex.).

Channeling Calhoun's speech about how slavery was a "positive good" for black Americans, Rep. Jackson Lee has called abortion a "needed action" and insisted on calling the heartbeats of fetuses "sounds" as to avoid acknowledging the possibility that fetuses are human life at all.

As the Left blames all of America's sins on so called "reactionary" conservatives, it would not be all that shocking if, 100 years from now, abortion is seen as a great moral stain on America and pinned American exceptionalism and conservatism.

Today there is a need for embracing American exceptionalism instead of rejecting it, especially in America's current age of crisis.

I defined American exceptionalism as close to the generally accepted originator of the term, Alexis De Tocqueville, would have: The prevailing American values of private property, popular government, laissez faire economics, individualism and natural rights. These are the values that conservatives have tried to uphold in their attempt to restore and strengthen America.

Dr. Zaretsky is wrong in his charge that the Right has not achieved a "critical election" and that Ronald Reagan did not create a permanent shift in American politics during the 1980's in the same way that Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt did.

Reagan did not have a perfect record and did not accomplish everything he wanted to during his election, however, there was undoubtedly a hard pivot in how Americans viewed government and Reagan laid the foundation for future conservative victories.

Conservative successes included the Kemp-Roth tax reform of the 1980's, which was the largest tax cut in American history, welfare reform and a balanced budget in the 1990's that a Republican dominated Congress forced upon a Democratic president, Bill Clinton, who said that "the era of big government is over," and a whole host of other reforms to limit the size of government taking place at the state level.

These conservative ideas stemmed from the belief that America was succumbing to what De Tocqueville called "soft despotism" which he said, "Does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd."

It was the road to serfdom as described by the conservative thinker Freidrich Hayek that conservatives were trying to steer America away from. Conservatives have tried to ensure that America remains the land of opportunity, not the land entitlements.

For instance, Zaretsky argued that Republicans and establishment Democrats built a "two-tier society" in which people who can "buy private education, health care, housing and security do so, while those who cannot are shunted into second-class, degraded public services, at best." However, it is conservatives that have lead the charge to get poor and disadvantaged children out of the "degraded" public schools and into better systems of education through the school choice and charter school ideas first introduced by conservative economist, Milton Friedman. The Left continues to support the "adult interest" of public unions instead of fighting to give American youth a better chance in life.

Dr. Zaretsky is right about one thing, America needs a change in direction. However, it isn't a change toward the soft despotism offered by modern liberalism, and it certainly isn't in the complete violation of natural rights offered by the hard-Left, it is a change toward embracing the doctrines of individual liberty, limited constitutional government and true equality based in natural rights that were passed down by the Founding Fathers.

View from the Left: "[American Exceptionalism & the Difference Between the Left & the Right](#)" by Eli Zaretsky, *Human Events*

July 10, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/07/10/view-from-the-left-american-exceptionalism-and-the-difference-between-the-left-and-the-right/>)

In "Leftists Continue to Misuse and Undermine American Exceptionalism," (*Human Events*, May 23, see below) Jarrett Stepman argues that American exceptionalism is one of the "primary pivot points that now divides the political right and left in America."

As an example of the Left, Stepman cites Barack Obama, who pooh-poohed American exceptionalism, explaining that most peoples think their nation is exceptional. As a second example, Stepman discusses my recent book, *Why America Needs a Left: A Historical Argument*, which contends that the Left's essential contribution to American history has come during periods of crisis, such as the slavery crisis, the Great Depression and the Nineteen Sixties.

As Stepman interprets my argument, the Left revels in hard times, since difficulties validate the Left's negative views of America, whereas the Right takes hard times as minor disruptions in a blessed and buoyant history, never abandoning its conviction that America has a special or exceptional destiny.

Stepman is right in one respect: we need a discussion of American exceptionalism. However, he systematically muddies the waters by equivocating as to the meaning of his key terms: "American exceptionalism," "the Left," and "crisis." Let us start with the first.

Stepman confuses two different meanings of the term "exceptional." The first meaning is that the United States is *sui generis*: it does not conform to the usual pattern of national development, especially because it had no feudalism. This was the meaning that Alexis De Tocqueville intended when, as Stepman notes, he first coined the phrase. The second meaning is that America is "exceptional" in the sense of superior, providing an example for others, the famous "city upon a hill." This was not at all what Tocqueville meant. On the contrary, this second meaning stands in tension with the first: a nation that is *sui generis* cannot set an example for others since it does not share their history (for example, feudalism), hasn't faced comparable problems (for example the problem of a peasantry or of a working class), and can't point the way to common solutions (for example, democratic socialism). All a *sui generis* nation can do is lecture others from on high.

Tocqueville's 1831 definition, which Stepman does not cite in full, clearly implies the first meaning. He writes: "The position of the Americans is ... quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one. Their strictly Puritanical origin, their exclusively commercial habits, even the country they inhabit, which seems to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts, the proximity of Europe, which allows them to neglect these pursuits without relapsing into barbarism, a thousand special causes, of which I have only been able to point out the most important, have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects. His passions, his wants, his education, and everything about him seem to unite in drawing the native of the United States earthward; his religion alone bids him turn, from time to time, a transient and distracted glance to heaven. Let us cease, then, to view all democratic nations under the example of the American people." Tocqueville's meaning could not be clearer. America is an exception. It does not provide the template for others. In no sense does Tocqueville suggest that America is "exceptional" in the sense of superior.

Of course, many people do believe that America is exceptional in the sense of superior. There are multiple sources for this view but the most important is millennial Protestantism. As Ernst Tuveson explained in a brilliant but now largely forgotten 1968 work, *Redeemer Nation*, the founding and subsequent history of America has deep roots in the Protestant Reformation, more even than in the Enlightenment. Whereas medieval Christians argued that what Augustine called "the city of man"—namely society and history—was irredeemably corrupt, some Protestant currents, notably the Puritans, believed that the advent of the millennium could be hastened by human action and "Bible politics."

America became the repository of this idea, a "redeemer nation." Seeing itself as all-good, it identified the devil (who governs the city of man) with a series of political enemies understood as absolute evil. These included the Catholic Pope, slave-holders, Nazis, Communists and, no doubt, Islamo-fascists. I will return to this second meaning of American exceptionalism, namely superiority, but for now let me say that while it has inspired some good, it has blinded the American people to their own faults as well as to the virtues of others.

Let us turn now to the second term around which Stepman equivocates: "the Left." As we shall see, understanding this term will move us toward a more satisfying conception of American exceptionalism. Nonetheless here again, Stepman runs together two different meanings.

One meaning of "Left" is rejection of the market, belief in government, in a word, socialism. The second meaning, the one I argue for in my book, is equality, which may or may not express itself through the market or through government. Stepman wants to affirm American exceptionalism when it comes to the Right, but he refuses to consider the possibility that there was anything exceptional about the American Left. For him, the American Left is nothing more than a copy of the European Left. By way of contrast, I argue in my book that the American Left is *sui generis*—it includes not only socialism but also anti-slavery, feminism, gay liberation and other movements insofar as they have sought to advance the nation's core egalitarian values. Let me explain.

Stepman's antagonism to the Left draws on another famous citation from Tocqueville, one that Friedrich Hayek also favored. According to Tocqueville, "Democracy extends the sphere of individual freedom, socialism restricts it. Democracy attaches all possible value to each man; socialism makes each man a mere agent, a mere number. Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word: equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude." Though artfully phrased, Tocqueville's contrast between individual freedom and socialism is ill-founded and misleading.

The only sort of freedom that is worth defending is *equal* freedom. Unequal freedom is simply domination, the freedom of some to dominate others. Freedom without equality means the freedom to own slaves, the freedom to monopolize markets and exclude others from competing, the freedom to maintain unsafe working conditions or to sell contaminated food or drugs, the freedom to refuse to serve blacks at one's lunch counter, and the freedom to harass female subordinates sexually. The reason America has needed a Left has been to clarify the difference between unequal and equal freedom. Let me illustrate this by discussing the abolitionists, whom I consider the first American left.

Probably all Americans of the early nineteenth century believed in freedom, and none more so than the slave-owners. They were adamant in their insistence that their freedom to own slaves was being interfered with by an intrusive federal government. "Get off my back," they regularly exclaimed. But, of course, it was *unequal freedom* to which the slaveholders were committed. Even the large number of Northerners who opposed slavery was not committed to equal freedom, when it came to race. They wanted to encourage the long-term decline of slavery or to return the slaves to Africa, but they regarded free Negroes as inferior, and aimed to keep them segregated. By contrast, the abolitionists sought to integrate schools, abolish the "Negro pew" in churches, and encourage interracial marriages.

Through their commitment to *equal* freedom, the abolitionists began the process of turning the national self-congratulation and boosterism that had followed the Revolution into a *project*: not that America was exceptional in the sense of superior, but that it could *become* so by ending slavery and accepting the ex-slaves as fully equal fellow citizens. Lincoln adopted the abolitionist ideas in his Gettysburg Address when he turned the Declaration of Independence's words that "all men are created equal," from an abstract proclamation of natural rights philosophy, which no one thought contradicted slavery, into a goal, that of achieving the equality of all of our citizens, something which did not yet exist. The concept of a project— what the philosopher Richard Rorty called "achieving our country"— is the real basis of American patriotism, precisely because it is self-critical: if we are superior, it is because we realize how far we fall short.

The same project was evident in the second American left, the populists, communalists, socialists and radicals who came to the fore during the New Deal and World War Two. Just as slavery would have been abolished without the abolitionists, so a modern state, with regulatory and fiscal capacities, would have been created without the leftists of the 1930s. But the Left helped give the new state the meaning of social equality: a guaranteed minimum in regard to jobs, health care, housing, education and other necessities. The New Deal in general, and Franklin Roosevelt in particular, are often credited with "saving" liberal democracy, meaning that when other nations turned to fascist and communist solutions, the United States held fast to its founding ideals. This is true, but it is not the whole truth. The liberal ideal of freedom survived the Great Depression only by appropriating principles of social equality pioneered by the Left.

Finally, in the 1960s, when a New Left and a New Right arose, both were fiercely committed to individual liberty. What distinguished them, however, was that the New Right criticized and stood aloof from the Civil Rights movement, defending such bogies as "states rights" and opposition to "intrusive government." The New Left, by contrast, built on the abolitionist and New Deal precedents, to advance the country's exceptional project of achieving equal freedom. Just as the Left of the thirties added the ideal of social equality to the ideal of racial equality, so the New Left added the ideal of equal participation.

Understanding the United States as having the project of equal freedom, rather than as already having achieved it, has moved us toward a better conception of American exceptionalism. But we still need to clarify a third term: "crisis." Here, again, there are two possible meanings. In the usual sense, a crisis is an economic downturn or a war from which the nation needs to recover. By contrast, my book reserves the term "crisis" for turning points in the

nation's history, periods during which fundamental decisions have to be made as to the society's future direction. It is because we are at such a turning point today that we once again need a Left.

By contrast, Stepman's timeless celebration of private property and markets will get us nowhere. He fails to acknowledge that, in the thirty-two years since the election of Reagan, the Right has failed to close the deal with the American people in the way that Lincoln closed the deal, and Franklin Roosevelt closed the deal.

The Right has never achieved what political scientists call "a critical election," one that creates a new majority, as 1860 created a new majority and as 1932 created a new majority. And the reason for this is simple. Whatever achievements the Right can claim as the champion of freedom, it is *unequal freedom* that it has championed. Not just the Republican Party, but the Clinton-Obama Democratic Party as well, has built and sought to legitimize a two-tier society in which people who can buy private education, health care, housing and security do so, while those who cannot are shunted into second-class, degraded public services, at best.

Far from acting in an exceptional manner, we have thereby missed three great opportunities to offer international leadership: in 1989, 2001 and 2008. We have created a security state that allows the President to kill American citizens at will, which eviscerates the most long-standing and fundamental basis of individual liberty, whether equal or unequal: *habeas corpus*. Any nation that allows that is in danger of losing its soul.

Finally, we can see why we need a Left by considering the disappointments of the Obama Presidency. In his campaign for the nomination, Obama said that we needed to move in a genuinely new direction, but in his Presidency he failed to lead. For example, he defined our economic goal as *recovery* from the financial near-collapse, obscuring the fact that the crisis was structural, and require us to rethink the whole basis of our government. Equally important, he described his goals in terms of some non-existent "center" or "compromise," excluding "extremists" of both Left and Right. By way of contrast, I believe that what the country needs is precisely the kind of debate that Jarrett Stepman and I are having now.

"Leftists Continue to Misuse and Undermine American Exceptionalism" by Jarrett Stepman , *Human Events*

May 23, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/05/23/leftists-continue-to-misuse-and-undermine-american-exceptionalism/>)

The idea of American exceptionalism has become one of the primary pivot points that now divides the political right and left in America. What was once an established and accepted truth about the American people has come under assault by liberal radicals who would rather deny even the existence of American exceptionalism.

President Barack Obama, when asked whether or not he believes in American exceptionalism, said, "I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism."

*Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne penned a column on May 10 called "Obama's American Exceptionalism" in which he said that conservatives were taking a "Western European path of austerity.

"The Obama administration, by contrast, has chosen a distinctly American path that kept austerity at bay," Dionne said.

Dionne went on to say. "Obama's thoroughly moderate economic policies are an excellent example of a practical American exceptionalism."

Although Obama tends to guard his words in order to sound moderate, many of his liberal allies have no qualms about directly attacking the idea of American exceptionalism.

Another recent article by Terrence McCoy in *The Atlantic* took a different track and claimed that the term "American exceptionalism" originated with Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, not the frequently attributed early 19th century French observer of American life, Alexis de Tocqueville.

All of these liberal statements on American exceptionalism are either based on an ignorance of its origin or an egregious abuse of its meaning.

Tocqueville is often given credit as the originator of the term because he wrote in his famous treatise *Democracy in America*, "The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one."

Stalin said of the American Communist Party, that it had the "heresy of American exceptionalism," which is how McCoy tries to tie the origination of the idea of American exceptionalism to the brutal Soviet dictator instead of Tocqueville.

McCoy wrote that this was meant not as a compliment but a ridicule of America for its "abnormalities." McCoy then goes on to claim that the idea of American exceptionalism became big "a few years ago."

However, the argument of McCoy on other liberals is merely over the etymology of the phrase instead of the ideas behind it.

Leftists clearly mean to denigrate American exceptionalism as a fictitious term created by conservative Republicans a few decades ago, instead of a timeless characteristic of the American experience.

American exceptionalism has even earlier roots than Tocqueville. American colonist John Winthrop gave a speech in 1630 called "A Model of Christian Charity," also known as the "Shining City Upon a Hill" speech, in which he explained the special conditions of the New World and its incredible potential for the future.

"For we must consider that we shall be as a **city upon a hill**. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world," Winthrop said.

That Stalin meant to use the term "American exceptionalism" as a way to ridicule America should really be considered a positive instead of a negative. It was American exceptionalism that prevented communism from ever taking hold in the United States; the values of private property, popular government, individualism, and natural rights prevailed over the statist and collectivist ideas that took hold of countries throughout the world.

Tocqueville said, "Democracy extends the sphere of individual freedom, socialism restricts it. Democracy attaches all possible value to each man; socialism makes each man a mere agent, a mere number. Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word: equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude."

As America was burgeoning into a powerful new country in the early 19th century, observers inside and out of the United States began to understand and express the ideas underpinning American exceptionalism.

The great American orator and statesman, Daniel Webster, who was originally from New Hampshire, but spent most of his political career in Massachusetts, described the special American character in a few famous orations.

In the Plymouth Oration in 1820, celebrating the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock, Webster said, "They left behind them the whole feudal policy of the other continent. The character of their political institutions was determined by the fundamental laws respecting property."

In this statement Webster was describing how Americans left behind feudal and aristocratic institutions in Europe. There were no great class divides in America even before it became a country.

Webster further described the historical American character in his Bunker Hill Address in 1825:

They were accustomed to representative bodies and the forms of free government; they understood the doctrine of the division of power among different branches, and the necessity of checks on each. The

character of our countrymen, moreover, was sober, moral, and religious; and there was, little in the change to shock their feelings of justice and humanity, or even to disturb an honest prejudice. We had no domestic throne to overturn, no privileged orders to cast down, no violent changes of property to encounter. In the American Revolution, no man sought or wished for more than to defend and enjoy his own.

All of the statements and observations about what construes American exceptionalism originated in the 18th century, were expounded upon and advanced in the 19th century and became the most critical factors in saving Western Civilization in the 20th century.

These American values are antithetical to the left-wing agenda, something educated liberals are keenly aware of. That is why they must discredit and subvert them at every opportunity, hence the attempted connection of American exceptionalism to Stalin.

In an article titled, "Why America Needs the Left", written by Eli Zaretsky, a professor of history at the New School for Social Research in New York City, the author reveals the values that are at the heart of American liberalism and why they are out of step with the most deeply held American values.

Zaretsky wrote, "The American Left inherited the idea of a crisis from Marx, not just the kind of 'economic crisis' that characterized the Great Depression and that afflicts the country today, but also broader crises reflecting Marx's influence on modern historiography."

For the American left to survive in America there must be a crisis, according to Zaretsky. This is the only way that Americans will even consider abandoning their values. He claims that the three crises were "slavery, corporate capitalism and hyper-globalization."

The connection to the left and abolition is fairly shaky, as the people that were most extreme in trying to free the slaves were either extremely religious, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, or considered the Constitution to be foundation for undoing the "peculiar institution" of slavery forever, such as in the case of men like former slave Frederick Douglas.

Modern parallels to abolitionists can probably more accurately be drawn to pro-life advocates calling for the end of abortion or Tea Party protestors demanding a return to the Constitution. These people are by no means a part of the liberal coalition in America.

The French writer, J. Hector St. John De Crevecoeur, who became a naturalized American citizen, was the first to write about the character of the American people after the nation was formed.

Crevecoeur wrote in his *Letters from an American Farmer* in 1782, "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world," he continued, "The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, self-interest; can it want a stronger allurements?"

What Crevecoeur was explaining was the American dream; the idea that every American has a chance to succeed based on their own merit, and that equality is achieved by unleashing humanity to pursue what is in their own self-interest. He is describing the melting pot that has been, and always should be, a part of the American ethic.

Embracing the idea of the melting pot is how America achieves racial and ethnic equality without losing its most deeply held values, something leftists have no desire to retain or restore.

Liberals have to fight traditional American ideals, because they stand in the way of the leftist radical agenda. They need to promote the idea of the "salad bowl" so that racial division continues, which is their only hope of creating the kind of class conflict and envy that allowed other countries to succumb to leftist ideology.

Counter to what E.J. Dionne claimed in his column, American exceptionalism does not stem from the policies of the president or any other governmental institution for that matter.

American exceptionalism is based on traditional characteristics embraced by American culture and described by Tocqueville: liberty, equality of opportunity, individualism, popular government and laissez-faire economics. It runs counter to collectivism, top-down government control, a massive and unaccountable bureaucratic-administrative state and equality of outcome.

These are the collectivist and statist ideologies that America resisted and defeated in the 20th century. It is why liberals must claw and scratch at every opportunity to undermine America's very old, yet radically different values.

20120710-03	12:37	SteveB	"How to Think"
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"How to Think" by Chris Hedges, Truthdig/NationofChange

July 10, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-think-1341922195>)

Cultures that endure carve out a protected space for those who question and challenge national myths. Artists, writers, poets, activists, journalists, philosophers, dancers, musicians, actors, directors and renegades must be tolerated if a culture is to be pulled back from disaster. Members of this intellectual and artistic class, who are usually not welcome in the stultifying halls of academia where mediocrity is triumphant, serve as prophets. They are dismissed, or labeled by the power elites as subversive, because they do not embrace collective self-worship. They force us to confront unexamined assumptions, ones that, if not challenged, lead to destruction. They expose the ruling elites as hollow and corrupt. They articulate the senselessness of a system built on the ideology of endless growth, ceaseless exploitation and constant expansion. They warn us about the poison of careerism and the futility of the search for happiness in the accumulation of wealth. They make us face ourselves, from the bitter reality of slavery and Jim Crow to the genocidal slaughter of Native Americans to the repression of working-class movements to the atrocities carried out in imperial wars to the assault on the ecosystem. They make us unsure of our virtue. They challenge the easy clichés we use to describe the nation—the land of the free, the greatest country on earth, the beacon of liberty—to expose our darkness, crimes and ignorance. They offer the possibility of a life of meaning and the capacity for transformation.

Human societies see what they want to see. They create national myths of identity out of a composite of historical events and fantasy. They ignore unpleasant facts that intrude on self-glorification. They trust naively in the notion of linear progress and in assured national dominance. This is what nationalism is about—lies. And if a culture loses its ability for thought and expression, if it effectively silences dissident voices, if it retreats into what Sigmund Freud called "screen memories," those reassuring mixtures of fact and fiction, it dies. It surrenders its internal mechanism for puncturing self-delusion. It makes war on beauty and truth. It abolishes the sacred. It turns education into vocational training. It leaves us blind. And this is what has occurred. We are lost at sea in a great tempest. We do not know where we are. We do not know where we are going. And we do not know what is about to happen to us.

The psychoanalyst John Steiner calls this phenomenon "turning a blind eye." He notes that often we have access to adequate knowledge but because it is unpleasant and disconcerting we choose unconsciously, and sometimes consciously, to ignore it. He uses the Oedipus story to make his point. He argued that Oedipus, Jocasta, Creon and the "blind" Tiresias grasped the truth, that Oedipus had killed his father and married his mother as prophesized, but they colluded to ignore it. We too, Steiner wrote, turn a blind eye to the dangers that confront us, despite the plethora of evidence that if we do not radically reconfigure our relationships to each other and the natural world, catastrophe is assured. Steiner describes a psychological truth that is deeply frightening.

I saw this collective capacity for self-delusion among the urban elites in Sarajevo and later Pristina during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. These educated elites steadfastly refused to believe that war was possible although acts of violence by competing armed bands had already begun to tear at the social fabric. At night you could hear gunfire. But they were the last to "know." And we are equally self-deluded. The physical evidence of national decay—the crumbling infrastructures, the abandoned factories and other workplaces, the rows of gutted warehouses, the closure of libraries, schools, fire stations and post offices—that we physically see, is, in fact, unseen. The rapid and terrifying deterioration of the ecosystem, evidenced in soaring temperatures, droughts, floods, crop destruction, freak storms, melting ice caps and rising sea levels, are met blankly with Steiner's "blind eye."

Oedipus, at the end of Sophocles' play, cuts out his eyes and with his daughter Antigone as a guide wanders the countryside. Once king, he becomes a stranger in a strange country. He dies, in Antigone's words, "in a foreign land, but one he yearned for."

William Shakespeare in *King Lear* plays on the same theme of sight and sightlessness. Those with eyes in *King Lear* are unable to see. Gloucester, whose eyes are gouged out, finds in his blindness a revealed truth. "I have no way, and therefore want no eyes," Gloucester says after he is blinded. "I stumbled when I saw." When Lear banishes his only loyal daughter, Cordelia, whom he accuses of not loving him enough, he shouts: "Out of my sight!" To which Kent replies:

See better, Lear, and let me remain the true blank of thine eye.

The story of Lear, like the story of Oedipus, is about the attainment of this inner vision. It is about morality and intellect that are blinded by empiricism and sight. It is about understanding that the human imagination is, as William Blake saw, our manifestation of Eternity. "Love without imagination is eternal death."

The Shakespearean scholar Harold Goddard wrote: "The imagination is not a faculty for the creation of illusion; it is the faculty by which alone man apprehends reality. The 'illusion' turns out to be truth." "Let faith oust fact," Starbuck says in *Moby-Dick*.

"It is only our absurd 'scientific' prejudice that reality must be physical and rational that blinds us to the truth," Goddard warned. There are, as Shakespeare wrote, "things invisible to mortal sight." But these things are not vocational or factual or empirical. They are not found in national myths of glory and power. They are not attained by force. They do not come through cognition or logical reasoning. They are intangible. They are the realities of beauty, grief, love, the search for meaning, the struggle to face our own mortality and the ability to face truth. And cultures that disregard these forces of imagination commit suicide. They cannot see.

"How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea," Shakespeare wrote, "Whose action is no stronger than a flower?" Human imagination, the capacity to have vision, to build a life of meaning rather than utilitarianism, is as delicate as a flower. And if it is crushed, if a Shakespeare or a Sophocles is no longer deemed useful in the empirical world of business, careerism and corporate power, if universities think a Milton Friedman or a Friedrich Hayek is more important to their students than a Virginia Woolf or an Anton Chekhov, then we become barbarians. We assure our own extinction. Students who are denied the wisdom of the great oracles of human civilization—visionaries who urge us not to worship ourselves, not to kneel before the base human emotion of greed—cannot be educated. They cannot think.

To think, we must, as Epicurus understood, "live in hiding." We must build walls to keep out the cant and noise of the crowd. We must retreat into a print-based culture where ideas are not deformed into sound bites and thought-terminating clichés. Thinking is, as Hannah Arendt wrote, "a soundless dialogue between me and myself." But thinking, she wrote, always presupposes the human condition of plurality. It has no utilitarian function. It is not an end or an aim outside of itself. It is different from logical reasoning, which is focused on a finite and identifiable goal. Logical reason, acts of cognition, serve the efficiency of a system, including corporate power, which is usually morally neutral at best, and often evil. The inability to think, Arendt wrote, "is not a failing of the many who lack brain power but an ever-present possibility for everybody—scientists, scholars, and other specialists in mental enterprises not excluded."

Our corporate culture has effectively severed us from human imagination. Our electronic devices intrude deeper and deeper into spaces that were once reserved for solitude, reflection and privacy. Our airwaves are filled with the tawdry and the absurd. Our systems of education and communication scorn the disciplines that allow us to see. We celebrate prosaic vocational skills and the ridiculous requirements of standardized tests. We have tossed those who think, including many teachers of the humanities, into a wilderness where they cannot find employment, remuneration or a voice. We follow the blind over the cliff. We make war on ourselves.

The vital importance of thought, Arendt wrote, is apparent only "in times of transition when men no longer rely on the stability of the world and their role in it, and when the question concerning the general conditions of human life,

which as such are properly coeval with the appearance of man on earth, gain an uncommon poignancy." We never need our thinkers and artists more than in times of crisis, as Arendt reminds us, for they provide the subversive narratives that allow us to chart a new course, one that can assure our survival.

"What must I do to win salvation?" Dimitri asks Starov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, to which Starov answers: "Above all else, never lie to yourself."

And here is the dilemma we face as a civilization. We march collectively toward self-annihilation. Corporate capitalism, if left unchecked, will kill us. Yet we refuse, because we cannot think and no longer listen to those who do think, to see what is about to happen to us. We have created entertaining mechanisms to obscure and silence the harsh truths, from climate change to the collapse of globalization to our enslavement to corporate power, that will mean our self-destruction. If we can do nothing else we must, even as individuals, nurture the private dialogue and the solitude that make thought possible. It is better to be an outcast, a stranger in one's own country, than an outcast from one's self. It is better to see what is about to befall us and to resist than to retreat into the fantasies embraced by a nation of the blind.

20120710-04	13:19	SteveB	Fw: Ultraviolet Petition: Tell Congress It's Time to Move On!
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from Ultraviolet:

Tomorrow [TODAY!], Republicans in Congress are going to vote, again, to repeal the Affordable Care Act--the most pro-woman piece of legislation in decades, and a law that is going to help tens of millions of people get health care who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford it.

They tried to defeat the bill in 2010 and they failed. They tried to get the Supreme Court to overturn it and they failed. They tried to gut birth control coverage in the bill and they failed. In fact, this will be the fourth time they have voted to completely repeal the whole law in the last few years.

Far-right conservatives have succeeded at one thing though, distracting Congress from dealing with serious issues facing our country, like the economy.

It's time for all of us to rise up and send a strong message to these politicians: Enough is enough. Can you sign this petition telling Congress that health care is here to stay and it's well past time to move on to urgent business--like creating jobs and ending pay discrimination against women and families?

Add your name to the petition:

<http://act.weareultraviolet.org/cms/sign/moveon/>.

The fact is that when health care reform passed and the Supreme Court upheld the law, millions of working Americans won and billionaire insurance company CEOs lost. These members of Congress just can't accept that--and they want their giant corporate donors to know it.

In the last few years, the right-wing Congress has tried to:

- Take away health care from women and families, votes they have taken repeatedly.
- Cut funding for Planned Parenthood--the only source of health care for millions of low-income women.
- Restrict access to reproductive health care.
- Take away birth control coverage from millions of women.

Jobs? This Congress has failed to create a single job in these last two years. But they did manage to:

- Reject equal pay protections for women.
- Refuse to allow women and families paid sick leave so that they can care for their ailing parents or kids--or themselves--without fear of losing their jobs.

- Roll back protections for survivors of domestic abuse--leaving millions of women at greater risk of violence.

This is crazy. And it's time to let them know that we, women and men voters all over the country, are paying attention and aren't going to let them get away with distraction politics.

Thanks for speaking out, --Nita, Shaunna and Kat, the UltraViolet team

20120710-05	14:28	SteveG	"Surplus Scrutiny" [in Indiana]
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Below is how Indiana built their surplus, balancing the budget and creating a \$2 billion surplus. An example of how repubs/conservatives want to do it?

"Surplus Scrutiny" [in Indiana], Ft. Wayne Journal Gazette editorial

July 6, 2012, (<http://www.journalgazette.net/article/20120706/EDIT07/307069994/1147/EDIT07>)

The tax credit Indiana taxpayers will receive next year as a result of the state's \$2 billion surplus will be welcome relief for some, but all taxpayers should consider where it came from. The need for some families would be less if painful cuts in services hadn't been made to create the surplus.

In announcing the budget news this week, Gov. Mitch Daniels couldn't say how much of the money came from cuts in state agency spending versus growing state revenues. While it's true that Indiana is seeing economic growth, it's also a fact that agencies were directed to cut millions in spending.

For example:

- Almost 40 percent of the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs budget was cut, to revert \$293,000 to the state's general fund.
- Reductions in K-12 education spending totaled \$325.5 million, or 4.7 percent of the Department of Education's general fund appropriation.
- At the Department of Labor, \$2.7 million was cut, or 52 percent of the agency's general fund appropriation.
- The Department of Child Services slashed nearly \$104 million in spending, for 16.5 percent of its budget.
- The State Fair Commission gave back more than \$1 million last year, or nearly 63 percent of the appropriation approved by the General Assembly.
- Almost 8.5 percent of the appropriation for Family and Social Services Administration was cut – a total of \$63.5 million.

Among those cuts were some programs vital to low-income Hoosiers. The \$1 million general fund appropriation for the Housing and Community Development Authority was eliminated. Those were dollars that would have helped families, seniors, veterans and people with disabilities find affordable housing. Also eliminated was a \$300,000 allocation to buy Indiana-produced food for food banks.

Cutting spending during a recession and its aftermath is good policy as long as the cuts don't create more harm. In Illinois, Gov. Pat Quinn last week announced additional cuts for a total reduction of \$1.4 billion in spending, but noted his objection to the legislature's cuts to education and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. He pledged to reallocate money this fall toward child protection.

"Our priority should always be the safety and well-being of our children," Quinn said in a news release.

By contrast, Indiana officials announced last week that child protection services will be cut by \$16 million this fiscal year – a much kinder cut than the 2011 reduction, but a reduction nonetheless.

The state's surplus also overlooks a \$1.7 billion debt Indiana owes to the federal government for unemployment insurance loans it began taking out in December of 2008. Nor does it acknowledge a pending independent audit of the state's tax collection system, following disclosure of errors by the Department of Revenue that cost local governments about \$200 million.

In addition to triggering a tax credit, the legislation the General Assembly put in place in the event of a surplus should trigger study and debate over the long-term effects of the cuts that contributed to it.

[20120710-06](#) 15:10 Art Re: "Surplus Scrutiny" [in Indiana] (reply to SteveG, above)

But people who make \$20 or \$30 Million need a tax break. Cm'on. Where's your priorities.

[20120710-07](#) 16:21 SteveG Re: "Surplus Scrutiny" [in Indiana] (reply to Art, above)

My blind trusts!

[20120710-08](#) 16:27 SteveB Fw: US Action Action: Tell Congress to Get to Work!

Tomorrow will be the 31st opportunity wasted by the GOP.

When they vote to repeal Obamacare for the 31st time, they will be wasting another opportunity to do the work we sent them to Washington to do.

Thirty-one opportunities wasted to pass a jobs bill to put people back to work.

Thirty-one opportunities wasted to side with their constituents, not the insurance companies.

Thirty-one opportunities wasted to help rebuild the middle class in this country.

Join us in calling on Congress to stop wasting opportunities and get to work:

[http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action\\_KEY=415&track=tw](http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=415&track=tw).

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

[20120710-09](#) 16:59 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Action: Contribute to Ads Defining Mitt Romney as the Candidate of the 1%!

from MoveOn:

In 2004, MoveOn made an ad about George Bush that was one of the most covered political ads, for the least money, in history—meaning, tens of millions more people saw it than we paid to show it to.<sup>1</sup>

Two weeks ago I asked our creative team to do it again—to give me the very best ideas they had for ads or videos to show that Mitt Romney would be great for the 1%, but terrible for the rest of us.

I just got the scripts back, and I'm totally blown away—I was hoping for one breakout hit, but there are at least six that are memorable, hilarious, and devastating—each one as good as or better than our ad in 2004.

Now we're in a pickle because we didn't budget for that many ads. So I'm coming to you for help.

It's hard to overstate how crucial it is for progressives to define Romney. He's gaining in the polls, and the election looks increasingly daunting. Last month, the Romney campaign hauled in \$106 million, blowing away the Obama campaign for a second month in a row. If this keeps up, President Obama could be the first presidential incumbent to be outspent in modern history—and that doesn't even count the Super PACs.<sup>2</sup>

We can't compete with that directly—we don't have \$9 million to drop in one day on attack ads like the Kochs do.<sup>3</sup> But we can make and air these ads for \$600,000, and I think they're powerful enough to generate tens of millions of dollars worth of media coverage, spreading our message exponentially and making your contributions really compete with big money donors. We just need to raise the money to do it.

Can you chip in \$5 to make these devastating ads about Mitt Romney? Click here to donate \$5:

[https://pol.moveon.org/donate/romney\\_ads.html?bg\\_id=hpc5&id=45883-20195165- VNDZmx&t=1](https://pol.moveon.org/donate/romney_ads.html?bg_id=hpc5&id=45883-20195165- VNDZmx&t=1).

The weakness of the economy means that President Obama faces an uphill battle. A Romney victory would be a catastrophe—he's promised to slash vital programs like Medicare, Social Security, and environmental protection, and repeal Obamacare, while giving a huge round of tax breaks to the 1%. He'd also be in a position to nominate up to three Supreme Court justices in his first term, skewing the court further to the right for a generation.

But the more voters learn about Romney's history with Bain Capital, and policies favoring the very rich, the less they like him. That's why it's so urgent to get the message out.

The right ad can swing an election—that's what the Swift Boat veterans did to John Kerry. Theirs was a lie, while ours are just as powerful—but true.

We just need to raise the money to get these ads made and on the air while there's still time to define Romney. Please help!

Thanks for all you do. –Justin, Laura, Emily, Victoria, and the rest of the team

#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup>"Censored at the Super Bowl," Newsweek, January 29, 2004, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277117&id=45883-20195165- VNDZmx&t=4>.

<sup>2</sup>"Romney raises more than \$106 million in June," CBS, July 9, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277095&id=45883-20195165- VNDZmx&t=5>.

<sup>3</sup>"Koch-backed group launches \$9 million ad campaign against health law," The Hill, June 29, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277118&id=45883-20195165- VNDZmx&t=6>.



### So let me get this straight...

The plan was to move factories and manufacturing overseas, open strip malls on every corner, make it near impossible for our small businesses to compete, force most of us into the service industry, THEN cut our wages, give us little or no health insurance, take away regulations that protect us, and our right to bargain collectively?

**Um, Yeah....NO!**

[www.facebook.com/serviceworkers](http://www.facebook.com/serviceworkers)

"Desert Sounds" by Howard Altmann, Slate

July 10, 2012, ([http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/poem/2012/07/desert\\_sounds\\_by\\_howard\\_altmann.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/poem/2012/07/desert_sounds_by_howard_altmann.html))

The iguana is still under the rock.  
Blossoms unfurl scents over coiled snakes.  
Saguaros arm their shadows  
With the long legs of daylight.  
And whose limbs got buried where  
The grand inquisitor unearths deeply.  
So it goes in the Sonoran desert.  
Sky shows its teeth with cacti.  
The mouth of civilization spits out sand.  
*Who are we, who are we?*  
The heart of the blue-throated hummingbird beats  
Up to twelve hundred times a minute.  
The palm-sized bird can play its hand backward too.  
With good reason metaphors stay open past midnight.  
When desert sounds coax silence into submission.  
When darkness branches off.  
O the miss in mystery; the hiss in history.  
The tap in a child's tapping: *wake up, wake up.*

<http://www.smashinglists.com/beautiful-spectacular-desert-oases/>

[http://www.blueplanetbiomes.org/sonoran\\_desert.htm](http://www.blueplanetbiomes.org/sonoran_desert.htm)



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #180 — JULY 12, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Drop Dead!**

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

In my entire lifetime, I have never seen a political party conduct war against its own voters. Never. Until now. In America. Republicans.

"GOP to the Uninsured: Drop Dead" by Matt Miller, *The Washington Post*

July 10, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/gop-to-the-uninsured-drop-dead/2012/07/10/gJQA4xZfbW\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/gop-to-the-uninsured-drop-dead/2012/07/10/gJQA4xZfbW_story.html))



The House is voting (again) Wednesday to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Meanwhile, six Republican governors (so far) say they won't go along with the law's planned Medicaid expansion for 4 million uninsured people in their states, even though the feds would pick up nearly all the tab.

See the pattern here?

The Republican message to uninsured Americans in the wake of the Supreme Court's recent ruling couldn't be clearer: You're on your own.

The party may not have officially adopted the “let him die” policy of right-wing hecklers at that CNN primary debate, when Ron Paul was asked what should be done when an uninsured man shows up at the hospital. But as a practical matter, Republicans are in pretty unsavory territory. What other conclusion can we draw when Rick Perry, who presides over a state where one in four people lack health coverage, makes swaggering indifference to these Texans’ plight a point of sovereign pride?

Fifty million uninsured Americans would be the immediate casualties of the GOP’s “let them eat the emergency room” mentality. But all of us would be at risk. In America — alone among wealthy nations — everyone is a pink slip or job change or new illness away from finding they have lost coverage or are uninsurable.

This is the shameful reality behind the GOP’s rhetoric on health care. Republicans don’t want to spend a penny to insure the uninsured.

We know this because back during the original debate over Obamacare, the “boldest” GOP alternative would have extended coverage to 3 million of the 50 million uninsured, versus Obama’s 30 million (which still leaves us 20 million short of behaving like every other civilized nation, mind you).

It was not always thus. It’s striking to recall that back in 1992, George H.W. Bush put out a serious plan to cover 30 million of the then 35 million uninsured. (Democrats at the time rejected it, figuring they’d do the job on their own terms once Bill Clinton won. We know how that turned out.) So the erosion of Republican seriousness over two decades can be tracked with unusual precision. As the ranks of the uninsured have soared, the size of Republican compassion has shriveled.

Why?

Daniel Patrick Moynihan gave me the most convincing explanation not long before he died in 2003. Summing up the Republican mind on the issue, he told me, “Those folks never vote for us, and we have our priorities for the money.”

### **Like trillions more in tax cuts for the best-off Americans over the next decade.**

You may have noticed that Republicans have been struggling to come up with a credible alternative to the Affordable Care Act once they repeal it. Why is it so hard? Because Obamacare WAS the Republican alternative. It was the conservative-designed mandate and subsidy approach. Republicans are in such an intellectual cul-de-sac on this issue that Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) actually blasted Obamacare for being a sop to the president’s “cronies” in the insurance industry. Oy!

I feel like a broken record, but some truths bear repeating. **Only in America could a Democratic president pass Mitt Romney’s health plan and fund it partly through John McCain’s best idea from the last campaign (taxing some employer-provided plans) and be branded a “socialist.”**

**In every other advanced nation, the idea that government has a central role in assuring basic health security was settled decades ago — a consensus that conservatives abroad embrace.** Always remember: conservative icon Margaret Thatcher would have been chased from office if she had proposed anything as radically conservative as Obamacare — which relies on private docs to deliver the medicine, after all, and still leaves 20 million people uncovered.

Here’s what you should do, Mr. President. In the debates this fall, pull out a small, laminated card you’ve had made as a prop for this purpose. Then remind Mitt Romney that the ranks of the uninsured today are equal to the combined populations of Oklahoma, Connecticut, Iowa, Mississippi, Kansas, Kentucky, Arkansas, Utah, Oregon, Nevada, New Mexico, West Virginia, Nebraska, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, Hawaii, Rhode Island, Montana, Delaware, North Dakota, South Dakota, Alaska, Vermont and -Wyoming.

Read that list slowly, Mr. President. Then ask your opponent: Would America turn its back on the citizens of these 25 states if everyone there lacked basic health coverage? That’s what we’ve been doing for decades. You knew it

was right to act when you were governor of Massachusetts, Mitt. How can you pretend we don't need to solve this for the nation? And how can you object with a straight face when your own pioneering plan was my model?

The president should also say he'd be happy to talk reform once Republicans offer a rival plan that the Congressional Budget Office certifies will cover 30 million people, as the Affordable Care Act does.

**Today's Republican Party won't do it. They want the money for tax cuts. They don't care.**

(Matt Miller, a co-host of public radio's "Left, Right & Center," writes a weekly online column for *The Post*.)

[20120711-01](#) 10:42 Art Re: Taxes: Not a 'Bad Word' (FotM Newsletter #179)

There's some interesting data in the chart given. See any correlation?? Note that in the post WW II era we were far and away the greatest economic power on the planet and we also built the Interstate Highway System among other accomplishments to include landing on the moon. How about today? We can't fix a pothole. Again see any correlation??

Remember, as we look at the current tax issue the President's proposal, is that everyone would receive a continuation of the Bush tax cuts on the first \$250,000 of their incomes. Any dollars they earn in excess of \$250,000 will be taxed at the old Clinton-era rates. What's not fair about that?

You may not agree with it but the statistics are correct to the best of my knowledge. What really caught my eye was the last piece. You can't correct a problem until you recognize, A, you have one, and B, what the problem really is.

Just a thought.

[20120711-02](#) 11:02 Pam Re: Taxes: Not a 'Bad Word' (FotM Newsletter #179)

"How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea," Shakespeare wrote, "Whose action is no stronger than a flower?" Human imagination, the capacity to have vision, to build a life of meaning rather than utilitarianism, is as delicate as a flower. And if it is crushed, if a Shakespeare or a Sophocles is no longer deemed useful in the empirical world of business, careerism and corporate power, if universities think a Milton Friedman or a Friedrich Hayek is more important to their students than a Virginia Woolf or an Anton Chekhov, then we become barbarians. We assure our own extinction. Students who are denied the wisdom of the great oracles of human civilization—visionaries who urge us not to worship ourselves, not to kneel before the base human emotion of greed—cannot be educated. They cannot think.

I watched the clip from "Newsroom" and found it very compelling. I then went to YouTube, where you can watch the whole first episode, so I thought I'd do that. About two minutes in, I gave up. It is so much like what is actually going on it made me sick. It's totally appropriate to base fiction on reality; often you can say a lot more that way than with pure logic, but I need some distance.

I completely share the sentiments in the above quotation. I have always believed that those who read good literature develop a moral understanding that transcends the mundane. Notice I said "good," not necessarily "great." One of the greatest qualities of literature is its ability to arouse empathy. When you understand and even identify with a character, you set aside your preconceptions about how humans should behave. Maybe the most extreme example is Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment." Dostoyevsky asks us to identify with a calculating murderer. That's not all he asks of his readers, but it certainly stretches the moral imagination to enter Raskolnikov's mind. Or Ahab's. Or Hester Prynne's. Or Sister Carrie's. Or Adam Bede's.

[20120711-03](#) 14:49 Ben "A Phone That Knows Where You're Going"

I bcc'ed several folks whose opinions will certainly vary:

"A Phone That Knows Where You're Going" by David Talbot, MIT *Technology Review*

July 9, 2012, (<http://www.technologyreview.com/news/428441/a-phone-that-knows-where-youre-going/>)

(An algorithm can better predict your future movements by getting a little help from your friends.)

20120711-04	14:57	SteveB	"Boy, Are Americans Not Overtaxed"
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"Boy, Are Americans Not Overtaxed" by Jared Bernstein, Huffington Post

July 11, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jared-bernstein/cbo-taxes\\_b\\_1664508.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jared-bernstein/cbo-taxes_b_1664508.html))

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) just released a very thorough update of their high quality household income series, adding data through 2009. There's so much in here it will be weeks before I can work my way through all of its nooks and crannies, but so far, something's jumped out at me.

First, man, I gotta say: when it comes to federal taxation, there is just no case in the data to be made in any way, shape or form that we Americans are overtaxed. Not middle income, not high income -- not the overall average. Not relative to other countries (figure 4 here), and not relative to our historical rates back to 1979.

The top line in the first figure below shows the decline in the overall average federal tax rate for all households. The rate is relatively constant at around 22% from 1979 to the big tax cuts of the George W. Bush years (the ones we're still arguing about!), when they start to slide; the decline at the end of the series is both cyclical and policy driven, as pretax income declines in the Great Recession and Recovery Act tax cuts lowered tax liabilities.

By the end of the series, the average U.S. household was paying 17.4% of their income in federal taxes, compared to 22% in 1979. The main culprit is the income tax; all the others in the figure stay relatively constant.

The bottom slide shows a long downward trend in the effective rate paid by the top 1% starting in the mid-1990s, and particularly large cyclical effects at the end of the series for middle and low-income households. At their peak average income in 2007 (\$1.9 million), had the top 1% paid taxes at their mid-90s effective rate (35%) instead of their 2007 rate (28%), their tax liability would have been \$134,000 higher.

We clearly are facing hard times, and there's a lot of powerful data in here for future posts on how households across the board, including the top 1%, got whacked by the downturn (notably, however, the top 1% started climbing back in 2010--other groups have yet to do so).

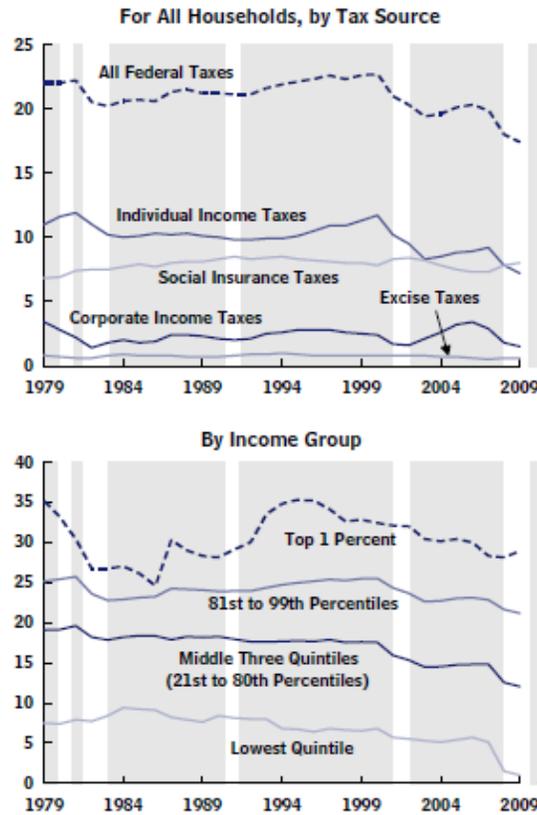
But I just don't see how, based on these facts, anyone can make a case that we're overtaxed, and to be clear, this includes all federal taxes, including business taxes. I also think there's a strong, reality-based case in here for new revenues in any deal to stabilize the debt situation, starting at the top of the income scale, as I've argued before. But like I said, that's based on the facts. Based on Buddha-knows-what, people will continue to say whatever the h-e-double-hockey-sticks they want.

Figure 5.

Return to Reference 1, 2, 3

### Average Federal Tax Rates, 1979 to 2009

(Percent)



Source: Congressional Budget Office.

Notes: Average tax rates are calculated by dividing tax liabilities of each type by total before-tax income for each income group.

20120711-05 15:49 Marty Fw: Two Cows

I enjoyed this, and I thought you might like it, especially since you own some cattle.

[Source of original email unknown. This is an updated version of an email you might have previously seen. –SteveB]

“Two Cows” under different scenarios.

#### SOCIALISM

You have 2 cows.

You give one to your neighbour.

The government charges a gift tax.

#### COMMUNISM

You have 2 cows.

The State takes both and gives you some milk.

#### FASCISM

You have 2 cows.

The State takes both and sells you some milk.

#### NAZISM

You have 2 cows.

The State takes both and shoots you.

#### BUREAUCRATISM

You have 2 cows.

The State takes both, shoots one, milks the other, and then throws the milk away.

#### TRADITIONAL CAPITALISM

You have two cows.

You sell one and buy a bull. Your herd multiplies, and the economy grows. You sell them and retire on the income.

#### Goldman Sachs (VENTURE) CAPITALISM

You have two cows.

You sell three of them to your publicly listed company, using letters of credit opened by your brother-in-law at the bank, then execute a debt/equity swap with an associated general offer so that you get all four cows back, with a tax exemption for five cows. The milk rights of the six cows are transferred via an intermediary to a Cayman Island Company secretly owned by the majority shareholder who sells the rights to all seven cows back to your listed company. The annual report says the company owns eight cows, with an option on one more. You sell one cow to buy a new president of the United States, leaving you with nine cows. No balance sheet provided with the release. The public then buys your bull.

#### AN AMERICAN CORPORATION

You have two cows.

You sell one, and force the other to produce the milk of four cows. Later, you hire a consultant to analyse why the cow has dropped dead.

#### A GREEK CORPORATION

You have two cows.

You borrow lots of euros to build barns, milking sheds, hay stores, feed sheds, dairies, cold stores, abattoir, cheese unit and packing sheds. You still only have two cows but owe millions.

#### A FRENCH CORPORATION

You have two cows.

You go on strike, organize a riot, and block the roads, because you want three cows.

#### A JAPANESE CORPORATION

You have two cows.

You redesign them so they are one-tenth the size of an ordinary cow and produce twenty times the milk. You then create a clever cow cartoon image called a Cowkimona and market it worldwide.

#### AN ITALIAN CORPORATION

You have two cows, but you don't know where they are. You decide to have lunch.

#### A SWISS CORPORATION

You have 5000 cows. None of them belong to you. You charge the owners for storing them.

#### A CHINESE CORPORATION

You have two cows. You have 300 people milking them. You claim that you have full employment, and high bovine productivity. You arrest the newsman who reported the real situation.

#### AN INDIAN CORPORATION

You have two cows.

You worship them.

#### A BRITISH CORPORATION

You have two cows.

Both are mad.

AN AUSTRALIAN CORPORATION

You have two cows.

Business seems pretty good. You close the office and go for a few beers to celebrate

A NEW ZEALAND CORPORATION

You have two cows.

The one on the left looks rather attractive...

20120711-06

16:23

SteveB

"Pauline Potter Weight Loss: World's Heaviest Woman Loses 98 Pounds With Marathon Sex"

Sorry. So...go feel good about yourself...because you aren't Pauline (or married to her!)

"Pauline Potter Weight Loss: World's Heaviest Woman Loses 98 Pounds With Marathon Sex" by Cavan Sieczkowski, Huffington Post

July 10, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/10/pauline-potter-weight-loss-worlds-heaviest-woman\\_n\\_1662919.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=mostpopular#slide=1208737](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/10/pauline-potter-weight-loss-worlds-heaviest-woman_n_1662919.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular#slide=1208737))



Ryan Schude, Guinness World Records

Pauline Potter became the world's heaviest living woman last year, weighing in at a whopping 643 pounds. Now, Potter has her sights set on losing weight, and she's turned to marathon sex sessions to help shed the pounds.

In an interview with the UK's Closer magazine, Potter described how her reignited sex life with ex-husband Alex has helped her lose 98 pounds.

"I can't move much in bed, but I burn 500 calories a session — it's great exercise just jiggling around," Potter told Closer. Potter, who had been consuming 10,000 calories a day, hopes to reach her goal weight of 532 pounds with the help of Alex. The two have sex up to seven times each day.

She makes sure to have some fun, too.

"We love foreplay and massages and, as well as full sex, I pleasure Alex, too," she told the magazine. "My bed is strengthened and, although I can't buy sexy lingerie, I drape a nice sheet over me."

After meeting online in 2002, the couple married in 2005 and, when Potter failed to bond with Alex's son, the two split up three years later. The break-up triggered Potter's weight gain. She began consuming copious amounts of high-calorie foods and packed on the pounds.

With all the extra weight on her, Potter became depressed. She contacted the *Guinness Book of World Records* in hopes that winning the title of "World's Heaviest Woman" would shame her into losing weight.

When Alex got wind of the publicity surrounding Potter, he decided to visit her and the flame was quickly rekindled.

"Within the first day of being back together we had sex six times in 24 hours," Alex told the Sun last November. "Even though one of Pauline's legs weighs more than I do, we're able to position her body to make sex enjoyable for both of us."

Alex, who weighs just 140 pounds, does most of the work in the bedroom.

"It's really dangerous for us to have sex because at any moment the bed could collapse and one or both of us could be seriously injured or even killed from the impact," he told the Sun.

But using sex for weight loss is not an unheard of activity.

"Shagging can make you slimmer, if you do enough of it," Dr. Yvonne Kristin Fulbright, a sex educator, relationship expert, columnist and founder of Sexuality Source Inc., wrote for Fox News in 2008. "It can also help the two of you fall for each other all over again. Requiring no monthly fee — dress code optional — you can 'sexercise' yourself into shape. This is one gym membership you'll never want to drop."

Dr. Fulbright, who has contributed to The Huffington Post and who earned her Ph.D. in International Community Health Studies at New York University, also writes that a good "sexercise" routine can not only lead to weight loss, but also to improved blood flow, strengthening of the heart, better cholesterol, better sleep, more energy, improved muscle tone and decreased stressed.

While Potter's sex life is speeding at full-throttle, she's also reined in her eating habits. She no longer eats 10,000 calories per day, though she still enjoys the occasional Big Mac.

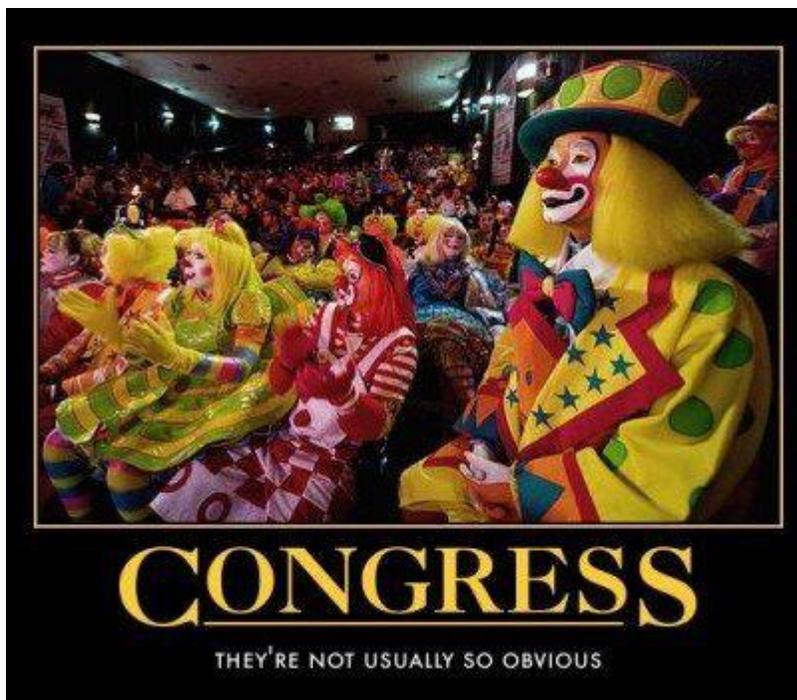
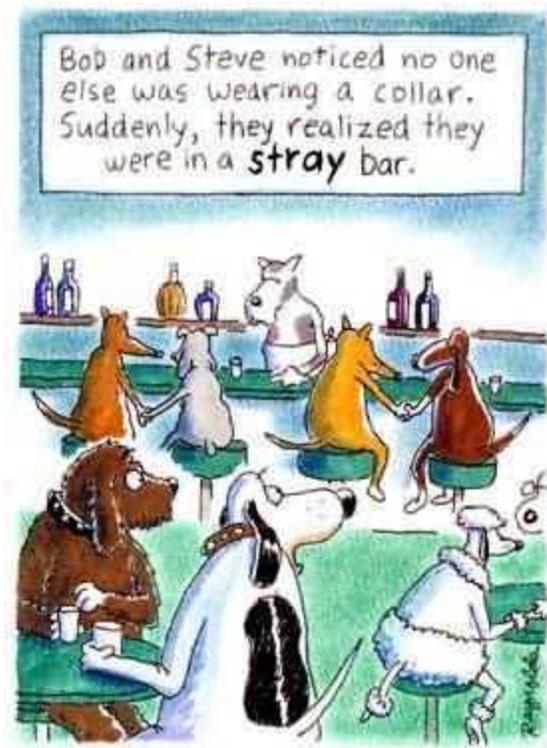
Other large women's photos from the article above. As a friend from near Chicago used to say, "They haven't missed many meals!"



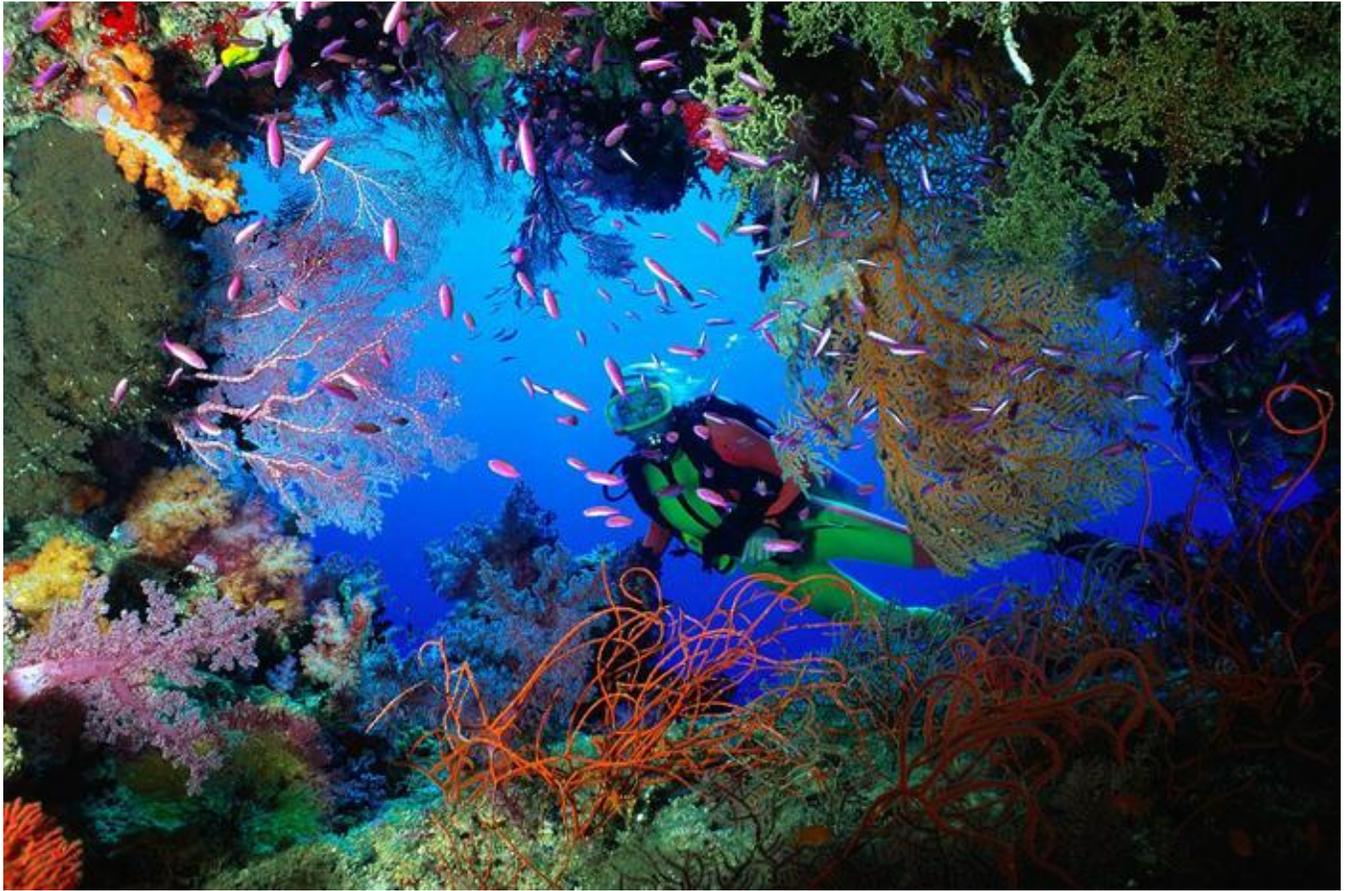
Barcroft / Fame Pictures



Barcroft / Fame



<http://www.insight-property-group.co.uk/cayman-islands-land-for-sale.html>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #181 — JULY 13, 2012

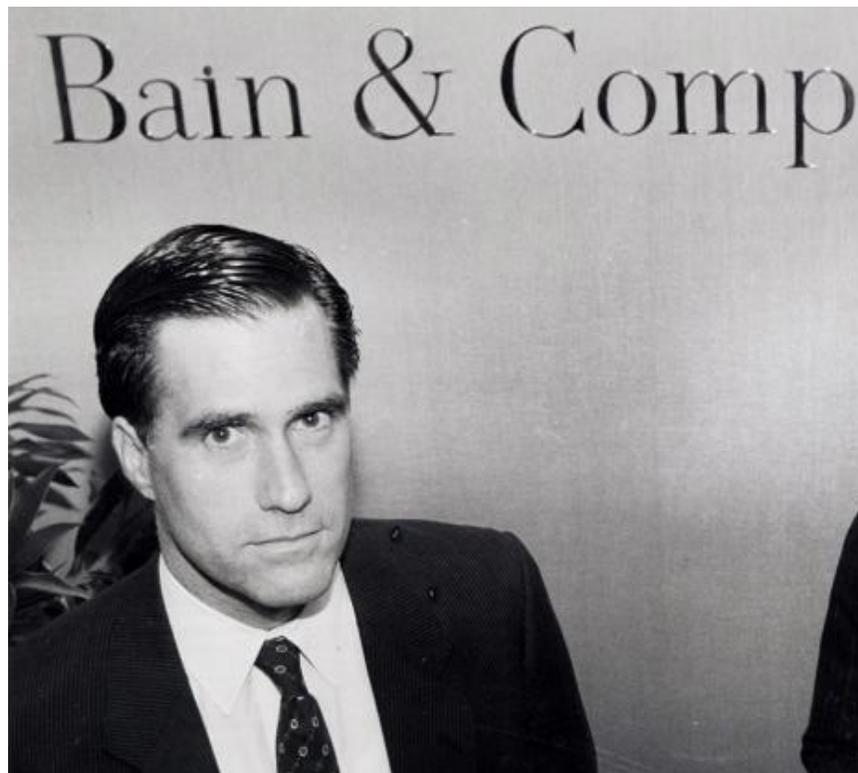
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**INDEX: Click here.**

### **R0mney Lied About Bain**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 13, 2012)

OK, REPUBLICANS, DENY THIS!



I told you in FotM Newsletter #178 ("He's Hiding Something"—the lead article) that Mitt R0mney was hiding something big.

Let me tell you this: He's hiding a whole lot more!!!

I just hope he actually gets to become the Republican nominee, because this guy would be so easy to defeat!

Mitt Romney, like, for some reason, so many Republicans, is a blatant, foul-acted liar! Period! Even to other Republicans, apparently!

"Mitt Romney Stayed at Bain 3 Years Longer Than He Stated" by Callum Borchers and Christopher, *Boston Globe*

July 12, 2012, (<http://bostonglobe.com/news/politics/2012/07/11/government-documents-indicate-mitt-romney-continued-bain-after-date-when-says-left/IpfKYWjnrseI4pvCFbsUTI/story.html>)

(Firm's 2002 filings identify him as CEO, though he said he left in 1999.)

Government documents filed by Mitt Romney and Bain Capital say Romney remained chief executive and chairman of the firm three years beyond the date he said he ceded control, even creating five new investment partnerships during that time.

Romney has said he left Bain in 1999 to lead the winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, ending his role in the company. But public Securities and Exchange Commission documents filed later by Bain Capital state he remained the firm's "sole stockholder, chairman of the board, chief executive officer, and president."

Also, a Massachusetts financial disclosure form Romney filed in 2003 states that he still owned 100 percent of Bain Capital in 2002. And Romney's state financial disclosure forms indicate he earned at least \$100,000 as a Bain "executive" in 2001 and 2002, separate from investment earnings.

**The timing of Romney's departure from Bain is a key point of contention because he has said his resignation in February 1999 meant he was not responsible for Bain Capital companies that went bankrupt or laid off workers after that date.**

Contradictions concerning the length of Romney's tenure at Bain Capital add to the uncertainty and questions about his finances. Bain is the primary source of Romney's wealth, which is estimated to be more than \$250 million. But how his wealth has been invested, especially in a variety of Bain partnerships and other investment vehicles, remains difficult to decipher because of a lack of transparency.

The Obama campaign and other Democrats have raised questions about his unwillingness to release tax returns filed before 2010; his offshore assets, which include investment entities based in Bermuda and the Cayman Islands and a recently closed bank account in Switzerland; and a set of "blind trusts" that meet the Massachusetts standards for public officials but not the more rigorous bar set by the federal government.

Romney did not finalize a severance agreement with Bain until 2002, a 10-year deal with undisclosed terms that was retroactive to 1999. It expired in 2009.

Bain Capital and the campaign for the presumptive GOP nominee have suggested the SEC filings that show Romney as the man in charge during those additional three years have little meaning, and are the result of legal technicalities. The campaign declined to comment on the record. It pointed to a footnote in Romney's most recent financial disclosure form, filed June 1 as a presidential candidate.

**"Since February 11, 1999, Mr. Romney has not had any active role with any Bain Capital entity and has not been involved in the operations of any Bain Capital entity in any way," according to the footnote. Romney made the same assertion on a financial disclosure form in 2007, during his first run for president.**

According to a statement issued by Bain Wednesday, "Mitt Romney retired from Bain Capital in February 1999. He has had no involvement in the management or investment activities of Bain Capital, or with any of its portfolio companies, since that time."

Evidence emerged last week in a report by Mother Jones that Romney had maintained an ongoing leadership role at Bain beyond February 1999. Citing SEC documents, the magazine said Romney had control of Bain Capital's shares in Stericycle, a medical waste company, in November 1999. Talking Points Memo reported this week on additional SEC filings listing Romney's position with Bain in July 2000 and February 2001.

A former SEC commissioner told the Globe that the SEC documents listing Romney as Bain's chief executive between 1999 and 2002 cannot be dismissed so easily.

"You can't say statements filed with the SEC are meaningless. This is a fact in an SEC filing," said Roberta S. Karmel, now a professor at Brooklyn Law School.

**"It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to say he was technically in charge on paper but he had nothing to do with Bain's operations," Karmel continued. "Was he getting paid? He's the sole stockholder. Are you telling me he owned the company but had no say in its investments?"**

**The Globe found nine SEC filings submitted by four different business entities after February 1999 that describe Romney as Bain Capital's boss; some show him with managerial control over five Bain Capital entities that were formed in January 2002, according to records in Delaware, where they were incorporated.**

A Romney campaign official, who requested anonymity to discuss the SEC filings, acknowledged that they "do not square with common sense." But SEC regulations are complicated and quirky, the official argued, and Romney's signature on some documents after his exit does not indicate active involvement in the firm.

A spokesman for the SEC said the commission could not comment on individual company filings or address the meaning of Romney's name and title on the documents.

Karmel, the former SEC commissioner, said the contradictory statements could have legal implications in some instances.

"If someone invested with Bain Capital because they believed Mitt Romney was a great fund manager, and it turns out he wasn't really doing anything, that could be considered a misrepresentation to the investor," she said. "It's a theory that could be used in a lawsuit against him."

Romney first deployed the defense that he left the firm in February 1999 as a candidate for governor in 2002, when Democrat Shannon O'Brien featured a laid-off worker from a Kansas City steel mill that went bankrupt in 2001, after Bain Capital had reaped a handsome profit from its investment in the company. "Romney has taken responsibility for making the initial investment but has said he could not be blamed for management decisions at the company," the Globe reported at the time.

Romney's exit from Bain Capital also served as a ready-made rebuttal when in May President Obama's reelection campaign began its public scrutiny of Romney's business record with an ad focusing on former laborers at the same mill, GST Steel. But the SEC filings examined by the Globe indicate Romney remained at the helm of Bain Capital when the steel mill declared bankruptcy, in February 2001.

And financial disclosure documents Romney filed in Massachusetts show that he was paid as a Bain Capital executive while he directed the Olympics.

When he was named chief executive of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee on Feb. 11, 1999, Romney declared that he would not accept the job's \$285,000 annual salary until the Games were over and he had proven his turnaround worth.

Romney continued to draw a six-figure salary from Bain Capital, according to State Ethics Commission forms.

In Romney's 2002 race for governor, he testified before the state Ballot Law Commission that his separation from Bain in 1999 had been a "leave of absence" and not a final departure.

"Romney and Bain Capital: The Secrecy Is Killing Him" by John Cassidy, *The New Yorker*

July 12, 2012, (<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/johncassidy/2012/07/romney-and-bain-capital-the-opacity-is-killing-him.html>)

Never give a sucker an even break!

Here I am, infuriating many *New Yorker* readers by finally saying something complimentary about Mitt Romney—I thought he did pretty well yesterday in his speech to the N.A.A.C.P.—and he goes and falls flat on his face again. Or rather, his hometown paper, the *Boston Globe*, trips him up, questioning his story about when exactly he left Bain Capital. He says he quit in February, 1999. Two *Globe* reporters turned up documents that say otherwise. One of them, which Bain Capital filed with the government in 2001, refers to Romney as the "sole stockholder, Chairman of the Board, Chief Executive Officer, and President" of the firm.

Once again, the Romney campaign is on the defensive, fending off hostile questions about what was supposed to be his biggest asset as a candidate: his business career. In view of the furor over Bain Capital's history of firings and downsizings, the timing of Romney's departure from the firm isn't merely a historical curiosity. He insists he wasn't responsible for any of the actions the firm took after early 1999. If it turns out that he was actually running the business—or helping to run it—for several years after that date, his credibility will be shot. "It's time for Mitt Romney to come clean so that the American people can make their own judgments about his record and his motivations," Stephanie Cutter, Obama's deputy campaign manager, said in response to the *Globe* story.

Off we go, down a familiar route.

Ever since last winter, when Rick Perry started calling the Mittster a "vulture capitalist," it was clear that some aspects of his career as a leveraged-buyout specialist could be turned to his disadvantage, and that the Obama campaign and the media would pound on them until election day: the workers Bain Capital fired and the factories it closed down in trying to turn a profit on its investments; the debts it piled on the companies it acquired; the hefty dividends and "management" fees it extracted from them, even as some of them were entering bankruptcy; the ultra-low income-tax rate that Romney and his colleagues enjoyed as a result of the scandalous "carried interest deduction" that afforded to private-equity moguls and hedge-fund managers.

Private equity is basically a racket. It may be a productive racket, although there is controversy about that. Some studies show that firms and plants taken over by firms like Bain Capital see bigger increases in output per worker than comparable companies that remain independent. But those productivity boosts are largely one-off situations produced by downsizing the labor force, firing people, and outsourcing some of the jobs they do. Sustained increases in productivity and innovation are much harder to find, as so is evidence that the rise of private equity has improved the performance of the economy as a whole, rather than just making a few people like Romney very rich.

But that's not the issue here. What's killing Romney now is another aspect of the private-equity business, and Bain Capital in particular, which has received rather less attention: its opacity and secretiveness. As a private company, Bain Capital isn't legally obliged to say much about what it does, but its aversion to public disclosure goes beyond standard norms. Like the Carlyle Group and other big private-equity firms, it deliberately withheld as much information as it could, both to create an aura that would help it attract outside investors and to disguise how much money its partners were making.

The clash between the demands of a Presidential campaign and the private-equity industry's culture of secrecy was always going to be a problem for Romney. So it has proved. For as long as he and his former firm refuse to shed more light on their activities and finances, investigative reporters and Democratic researchers will continue to dig for nuggets of information that can be portrayed in a negative light.

This latest story appears to fall into that category. It's not news that, in some of its official filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Bain Capital continued to describe Romney as an executive of the firm well after he

stopped working there full-time and went to rescue the Salt Lake City Olympics. The *Globe's* contribution was to unearth more of these documents, submitted by four different business units associated with Bain.

Romney's campaign has said that the descriptions of him as a Bain executive were just legal boilerplate, reflecting the fact that it wasn't until 2002, three years after he stopped working for Bain Capital on a day-to-day basis, that he and the firm reached a severance agreement. Today, Team Romney reiterated that message, and Bain Capital issued a statement saying: "Mitt Romney retired from Bain Capital in February 1999. He has had no involvement in the management or investment activities of Bain Capital, or with any of its portfolio companies, since that time."

But this statement raises as many questions as it answers. If Romney had "retired" from Bain Capital, why did the firm continue to describe him as its chairman and chief executive? And if he was still the firm's "sole stockholder," can he really have been as detached from its activities as he claims? "It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to say he was technically in charge on paper but he had nothing to do with Bain's operations," Robert S. Karmel, a former S.E.C. commissioner who teaches at Brooklyn Law School, told the *Globe*. "Was he getting paid? He's the sole stockholder. Are you telling me he owned the company but had no say in its investments?"

On top of everything else, the timing of the *Globe* story is horrible for Romney. In recent days, he's been trying to move beyond criticisms of his campaign, some of them from Republicans—both about policy matters (e.g. his lack of a coherent economic plan) and his failure to hit back aggressively to attacks on his record. "If you're responding, you are losing," Romney told Fox News yesterday.

Today, Romney is responding.

[20120712-03](#) 14:36 Pam Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to SteveB, above)

Oh boy! It just gets better and better. I loved it when Romney got booed during a speech to the AARP (I think it was) when he said he'd eliminate Obamacare. Later he said he "expected" that reaction. If he did, then why did he provoke it? Not very smart.

[20120712-04](#) 14:42 SteveG Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Pam, above)

It was a NAACP meeting. If I had \$250 million, I certainly think I could afford to get my facts straight and be able to hire competent writers to tailor speeches to audiences without looking like some idiot.

[I guess he actually has \$1 billion for the campaign. -SteveB]

[20120712-05](#) 14:55 Clark Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Pam, above)

It was the NAACP and he wanted to provoke it to gin up his base; "he took 'em on, spoke his mind, went into the lion's den," that sort of thing.

[20120712-09](#) 15:58 Art Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Clark, above)

Right you are. He knows he'll never get their votes but this is a good way to burnish his conservative racist credentials

[20120712-06](#) 15:29 Pam Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Clark, above)

That is disgusting. Appeal to the Right's racism?! What a creep!

[20120712-07](#) 15:31 Clark Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Pam, above)

You got it!

[20120712-10](#) 16:02 Pam Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Art, above)

I hate to say it, but I think racism is the dirty little secret in this campaign. I think THE MAN is so threatened by a black man in such a prestigious position. I could be wrong, and I hope I am, but I think a lot of white folks simply don't identify with Obama.

[20120712-11](#) 16:15 Art Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Pam, above)

It is the only thing that makes sense. When President Obama got elected most white conservative Republicans said to themselves, "Well, he's nothing but a Chicago black radical activist dirtbag like Huey Newton or Eldridge Cleaver and he will fall flat on his face soon enough but we can now say we gave the niggers a chance." Much to their horror President Obama not only turned out to be very bright guy who had a marvelous grasp of what needed to be done and could articulate it but even worse, he was a good honest family man, and, the most terrible thing of all, deep in their racist little heats they also recognized he was smarter than they were. A lot smarter. This country cannot have a smart honest black guy at the top. He has to go.

Look at the deluge of lies that came out over the Internet. The shrill cries of foul socialist, but never any facts or actual data to go with it. It continues today. Pretty disgusting and pretty sad indictment of these United States.

[20120712-12](#) 16:59 Pam Re: R0mney Lied About Bain (reply to Art, above)

Well said, Art. What you say rings true. I grow more and more disillusioned with this country by the day. I was at the doctor's office this morning, and on the wall there was a poster with all kinds of information and graphs and charts about global warming. It is incredible to me, but I know for a fact that many of the good citizens of NC think global warming is a hoax or maybe the result of natural forces, not caused by man. The world is in big trouble, and it will take a concerted effort on the part of all industrialized nations to have a hope of reversing a trend that will eventually wipe out a lot of species, perhaps even our own. I don't see such an effort forthcoming, and I am very pessimistic.

[20120712-14](#) 18:40 SteveB "Romney Addresses NAACP Convention, Receives Standing Ovation"

This is the Right's take on the NAACP address. "ROMNEY RECEIVES STANDING O FROM NAACP!"

"Romney Addresses NAACP Convention, Receives Standing Ovation" by John Hayward, *Human Events*

July 11, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/07/11/mitt-romney-and-eric-holder-address-the-naACP/>)

(Mitt Romney and Eric Holder address the NAACP.)

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney will address the NAACP convention in Houston today. This will be a somewhat more challenging encounter than the speeches President Obama likes to give in front of college audiences and union groups.

The Romney campaign released some excerpts of the candidate's prepared remarks in advance of the speech, which will focus heavily upon the economy. Romney will introduce himself to black voters by explaining, "I believe that if you understood who I truly am in my heart, and if it were possible to fully communicate what I believe is in

the real, enduring best interest of African American families, you would vote for me for president. I want you to know that if I did not believe that my policies and my leadership would help families of color – and families of any color – more than the policies and leadership of President Obama, I would not be running for president.”

The emotional plea for NAACP members to peer into the recesses of Romney’s heart is a bit problematic – “if only you knew how completely racially sensitive I truly am!” – but that is the vernacular of modern politics. He also places this statement at the beginning of his remarks, and works hard to meet the challenge of explaining his beliefs to the audience – it works much better as his opening statement, rather than his closing argument.

It’s encouraging to hear Romney emphasize that good policies benefit “families of any color,” and he is unsparing in his critique that President Obama’s presumed sympathy hasn’t done a lot of good for anyone, from any racial background: “I am running for president because I know that my policies and vision will help hundreds of millions of middle class Americans of all races, will lift people from poverty, and will help prevent people from becoming poor. My campaign is about helping the people who need help. The course the President has set has not done that – and will not do that. My course will... When President Obama called to congratulate me on becoming the presumptive Republican nominee, he said that he, quote, “looked forward to an important and healthy debate about America’s future.” To date, I’m afraid that his campaign has taken a different course than that.”

Romney places strong practical emphasis on this point later in the speech: “If equal opportunity in America were an accomplished fact, then a chronically bad economy would be equally bad for everyone. Instead, it’s worse for African Americans in almost every way. The unemployment rate, the duration of unemployment, average income, and median family wealth are all worse for the black community. In June, while the overall unemployment rate remained stuck at 8.2 percent, the unemployment rate for African Americans actually went up, from 13.6 percent to 14.4 percent.”

He also notes that leftist policies block equality of opportunity in more areas than employment. “If equal opportunity in America were an accomplished fact, black families could send their sons and daughters to public schools that truly offer the hope of a better life. Instead, for generations, the African-American community has been waiting and waiting for that promise to be kept. Today, black children are 17 percent of students nationwide – but they are 42 percent of the students in our worst-performing schools.”

“When it comes to education reform,” Romney asserts, “candidates cannot have it both ways – talking up education reform, while indulging the same groups that are blocking reform. You can be the voice of disadvantaged public-school students, or you can be the protector of special interests like the teachers unions, but you can’t be both. I have made my choice: As president, I will be a champion of real education reform in America, and I won’t let any special interest get in the way.”

As it happens, Romney follows a speech from Attorney General Eric Holder, in which he describes common-sense voter ID laws as “political pretexts to disenfranchise American citizens of their most precious right.” Presumably black voters aren’t supposed to be worried about getting “disenfranchised” by fraudulent votes – the form of disenfranchisement Eric Holder never, ever wants to discuss.

But Holder went further. Outrageously, he said of voter ID laws: “We call those poll taxes.”

Poll taxes were a fee leveled against freed slaves in the old South, to keep them from voting. They are illegal under the 24th amendment to the Constitution. Shouldn’t the Attorney General of the United States be required to know that? How often must Eric Holder loudly declare that he is completely unqualified for the position he holds?

Holder has relentlessly launched legal challenges to every voter ID law in the land, but to my knowledge he has never asserted in court that they were poll taxes. Whatever political latitude we might choose to extend to the Attorney General, it seems certain that his job should not involve lying about the law to frighten American citizens into cooperation with his political agenda.

We occasionally hear criticism of “the politics of fear.” The contrast between Romney and Holder illustrates the politics of fear perfectly. The NAACP got to hear ridiculous scare tactics from an embattled Attorney General who felt free to address them as if they were imbeciles, easily frightened into obedience with the most absurd and

extreme rhetoric. Then they'll hear Mitt Romney address them with the respect due to mature adults, and talk about the unbreakable connection between opportunity and freedom. It is very sad to think that anyone in America would believe the color of their skin obliges them to entertain the former argument, at the expense of the latter.

Update: Courtesy of PBS, here's a video of Mitt Romney's entire 24-minute address to the NAACP convention. He got booed a few times, but they gave him a standing ovation at the end.

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAhJh0ADd9k&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAhJh0ADd9k&feature=player_embedded).

<a href="#">20120712-18</a>	20:19	Bill	"A Note from Mitt Romney's Doctor About His Memory Loss"
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"A Note from Mitt Romney's Doctor About His Memory Loss" by Andy Borowitz, The Borowitz Report

July 12, 2012, (<http://www.borowitzreport.com/2012/07/12/a-note-from-mitt-romneys-doctor/>)

(NEW YORK) Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney today released this doctor's note from his longtime physician, Dr. Hamilton Tennace:

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been Willard Mitt Romney's personal physician for the past thirty-two years. In that capacity, I believe I am uniquely qualified to address the issue of whether Mr. Romney left his post at Bain Capital in 1999, as he has said he did, or in 2002, as actual facts seem to suggest.

I treated Mr. Romney throughout his tenure at Bain. During those years, I found him to be healthy, fit, and tan, but not dangerously so. From a health standpoint, those years were uneventful for Mr. Romney, with one notable exception.

In 1999 I received an urgent call from Bain headquarters indicating that Mr. Romney had suffered a serious accident. Once I arrived on the scene, I learned that Mr. Romney had participated in a "going away party" to celebrate the end of his tenure at Bain and that he had been hit in the forehead with an exploding champagne cork. After he spent several days in the hospital for observation, it became clear to me that Mr. Romney was suffering from symptoms consistent with head trauma, including severe memory loss. For example, he could not remember several key episodes from his youth, including the time he pinned a gay student to the ground and cut off his hair.

After I advised his partners at Bain that Mr. Romney's recovery from this head trauma could be difficult and prolonged, they decided to keep him on as chief executive at Bain so that he could benefit from the company's health coverage. It was decided that he would take a leave of absence from his duties at Bain to do something less demanding, and so he signed on to run the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

When his duties at the Olympics were complete, Mr. Romney submitted to a full physical at the request of his partners to Bain to see if he was finally ready to make his much-delayed exit from the firm. He passed most of the cognitive tests with flying colors; he could remember the name of his wife and all of his sons, which in his case was an impressive feat. Only one question made him stumble. When I asked him what year it was, instead of 2002 he replied, "1999."

To be candid, I did not think much of his error at the time, although I now see it as a symptom of the chronic memory loss that persisted once he became Governor of Massachusetts. For example, after examining Gov. Romney just after his greatest legislative achievement, Massachusetts' healthcare law, he had no memory of having any role in it. In subsequent appointments, Mr. Romney has been unable to remember other facts one might deem important, such as where he put all his money and what file drawer contains his tax returns.

In closing, it is my medical opinion that Mr. Romney's forgetfulness about when he departed Bain, as well as his vagueness on any number of other subjects, stem from that original head injury he suffered in 1999. Having said

that, I do not believe that Mr. Romney's bouts of amnesia should in any way prevent him from having a full, active public life. In running for the Presidency, they may even be an advantage.

Sincerely, Dr. Hamilton Tennace, M.D.

20120712-01 07:10 MarthaH "25% of Romney Bundlers Hail from Finance Sector"

"25% of Romney Bundlers Hail from Finance Sector" by Fredreka Schouten and Gregory Korte, *USA Today*

July 12, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-07-10/romney-bundlers-finance-sector/56156630/1>)

(WASHINGTON) Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney depends on a wide network of venture capitalists, hedge-fund managers and other Wall Street bankers to raise the hundreds of millions he has amassed in his bid to oust President Obama, a USA TODAY analysis of his fundraising operation shows.

More than 300 people — or nearly a quarter of the roughly 1,200 individuals *USA Today* has identified as Romney fundraisers — come from the world of finance, more than any other sector. More than a dozen come from the ranks of a single company, investment powerhouse Goldman Sachs, which spent nearly \$4.4 million to influence Washington policymakers last year.

By comparison, 77 of Obama's 532 fundraisers work in the securities and investment industry, according to a tally by the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics. Obama has slammed Romney's record in private equity, while Romney has pledged to dismantle financial-industry regulations enacted during the Obama administration.

Those fundraisers who commit to raising as much as \$250,000 to host Romney at dinners and receptions include diet guru Jenny Craig, who hosted Romney at her California beachfront home, billionaire hedge-fund guru Julian Robertson and Arizona Cardinals tight end Todd Heap.

Romney's supporters have unleashed torrents of campaign cash since he effectively clinched the GOP nomination. Last month, he and the Republican National Committee raised \$106 million — \$35 million more than Obama and the Democratic National Committee. The June haul marks the second month in a row Romney and the GOP have outraised Obama, as Wall Street and other interests turn away from a president who has slammed Romney's record as a venture capitalist — and flock to Romney, who has pledged to dismantle new financial-industry regulations erected during Obama's time in office.

Unlike Obama, Romney has refused to name his top fundraisers. USA TODAY reviewed Federal Election Commission data, invitations to 85 Romney fundraising events obtained by the non-partisan Sunlight Foundation, campaign news releases and news accounts to offer a snapshot of Romney's fundraising network.

Political fundraisers, often known as "bundlers" for their ability to bundle together contributions from family, friends and business associates, are crucial to politicians collecting money in small increments from thousands of donors. Bundlers are so valuable that presidents often reward them with ambassadorships.

Romney's most prolific supporters also have performed double duty — writing large checks to Restore Our Future, a pro-Romney super PAC that can raise unlimited amounts to aid his White House bid as long as it operates independently of his campaign.

More than 90 of the fundraisers identified by USA TODAY also have contributed \$25,000 or more to the super PAC. They have donated nearly \$18.4 million to the group, which has spent more than \$53 million to promote Romney and attack his rivals.

"You see Romney look-alikes — people from the same world he comes from," said Ellen Miller of the Sunlight Foundation. "While it's not surprising, it's sobering when you think about who has his left and right ear." The Romney campaign did not respond to interview requests.

Edward Schwartz, president of a Bloomfield Hills, Mich., investment firm said he joined the fundraising team because of his family's close ties to Romney's brother, Scott, a Michigan lawyer. Romney's background in government and business have given him skills "that surpass any candidate I've seen," Schwartz said. He declined to say how much he has raised.

"We've made our very best efforts," Schwartz said.

Romney has also tapped business, religious and family ties to build his fundraising network.

His fundraisers include dozens of current and former executives of the consulting and private-equity firms he ran. Dozens more are fellow Mormons, such as JetBlue founder David Neeleman. Republican stalwarts, including former U.S. ambassador to Belgium Sam Fox, also have joined the fundraising circuit. Scott Romney is a national finance chairman.

A St. Louis businessman, Fox said President Obama "means well" but doesn't have the experience to right the troubled U.S. economy.

Fox, who said he had his assistants research Romney's career in business and government after Romney sought his support in 2005, said "he's been successful at every problem he's taken on."

He donated \$190,000 to a pro-Romney super PAC but won't say how much he has raised — only that the "floodgates opened" once the former Massachusetts governor clinched the nomination in May.

Neeleman called Romney "one of the smartest guys I know" and said Romney's long volunteer church service — first overseeing a local congregation as a Mormon bishop and later as a stake president presiding over several congregations in suburban Boston — demonstrates his kindness. The church does not have paid clergy, and bishops and stake leaders have broad responsibilities to manage budgets, deliver sermons and provide spiritual counseling. "As a Mormon, I know what that entails," Neeleman said. "You have to be very compassionate and loving. When people say he's out of touch because he's rich ... I'd like to see them give that kind of service."

Neeleman said he hosted a fundraiser for Romney at his Connecticut home in May, but said he's unsure how much was raised.

Indeed, without voluntary reporting from the campaigns themselves, it's impossible to determine exactly how much either presidential contender has raised through bundlers. Every few months, Obama releases a list of bundlers who have collected at least \$50,000, but describes their fundraising totals only in broad ranges. The campaign's most recent release shows 532 people directed at least \$106.4 million to Obama's re-election efforts through April 20.

Among Romney's backers: a Georgia executive who was on the invitation as a host of a February fundraising event for Romney a month after the Securities and Exchange Commission accused him of insider trading. On Jan. 9, the SEC filed a civil complaint against Parker "Pete" Petit, alleging Petit tipped off a friend to the impending sale of Matria Healthcare, a health-wellness company where Petit was CEO. On Feb. 8, Petit was on the host committee for a Romney fundraiser at the W Hotel in Atlanta, according to an invitation obtained by the Sunlight Foundation. He gave \$2,500 to Romney's campaign Feb. 6.

Petit has denied any wrongdoing. His lawyer, Aaron Danzig, sent USA TODAY a January news release, saying the SEC "has targeted an innocent business executive."

[20120712-08](#)

15:47

Art

Re: "25% of Romney Bundlers Hail from Finance Sector" (reply to MarthaH, above)

Gee, who would have guessed?

from Avaaz:

Big banks have been caught in a massive scam to rig global interest rates, ripping off millions of people on their mortgages, student loans and more! We'd go to jail for this, but Barclays bank has only been fined, and just a fraction of their profits! Outrage is mounting -- this is our chance to finally turn the tide of the banks' reign over our democracies.

The EU finance regulator, Michel Barnier is standing up to the powerful bank lobby and championing reform that would put bankers behind bars for fraud like this. If the EU goes first, accountability could quickly spread across the globe. But the banks are lobbying hard against it, and we need a massive surge of people power to drive these reforms through.

If we can get 1 million people to stand with Barnier in the next 3 days, it will give him momentum to face down the banking lobby and push governments to bring reform. Click below to sign, and our growing numbers will be represented by adding mock bankers to a jail right in front of the EU Parliament:

[http://www.avaaz.org/en/bankers\\_behind\\_bars\\_f/?bWIgKcb&v=15955](http://www.avaaz.org/en/bankers_behind_bars_f/?bWIgKcb&v=15955).

The full scale of the scandal is still unknown, but what we know is breathtaking: "Several" unnamed major banks were involved, and the rigging of the LIBOR interest rate, the rate on which many of the world's interest rates are based, affected the value of literally hundreds of trillions of dollars in investments. Barclays alone has admitted to committing this fraud "hundreds" of times.

For too long, our governments have been cowed by powerful banks who threatened to move elsewhere if challenged. For too long, banks have manipulated our market economies, tilting the playing field in their favour, and engaging in reckless risk-taking, secure in the knowledge that they could force governments to hand them our taxpayer money when they got into trouble.

The system is rigged, and that's a crime. It's time to put the criminals behind bars for it. It starts in Europe -- let's make it happen.

There may never have been a time in modern history when the big banks didn't have excessive and extraordinary power that they regularly abused. But democracy is on the march -- we've seen this march overcome tyrants across the world, and together, we'll help end the reign of the banks as well.

With hope, Ricken, Iain, Alex, Antonia, Giulia, Luis, and the entire Avaaz team

P.S. -- Last week 94,000 people joined Avaaz member David R.'s campaign against foul-play in the Mexican elections which he launched on the new Avaaz Community Petitions platform. Get support for the things you care strongly about by starting your campaign here: [http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/start\\_a\\_petition](http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/start_a_petition).

More information:

FSA's Turner Says Banks Culture One of 'Cynical Entitlement' (Bloomberg), <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-07-03/fsa-s-turner-says-banks-have-culture-of-cynical-entitlement-1-.html>.

Barclays Libor scandal: how can we change banking culture? (*The Guardian*), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/jul/02/barclays-libor-scandal-change-banking-culture>.

Barclays just the tip of the iceberg as banking braced for more scandals (*The Guardian*), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/jul/08/banking-scandals-barclays?intcmp=239>.

The rotten heart of finance: A scandal over key interest rates is about to go global (*Economist*), <http://www.economist.com/node/21558281>.

Banking Reforms after the Libor scandal (*Financial Times*)  
<http://blogs.ft.com/martin-wolf-exchange/2012/07/02/banking-reforms-after-the-libor-scandal/#axzz1zY8LnZHS>.

EU's Barnier pushes for criminal sanctions for Libor abuse (Reuters)  
<http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/07/09/idINL6E8I91PR20120709>.

Barnier Seeks to Widen EU Rules to Bar Libor Manipulation (*Business Week*),  
<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-07-08/barnier-seeks-to-widen-eu-market-abuse-rules-to-include-libor>.

**20120712-13** 18:16 MarthaH Drought in Indiana & Putnam County

The data cutoff for Drought Monitor maps is Tuesday at 7 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. The maps, which are based on analysis of the data, are released each Thursday at 8:30 a.m. Eastern Time.

# U.S. Drought Monitor

## Indiana

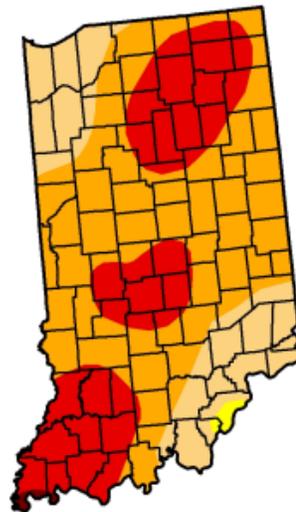
July 10, 2012  
 Valid 7 a.m. EST

*Drought Conditions (Percent Area)*

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	99.40	80.15	29.77	0.40
Last Week (07/03/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	89.02	68.84	23.46	0.00
3 Months Ago (04/10/2012 map)	90.54	9.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/27/2011 map)	55.11	44.89	6.08	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (07/05/2011 map)	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

*Intensity:*

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, July 12, 2012  
 Rich Tinker, Climate Prediction Center/NCEP/NWS/NOAA

**20120712-15** 19:13 Pam Re: Drought in Indiana & Putnam County (reply to MarthaH)

Yikes! What on earth are we going to do?

**20120712-16** 19:15 SteveG Republicans & Obamacare

In case you're keeping score...

Number of Jobs Bills Introduced and Passed by the Republicans in the House of Representatives: ZERO.

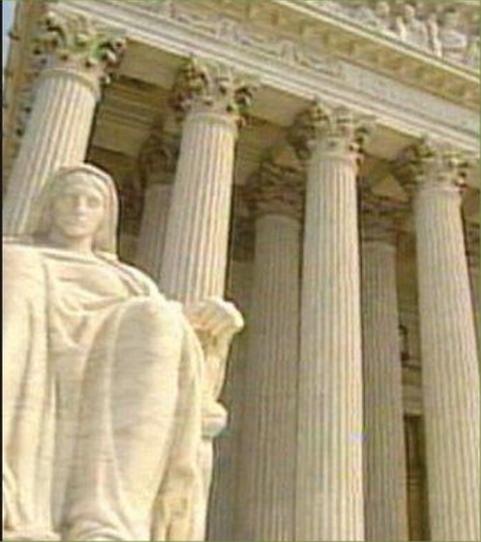
Number of times those same House Republicans have attempted to repeal the Affordable Care Act: 33.

It's all about priorities with [Eric Cantor](#) and [John Boehner](#).

**The cowardly lions of "free speech" ...**

**"Poor people haven't lost their voice — they can't afford a voice. Everyday working people suffer from universal laryngitis, brought on by the absence of money. As for children — children who have a big stake in our elections but no vote, forget it— for them to be heard they would need piggy banks the size of Walmart heirs. Or the Koch brothers for uncles."**

*~ Bill Moyers on Citizens United  
July 9, 2012 / Salon.com*



<http://www.in.gov/visitindiana/>



(by deanspic)

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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #182 — JULY 16, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Just Wake Up**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 16, 2012)



(<http://www.wildjunket.com/2009/11/09/climbing-the-most-active-volcano-in-guatemala/>)

Early Saturday morning, I had one of those DREAMS. You know, one of those metaphorical, larger-than-life dreams, almost like being in a Shakespeare play, but real.

I don't know who I was in the dream or what my job was, but I had been working on the edge of (I think) volcanoes, for some time. Maybe they were caves. But, tethered, my job was to jump into the abyss and do... something.

So, in my dream, wherever I was, I had jumped and was descending. It wasn't anything like a falling dream (which I love), that wild empty pit of the stomach ride they say must awaken you or you truly die. (I doubt it.)

I was simply descending into some giant crack in the Earth and I knew it would get hotter the lower I went, though my suit would protect me. Often, in a dream such as this, I might have the sensation of not being able to breathe, which wakes me up immediately, but that didn't happen this time.

Suddenly, I felt a snap and I knew that meant the tether had broken. My only connection to the real world above had broken. My way home and to life was gone in an instant.

For many seemingly long moments I faced the realization that I would surely die. There was no way to claw my way back up. There wasn't even anything to hold onto. I entertained thoughts that I sure was dumb for putting myself in such a perilous situation. How could I have done such a stupid thing? Didn't I realize my life was at the mercy of a tenuous piece of technology that didn't care whether I lived or died?

My mind raced desperately to think of a way out, as despair started to settle its old score. At no time did I think I was not in a real situation, truly dumb, and truly dying.

Then I thought, what the hell, I know it won't do any good because, unfortunately, this is reality, but my only chance in this existence for further life is if, by some God-granted miracle, I am actually asleep instead of dying. As useless as it seemed to me at the time, I decided to try, against all odds and common sense, to wake up.

The next thing I knew, I was lying in the cool tropical winter air, breathing...and, wakening, realizing how incredibly delicious and precious the air we take for granted and this life we largely sleep through.

It started me thinking. Here we are as a civilization, apparently sinking, much as I was in my dream. Maybe, somehow, we need to wake up! Not from sleep, of course, but from forgetfulness about how we arrived here. We must remember that we've been to this Republican idea of utopia we now live in, before. It was called the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and it featured the full implementation of all the Republican programs and dreams: low or no taxes, winner take all, no rules, no unions, few laws or regulations, freedom and the vote only for the rich, white males, unbridled corporate capitalism, and slaves (owned or free) for labor.

We need to wake up and remember we didn't like that kind of society—that's why we progressed forward a little, for a while. The fact is, the class system imposed upon Americans was hated with a fierce, hungry passion that is now very hard to imagine.

Yet we need to wake up to that passion or, I fear, we are sunk. As in my dream, even if it seems like it can't possibly save us, WAKE UP!

20120715-01	05:30	SteveB	Bolivian Bakery Biz
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It's been a pretty good week for the future business. My new construction chief, Jesus, and his crew have been doing a great remodeling job and should finish this week. We've been busy rounding-up everything we need to get started. This has made the initial investment level rise to \$20,000, still an incredibly small amount to start a business with this potential.

I guess the most interesting happening was our search for a sink big enough to wash our large cookie sheets, without being as big as a bathtub. When we finally found our sink, it turned out to be solid fancy, fancy marble. OK, the public will have a clear view of our little factory's operations, and we are striving for an upscale look, but Jeez, I've never owned such a thing. Still, it was beautiful and the only thing we found that was big enough.

But it was just a few centimeters too long for the spot I had planned. No problem, we were told, they would cut it, fix it, and have it ready the next day. We returned the next day to a big controversy and confusion. I am still positive that the original sink we saw and measured was mainly black, which I didn't like so much, but now it was sort of brown and measured 2 cm. less in the crucial dimension. The place insisted this was what we had seen, to the point that Marci couldn't remember what the heck color it had been. Reality had been distorted.

Still, we both liked the “new” color. There was a flange around the sink that could be made slightly smaller and make the sink part itself acceptably large. They would do that for free and we could pick it up the next day. That part all worked out, so now we have a billionaire’s utility sink to wash our pots and pans in.

Another little adventure—getting the exact right lighting installed in concrete/plaster/brick walls in a commercial space can be tricky, but we also put that issue to rest this past week. The lighting should now be perfect.

Oh, one more thing I almost forgot about. I was forced, this week, to come to the realization that one of our big plate glass windows will have to be removed so our huge oven can be moved in after remodeling. Fun! Fortunately, the big, new arched doorway, where Jesus succeeded after Oscar failed, will be large enough for the oven we will buy, but some ovens would have required a little destructive widening and repair—where the solid brick wall is a foot thick! Jesus was happy to hear his artwork will remain intact. Me too! Whew! Call it good planning, or, finally, a stroke of luck.

20120713-01 07:47 MarthaH “Lines Are Drawn Over Opting Out of Medicaid Plan”

The plot thickens, and the jockeying for the next presidential campaign has begun with the Supreme Court decision. I am convinced it is not about Medicaid, etc, but about pandering. If not, why this list of characters?

“Lines Are Drawn Over Opting Out of Medicaid Plan” by Abby Goodnough, *The New York Times*

July 12, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/13/health/policy/in-florida-a-fight-brews-over-governors-vow-to-opt-out-of-medicaid-expansion.html?pagewanted=all>)

(MIAMI) In the weeks since the Supreme Court ruled that states could opt out of a plan to vastly expand Medicaid under President Obama’s health care law, several Republican governors have vowed to do just that, attacking the expansion as a budget-busting federal power grab.

But it may not be so easy. A battle is brewing here in Florida, where Gov. Rick Scott took to national television soon after the ruling to announce that he would reject the expansion. Advocates for the poor and some players in the health care industry — especially hospitals, a powerful political lobby — intend to push back.

Hospital associations around the country have already signed off on cuts to reimbursement rates under the health care law on the assumption that the new paying customers they would gain, partly through the Medicaid expansion, would more than cover their losses.

“If we’re going to walk away from that coverage, we’ll simply see those dollars we contributed through cuts in hospital payments go to covering people in other states,” said Bruce Rueben, president of the Florida Hospital Association. “It’s a bad deal for people in Florida if it plays out that way.”

Given Florida’s size — it is the fourth most populous state in the nation, and more than 20 percent of its 19 million residents lack health insurance — the implications for Mr. Obama’s goal of insuring most Americans are significant. And Florida’s importance as one of the biggest battleground states in the presidential race adds potency to Mr. Scott’s clash with the Obama administration. Supporters of the law here have hurried to paint the Medicaid expansion as crucial not just morally, but economically.

But there is noticeable frustration with the White House from some. State Senator Nan Rich, a Democrat running for governor in 2014, said the administration needed to do a better job of countering state-level opposition.

“The Obama administration needs to be more forceful in going out there and explaining what is true and what’s not,” she said.

Despite the governor's statements, leaders of the Republican-controlled state Legislature have not outright rejected the expansion, saying they will study their options over the coming months before making a decision.

"At the end of the day, we are going to take a rational approach that reflects the interests of Floridians, protects their hard-earned tax dollars and uses common sense," said Representative Will Weatherford, the incoming House speaker.

That more measured approach may reflect, in part, mixed public sentiment about the health care law. The boos that met Mitt Romney's vow to repeal the law in a speech on Wednesday at the N.A.A.C.P.'s annual convention in Houston were a reminder that while Republicans believe strident opposition is a winning strategy, it may not be so clear-cut.

Mr. Scott describes Medicaid as a dysfunctional program, saying the portion of the state budget devoted to it is growing at more than three and a half times the rate of general revenues. The program currently costs about \$21 billion a year in Florida, with the federal government covering 55 percent, and serves about 3.2 million people. Childless adults are generally not eligible but would be under the expansion.

All told, the expansion would add some 17 million people to the Medicaid rolls nationally, including perhaps one million or more in Florida.

Under the law, the federal government would pay the full cost of each state's expansion for the first three years, starting in 2014, and gradually decrease its share to 90 percent in 2020 and beyond. Last week, Mr. Scott said in national television interviews that the state would owe an additional \$1.9 billion a year if, as the law calls for, it expanded Medicaid to everyone with incomes up to 133 percent of the poverty level. That is currently about \$15,000 for a single person and \$31,000 for a family of four.

Mr. Scott has since backed off the \$1.9 billion estimate; his spokesman, Lane Wright, said he had based it on an outdated report. But the state is still anticipating high costs, partly because it expects that a number of people who are currently eligible for Medicaid but have not signed up will do so, a concern shared by other states. The federal government would pay a lower share of the cost for that group.

In Florida, the federal government would contribute a total of \$20 billion for the newly eligible group from 2014 through 2019, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonpartisan research group. The foundation estimates Florida's share of the expansion costs at between \$1.2 billion and \$2.5 billion from 2014 through 2019, depending on how many of those newly eligible for Medicaid actually enroll.

Without the expansion, Mr. Rueben and others in the health care industry said, the cost of uncompensated care — emergency treatment for those who are uninsured and cannot afford to pay — will continue to spiral upward and more costs will be shifted to the insured. Jackson Health System, the safety-net hospital system in Miami, provided more than \$450 million in uncompensated care last year.

For the most part, hospitals are likely to hold their fire until after the election, said Jeff Goldsmith, a health industry analyst based in Virginia. "If Obama is defeated and the Senate flips, it's all over," Mr. Goldsmith said. "Do you spend a bunch of scarce political capital making people angry now, or wait until things have settled after November?"

Although clinics for the poor provide basic care to a constant stream of uninsured patients, those who need more complicated tests or procedures are often out of luck.

Dr. Edwin Bosa-Osorio, chief medical officer at Jessie Trice Community Health Center, which serves several poor neighborhoods in the Miami area, said it can take more than a year for his patients to get diagnostic tests or consultations even at Jackson, the safety-net hospital system, because it is so overburdened.

As a result, Dr. Bosa-Osorio said, the center's doctors too often have to take "the Plan B approach to a condition."

For Tracy Similien, a 22-year-old student who injured her hip in a fall several years ago and still has frequent searing pain, that means relying on Tylenol instead of seeing an orthopedist or neurologist.

Fatima Zafar, Ms. Similien's primary care doctor at Jessie Trice, said another of her patients has uterine fibroids that make her anemic and weak. She needs a hysterectomy, Dr. Zafar said, but is on a waiting list for it at Jackson. About 23 percent of Jessie Trice patients have Medicaid and can thus be referred to other hospitals that offer quicker appointments; most of the rest are uninsured. "You feel very limited in your scope," Dr. Zafar said.

In a letter to governors on Tuesday, Kathleen Sebelius, the health and human services secretary, urged them to take advantage of "the unusually generous federal resources" and move ahead with expansions.

But State Senator Joe Negrón, a Republican who is vice chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, said he was skeptical that the federal government could continue to pay for most of the expansion indefinitely given the size of the deficit.

"Medicaid should be a last-resort safety-net program and not a mechanism to reduce the number of uninsured," he said. "We have to hope our economy keeps improving and more people get back to work and therefore would have access to private health insurance."

<a href="#">20120713-05</a>	11:18	Pam	Re: "Lines Are Drawn Over Opting Out of Medicaid Plan" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Universal coverage/single payer. When hell freezes over, I know, but I have to keep hope alive.

<a href="#">20120714-01</a>	17:17	SteveG	"Nation's Governors Focus on Ways to Trim Health Care Costs"
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"Nation's Governors Focus on Ways to Trim Health Care Costs" by Kelly Kennedy, *USA Today*

July 14, 2012, (<http://www.indystar.com/usatoday/article/56222792?odyssey=mod|newswell|text|IndyStar.com|s>)

(WILLIAMSBURG, Va.) One day after a *USA Today* survey showed the states are divided along party lines when it comes to implementing the Affordable Care Act, governors meeting here tried to focus beyond politics on what needs to be done to cut health care costs.

And unlike the bitter battle at the national level, they calmly found middle ground by sticking with issues that could be addressed at the state level. The *USA Today* survey found that only Republican governors have refused to expand Medicaid and only Democrats say they will. But Saturday, the governors said they saw solutions.

"Fifteen years ago, we thought we would never, ever get a handle on violent crime," said Gov. Martin O'Malley, D-Md., and he then talked about innovative ideas that worked in that arena, such as performance reviews and incentives. "I'm hearing all the same ideas. I've seen what you all are doing. It sounds like what we need is a common platform."

Speakers talked about the high cost of patients with chronic health issues, keeping track of patients who needed follow-up care to keep them healthy and cut costs, and creating incentives for providers that lower costs for the states.

Some of the lessons seemed obvious, such as addressing the Medicaid dental patients in Minnesota who went to the hospital for pain medication, rather than to the dentist for treatment; or providers at 11 centers who duplicated medical tests because there was no incentive to stop, said Jennifer DeCubellis, director of Hennepin County Health in Minnesota.

Many of the states are already working through solutions that were included in the Affordable Care Act: providers who work together as a team, better medication management, and trying to better share information between health care systems, including with electronic records.

Some of the governors latched on to the idea that they could address the problem using resources they already have.

"Are you suggesting the current system has more than sufficient funding?" said Gov. Dave Heineman, R-Neb., to the presenters. "We're just not using it efficiently?"

Jeffrey Brenner, director of the Camden (N.J.) Coalition of Healthcare Providers, said the United States spends more money than any other country, but "you don't see the French dying in the streets." In other words, other countries have created good health care systems without watching the quality go down. He said the states with the most efficient health care systems are the states where the governors have "banged their fists on the table and said, 'Let's get this together.'"

But it's not quite that simple, DeCubellis said.

She said she believed the money is in the system, but some problems cannot be solved in 20 minutes with the doctor, such as getting the word out the public about obesity or making sure people can get to the resources — such as fruits and vegetables at a local grocery store — they need to make healthy choices.

Gov. Gary Herbert, R-Utah, picked up on some of those problems, such as trying to make change in a large, bureaucratic system. "It gives us pause for thought for what we can do at the state level," he said. Then he asked Brenner to explain what he meant when he said health care has not "innovated."

Brenner said amazing progress has been made in health care, but that, unlike a company like Apple that immediately makes sure the innovations reach down to the lowest level, health care still struggles with getting the word out about basics.

As an example, he talked about a 70-year-old man who couldn't keep his blood-sugar levels under control. Because hospitals face penalties for patients who are readmitted within 30 days of a hospital stay, some organizations have nurses calling patients after they go home to make sure they're taking their medications, to see if they have any questions and to see if they've noticed any changes in their health. In the case of the 70-year-old, a team visited to figure out the problem: He sees poorly, and he had been sucking air, rather than insulin, into his hypodermic needle. Brenner called that a "process failure."

About 100,000 patients die every year to provider errors, Brenner said, adding that they get great care at the hospital, but then are sent out into the world without follow-up care.

"There's no incentive to do it," he said. If everyone worked together, "you'd close hospitals."

Gov. Jack Markell, D-Del., asked how, then, can a state reward quality, rather than using a fee-for-service system, across the health care system. Brenner suggested hospital bonds. "Half of the costs are doctors and hospitals," he said.

Emergency room physician Andrea Archer traveled to the conference from Midlothian, Va., because what the governors talk about and the policy decisions they make will affect her work. She said many of those decisions should be made at the local level, echoing comments in the meeting that one solution will not work for every state.

"It's interesting to see how some people with their boots on the ground are making things work," she said. "That was really exciting."



Bain the bane...

Poor Mitt! Probably not the best candidate in the world, but who wants the rest of the GOP field? Maybe Sarah will ride to the rescue on a white horse! Maybe Newt will come up with a brilliant solution! Perhaps Perry will remember his indoctrination or Cain will renounce promiscuity. Then there's that devil, Santorum... Yuck!

With R0mney, his lies, and the \$billions behind him, I'm reminded of an old rhyme:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the kings horses and all the kings men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

"Bain Will Never Go Away" by Dylan Byers, Politico

July 13, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/>)

"**Bain will never go away, never.** We may even run ads against Bain after the election."

That's veteran Democratic strategist Paul Begala, who like President Obama refers to Mitt Romney's private sector experience as the candidate's "main calling card" for the White House. It's a phrase that the Obama team and its surrogates will be using a lot over the course of the campaign, especially as the Romney campaign struggles to rebut coverage of Romney's tenure at the firm.

Begala's biases aside -- he is a consultant to the pro-Obama super PAC Priorities Action USA -- he has nearly 30 years of experience advising candidates, and knows a thing or two about managing media crises. When the Whitewater scandal hit the front pages, Begala was standing next to Bill Clinton in Texas when Clinton called a press conference to address reporters' questions.

"That was the difference," Begala told POLITICO in an interview yesterday. "When something like this happens, you have to respond -- and Romney won't respond. What that tells me is, there's probably more to this. I've been doing this for 28 years, and any time a politician won't release his tax returns, it's because he can't. Whatever is in there is worse than the Cayman Islands and shipping jobs to China. And like Lyndon Johnson said, **'You can't shine shit.'**"

But the larger problem, Begala continued, is the 'calling card' issue -- the fact that Romney is running on his business experience, and little else.

"Whitewater didn't define Clinton -- he was running on other issues. Barack Obama didn't run for president as the Jeremiah Wright candidate, and George W. Bush didn't run on his service in the National Guard," Begala said, referring to the issues that plagued previous presidential campaigns. "But **Romney is a one-trick pony. The only calling card Romney has for the presidency is his time in business. He never mentions his record in Massachusetts -- those years have been scrubbed. His raison d'être is his business background, and he won't come clean on it.**"

Again, Begala is biased, but he isn't the only one advising Romney to address questions about his Bain tenure head-on. Several Republican strategists have also said that Romney would better serve his candidacy by releasing more information about both his financial sector service and his finances in general.

And, Begala's critique gives you a pretty good indication of how the Dems intend to play this -- and tells you that they intend to play it straight through November.

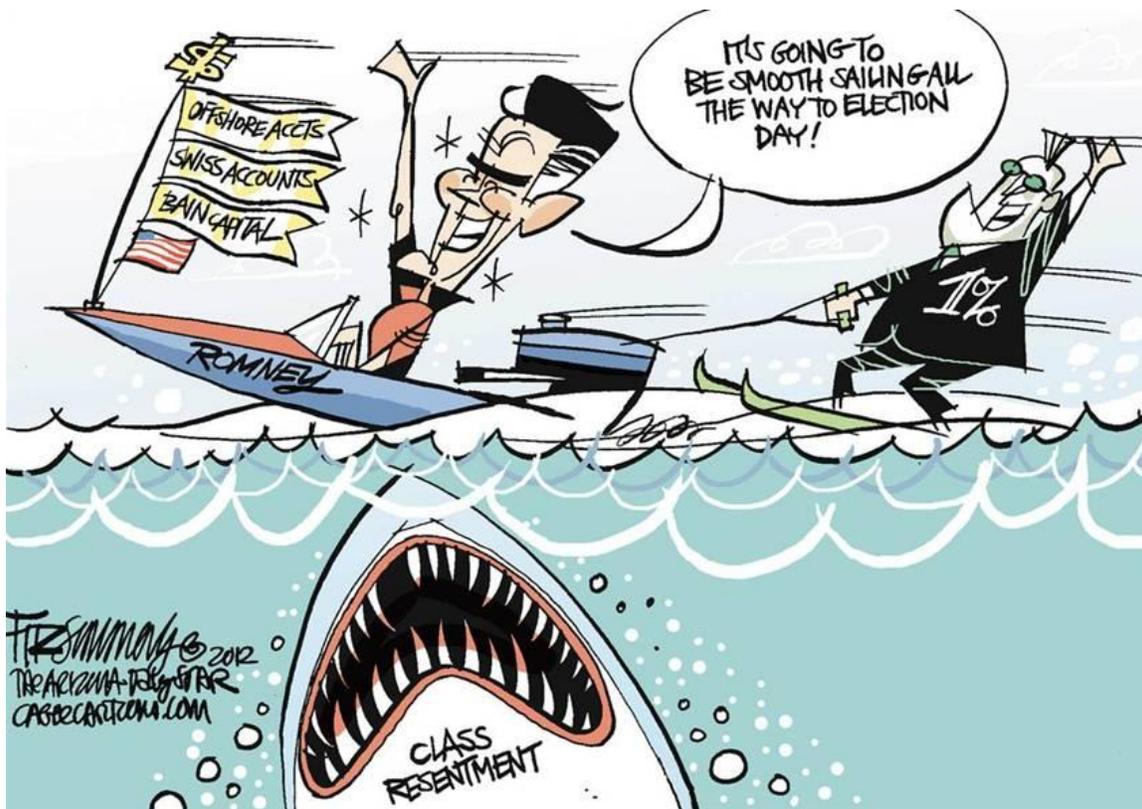
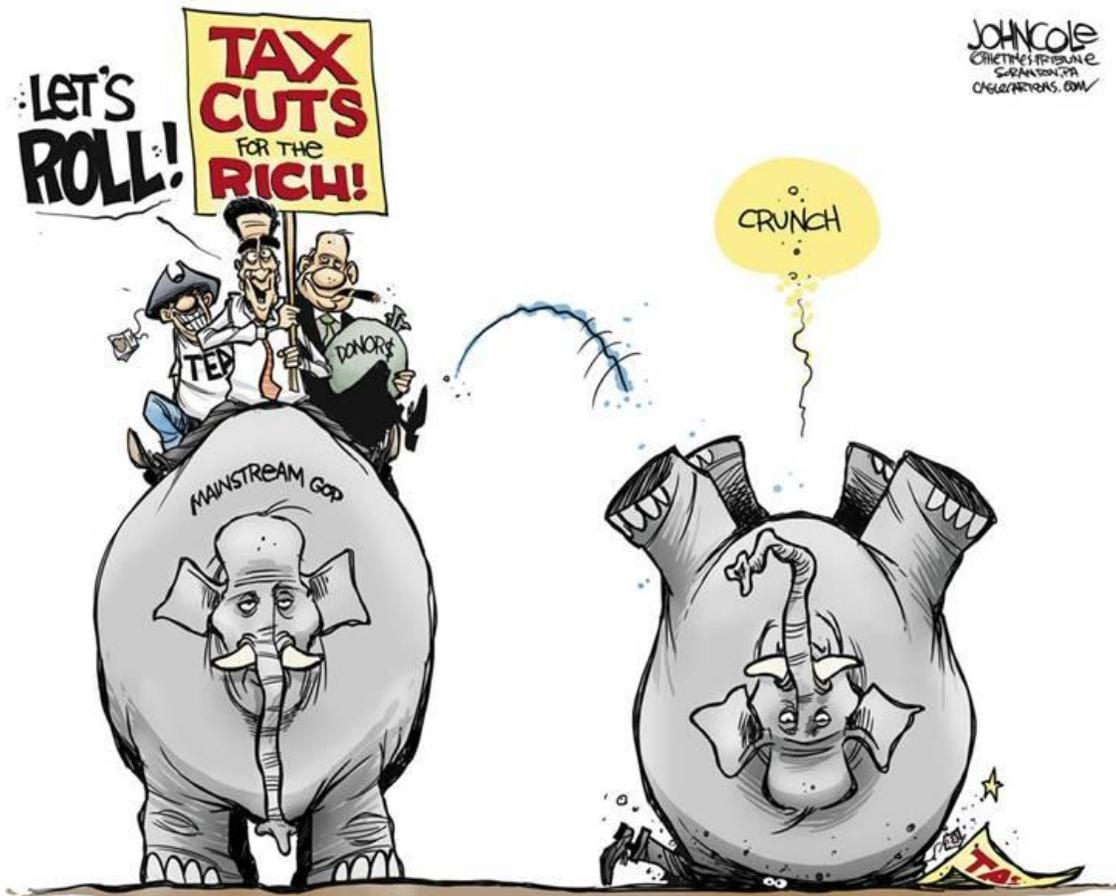
<a href="#">20120713-04</a>	11:06	Pam	Re: "Bain Will Never Go Away" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Follow the money.

<a href="#">20120713-06</a>	13:25	SteveG	Re: "Bain Will Never Go Away" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Don't worry, Bonner will throw his name in the ring.

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This is pretty good. What exactly have we raised up here?

"Rachel Maddow Mocks Mitt Romney's Interview Blitz" (incl. Video) by Huffington Post

July 14, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/14/rachel-maddow-mitt-romney-bain-interviews\\_n\\_1673433.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=email\\_share](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/14/rachel-maddow-mitt-romney-bain-interviews_n_1673433.html?utm_hp_ref=email_share))

Rachel Maddow lampooned Mitt Romney's Bain Capital interview blitz on her Friday show.

The presumptive GOP nominee sat down with correspondents from five networks -- CNN, Fox News, NBC, CBS and ABC -- in a hastily arranged pushback at the controversy surrounding disputes over his tenure at the head of the private equity firm. In the interviews, he rejected recent reports that contradicted his repeated claims that he left Bain Capital in 1999.

Maddow pointed out that the move was a departure for Romney, whose aversion to the press has been a theme of his campaign.

"After two very bad weeks on the campaign trail ... the Mitt Romney campaign did something they have never done with their normally rather interview-shy candidate," Maddow said.

She also dinged Romney for not talking to MSNBC -- though, realistically, it would have been a shocker if he did.

"He talked to MS -- well, no, actually, Mitt Romney did not talk to MSNBC," she said. Maddow then noted that Romney had repeated the same message in each of his five interviews. She played clips of him saying, "I had no role whatsoever in the management of Bain Capital after February of 1999" on multiple networks.

"I will admit that part of me was bummed that I didn't get one of these Mitt Romney interviews when everybody else got one," Maddow said. "But, you know, on the other hand, I realized that all that he would have said was 'I left Bain Capital in 1999,' and I would have said 'Pardon?' and he would have said 'I left Bain Capital in 1999,' and I would have said 'Could I change the subject?'"

**"Romney insists he left Bain in 1999 to run the 2002 Winter Olympics. This week he takes the gold medal for his marathon sprint from his own record. You can tell he's been training: he shaved three years off his time at Bain."** —Arianna Huffington (7/15/12, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/sunday-roundup\\_238\\_b\\_1673264.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/sunday-roundup_238_b_1673264.html))

Mitt:

- When being vetted as a possible VP candidate for John McCain's run at the presidency released 23 years of tax returns.
- McCain picked Sarah Palin
- Hmmmmmmm

Texas and the voter identification law:

- Gotta have a drivers license, military ID, gun permit, passport, or state issued ID (college ID's do not count)
- About half of the counties in Texas do not have drivers license offices
- All to prevent voter fraud

- In the past 10 years there have been 62 cases prosecuted in Texas for voter fraud
- During the primary in May 2012 200 deceased people voted in Texas
- A total of 262 cases of voter fraud in the past 10 years
- HmMMMMMMMMMM

**20120713-07** 14:18 Ben Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012 (to Debbie)

I love the idea, but since this isn't being logged anywhere except on internet backbone routers, maybe I should send it to my congresspeople - or the President's staff - instead...

Of course, getting Congress to pass this is a never-gonna-happen proposition. Call me a cynic (you'd be right!) but... I'm on board with this.

I'd also like to make corporate lobbying AND campaign contributions illegal. Let those corporations vote through the support of their employees and customers: it's citizens that have a right to vote, not corporations.

Weasels!

I have a close friend who runs a very thoughtful newsletter that might be of interest to you:

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

**20120713-09** 14:20 Ben Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012

Got this lovely chain mail from a good friend of some years. I sent her the FoM URL and email addresses.

Of course, there is no link to a counter or petition or lawmaker address or even a suggestion actually to make this sentiment heard, so in the end, it's only spam.

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Warren Buffett, in a recent interview with CNBC, offers one of the best quotes about the deficit: "I could end the deficit in 5 minutes," he told CNBC. "You just pass a law that says that anytime there is a deficit of more than 3% of GDP, all sitting members of Congress are ineligible for re-election."

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified! Why? Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971 - before computers, e-mail, cell phones, etc. Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven (7) took one (1) year or less to become the law of the land - all because of public pressure.

Warren Buffet is asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise. In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

Congressional Reform Act of 2012

1. No Tenure / No Pension. A Congressman/woman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they're out of office.
2. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security. All funds in the Congressional retirement fund move to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system, and Congress participates with the American people. It may not be used for any other purpose.

3. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan, just as all Americans do.
4. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.
5. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.
6. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.
7. All contracts with past and present Congressmen/women are void effective 12/1/12. The American people did not make this contract with Congressmen/women.

Congress made all these contracts for themselves. Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

20120713-10 14:35 SteveB Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012 (reply to Ben, above)

This has been making the rounds for some time now, and we've published it a couple of times. This is a slightly different version, though, in that it leaves out the usual term limits clause, which I mightily oppose. Republicans push term limits for the same reason they advocate flat taxes, free trade, and unbridled corporate campaign spending—it would benefit the richest 1% to have Congress full of rookies.

Thanks for this and your comments.

20120715-04 12:53 SteveB "Jobs Emergency Hollowing Out the Middle Class"

"Jobs Emergency Hollowing Out the Middle Class" by Dave Johnson, NationofChange

July 15, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/jobs-emergency-hollowing-out-middle-class-1342360648>)



We have a jobs emergency that is hollowing out the middle class. Some say automation is the cause of our high unemployment and that it will get worse. Others say there are other structural problems and that our high unemployment is a "new normal." Perhaps these are contributing to the problems. But let's do the things that we know we *can* do and *need* to do today, and then we can talk about how to restructure our economy to help us deal with these changes.

## The Discussion

In the *New York Times*, Thomas B Edsall writes about some who make a case that automation is a major cause of the "hollowing out" of our economy, killing off jobs and pushing income to the top. Dean Baker responds at CEPR that there are plenty of other factors that are pushing income upward, and they involve policies we can do something about right now.

## But First

Before any discussion of longer-term or structural effects of automation on employment and income and what to do about them, this has to be said: **We have millions of jobs that need doing and we could employ many millions if we would just get started on doing them.** Here are a few:

- **Infrastructure needs:** We have been putting off maintenance and modernization of our infrastructure for decades. This is work *that has to be done*, and doing it will employ millions. We can finance this at the lowest cost in history, and the payoff will be an improved, efficient and competitive economy. The only reason we are not putting people to work fixing our infrastructure is that Republicans are intentionally sabotaging employment to give themselves an edge in the coming election. There is no way around that conclusion, but the media is not bringing the story to the public.
- **Energy efficiency:** Another urgent need -- we urgently need to get our economy off of oil, and we can employ more millions of people doing it. We can start with a project to retrofit all of our buildings and homes to be more energy efficient. If we did this we would all spend less on energy from now on, our economy would more efficient and competitive *and* it would reduce imports and help our balance of trade. Just as with infrastructure work we can finance this work at the lowest cost in history. (Also, people don't need college degrees to install thermal windows, paint roofs white and insulate houses.)
- **Green energy:** The world is turning away from oil and coal, with wind and solar and other alternatives climbing up to take their place. Smart-grid systems will efficiently transport the electricity generated with these new methods. Cars will move to electric. Mass transportation will be built in cities with high-speed rail linking them. This means a manufacturing revolution is taking place that will bring millions of jobs and trillions of dollars to countries that win a share. But so far certain entrenched interests are fighting to keep our country from gaining a share of the new industries.
- **Government:** Even as we face terrible unemployment, anti-government conservatives are forcing layoffs of hundreds of thousands of teachers, police, firefighters, postal workers and others We, the People hire to do things we want done for each other. As these people lose their jobs they stop patronizing grocery stores and other businesses, stop buying clothes and cars and other things that also provide jobs. This has obviously contributed to the unemployment emergency we face.
- **Trade:** We have policies that drive factories out of the country and drive remaining wages down. In the Bush years we pushed more than 50,000 factories out of the country, losing millions of manufacturing jobs! Our huge trade deficit drains money from our economy, forcing us to borrow from China and others.

Let's put people to work in those jobs that need doing, like fixing and modernizing our infrastructure, moving to a green non-oil pollution economy, teaching, policing, firefighting, administering, etc. Lets fix policies that drive jobs out of the country.THEN let's start working on what to do about our economic system that lets some people grab billions and lets others just starve.

## Structural?

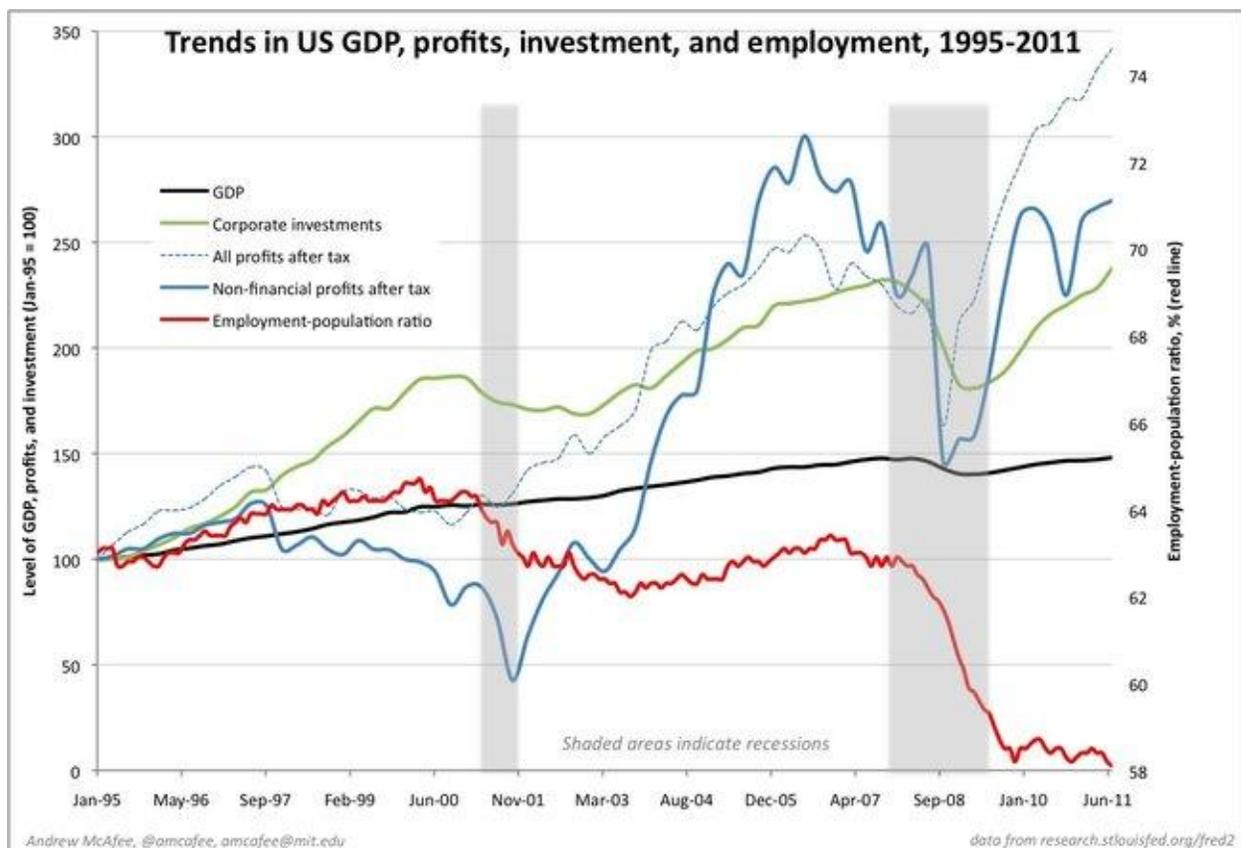
Even though we currently have millions of jobs that need doing, but are not hiring people to do them, there are some who claim that those without jobs are somehow to blame for their own unemployment, or are claiming that we have "structural" reasons for the unemployment emergency. They say we need to get used to high unemployment, that it is a "new normal" so we shouldn't make the effort to fix the problem, because we can't.

## Edsell

In "The Hollowing Out" at the *NY Times*' Campaign Stops blog, Thomas B. Edsall writes about "the most important issue facing the United States: the hollowing out of the employment marketplace, the disappearance of mid-level jobs." This hollowing out of the middle class means a few people end up with most of the money and the rest are either at the bottom or are falling down toward the bottom.

The issue of the disappearing middle is not new, but credible economists have added a more threatening twist to the argument: the possibility that a well-functioning, efficient modern market economy, driven by exponential growth in the rate of technological innovation, can simultaneously produce economic growth and eliminate millions of middle-class jobs.

Michael Spence, a professor at N.Y.U.'s Stern School of Business, and David Autor, an economist at M.I.T., have argued that this "hollowing out" process is a result of twin upheavals: globalization and the hyper-acceleration of technological progress.



Since the Great Recession officially ended in June of 2009 G.D.P., equipment investment, and total corporate profits have rebounded, and are now at their all-time highs. The employment ratio, meanwhile, has only shrunk and is now at its lowest level since the early 1980s when women had not yet entered the workforce in significant numbers. So current labor force woes are not because the economy isn't growing, and they're not because companies aren't making money or spending money on equipment. They're because these trends have become increasingly decoupled from hiring — from needing more human workers. As computers race ahead, acquiring more and more skills in pattern matching, communication, perception, and so on, I expect that this decoupling will continue, and maybe even accelerate.

...Policies to ameliorate the process — a shorter work week, a massive investment in education (for example, at the community college level), the disaggregation of complex tasks into simple functions that could be executed by mid-skill workers — may only slow the decline, not stop it. This is a deeply pessimistic vision.

Edsell also quotes economists and others who dispute that automation is the cause of the hollowing out, and brings up some of the ideas for how we might react.

Brynjolfsson and McAfee have a list of 19 proposals that they support — which range from massive investment in education, infrastructure and basic research, to lowering barriers to business creation, eliminating the mortgage interest deduction and changing copyright and patent law to encourage new (as opposed to protecting old) innovations.

But,

Any effort to ameliorate the damaging consequences to the employment marketplace stemming from technological innovation, according to Brynjolfsson, requires substantial government action at a time when “the political system is the most dysfunctional part of our society.”

### Baker

Dean Baker responds, in *Income Is Definitely Being Redistributed Upward, but Why Do We Think It's Technology?* at the Center for Economic and Policy Research's Beat the Press, (emphasis added to emphasize):

Thomas Edsall devoted his blogpost today to several economists who claim that the upward redistribution we have seen over the last three decades is a result of revolutions in technology and that it will be difficult to reverse this development. In fact, much of this economic analysis is quite sloppy and it is easy to show that many of the factors leading to upward redistribution had nothing to do with technology.

Baker writes that last decade's manufacturing job loss is instead because of the trade deficit,

...the piece refers to the millions of manufacturing jobs that the United States lost over the last decade. The biggest factor behind the job loss was not technology; productivity growth in manufacturing was not markedly faster in the 2000s than in prior decades. **The main factor leading to job loss was the growing U.S. trade deficit.**

The predicted result of an over-valued dollar is the loss of jobs and lower wages in the sectors of the economy that are exposed to international competition. However, the availability of low-cost imports raises the living standards of those who are protected from international competition.

The latter group would include highly paid professionals, like doctors and lawyers. Note that it is not technology that protects these professionals from seeing their wages depressed by competition from their low-paid counterparts in the developing world, it is deliberate policy. While it has been the explicit goal of trade policy to put manufacturing workers in direct competition with workers in the developing world, the barriers that make it difficult for qualified doctors, dentists, and lawyers in the developing world to work in the United States have been left in place or strengthened.

### The System Must Change

If we are entering a period where automation increasingly takes over the work previously done by working people - and we may well be -- this presents us with tremendous opportunities for advancement, or terrible suffering and eventual economic collapse. Under our current economic system a machine can replace a person and it means that person is left with no income and the "owner" of the business can just pocket the money that person was making. But after enough machines replace people there would be so many people unemployed that whatever those machines do doesn't matter because there is no one with the money to use the products or services they make. The system must collapse. (We are seeing that sort of thing in our economy right now.)

But what if we instead change our economic system so everyone shares to some degree in the gains from technology and other increases in productivity, instead of all the gains going into the pocket of a few at the very top? Suppose a person displaced by a robot or computer received some continuing income? Or suppose that person and everyone else at that company worked fewer hours without so much of a pay cut? Or suppose all of us receive

a guaranteed income? Then everyone would benefit from these advances, instead of a very few people benefiting at the expense of everyone else, as our system is currently structured.

**Economic systems come and economic systems go.** America's South used to have a *system* under which a few people could actually *own* other people, make them work, and keep the proceeds of their work for themselves. This economic system was very beneficial to a few people, and they fought a war to preserve it. But that economic system did eventually fall.

Baker writes about a corrupt system rigged and manipulated by a wealthy few to benefit themselves at the expense of the rest of us. He writes that, "The high pay going to top executives in the United States also has little to do with technology." But technology is coming, and we can change things to make it help us rather than just take our job and income. Like past systems that didn't work, the current system can also eventually fall if we decide that it should -- and it really should.

20120715-05	12:11	SteveG	"The Woman Who Stood Up to Joe Paterno"
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Hopefully we all can learn from Penn State.

"The Woman Who Stood Up to Joe Paterno" by Ann O'Neill, CNN

July 15, 2012, ([http://edition.cnn.com/2012/07/15/us/triponey-paterno-penn-state/index.html?hpt=hp\\_c1](http://edition.cnn.com/2012/07/15/us/triponey-paterno-penn-state/index.html?hpt=hp_c1))

Vicky Triponey knows all too well the power Penn State's late football coach, Joe Paterno, held for more than half a century over the insular slice of central Pennsylvania that calls itself Happy Valley.

She experienced firsthand the clubby, jock-snapping culture, the sense of entitlement, the cloistered existence. It's what drove her five years ago from her job as the vice president who oversaw student discipline.

She was told she was too aggressive, too confrontational, that she wasn't fitting in with "the Penn State way."

She clashed often with Paterno over who should discipline football players when they got into trouble. The conflict with such an iconic figure made her very unpopular around campus. For a while, it cost Triponey her peace of mind and her good name. It almost ended her 30-year academic career.

Another person might have felt vindicated, smug or self-righteous when former FBI Director Louis Freeh delivered the scathing report on his eight-month investigation of the Jerry Sandusky child abuse scandal. But Triponey sensed only a deep sadness.

The inquiry, commissioned by the board of trustees, exposed how the personal failings of Paterno and three other Penn State leaders -- along with the university's football-first culture -- empowered an assistant football coach who molested fatherless boys for more than a decade.

"There's no joy," Triponey told CNN as she sat down for an interview Friday, the day after the Freeh report was released. She said she found solace in the public recognition of Penn State's "culture of reverence for the football program," as the report phrased it, and that it is "ingrained at all levels of the campus community." Freeh found that the culture contributed to the Sandusky scandal.

She agrees with Freeh's suggestion that the university's trustees lead an effort to "vigorously examine and understand" Penn State's culture, why it's so resistant to outside perspectives and why it places such an "excessive focus on athletics."

"It's comforting to know that others can now understand," Triponey said. "It didn't have to happen this way."

Her former boss at Wichita State University described Triponey as "a dedicated, ethical professional" who was devastated by her experience at Penn State.

"Vicky knew that she had attempted to do the right thing in disciplining the football players, but she was unable to do so in the Penn State environment," said Gene Hughes, a president emeritus at Wichita State and Northern Arizona University.

At Penn State, Triponey was among the few who stood up to Paterno, the legendary "JoePa" who for 61 years was synonymous with a football program that pumped millions of dollars into Penn State. And she paid dearly for it. At the end, nobody at the top backed her. And it didn't seem to matter to anyone whether she was right, or even if she had a point.

At the heart of the problem, the Freeh report stated, were university leaders eager to please Paterno above all else, a rubber-stamp board of trustees, a president who discouraged dissent and an administration that was preoccupied with appearances and spin.

Triponey has been saying that since 2005.

Sandusky, as the mastermind of college football's legendary "Linebacker U," enjoyed insider status and used Penn State's sporting events and athletic facilities to lure victims even after he retired in 1999. When he was indicted and arrested in November, the report said, Sandusky still had his keys to the Penn State locker room.

Triponey, a slim blonde who dresses preppie and carries herself with the reserve of an academic lifer, was always an outsider at Penn State, even though she grew up in central Pennsylvania. She was not involved in the Sandusky matter; she says she never met him. But she is keenly aware of the campus culture that allowed him to prey on boys for years, virtually unchecked.

"The culture is deep," she said. "The culture is making decisions based on how others will react, not based on what's right and wrong." It focused on the interests of those at "the top of the chain," she added. "Others at the bottom didn't matter."

Triponey was just one of the 430 witnesses who spoke with Freeh's investigators; her story, which she laid out for them over several hours in March, was supported by e-mails uncovered among the 3.5 million electronic documents the investigators examined.

"When I visited with them, that's when I started to be more hopeful," she said. "They got it, and they were determined to expose it. They found evidence of the culture that allowed Jerry Sandusky to exist."

More storms loom for Penn State in wake of Freeh report

"Now I can articulate it," she said. "That is what I was railing against."

Triponey is not named in the 267-page report; her experience is laid out in a footnote at the bottom of pages 65 and 66. The section deals with the janitors who were afraid they'd lose their jobs if they reported they'd seen Sandusky molesting a boy in the showers in 2000.

"I know Paterno has so much power that if he had wanted to get rid of someone, I would have been gone," one janitor told investigators. "Football runs this university."

"If that's the culture at the bottom," Freeh told reporters, "God help the culture at the top."

The Triponey footnote sheds some light on the top. "Some individuals interviewed identified the handling of a student disciplinary matter in 2007 as an example of Paterno's excessive influence at the university," the footnote stated. It described "perceived pressure" to "treat players in ways that would maintain their ability to play sports," including reducing disciplinary sanctions.

"I wasn't part of the evidence. I was confirmation of the evidence," Triponey told CNN. "This is not about me. This is about what Jerry Sandusky was allowed to do."

Penn State can learn from its mistakes, she believes, but needs new leadership, fresh blood -- someone from outside Happy Valley.

"It's a cocoon. It's a bubble. That's why those inside the bubble are really struggling. They're afraid; they're embarrassed; they're struggling with what to do," she said.

"Now the question is, 'do you face reality?'"

### 'The Penn State way'

Vicky Triponey grew up in a working-class household and was the first person in her family to attend college. Her father was a rabid Penn State football fan, but she chose to go to the University of Pittsburgh, commonly known as Pitt. She got her bachelor's degree in psychology and continued with post-graduate studies, pursuing a career in higher education. She earned her doctorate at the University of Virginia.

She worked at several colleges and universities before encountering her mentor, James Rhatigan, who developed the division of student affairs at Wichita State University. Rhatigan introduced her to Mike Meacham, a young man who had been student body president and worked for the alumni association. They married 21 years ago.

She left Wichita in 1998 for the University of Connecticut, where she helped coach Randy Edsall build up the football program. Edsall, who is now head coach at the University of Maryland, told CNN that they worked hard to ensure that football players lived by the same rules as other students.

"We always taught our guys they weren't better than somebody else," Edsall said. "My whole thing was, we told our guys up front that there was a student code of conduct they had to adhere to. If they violated it, there would be consequences."

Penn State recruited Triponey in 2003. She quickly figured out she was the leading candidate when the university brought on its A game for her interview. Her campus visit coincided with the weekend of "The Thon," a popular dance marathon that students hold to raise money for charity.

"I liked what I heard during the interview," she recalled. "It was a truly impressive place, and I considered it a fabulous next step in my career."

She also heard the expression "the Penn State way" for the first time that weekend. Had she understood its significance, she said, she would have "quickly run in the other direction."

Still, she enjoyed a long honeymoon. She felt she had the support of Penn State's president, Graham Spanier, who unabashedly sang her praises when she was hired and later at professional conferences they both attended.

"I arrived there and was supported, encouraged, and really for the first two years I thought we were doing good things," she said. "We were moving in some good directions. But that second year, in the fall, I started going home and telling Mike, 'They're not getting it. They're not embracing conversations about change.'"

There were controversies about her decisions to cut off funding to a student radio program and revamp the student government.

Spanier assured her that she was right to stick to her guns, but she was "hitting the brick wall in student discipline." Looking back, she says, "I was putting my neck out and taking a stand, but there weren't many people with me."

And then one day in late 2004, as disciplinary sanctions were being considered against a member of the football team, she received a visit from Paterno's wife, who had tutored the player.

He's a good kid, Sue Paterno said. Could they give him a break?

Triponey realized then that she wasn't in Kansas anymore. Or even Connecticut.

By the next year, 2005, she was battling Paterno himself over who controlled how football players were disciplined. Paterno also chafed over enforcing Penn State's code of conduct off campus.

Spanier called a meeting at which Paterno angrily dominated the conversation, Triponey recalled. She summarized the meeting in an e-mail to Spanier, Athletic Director Tim Curley and others, complaining that Paterno "is insistent that he knows best how to discipline his players" and that her department should back off.

She noted that Paterno preferred to keep the public in the dark about player infractions involving violence, and he pushed for not enforcing the student code of conduct off campus. She added that having "a major problem with Coach Paterno should not be our concern" in making disciplinary decisions.

"I must insist that the efforts to put pressure on us and try to influence our decisions related to specific cases ... simply MUST STOP," she wrote. "The calls and pleas from coaches, board members and others when we are considering a case are indeed putting us in a position that does treat football players differently and with greater privilege ... and it appears on our end to be a deliberate effort to use the power of the football program to sway our decisions in a way that is beneficial to the football program."

Curley, who once played for Paterno and according to the Freeh report was widely considered his "errand boy," responded to Triponey by explaining "Joe's frustrations with the system" and the "larger issues that bother him."

Triponey wrote back, complaining about Paterno's "disregard for our role and disrespect for the process." She added, "I don't see how we can continue to trust those inside the football program with confidential information if we are indeed adversaries."

She followed up with another e-mail to Spanier on September 1, 2005, stating her objection to Paterno's attitude and behavior, which she called "atrocious." She said others, including students and their parents, were mimicking him.

"I am very troubled by the manipulative, disrespectful, uncivil and abusive behavior of our football coach," she wrote. "It is quite shocking what this man -- who is idolized by people everywhere -- is teaching our students."

Paterno clearly seemed to resent "meddling" from outsiders, even if Triponey was simply doing her job. She saw the dangers of special treatment that placed football players under a softer standard than other students lived by. She said it wasn't right. But it was a battle she couldn't win.

Paterno ridiculed her on a radio show as "that lady in Old Main" who couldn't possibly know how to handle students because "she didn't have kids."

Tensions reached the breaking point in 2007 over how to discipline half a dozen players who'd been arrested at a brawl at an off-campus apartment complex. Several students were injured; one beaten unconscious.

Triponey met with Paterno and other university officials half a dozen times, although she preferred to remain neutral as the appeals hearing officer.

At the final meeting, Triponey urged the coach to advise his players to tell the truth. Paterno said angrily that he couldn't force his players to "rat" on each other since they had to practice and play together. Curley and Spanier backed him up on that point, she said.

Triponey recommended suspensions; Paterno pushed for community service that included having the team clean up the stadium for two hours after each home game.

In the end, four players were briefly suspended during the off-season. They didn't miss a game.

By then it was clear she no longer enjoyed Spanier's support. He began making noises about whether she really embraced "the Penn State way." He told her during an annual review that she was too confrontational, too aggressive. Triponey knew her days at Penn State were numbered when he advised her to think hard about whether she had a future there.

Paterno defended football, Penn State in letter before his death

### Back from the ashes

When it all fell apart, Triponey felt completely alone.

She received threatening phone calls at home when her husband was traveling and was savaged on student message boards. Her house was vandalized and "For Sale" signs were staked in her front yard. By the time police installed surveillance cameras, she was already on her way out.

Spanier came to her home and sat in her living room after Paterno lost his temper at the meeting about the players involved in the brawl. She said he told her, "Well, Vicky, you are one of a handful of people, four or five people, who have seen the dark side of Joe Paterno. We're going to have to do something about it."

She shakes her head, recalling that conversation now. "Doing something about it," she says, "ended with me being gone."

Citing "philosophical differences," Triponey resigned under pressure as the 2007 football season got under way. Unlike Sandusky, convicted last month of 45 counts of molesting young boys, she did not receive a \$168,000 golden handshake, prime football seats for life or keys to the locker room.

She was no longer invited to events. She was shunned.

She sold her big house in State College and moved into a condo in Bellfonte, the quaint county seat where Sandusky was tried, while her husband, a Penn State professor, looked for a job at another university. It took two years, but he finally found a spot at the University of South Carolina's medical school in Charleston.

She stopped going to Wegman's, a favorite upscale supermarket outside State College, because "the Penn State people went there." They recognized her and without fail turned their backs and walked away, she recalled.

Former colleagues who did want to reach out held back. Later, they explained that they were afraid of losing their jobs, too.

That, she says, was "the Penn State way" as she knew it.

It had been corrupted by success.

"Winning became more important," she said, along with a strong desire "to avoid bad publicity." So many people were invested in the football program, they felt they had "to protect something that they had created, a grand experiment that was so perfect that they didn't dare let anybody know there were blemishes."

There was no accountability. Board meetings were scripted to avoid controversy. It was a point of pride that nobody ever argued. The leadership was "grounded in the spin, the image, the 'too big to fail.' It became a business dependent on the money and contributions," she said.

As for Paterno, who died of lung cancer in January, Triponey does not judge him harshly.

"Joe Paterno was an incredibly principled person," she said, recalling how, at the beginning, he made sure his athletes were successful students, as well. "That was at his core," she said, "but the pedestal became so high, he lost that somewhere."

She thought she had left academia forever, following her husband to Charleston and getting involved in charities and community work.

"At the time, it destroyed my career. I couldn't go back into higher education after what happened at Penn State. I had to leave the work I had done for 30 years. What enabled people to take a chance on me was when the Sandusky story broke."

Sandusky was indicted in November and accused of molesting 10 boys over 15 years. Spanier and Paterno were dismissed and Curley and another Penn State vice president, Gary Schultz, were charged with lying to a grand jury about what they knew about the Sandusky affair.

"The world of higher education started seeing me as a more credible person," Triponey said. "I did get messages and kudos."

Reporters started calling, and then so did people at other schools. Among them was R. Barbara Gitenstein, president of the College of New Jersey near Trenton. The Division III school focuses on liberal arts and had an opening in student affairs.

Triponey started in February and plans to stay at least until December as the interim director.

"Actually, she's not doing just fine," Gitenstein said. "She's doing great." She is well liked by the students, staff, trustees and other department heads, she added.

#### Penn State leaders 'empowered Sandusky'

"I think she's open, she accessible," Gitenstein said. "She's thoughtful, and she has knowledge about student affairs. She's also very responsible in terms of budget. She knows how to bring others along, to make them feel part of the enterprise."

Triponey says she's now working in a place where it's not just acceptable to speak truth to power, it's encouraged.

"I never thought I'd be back doing work in higher education," she said. "I also never thought I'd see the day where public opinion is at the place where folks are saying Penn State's culture has got to change."

Edsall, her former colleague at UConn, says Triponey stands in contrast to the other officials at Penn State and the choices they made. "She lost her job, but she never lost her principles, her values or her morals," he said. "When you see a friend, a colleague, go through what she went through, it's good to see that things have come to light."

"I tell my players there are two things in life," he added. "You've got your name and you've got your reputation. And you know what? Vicky still has her name and she still has her reputation."

She took a stand for what she believed in, Edsall said, but the leadership at Penn State didn't want to change.

"They wanted to continue with the status quo, and look where it got them."

Triponey views the Freeh report as "my trigger that it's OK to start speaking out," she said.

"Maybe it's an opportunity for me to take the experience, take the pain, take the pain of other victims, and help change the culture," she said. "Maybe not at Penn State, but other coaches, other presidents around the country are in a position now to see the danger in a culture like this."

It has all left her "saddened, disgusted and horrified, but also hopeful," she said.

It has brought new life to the teacher in her.

[20120715-06](#) 11:48 SteveM Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans! Dick Morris TV: Lunch ALERT!

Hold onto your wallet! Talk about scary!! This is very bad news!

"Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, Tequila in one hand - handle bars in the other, body thoroughly used up and totally worn out, screaming "WOO HOO - What a Ride!" —unknown

Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans! Dick Morris TV: Lunch ALERT! (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIfI2whjiM>)

[20120715-07](#) 11:52 SteveM Video: Obamaspill Timeline

Here's a great video! Let's get this around because most of us have short memories!!!

Wow..... Check this out...someone has done a great job putting this together.

Video: "Oil Spill Timeline" by Rightchange, 2010 [Might as well call it: "President Obama Caused the BP Oil Spill" or "Obamaspill Timeline". --SteveB] <http://vimeo.com/12933322>.

[20120715-08](#) 23:57 SteveG Graphics: Our Republican Representatives

**Congress has taken  
30 VOTES  
to defund, repeal,  
and dismantle  
'ObamaCare'.**

**Since the Supreme Court didn't "side" with them, Republicans will continue to waste time, take more votes and try to take health care away from millions of Americans.**

**FORMIDABLE REPUBLICAN OPPOSITION** *Ozzy Amos*

**COST OF KEEPING CONGRESS  
OPEN FOR A SINGLE WORKDAY:**

**\$30,275,229**

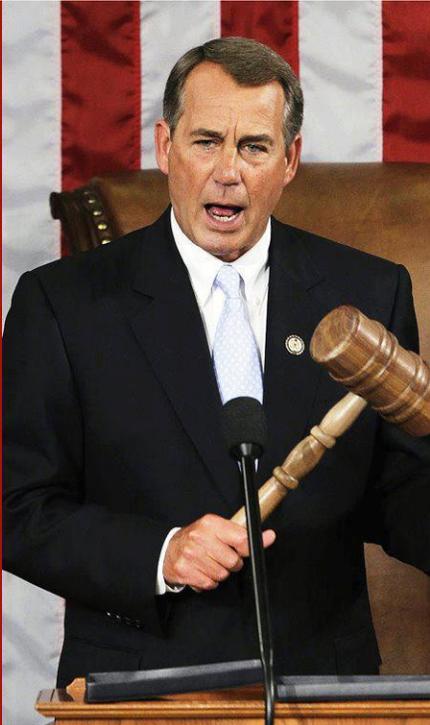
**NUMBER OF TIMES THE HOUSE  
GOP HAS VOTED TO REPEAL  
OBAMACARE:**

**33**

**NUMBER OF TIMES THE HOUSE  
GOP HAS VOTED ON THE  
PRESIDENT'S JOBS BILL:**

**0**

**YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK?**



Source: FY 2012 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill; Photo: AP/Charles Dharapak

20120715-09 23:58 Marci Amazing Animal Photobomb

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/28/45-amazing-animal-photobombs-photos\\_n\\_1633876.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=mostpopular#slide=1156427](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/28/45-amazing-animal-photobombs-photos_n_1633876.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular#slide=1156427)



<http://toastburnt.blogspot.com/2011/01/hot-lava-dreams.html>

Plants growing in a lava crack.



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #183 — JULY 17, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Why Can't the U.S. Be as Rich as Canada?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 17, 2012)

More evidence of our decline... That darned President Obama! For four long years Republicans have fought to fix things, but the President wouldn't let them. He halted progress on every front (ignore Obamacare). The greatest American president of all time, George W. Bush, handed President Obama a country that was functioning like a well-oiled machine, but Obama failed to use any grease or oil whatsoever. Now we're poor and it's all that socialist's fault! (Now, where's that sarcasm font when I really need it?)

"Hardheaded Socialism Makes Canada Richer Than U.S." by Stephen Marche, Bloomberg

July 15, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/populum/linkframe.php?linkid=153123>)



(Illustration by James Clapham)

On July 1, Canada Day, Canadians awoke to a startling, if pleasant, piece of news: For the first time in recent history, the average Canadian is richer than the average American.

According to data from Environics Analytics WealthScapes published in the Globe and Mail, the net worth of the average Canadian household in 2011 was \$363,202, while the average American household's net worth was \$319,970.

A few days later, Canada and the U.S. both released the latest job figures. Canada's unemployment rate fell, again, to 7.2 percent, and America's was a stagnant 8.2 percent. Canada continues to thrive while the U.S. struggles to find its way out of an intractable economic crisis and a political sine curve of hope and despair.

The difference grows starker by the month: The Canadian system is working; the American system is not. And it's not just Canadians who are noticing. As Iceland considers switching to a currency other than the krona, its leaders' primary focus of interest is the loonie -- the Canadian dollar.

As a study recently published in the New York University Law Review pointed out, national constitutions based on the American model are quickly disappearing. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in an interview on Egyptian television, admitted, "I would not look to the United States Constitution if I were drafting a constitution in the year 2012." The natural replacement? The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, achieving the status of legal superstar as it reaches its 30th birthday.

### Canadian Luck

Good politics do not account entirely for recent economic triumphs. Luck has played a major part. The Alberta tar sands -- an environmental catastrophe in waiting -- are the third-largest oil reserves in the world, and if America is too squeamish to buy our filthy energy, there's always China. We also have softwood lumber, potash and other natural resources in abundance.

Policy has played a significant part as well, though. Both liberals and conservatives in the U.S. have tried to use the Canadian example to promote their arguments: The left says Canada shows the rewards of financial regulation and socialism, while the right likes to vaunt the brutal cuts made to Canadian social programs in the 1990s, which set the stage for economic recovery.

The truth is that both sides are right. Since the 1990s, Canada has pursued a hardheaded (even ruthless), fiscally conservative form of socialism. Its originator was Paul Martin, who was finance minister for most of the '90s, and served a stint as prime minister from 2003 to 2006. Alone among finance ministers in the Group of Eight nations, he "resisted the siren call of deregulation," in his words, and insisted that the banks tighten their loan-loss and reserve requirements. He also made a courageous decision not to allow Canadian banks to merge, even though their chief executives claimed they would never be globally competitive unless they did. The stability of Canadian banks and the concomitant stability in the housing market provide the clearest explanation for why Canadians are richer than Americans today.

Martin also slashed funding to social programs. He foresaw that crippling deficits imperiled Canada's education and health-care systems, which even his Conservative predecessor, Brian Mulroney, described as a "sacred trust." He cut corporate taxes, too. Growth is required to pay for social programs, and social programs that increase opportunity and social integration are the best way to ensure growth over the long term. Social programs and robust capitalism are not, as so many would have you believe, inherently opposed propositions. Both are required for meaningful national prosperity.

### Orderly Fairness

Martin's balanced policies emerged organically out of Canadian culture, which is fair-minded and rule-following to a fault. The Canadian obsession with order can make for strange politics, at least in an American context. For example, of all the world's societies, Canada's is one of the most open to immigrants, as anyone who has been to Toronto or Vancouver will have seen. Yet Canada also imposes a mandatory one-year prison sentence on illegal immigrants, and the majority of Canadians favor deportation. Canadians insist that their compassion be orderly, too.

This immigration policy is neither "liberal" nor "conservative" in the American political sense. It just works. You could say exactly the same thing about Canada's economic policies.

Canada has been, and always will be, overshadowed by its neighbor, by America's vastness and its incredible versatility and capacity for reinvention. But occasionally, at key moments, the northern wasteland can surprise. Two hundred years ago last month, the War of 1812 began. Thomas Jefferson declared, "The acquisition of Canada, this year, as far as the neighborhood of Quebec, will be a mere matter of marching." The U.S. was comparatively enormous -- with almost 8 million people, compared with Canada's 300,000. The Canadians nonetheless turned back the assault.

Through good luck, excellent policy and even some heroism, Canada survived the war. But it has taken 200 years for Canada to become winners.

(Stephen Marche is a novelist and columnist for Esquire Magazine. His most recent book is *How Shakespeare Changed Everything*. The opinions expressed are his own.)

<a href="#">20120716-01</a> 13:01 Tom "Bikini-Clad, Gun-Toting Israeli Woman Becomes an Internet Sensation"
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This is common place in a land where terrorists attack civilians on a daily basis; Bikini-clad, gun toting Israeli woman becomes an Internet sensation:

Do you think people would freak out if they saw this at their beach?

"Bikini-Clad, Gun-Toting Israeli Woman Becomes an Internet Sensation" by Victoria Cavaliere, *New York Daily News*

Friday, July 13, 2012, (<http://m.nydailynews.com/1.1113980>)



(A photo of a gun-wielding, bikini-clad woman standing on a crowded Tel Aviv beach has become an Internet sensation, with thousands of viewers curious about whether the brunette beauty is part of Israel's military and why she wasn't in uniform with her weapon in tow.)

A photo of a gun-wielding, bikini-clad woman standing on a crowded Tel Aviv beach has become an Internet sensation, with thousands of viewers curious about whether the brunette beauty is part of Israel's military and why she wasn't in uniform with her weapon in tow.

The young woman, dressed only in a black-and-white string bikini, was captured chatting with a friend, rifle (with its magazine removed) slung casually behind her back. Though there's no uniform to identify her, the woman appears to be part of the Israel Defense Forces. Two years of IDF service is mandatory for most Israeli women at age 18. Men serve three years.

The photo was viewed 650,000 times in one day and was posted on sites including Facebook, Reddit and Gizmodo under titles like "Only in Israel," and "Bada\*s Chicks in Israel Don't Go to the Beach Without Their Assault Rifles." It garnered a series of lascivious comments from male admirers but almost as many questions about the IDF's weapons policy for off-duty soldiers.

Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper, which picked up on the viral photo, wrote that "To an Israeli, the photo makes perfectly practical sense. When soldiers take their weapon off military premises, they must guard it closely and keep it on their person, at all times. Having one's weapon stolen is harshly punished with time in military prison a given. "

Haaretz also concludes that Israelis are "used to seeing guns in all kinds of places - propped up next to the guy sitting next to us in a coffeeshop, or in a university classroom, and of course, slung over the shoulders of women soldiers." That apparently also includes the shoulder of a woman ready for an afternoon at the beach.

<a href="#">20120716-02</a>	13:07	SteveB	Fw: UltraViolet Petition: We Want a Woman to Moderate a Presidential Debate!
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from UltraViolet:

Incredible! Already, over 150,000 people have joined the call for a woman moderator at a presidential debate this year.

That's some serious momentum. And we want to get the numbers even higher before joining the original petition creators, three high school girls from New Jersey, to hand the petition signatures over to the Presidential Debates Commission and the two presidential campaigns next week. It looks like you haven't signed yet and we're hoping you will before the big delivery.

It's been 20 years since a woman moderated a presidential debate. Three high school girls, Emma, Sammi and Elena, are working to make sure that trend ends this year--and their call is really taking off. But they need more voices with them! Can you add your name to the petition?

They've started a petition on Change.org asking the Commission on Presidential Debates, and President Obama's and Mitt Romney's campaigns, to appoint a woman to moderate one of the upcoming presidential debates. It's totally taking off and starting to attract media attention--but they need more voices with them.

This should be a no-brainer. Women vote more than men. Women drive our economy and make the majority of the purchasing decisions in families. And this year, women's rights--from access to health care, to protection from domestic abuse and wage discrimination--have been front and center. And there's no sign of that letting up.

But to get the Presidential Debates Commission, and President Obama and Mitt Romney's campaigns to agree, we need to take this energy to the next level and show them that hundreds of thousands of people are demanding it. The more of us that sign on, the more media attention we'll get and the harder our ask will be to ignore. Click below to add your name:

<http://act.weareultraviolet.org/go/161?t=6&akid=136.359331.TZQ3K6>.

It's pretty shocking that it's been so long since a woman has moderated a presidential debate given how critical women's votes are in every election. But this year, with women's economic security, access to basic health services, and the right to control our own bodies dominating the political debate, it's especially important to have a woman giving voice to those issues and demanding real answers on them.

And this is a very serious and huge problem with the media and coverage of women in elections and politics generally. For example, in news stories about Planned Parenthood, men were quoted 67% of the time, and women just 26% (the other 7% were organizational quotes), and on birth control women were only quoted 19% of the time. Even NPR only quotes women 23% of the time and the problem is even worse on television--MSNBC's "Hardball" only quotes women 15% of the time.

It's not like there aren't tons of incredibly accomplished women journalists to choose from--Rachel Maddow, Gwen Ifill (who moderated the last VP debate), Diane Sawyer, Christiane Amanpour and Katie Couric just to name a few.

By not having a woman moderate a debate, the commission is sending a dangerous message to women and girls everywhere: That there are some honors, accomplishments and platforms that they just can't reach. That's wrong.

Please join the call to get the Presidential Debates Commission to appoint a woman moderator today.

Thanks for speaking out, Nita, Shaunna and Kat, the UltraViolet team

<a href="#">20120716-03</a>	13:10	SteveB	"Poll: Tax Hike for Rich Supported by Majority of Americans"
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The contrasts are fascinating! That darned President Obama!

from "Romney Singles Out Wait-Staff as Struggling Americans at Fundraiser" by Maggie Haberman, Politico

July 17, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/burns-haberman/2012/07/romney-singles-out-waitstaff-as-struggling-americans-129129.html>)

Mitt Romney sought to humanize his remarks about the middle class at a fundraiser in Jackson, Miss. earlier tonight, per a pool report: "I know that people in this room are probably doing relatively well, relative to folks across this country. But not everyone in America is doing so well right now, it's tough being middle class in America right now. The waiters and waitresses that come in and out of this room and offer us refreshments, they're not having a good year. The people of the middle class of America are really struggling. And they're struggling I think in a way because they're surprised because when they voted for Barack Obama...he promised them that things were going to get a heck a lot of better. He promised hope and change and they're still waiting."

"Poll: Tax Hike for Rich Supported by Majority of Americans" by Ariel Edwards-Levy, Huffington Post

July 16, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/16/tax-hike-for-rich\\_n\\_1677826.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/16/tax-hike-for-rich_n_1677826.html))

**Americans support raising taxes on the rich by a two-to-one margin**, with many believing an increase would both help the economy and make the tax system fairer, according to a Pew poll released Monday afternoon.

[Romney, of course, does not support such a tax because he'd have to pay more. --SteveB]

Forty-four percent of adults surveyed said that raising taxes on incomes above \$250,000 would help the economy and increase fairness, while 22 percent said it would hurt the economy and 21 percent that it would make the system less fair.

Opinions split somewhat down partisan lines, with 64 percent of Democrats predicting raising taxes on the wealthy would help the economy, compared to 27 percent of Republicans.

Members of both parties were also about 10 percent more likely than independents to know that President Barack Obama supports ending Bush-era tax cuts on income above \$250,000, a pledge that took political center stage last week.

Survey respondents who were aware of Obama's stance, as well as those who said they'd heard a lot about the issue, were more inclined to support a tax increase.

The Pew Research Center poll surveyed 1,015 adults by telephone between July 12 and July 15. The survey has a 3.6 percent margin of error.

[20120716-04](#) 13:17 Art Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012 (reply to Ben, FotM Newsletter #182)

As noted, this has been around awhile and it is also way off base. As dirtbag as many of our elected politicians may be, this is not one of the problems. They are under the FERS system just like all federal workers after 1984 and do not get any special retirement benefits. Only the few remaining from before 1984 or before are under the old CSRS system which did not pay into social security but again the retirement benefits are not particularly egregious. As far as I know, they pay into their health care system again just like all federal workers.

What this hides is the real reason many go into Congress. It is not the pay as Congress members, it is the payoffs from rich corporations etc. Santorum is classic. He went into the senate as a relatively poor Pennsylvania non entity and came out a millionaire. If they don't take it while they are in office, they sell themselves as lobbyists immediately after the leave Congress. This is the real problem, and large part of the reason we are in the shape we are in now.

[20120716-09](#) 19:34 SteveB Re: Congressional Reform Act—2012 (reply to Art, above)

I think you're right, Art. Unless we have campaign and lobbying reform, we're spinning our wheels.

[20120716-07](#) 14:12 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos.MoveOn Petitions: Demand the Release of Mitt R0mney's Tax Returns!

from Daily Kos:

Please click below to sign the petition from Daily Kos and Democracy for America telling Mitt Romney to release all of his tax returns. We'll deliver the signatures to Romney's campaign HQ in Boston, and do it in front of the press.

<http://democracyforamerica.com/activities/797?t=dkos>

Mitt Romney argues he would be a good president because of his experience at Bain Capital. However, evidence is piling up that he made millions at Bain by firing American workers, outsourcing jobs, and keeping his money overseas.

Romney could shed some light on this by releasing multiple years of his tax returns, as every major presidential candidate has done for decades. This practice was actually pioneered by Romney's father, George, who released 12 years of tax returns when he ran for president in 1968.

However, Mitt Romney has only released one year of his tax returns, increasing suspicion he got rich mainly by dismantling the American middle class. He is starting to take a pounding for it in the media, too. We can help fuel that media narrative with this petition, and put Romney's campaign in a hole from which it can never recover.

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers, Campaign Director, Daily Kos

from MoveOn:

Explosive news broke last week that Mitt Romney may have been in charge of Bain Capital well after he claimed to leave in 1999, as Bain continued to outsource American jobs.

Romney's own tax returns could help clear up his actual role at Bain during this time and his responsibility for what happened to those workers, but he's refusing to release them.

Even Romney's Republican allies, including two governors, are now calling on him to release more of his returns.<sup>2</sup> And guess what? The one complete tax return Romney did release details massive offshore investments in the Cayman Islands and a Swiss bank account.

Enough's enough. It's time for Mitt to come clean. Public pressure is building and we have the opportunity to pour it on with a MASSIVE petition, because even Mitt's Republican friends (and your conservative uncle) understand that Americans need to know the basic truth about our presidential candidates.

We'll deliver the petition soon to his campaign headquarters in Boston. So after you sign, be sure to share the petition with everyone you know—including your conservative uncle.

Sign the petition: "Mitt Romney: Stop hiding. Release all your tax returns back to 1999."

<http://pol.moveon.org/releasethereturns/?id=46354-20195165-KTHLZZx&t=5>

The American public deserves to know more than one year's worth of tax history for a presidential candidate—especially when there are legitimate questions about his financial record. And Americans need to know how long Romney was involved with Bain Capital as it continued to bankrupt American companies and outsource American jobs.

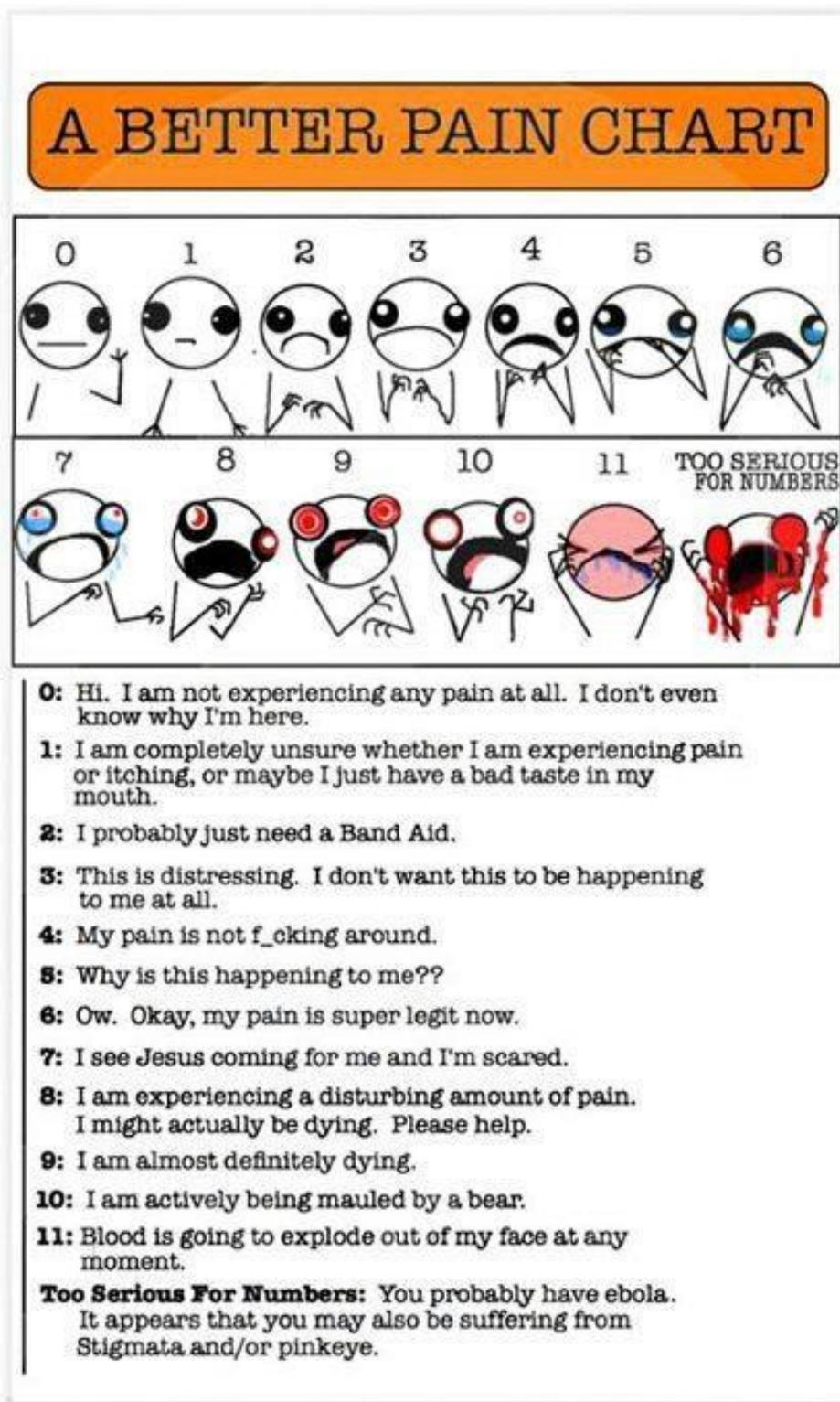
Romney's going against a tradition of transparency started by his own father, who released 12 years of returns when he ran for president saying, "One year could be a fluke, perhaps done for show."<sup>4</sup> It's time for Romney to come clean and let the American public know the truth about his taxes.

On Friday, MoveOn members went to Romney's campaign offices across the country to get him to come clean. Now this petition can put even more pressure on Romney to release his tax returns.

Then share the petition—and remember, not just with your friends but with your conservative uncle too!

Thanks for all you do. –Justin, Victoria, Emily, Milan, and the rest of the team

Many of you can relate to this!



more awesome pictures at [THEMETAPICTURE.COM](http://THEMETAPICTURE.COM)

That darned President Obama! He sure has sunk the economy with his rampant, radical socialist experiments!!!

"An Astounding Read on Housing" by Jim Cramer, MSN Money

July 16, 2012, (<http://money.msn.com/top-stocks/post.aspx?post=05f98c6f-663f-43ed-af12-6be9efde0372>)

(A report from Wells Fargo reveals a booming mortgage business -- and a U.S. economy in fine shape.)

Beginning this week we won't have time -- at least most of us won't -- to do enough work on individual quarterly reports as they happen. The next three weeks will be sheer hell, and I am always amazed when generalists have claimed they've seen more than just the cheat sheet of the reports -- the CliffsNotes, so to speak.

But last week was different. If you took the time out to read the report of Wells Fargo (WFC 0.00%) -- and, believe me, there was time to do it -- you would have been pretty much stunned at how much business it's doing and at how strong the mortgage business is in the U.S.

Put the following facts in perspective from a company that has more than 30% of the mortgage market in this country:

- Mortgage business revenue was up 90% from a year earlier and 11% from the prior quarter.
- Revenue from refinancing was up more than \$19 billion, or 43%, from the first quarter, "indicating continued strength in the overall housing market, where we see increases in sales and pricing in markets throughout the country, even some of the hardest hit areas during the slowdown," according to CEO John Stumpf.
- A 31% increase was achieved in commercial loan growth, through portfolio acquisitions and organically increased credit card penetration.
- Credit quality continued to improve, with the charge-off ratio declining to 1.15%, the lowest since 2007.
- Nonperforming assets declined by \$1.8 billion from the first quarter, down 11% from a year earlier.
- Record net income rose by 17%, with earnings per share up 17% from a year earlier.
- "Mortgage volumes have been much stronger than anyone expected a year ago or even three months ago, for that matter, with originations more than double where they were a year ago, and our mortgage pipeline, which should lead to future revenue and expense growth, has also doubled," according to CFO Timothy Sloan.

These are astounding numbers. They're the kinds of numbers that signal a gathering strength in housing, something that few people expected and fewer still had thought possible, given that the economy was supposed to have hit a wall a few months ago.

When the largest bank for mortgages reports these numbers, you simply have to rule out the kind of slowdown the employment numbers suggest to us. You have to conclude otherwise. The numbers from Wells are just too big.

I have been a believer in Wells ever since the bank got its arms around the portfolio it bought from Golden West via Wachovia.

That deal -- which no one, other than Wells Fargo, would ever admit was cheap -- now does look incredibly intelligent for this simple reason: The amount of national coverage Wells bought otherwise never would have been allowed by regulators. Wells basically got control over most of the country's mortgage market and servicing market. It services an astounding \$1.9 trillion in residential mortgages, with an amazing ability to cross-sell, in return for two years of outsized losses.

**Put simply, Wells Fargo is telling you that housing is back and that it is booming and that this moribund part of the economy is now a huge tailwind, not a headwind.** Can housing carry the economy? No. Can it offset sluggish employment? I'm beginning to think it can, and that's the main reason the market was able to reverse direction and go up at the end of last week. When you consider the good commercial lending by JPMorgan Chase (JPM 0.00%) and the mortgage lending by Wells, you basically come back with a picture of the U.S. being in fine shape, by far the best of all economies around the world, save for China. It emerges as an economy with increasing strength, not declining strength, as we head into the second half of the year.

20120716-08	15:10	SteveB	"The Latest [Republican] Lie: 'You Didn't Build That'"
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"The Latest Lie: 'You Didn't Build That'" by Dave Johnson, NationofChange

July 16, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/latest-lie-you-didn-t-build-1342451525>)

Did President Obama tell business owners they didn't build their businesses? That's what the entire right-wing media machine is saying he said. What did he really say?

Drudge Report headline: "Obama Goes Wild: 'If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen'..."

Drudge links to the *Washington Times*, which writes, "President Barack Obama addressed supporters in Roanoke, Virginia on Friday afternoon and took a shot at the business community. President Obama dismissed any credit business owners give themselves for their success:"

Heritage Foundation: Obama Tells Entrepreneurs "You Didn't Build" Your Business

Heritage writes: "That sound you hear is silence—as millions of small business owners and entrepreneurs were left speechless this weekend from President Obama's latest insult."

What Did He Really Say?

President Obama pointed out that **businesses did not build the roads and bridges** that help them get their products to markets. He said that in the United States we succeed together. Here is the full quote:

**There are a lot of wealthy, successful Americans who agree with me -- because they want to give something back. They know they didn't -- look, if you've been successful, you didn't get there on your own. You didn't get there on your own. I'm always struck by people who think, well, it must be because I was just so smart. There are a lot of smart people out there. It must be because I worked harder than everybody else. Let me tell you something -- there are a whole bunch of hardworking people out there.** (Applause.)

If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help. There was a great teacher somewhere in your life. **Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you've got a business -- you didn't build that.** Somebody else made that happen. The Internet didn't get invented on its own. Government research created the Internet so that all the companies could make money off the Internet.

The point is, is that when we succeed, we succeed because of our individual initiative, but also because we do things together. There are some things, just like fighting fires, we don't do on our own. I mean, imagine if everybody had their own fire service. That would be a hard way to organize fighting fires.

This is not "insulting," it is just the way it is.

Nuts

PS, Heritage then goes seriously off the deep end:

Obama pushed his policy goals of infrastructure (aka stimulus) spending and "government research" as part of a collectivist utopia "doing things together." It's simply stunning that he would tell Americans, "If you've got a business—you didn't build that."

Heritage mocks the idea that government should maintain our country's infrastructure -- internal improvements? Heritage says infrastructure and research and "doing things together" are part of a "collectivist utopia?" Deep end, people, deep end. Get back in the children's pool.

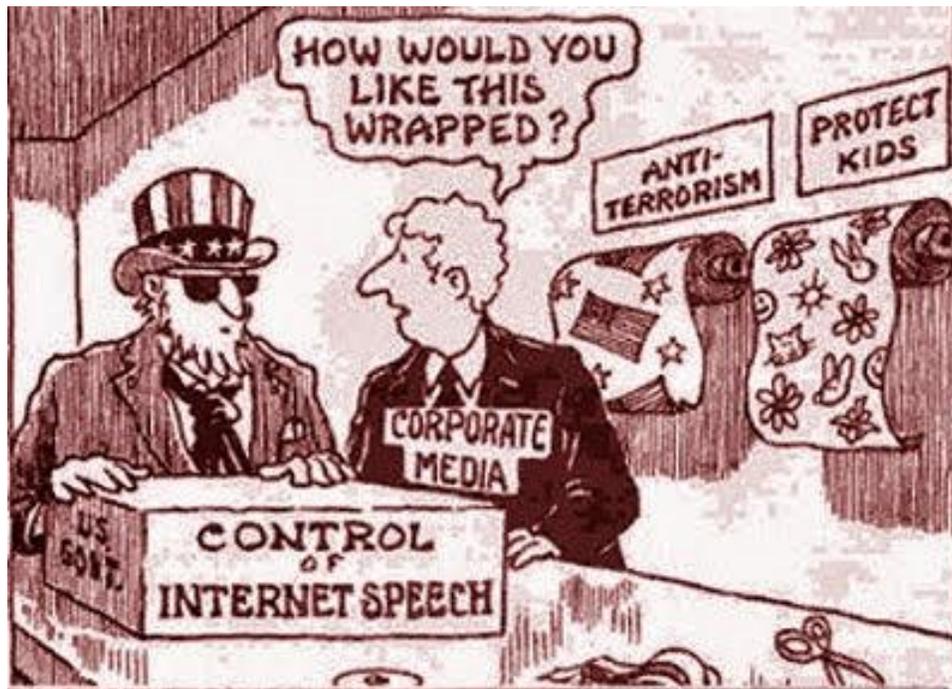
20120716-10 20:51 SteveB Drip...Drip...Drip...

Note: Maybe the vetting didn't go so well, since Palin beat Mitt out.

"If one has nothing to hide, why not release a set of comprehensive records (Romney reportedly, after all, provided the McCain campaign with 20 years of returns when being vetted for VP)? The answer is simple -- **Mitt Romney must have something to hide.**"

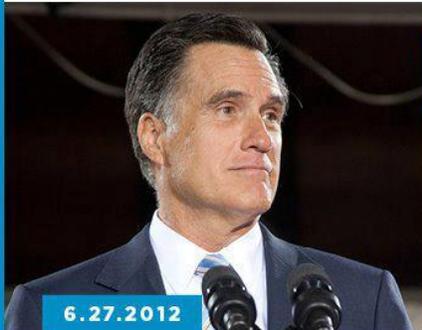
—Abby Huntsman, Political Commentator and Host for HuffPost Live, July 16, 2012,  
([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/abby-huntsman/mitt-romney-tax-returns\\_b\\_1675711.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/abby-huntsman/mitt-romney-tax-returns_b_1675711.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

20120716-11 21:36 Tom Cartoon: Internet Free Speech



**THE CHOICE**

## Paying for higher education



6.27.2012

Students should “get as much education as they can afford.”



6.21.2012

“Higher education cannot be a luxury reserved for the privileged few. It is an economic necessity.”

[BARACKOBAMA.COM/TRUTHTEAM](http://BARACKOBAMA.COM/TRUTHTEAM)



<http://www.aeroplanes.com/travel/photos/pictures-of-canada-90403821/>

Moraine Lake, Banff National Park



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

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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #184 — JULY 18, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

## **National Debt Mythology**

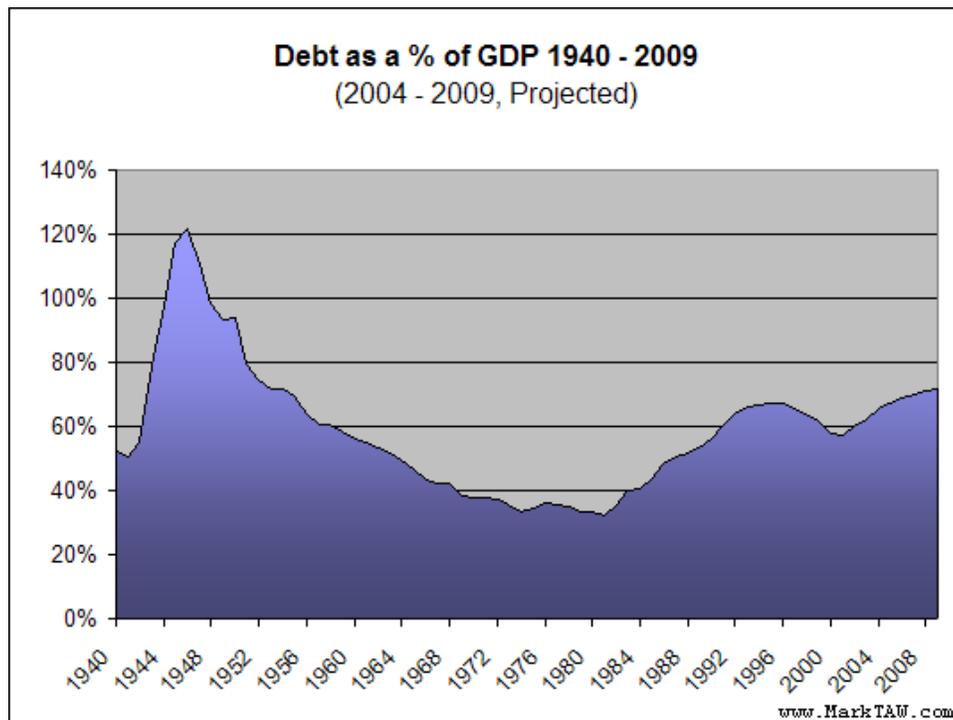
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 18, 2012)

If lies were raindrops, the crops would be as tall as we wish they were.

"Four Dangerous Myths About Government Spending" by Mattea Kramer, TomDispatch/Salon

July 17, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/07/17/four\\_dangerous\\_myths\\_about\\_government\\_spending/](http://www.salon.com/2012/07/17/four_dangerous_myths_about_government_spending/))

(How not to solve an American crisis.)



"We're at the edge of the cliff of deficit disaster!" "National security spending is being, or will soon be, slashed to the bone!" "Obamacare will sink the ship of state!"

Each of these claims has grabbed national attention in a big way, sucking up years' worth of precious airtime. That's a serious bummer, since each of them is a spending myth of the first order. Let's pop them, one by one, and move on to the truly urgent business of a nation that is indeed on the edge.

**Spending Myth 1: Today's deficits have taken us to a historically unprecedented, economically catastrophic place.**

This myth has had the effect of binding the hands of elected officials and policymakers at every level of government. It has also emboldened those who claim that we must cut government spending as quickly, as radically, as deeply as possible.

In fact, we've been here before. In 2009, the federal budget deficit was a whopping 10.1% of the American economy, and back in 1943, in the midst of World War II, it was three times that — 30.3%. This fiscal year the deficit will total around 7.6%. Yes, that is big. But in the Congressional Budget Office's grimmest projections, that figure will fall to 6.3% next year, and 5.8% in fiscal 2014. In 1983, under President Reagan, the deficit hit 6% of the economy, and by 1998, that had turned into a surplus. So, while projected deficits remain large, they're neither historically unprecedented nor insurmountable.

More important still, the size of the deficit is no sign that lawmakers should make immediate deep cuts in spending. In fact, history tells us that such reductions are guaranteed to harm, if not cripple, an economy still teetering at the edge of recession.

A number of leading economists are now busy explaining why the deficit this year actually ought to be a lot larger, not smaller; why there should be more government spending, including aid to state and local governments, which would create new jobs and prevent layoffs in areas like education and law enforcement. Such efforts, working in tandem with slow but positive job growth in the private sector, might indeed mean genuine recovery. Government budget cuts, on the other hand, offset private-sector gains with the huge and depressing effect of public-sector layoffs, and have damaging ripple effects on the rest of the economy as well.

When the economy is healthier, a host of promising options are at hand for lawmakers who want to narrow the gap between spending and tax revenue. For example, loopholes and deductions in the tax code that hand enormous subsidies to wealthy Americans and corporations will cost the Treasury around \$1.3 trillion in lost revenue this year alone — more, that is, than the entire budget deficit. Closing some of them would make great strides toward significant deficit reductions.

Alarmingly, the deficit-reduction fever that's resulted from this first spending myth has led many Americans to throw their support behind de-investment in domestic priorities like education, research, and infrastructure — cuts that threaten to undo generations of progress. This is in part the result of myth number two.

**Spending Myth 2: Military and other national security spending have already taken their lumps and future budget-cutting efforts will have to take aim at domestic programs instead.**

The very idea that military spending has already been deeply cut in service to deficit reduction is not only false, but in the realm of fantasy. The real story: Despite headlines about "slashed" Pentagon spending and "doomsday" plans for more, no actual cuts to the defense budget have yet taken place. In fact, since 2001, to quote former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, defense spending has grown like a "gusher." The Department of Defense base budget nearly doubled in the space of a decade. Now, the Pentagon is likely to face an exceedingly modest 2.5% budget cut in fiscal 2013, "paring" its budget down to a mere \$525 billion — with possible additional cuts shaving off another \$55 billion next year if Congress allows the Budget Control Act, a.k.a. "sequestration," to take effect.

But don't hold your breath waiting for that to happen. It's likely that lawmakers will, at the last moment, come to an agreement to cancel those extra cuts. In other words, the notion that our military, which has been experiencing financial boom times even in tough times, has felt significant deficit-slashing pain — or has even been cut at all — is the Pentagon equivalent of a unicorn.

What this does mean, however, is that lawmakers heading down the budget-cutting path can find plenty of savings in the enormous defense and national security budgets. Moreover, cuts there would be less harmful to the economy than reductions in domestic spending.

A group of military budget experts, for example, found that cutting many costly and obsolete weapons programs could save billions of dollars each year, and investing that money in domestic priorities like education and health care would spur the economy. That's because those sectors create more jobs per dollar than military programs do. And that leads us to myth three.

### **Spending Myth 3: Government health-insurance programs are more costly than private insurance.**

False claims about the higher cost of government health programs have led many people to demand that health-care solutions come from the private sector. Advocates of this have been much aided by the complexity of sorting out health costs, which has provided the necessary smoke and mirrors to camouflage this whopping lie.

Health spending is indeed growing faster than any other part of the federal budget. It's gone from a measly 7% in 1976 to nearly a quarter today — and that's truly a cause for concern. But health care costs, public and private, have been on the rise across the developed world for decades. And cost growth in government programs like Medicare has actually been slower than in private health insurance. That's because the federal government has important advantages over private insurance companies when it comes to health care. For example, as a huge player in the health-care market, the federal government has been successful at negotiating lower prices than small private insurers can. And that helps us de-bunk myth number four.

### **Spending Myth 4: The Affordable Care Act — Obamacare — will bankrupt the federal government while levying the biggest tax in U.S. history.**

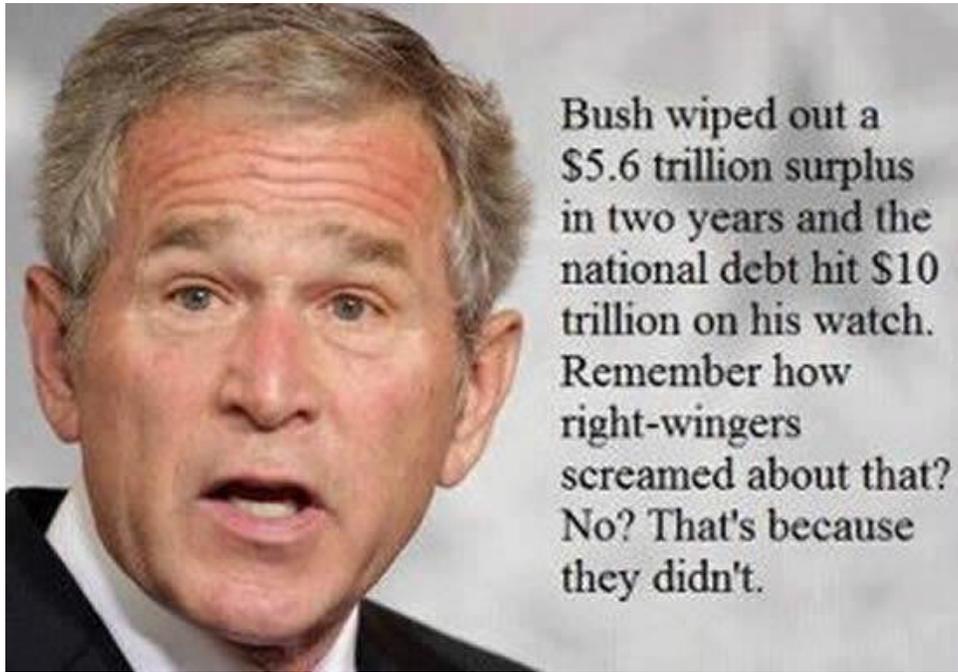
Wrong again. According to the Congressional Budget Office, this health-reform legislation will reduce budget deficits by \$119 billion between now and 2019. And only around 1% of American households will end up paying a penalty for lacking health insurance.

While the Affordable Care Act is hardly a panacea for the many problems in U.S. health care, it does at least start to address the pressing issue of rising costs — and it incorporates some of the best wisdom on how to do so. Health-policy experts have explored phasing out the fee-for-service payment system — in which doctors are paid for each test and procedure they perform — in favor of something akin to pay-for-performance. This transition would reward medical professionals for delivering more effective, coordinated, and efficient care — and save a lot of money by reducing waste.

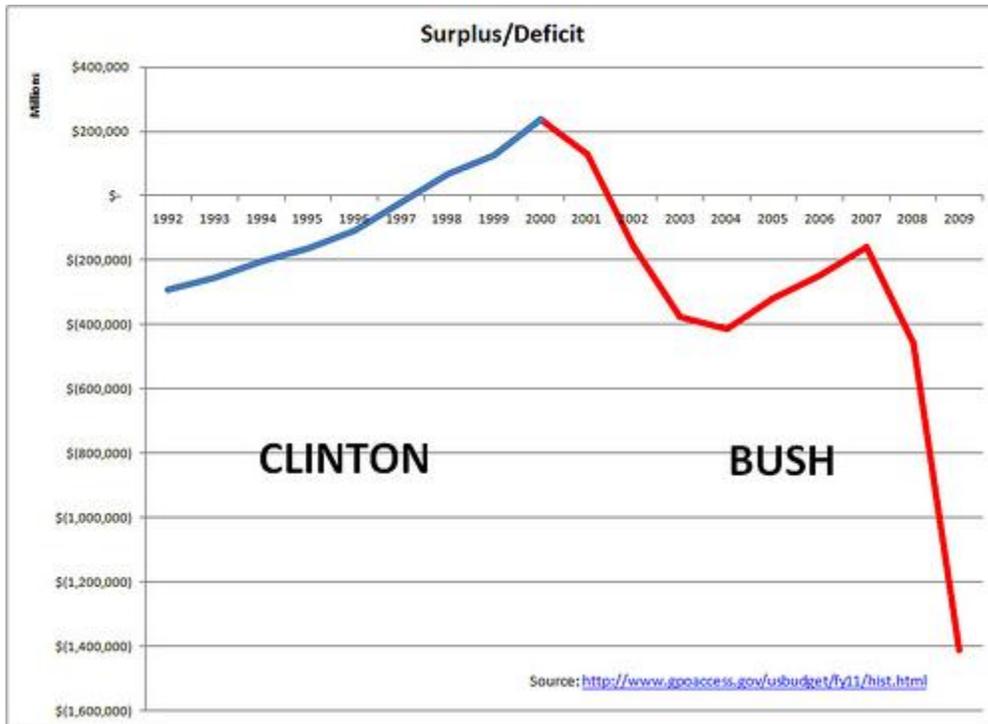
The Affordable Care Act begins implementing such changes in the Medicare program, and it explores other important cost-containment measures. In other words, it lays the groundwork for potentially far deeper budgetary savings down the road.

Having cleared the landscape of four stubborn spending myths, it should be easier to see straight to the stuff that really matters. Financial hardship facing millions of Americans ought to be our top concern. **Between 2007 and 2010, the median family lost nearly 40% of its net worth.** Neither steep deficits, nor disagreement over military spending and health reform should eclipse this as our most pressing challenge.

If lawmakers skipped the myth-making and began putting America's resources into a series of domestic investments that would spur the economy now, their acts would yield dividends for years to come. That means pushing education and job training, plus a host of job-creation measures, to the top of the priority list, and setting aside initiatives based on fear and fantasy.



(Thanks to SteveG!)



[20120717-10](#) 23:41 SteveM Re: National Debt Mythology—Bush Graphic (reply to SteveB, above)

And this is relevant How? You can't defend Obama and the ruinous policies so you try AND CHANGE THE SUBJECT. Could you be any lamer?

[20120717-01](#) 06:05 Tom Fw: Video: "The Whole Truth"

from AmericanDoctors4Truth.org

TRUTH... most people did not know what was in this bill. As Nancy Pelosi said, "pass it and then find out."

Health care does need a reform but not like this bill proposes.

The Democratic Party has produced a television ad purporting to show Rep. Paul Ryan throwing grandma off the cliff, by opposing ObamaCare.

A couple of San Antonio doctors have responded with an effective ad to counter this injustice. See the ad produced by Doctors Jane Hughes and Kris Held:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJ-p29xEM0s>.

We believe that the doctors who actually care for America's patients have valuable insight and wisdom to share. We have waited too long for a national voice to inform the average American citizen about the hazards of the new health care law and to lead the way with reform. The time for waiting is over!

<a href="#">20120717-02</a>	08:36	SteveG	"Report: 2 Million Jobs Lost if Automatic Cuts Kick In"
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"Report: 2 Million Jobs Lost if Automatic Cuts Kick In" by Donna Cassata, AP/Yahoo! News

July 17, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/report-2m-jobs-lost-automatic-cuts-kick-065246317--finance.html>)

(WASHINGTON) Automatic cuts in federal spending will cost the economy more than 2 million jobs, from defense contracting to border security to education, if Congress fails to resolve the looming budget crisis, according to an analysis released Tuesday.

The study, obtained by The Associated Press, was conducted for the Aerospace Industries Association, but it examined the shared pain for defense and domestic programs from the across-the-board reductions slated to kick in Jan. 2. The cuts would reduce the nation's gross domestic product by \$215 billion next year while consumer confidence would plummet, said the report by Dr. Stephen Fuller of George Mason University and Chmura Economics and Analytics.

"If they are allowed to occur as currently scheduled, the long-term consequences will permanently alter the course of the U.S. economy's performance, changing its competitive position in the global economy," said the report.

The analysis is similar to other cautionary reports that have emerged in recent months from independent organizations that analyze federal spending and the process known in Washington as sequestration. All the reports carry a degree of uncertainty as the government hasn't spelled out where it would make the cuts.

The Aerospace Industries Association is a trade group that represents manufacturers of military and business aircraft, space systems and other technology. At stake for these companies are billions of dollars of contracts and they are campaigning hard against the spending cuts.

Its report comes amid a cacophony of election-year demands and partisan backbiting over how to avert the impending cuts that will only grow louder in the coming weeks.

Republicans are certain to seize on the dire numbers as they insist that President Barack Obama is ignoring a critical problem and is willing to make deep cuts in the military. Democrats will use the estimates to demand that the GOP accept tax increases on high wage earners as part of any alternative to implementing the cuts.

The House is scheduled to vote this week on legislation forcing the Obama administration to explain how it will impose the automatic cuts. Top officials from major defense contractors such as Lockheed Martin, EADS, Pratt and

Whitney and Williams-Pyro are slated to testify before the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday as they clamor for Congress to avoid the cuts.

Then, on Aug. 1, Jeffrey Zients, acting head of the Office of Management and Budget, and Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter will be questioned by the panel on how the administration plans to make \$55 billion in defense cuts next year.

Unless Obama and congressional Republicans and Democrats can agree on a plan to stave off the cuts, the military will face a reduction of \$492 billion over a decade, with a \$55 billion cut beginning in January, three months into the fiscal year. Domestic programs also would be reduced by \$492 billion over 10 years.

The automatic cuts, known as sequestration, are the result of the failure last year of a bipartisan congressional panel to come up with a plan to cut the deficit by \$1.2 trillion over 10 years. The panel had been created in the hard-fought budget law passed last summer that reduced government spending while raising the nation's borrowing authority. Decisions on across-the-board reductions, the expiration of Bush-era tax cuts and another effort to increase the country's borrowing authority are part of a packed congressional agenda after the November elections.

Using the issue as leverage, Democrats have signaled they are willing to allow the automatic cuts if Republicans continue to rebuff calls to raise taxes on those Americans making more than \$250,000 a year.

Based on analyses by the Congressional Research Service and other data, the report estimated that the automatic cuts would translate into a 1.5 percentage point increase in unemployment, which now stands at 8.2 percent in a sluggish economic recovery.

The report estimated a loss of 1.09 million jobs from the defense cuts next year, with almost 70 percent from manufacturing and professional and business service jobs. Cuts in domestic spending would result in 1.05 million jobs lost, the report estimated.

"The federal agencies haven't said what they would cut back," Fuller said in an interview of the domestic cuts. "They don't have too many choices because most of their budget is payroll, where the Defense Department has more choices because most of its budget isn't payroll."

Republicans and Democrats remain deeply divided over how to stave off the cuts, though various groups of senators have been trying to come up with a resolution.

Sen. John McCain, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, has been talking privately with the panel's chairman, Democrat Carl Levin of Michigan, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and other lawmakers about various options to avert the cuts, including a \$110 billion, one-year plan that would include closing tax loopholes.

He faces a tough challenge in securing strong bipartisan support, a reality underscored by House Speaker John Boehner's contention that closing tax loopholes should be part of a deal for tax reform rather than a way to avert the defense cuts.

Marion Blakey, president and chief executive officer of the Aerospace Industries Association, said the industry did not want to offer an opinion on what solution would be best.

"We would expect that in this situation, rational behavior will take hold," she said in an interview. She said it was imperative because the cuts only provide a short-term benefit.

"This isn't addressing the fundamentals in any way," she said. "What it's doing is driving our economy back into a recession for an anticipated short-term nick on the debt. That's all it is."

[20120717-03](#)

10:43 Ben

Re: "Bikini-Clad, Gun-Toting Israeli Woman Becomes an Internet Sensation" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #183)

So where's the shadow of the muzzle of that rifle that should be showing alongside the shadow of the girl's right leg? And where does sunlight hit that projecting muzzle? And if she's really carrying that far-from-light weapon on that 2" strap, why isn't there a little pucker in the flesh of her shoulder? If the magazine is removed, well, I guess it's all right to be wearing the weapon, since it's safe, but... senseless, and definitely ill-advised, if she isn't carrying ammunition. Where's that mag? I can think of only two places for one so dressed, and neither seems very likely, does it?

And... what message is the goomba that 'Shopped this trying to convey, anyway?

I get so tired of people with agendas fabricating 'evidence' to support their silly causes.

And the gullible (that is, almost all users) fall right into the trap.

<a href="#">20120717-04</a>	14:20	SteveM	"Obama's Illegal Alien Uncle Given a Stay from [sic] Deportation Despite Criminal Fugitive Status & DUI"
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"Obama's Illegal Alien Uncle Given a Stay from [sic] Deportation Despite Criminal Fugitive Status and DUI" by TheDuke, FreeRepublic.com/A Nation in Peril

July 17, 2012, (<http://anationinperil.com/>)

Framingham Public Information Officer Lieutenant Delaney said when Onyango Obama was asked at the station if he wanted to make a telephone call to arrange for bail following his DUI arrest, he replied: "I think I will call the White House."

Now we see why. Obama's "Uncle Omar" never had anything to worry about. Judicial Watch – which had to sue to obtain the information – has now reported that Obama's uncle the illegal alien fugitive was granted a special stay from deportation from the Obama Administration.

This, despite his overstaying a tourist visa from Kenya nearly 30 years ago. This despite having committed Social Security fraud and evading thousands in back taxes. This, despite being apprehended by the INS in 1992 and receiving a "final order of removal" from a Federal immigration judge – who then subsequently put a Federal warrant out for Uncle Omar's arrest when he skipped his hearing. This, despite after 19 years on the run from that bench warrant – a Federal fugitive – being arrested for a DUI in Framingham, Mass. in August 2011. And despite Presidential spokesperson Jay Carney insisting Uncle Omar would not get "any special treatment".

A criminal alien, fraudster and fugitive from justice for decades, Uncle Omar was released by ICE after only a 2-week detention after his DUI arrest, allowed to return to his job in a liquor store (yep...you can't make this stuff up) against Federal law, unbelievably being permitted by the state of Massachusetts to get his drivers license back after only a 12-day suspension. And now, thanks to his nephew, this criminal is now being allowed to stay in the U.S. and fight his deportation order from 19 years ago!

When Drunken Uncle Omar appeared at his Framingham court hearing last fall that absolved him of any punishment and sent him on his merry way, he was laughing about it. And why not?

He was laughing at all Americans. At our disgraceful legal system that gives illegal aliens more rights than an average citizen would ever receive. At our pathetic immigration system that ordered him deported 20 years ago, yet is now allowing him to once again challenge that deportation, and is permitted to work – against Federal law – while that case progresses.

And he is laughing because he knows that his nephew shares his own contempt for our laws, and will do everything he can to make sure he gets off scot free. It is absolutely despicable.

**November cannot come soon enough.**

20120717-05 14:27 SteveM Video: Best Anti-Obama Ad I've Ever Seen!"

[www.ObamaGetOut.com](http://www.ObamaGetOut.com), by Patriot Super PAC

20120717-06 16:10 SteveB Fw: USAction Action: Freeze Military Spending Now!

Well, this certainly isn't going to happen, but it might be worth expressing your opinion...

from USAction:

Outrageous. Despite continuous calls from the House Republican leadership to make drastic cuts to Medicare, Social Security, food stamps and other programs middle class families rely on just to get by, they absolutely refuse to budge even an inch on Pentagon spending.

Not only do they refuse to cut the military budget, but they want to increase it — above and beyond what even our highest commanding officers have asked for.<sup>1</sup> How's that for fiscal responsibility?

But as Congress takes up the 2013 Defense Appropriations bill, there's one amendment where progressives and tea party members can agree. Introduced by two representatives from polar opposite sides of the fence, the Mulvaney-Frank amendment will freeze military spending to last year's levels.

With a vote expected as early as Thursday, it will come down to the wire as many members are still on the fence. Tell your Representative to vote for the Mulvaney-Frank Amendment now:

[http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action\\_KEY=417](http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=417).

According to the CBO, Pentagon spending accounts for over 50% of all discretionary spending in the budget.<sup>2</sup> If Republicans are going to ram drastic cuts to our social safety net through Congress, then it's only fair to cut from the bloated Pentagon budget as well.

And the American public overwhelmingly agrees. According to a survey by the Stimson Center, on average, Americans want to cut military spending by 18 percent. This was true amongst Democratic and Republican voters alike — and even amongst voters living in districts with the most defense spending in the country.<sup>3</sup>

The American people overwhelmingly support cutting military spending but Washington isn't listening.

So we need to make sure Congress hears our voice loud and clear: the American people want to cut Pentagon spending, so do it now! Click above to tell your Representative to vote 'yes' on the Mulvaney-Frank Amendment.

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

<sup>1</sup><http://bit.ly/NDpI3K>

<sup>2</sup><http://1.usa.gov/NDpSYK>

<sup>3</sup><http://wapo.st/NDpWYH>

20120717-07 16:15 SteveG Fw: MoveOn Petition: Eliminate the Ceiling on Social Security Payroll Taxes!

from MoveOn:

Currently, there is a \$110,100 cap on Social Security payroll taxes. Most of us don't come close to paying this much and pay tax on 100% of our payroll income.

However, because of the \$110,100 cap, the superrich pay much less than their fair share. For instance, in 2011, Henry Kravis, the CEO of the private equity firm KKR & Co., paid off his Social Security taxes for the year on January 10, 2011, six working days into the new year.

That's just one example. If the cap on payroll taxes were removed, Social Security would be safe-probably forever. That's why I created a petition on SignOn.org to Congress and President Barack Obama, which says:

Remove the cap on Social Security payroll taxes.

Will you sign the petition? Click here to add your name, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=276842&id=46437-4073648-9%3D57Wx&t=2>.

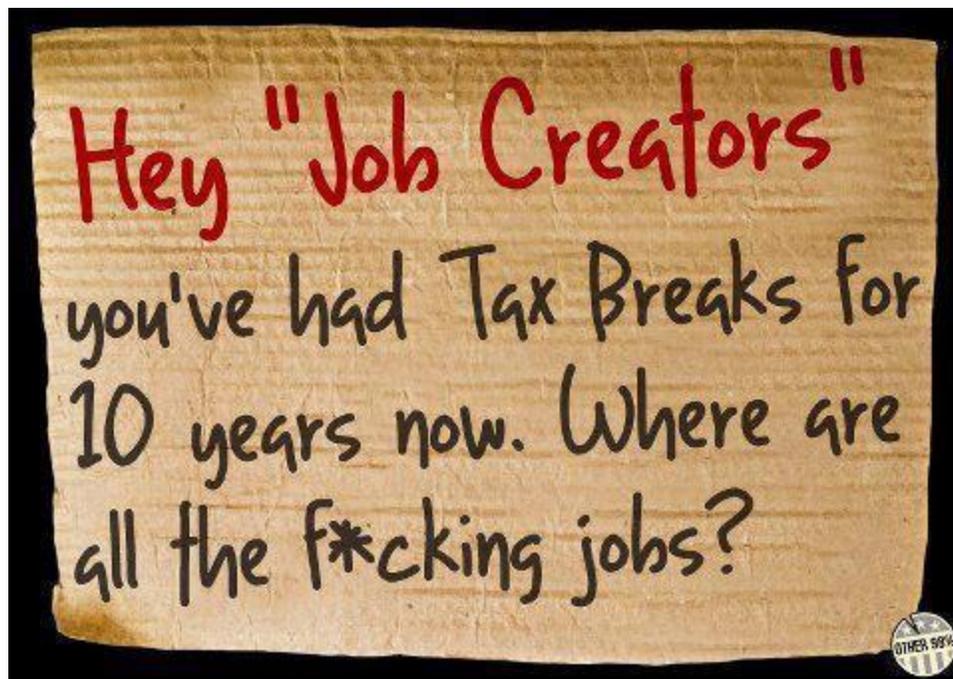
Thanks! -Laraine Harrison

20120717-08

19:72

SteveG

Graphic: Where Are All the F\*cking Jobs?



**CORPORATE PROFITS  
ARE AT A 50-YEAR HIGH**  
while unemployment is also at  
a 50-year high. If it was  
true that the rich and  
business were the job  
creators, we'd be  
drowning in jobs today.



**Nick Hanauer**  
American entrepreneur,  
venture capitalist,  
co-author of *The True Patriot*

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SOURCE: Korn, Morgan, "Millionaire Investor Calls for Higher Taxes on the Rich," 9 Feb 2012, Yahoo! Finance, <http://y.ahoo.it/WwU/w>.

20120717-09 23:38 SteveM Billboards from the Right - 1

I have never, ever seen signs like this about any other President or candidate in my entire life.

[Maybe because there weren't any previous black Presidents or (nearly) candidates! -SteveB]

This says something very important about these times and about our President.



20120717-11 23:45 SteveM Fw: Grassroots Action: Tell Comcast to Clean House at NBC!

from MRC/Grassroots Action:

After years of being embarrassed by the hatemongers who rule MSNBC's airwaves, Microsoft has had enough.

**As widely reported yesterday, the software giant has officially severed all ties with MSNBC ... But what does this so-called divorce mean to you?**

**Comcast—NBC's parent company—is feeling the heat.**

Stephen, because of the relentless efforts of the MRC Action team, Comcast knows how bad things are at MSNBC and are worried that the American people have lost faith in NBC News because of it.

That's why they decided to rebrand MSNBC.com as NBCNews.com to give the false impression that MSNBC is a separate entity. But we know better. NBC News and MSNBC are inextricably linked, with hosts and staff simultaneously working on both stations...

Even worse, both are working around the clock spreading liberal propaganda.

Remember that it was NBC News that committed the most despicable journalistic fraud in recent history by editing the George Zimmerman 9-11 tape to make it look like Zimmerman thought Trayvon Martin was suspicious because he was black.

It's a good thing MRC's NewsBusters.org was there to nail them on it. Make no mistake about it: MSNBC is NBC News.

But rather than clean up their mess at NBC, Comcast is playing a shell game by changing website names and pretending that their cable news channel isn't part of their news division.

We have extensively documented the outrageous behavior exhibited daily by unhinged MSNBC hosts and Comcast must be held directly responsible for refusing to restore journalistic standards and basic decency.

We need you to keep up the pressure on Comcast, insisting that they do the right thing with NBC by sweeping the house free of the hatemongers and liberal propagandists that are ruling the MSNBC airwaves!

Go here now to directly contact Comcast Board members and tell them to do the right thing by cleaning up their station:

[http://www.grassrootsaction.com/489/petition.asp?Ref\\_ID=16918&CID=489&RID=35237119](http://www.grassrootsaction.com/489/petition.asp?Ref_ID=16918&CID=489&RID=35237119).

Even if you have already contacted a board member, please do so again as a reminder that you aren't going away, and won't let it rest until they clean house.

After taking action, forward this email to your patriotic friends and urge them to hold Comcast and MSNBC accountable as well by going here.

Thank you as always for your support and your commitment to pressuring the liberal media to "Tell the Truth"!

20120717-12	23:50	SteveM	"Who's the Real Felon, Mr. Obama?"
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"Who's the Real Felon, Mr. Obama?" by Derrick Hollenbeck, [ImpeachObamaCampaign.com](http://ImpeachObamaCampaign.com)

July 17, 2012, (<http://www.impeachobamacampaign.com/whos-the-real-felon-mr-obama/>)



By his own admission, Barack Obama used drugs and almost certainly passed drugs to his friends. This makes it likely he has committed drug-related felonies. Even just passing drugs around in a circle of friends is a "sale of drugs" felony. Nevertheless, it's not really important whether we have enough definitive evidence to convict Barack Obama in a court room. It is, after all, only the seriousness of the charges and not the nature of the evidence that counts.

During Sheriff Joe Arpaio's March 1, 2012 press conference, his lead investigator presented a copy of Barack Obama's draft registration card and explained how it was forged. It was clear that if the draft card Obama possessed was genuine, he, Barack Hussein Obama, received THE ONLY draft card issued since 1980 that was stamped with a single digit year. Every other draft card issued before and after Barack Obama's special one includes four digits. Obama's draft card is stamped with "80" for the year it was issued. Any legitimate stamp would say "1980."

Obama's draft card looks like it was made by a high school kid learning how to photo-shop a document. All of this strongly suggests Obama may very well be a felon under several statutes of both Hawaiian and federal law.

When Obama either made or received his obviously fake draft card, that could be a felony violation of Jimmy Carter's Proclamation 4771, Registration Under the Military Selective Service Act, which retroactively re-established the Selective Service registration requirement for all 18–26 year old male citizens born on or after January 1, 1960.

Failure to register for the draft – certainly indicated by possession of a forged draft card – makes a man born after December 31, 1959 liable for a maximum fine of \$250,000 and a prison term of up to five years.

The law also stipulates that an unregistered male is not eligible for a job in the Executive Branch. This means a forged draft card cannot be used to satisfy the requirements to be the president. It means Barack Obama may be guilty of federal felonies because he possessed and presented an identification document that is a fake. It means he may have committed more federal felonies involving fraud when he presented a forged draft card to satisfy the requirements for any federal student aid he used to attend college in America.

My goodness, there may be a felon in the White House!



[http://zh.treklens.com/gallery/South\\_America/Peru/South/Arequipa/photo359682.htm](http://zh.treklens.com/gallery/South_America/Peru/South/Arequipa/photo359682.htm)



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

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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #185 — JULY 19, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

## 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'?

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

This is a very interesting article, told mostly from the Republican side. The only thing I think I can argue with is that R0mney is not so much a 'hairball' as he is a 'slimeball' Maybe there was a typographical error...the terms are very similar...maybe there was some cornfusion...

"Mitt Romney Taxes Controversy Shows He's Still A Tough Sell" by Howard Fineman, Huffington Post

July 18, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/18/mitt-romney-taxes-tough-sell-hairball\\_n\\_1681636.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/18/mitt-romney-taxes-tough-sell-hairball_n_1681636.html))

(The storm over Mitt Romney's refusal to release more of his federal tax returns intensifies.)

### Myths from Around the World



The Romanian "Vampire"



The South American "Chupacabra"



Scotland's "Loch Ness Monster"



The European "Werewolf"



The Himalayan "Yeti"



The North American "Job Creator"

Facebook: Ayn Rand collected Social Security

(WASHINGTON) Months after he mathematically locked up the Republican presidential nomination, Mitt Romney remains a political hairball that GOP insiders -- conservative and otherwise -- wish they could cough up before the convention in Tampa, Fla., next month.

The likelihood of their doing so is slim to none, party sources said. But that doesn't mean that they are happy to have Mitt atop the ticket.

That is the real, unspoken political meaning behind the remarkable, rising chorus of voices calling on the presumptive party nominee to release more of his federal tax returns to the public.

"The fact is, no one likes the guy or believes in him," said the campaign manager for a former Romney rival, who declined to be quoted by name because his former boss is on record supporting Romney's campaign against incumbent President Barack Obama.

"Look back at our 2008 primaries," he said. **"Who did all the other candidates dislike? Romney.** Look at this year. **Who did all the other candidates dislike? Romney.** No one wants Obama to win, but no one likes the guy who is running against him."

**Republican leaders, especially conservatives, see Romney as a malleable, cynical power-grabber without principle or compass.** They warned voters that Romney would be unable to take the fight to Obama on health care because he had fostered a similar program as governor of Massachusetts, and they argued that a wealthy, well-connected son of privilege was not a good spokesman for selling free-market ideas to the middle-class.

Over the last week, a disparate array of Republican and conservative leaders have called on Romney to do what he is clearly loathe to do: release several years if not a decade or more of his federal tax returns. It is an unspoken form of payback.

The list is not only a veritable who's who of the party, but a not-so-subtle roster of people who opposed Romney for the presidential nomination. That they have not fallen in line behind Romney's stonewalling is a telling sign.

Among those who have called on Romney to disclose are figures tied to the candidates who opposed Romney in the Republican primaries, and who are clearly not willing to do him any favors now. They include Rick Tyler, a close and longtime adviser to former House Speaker Newt Gingrich; John Weaver, who served in a similar capacity in the campaign of former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman; former GOP candidate Rep. Ron Paul of Texas; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas (who said that ALL candidates should disclose their returns); and conservative pundit William Kristol, who is close to former Sen. Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, among other former candidates.

Normally, defeated primary rivals quickly fall in line behind the strategy and message of the winning candidate. In this crucial case, Romney's former rivals have done just the opposite on what Romney has made clear is a crucial issue.

Equally noteworthy are the party leaders and pundits who have left the Romney Alamo. They include former party chairs Haley Barbour and Michael Steele, and pundits George Will, David Frum, the editors of *National Review* and, to a degree, the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*.

As if to add insult to injury, the GOP's 2008 standard-bearer, Sen. John McCain, said on Tuesday that he had picked former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin as his running mate because she was the best candidate for the job -- a sock to the jaw to Romney, who had been on McCain's veep list.

Even before the tax return issue had come to dominate the campaign, News Corp. boss Rupert Murdoch had complained about what he regarded as the ineptitude and lack of focus of the Romney team.

And Congressional Republicans were upset with Romney's insistence that his health care plan in Massachusetts was based on "penalties," not taxes. The GOP wants to run against the president on the notion that his version of health care -- similar to Romney's -- is a "massive tax increase." Mitt muddled the message.

"Romney threw them under the bus and they aren't going to stand for it," said Hogan Gidley, media director for Santorum's campaign. "The idea that Obama health care is a tax increase is a key to the whole Republican campaign."

Seen as arrogant and aloof by his rivals, Romney is said to have few friends or ties among his former challengers or elsewhere in the GOP and conservative ranks. He has money and a tight and loyal cadre of operatives, but they find themselves without many allies as they try to argue that their boss should be allowed to keep his business dealings and taxes private.

"There are those of us who think that Romney is destined to lose, and they are behaving accordingly," said the former manager of another campaign, who also declined to be quoted because his boss has endorsed Romney.

"Everybody's looking ahead to the next round. They won't say it, but they are."

[20120718-07](#) 15:33 Pam Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to SteveB, above)

Isn't it interesting that despite all this dislike of Romney the Republicans couldn't come up with another, more salable candidate? Why was Romney so inevitable? Maybe because the whole field was so awful, in which case it makes you wonder if there are ANY Republicans out there who could have been viable. The whole party seems sunk in the mire of bad economic policy and screwed up priorities. I read an article in Mark's Stanford alumni magazine about a scientist from there who has figured out how to get us off fossil fuels and onto wind, sun, and hydro in 30 years and make energy cheaper to boot. The technology is there, but the political will is lacking. These are dark days for America.

[20120718-11](#) 16:07 SteveG Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to Pam, above)

Lack of political will plus lobbyist will plus PAC will plus lack of supply methods and nothing will happen.

Tea party plus no tax mentality makes a lack of viable candidates – PAC's will try to make anyone viable.

[20120718-15](#) 16:16 Art Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to SteveG, above)

This whole tax thing might just explode and cost Romney the nomination. There is something really ugly here methinks. Think about that.

[20120718-16](#) 16:19 SteveG Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to Art, above)

He made \$24 or so million in 2010 and reportedly when his 2011 returns are available it will indicate an income of \$43 million – give or take a little. Hiding something in the previous years – damn straight!

[20120718-19](#) 17:12 Tom Re: 'Hairball' or 'Slimeball'? (reply to Art, above)

Yes, me also!

At least we know where Romney was Born, "The Planet Krypton!" ;-)

Progressives like (1) Socialists/Marxist.

Conservatives have no choice given to them (-0) Banker/Broker- Globalists!

Published on Monday, July 16, 2012 by Common Dreams

"Five Reasons the Super-Rich Need Government More Than the Rest of Us" by Paul Buchheit, Common Dreams

July 16, 2012, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/07/16-1>)

Wealthy individuals and corporations want us to believe they've made it on their own, without the help of government or the American people. Billionaire financier Sanford Weill blustered, "We didn't rely on somebody else to build what we built." He was echoing the words of his famous predecessor, the formidable financier J. P. Morgan, who spouted, "I owe the public nothing."

That's the bull of Wall Street. There are at least five good reasons why the wealthiest Americans need government as much as the rest of us, and probably more.

### 1. Security

In his *People's History*, Howard Zinn described colonial opposition to inequality in 1765: "A shoemaker named Ebenezer Macintosh led a mob in destroying the house of a rich Boston merchant named Andrew Oliver. Two weeks later, the crowd turned to the home of Thomas Hutchinson, symbol of the rich elite who ruled the colonies in the name of England. They smashed up his house with axes, drank the wine in his wine cellar, and looted the house of its furniture and other objects. A report by colony officials to England said that this was part of a larger scheme in which the houses of fifteen rich people were to be destroyed, as part of 'a war of plunder, of general levelling and taking away the distinction of rich and poor.'"

That doesn't happen much anymore. Of course, the super-rich aren't taking any chances, with panic shelters and James Bond cars and personal surveillance drones. But the U.S. government will be helping them by spending \$55 billion on Homeland Security next year, in addition to \$673 billion for the military. The police, emergency services, and National Guard are trained to focus on crimes against wealth.

In the cities, business interests keep the police focused on the homeless and unemployed. And on drug users. A "Broken Windows" mentality, which promotes quick fixes of minor damage to discourage large-scale destruction, is being applied to human beings. Wealthy Americans can rest better at night knowing that the police are "stopping and frisking" in the streets of the poor neighborhoods.

### 2. Laws and Deregulations

The wealthiest Americans are the main beneficiaries of tax laws, property rights, zoning rules, patent and copyright provisions, trade pacts, antitrust legislation, and contract regulations. Tax loopholes allow them to store over \$1 trillion in assets overseas.

Their companies benefit, despite any publicly voiced objections to regulatory agencies, from SBA and SEC guidelines that generally favor business, and from FDA and USDA quality control measures that minimize consumer complaints and product recalls.

The growing numbers of financial industry executives have profited from 30 years of deregulation, most notably the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act. Lobbying by the financial industry has prolonged the absurdity of a zero sales tax on financial transactions.

Big advantages accrue for multinational corporations from trade agreements like NAFTA, with international disputes resolved by the business-friendly World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization. Federal judicial law protects our biggest companies from foreign infringement. The proposed

Trans-Pacific Partnership would put governments around the world at the mercy of corporate decision-makers.

The euphemistically named JOBS Act further empowers business, exempting startups from regulatory accounting requirements.

There are even anti-antitrust measures, such as the licensing rules that allow the American Medical Association to restrict the number of doctors in the U.S., thereby keeping doctor salaries artificially high. Can't have a free market if it hurts business.

### 3. Research and Infrastructure

A publicly supported communications infrastructure allows the richest 10% of Americans to manipulate their 80% share of the stock market. CEOs rely on roads and seaports and airports to ship their products, the FAA and TSA and Coast Guard and Department of Transportation to safeguard them, a nationwide energy grid to power their factories, and communications towers and satellites to conduct online business. Private jets use 16 percent of air traffic control resources while paying only 3% of the bill.

Perhaps most important to business, even as it focuses on short-term profits, is the long-term basic research that is largely conducted with government money. Especially for the tech industry. Taxpayer-funded research at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (the Internet) and the National Science Foundation (the Digital Library Initiative) has laid a half-century foundation for technological product development. Well into the 1980s, as companies like Apple and Google and Microsoft and Oracle and Cisco profited from the fastest-growing product revolution in American history, the U.S. Government was still providing half the research funds. Even today 60% of university research is government-supported.

Public schools have helped to train the chemists, physicists, chip designers, programmers, engineers, production line workers, market analysts, and testers who create modern technological devices. They, in turn, can't succeed without public layers of medical support and security. All of them contribute to the final product.

As the super-rich ride in their military-designed armored cars to a financial center globally connected by public fiber optics networks to make a trade guided by publicly funded data mining and artificial intelligence software, they might stop and re-think the old Horatio Alger myth.

### 4. Subsidies

The traditional image of 'welfare' pales in comparison to corporate welfare and millionaire welfare. Whereas over 90% of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families goes to the elderly, the disabled, or working households, most of the annual \$1.3 trillion in "tax expenditures" (tax subsidies from special deductions, exemptions, exclusions, credits, and loopholes) goes to the top quintile of taxpayers. One estimate is \$250 billion a year just to the richest 1%.

Senator Tom Coburn's website reports that mortgage interest and rental expense deductions alone return almost \$100 billion a year to millionaires.

The most profitable corporations get the biggest subsidies. The Federal Reserve provided more than \$16 trillion in financial assistance to financial institutions and corporations. According to Citizens for Tax Justice, 280 profitable Fortune 500 companies, which together paid only half of the maximum 35 percent corporate tax rate, received \$223 billion in tax subsidies.

Even the conservative Cato Institute admitted that the U.S. federal government spent \$92 billion on corporate welfare during fiscal year 2006. Recipients included Boeing, Xerox, IBM, Motorola, Dow Chemical, and General Electric.

In agriculture, most of the funding for commodity programs goes to large agribusiness corporations such as Archer Daniels Midland. For the oil industry, estimates of subsidy payments range from \$10 to \$50 billion per year.

## 5. Disaster Costs

Exxon spokesperson Ken Cohen once said: "Any claim we don't pay taxes is absurd...ExxonMobil is a leading U.S. taxpayer." Added Chevron CEO John Watson: "The oil and gas industry pays its fair share in taxes" But SEC documents show that Exxon paid 2% in U.S. federal taxes from 2008 to 2010, Chevron 4.8%.

As if to double up on the insult, the petroleum industry readily takes public money for oil spills. Cleanups cost much more than the fines imposed on the companies. Government costs can run into the billions, or even tens of billions, of dollars.

Another disaster-prone industry is finance, from which came the encouraging words of Goldman Sachs chairman Lloyd Blankfein: "Everybody should be, frankly, happy...the financial system led us into the crisis and it will lead us out."

Estimates for bailout funds from the Treasury and the Federal Reserve range between \$3 trillion and \$5 trillion. That's enough to pay off both the deficit and next year's entitlement costs. All because of the irresponsibility of the super-salaried CEOs of our most profitable corporations.

## Common Sense

Patriotic Millionaires recently addressed the President and Congress: "Given the dire state of our economy, it is absurd that one-quarter of all millionaires pay a lower tax rate than millions of working, middle-class American families...Please do the right thing for our country. Raise our taxes."

It's good to know somebody gets it right. Taxes, for the most part, are not unfair. They represent payment for society's many benefits, which get bigger and better as people get richer.

<a href="#">20120718-32</a>	23:23	SteveB	Re: "Five Reasons the Super-Rich Need Government More Than the Rest of Us" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Really good article, Martha. Thank you! I hope you have had some rain there at home.

When I was in high school and read Ayn Rand (well...they were very thick so I liked the challenge and they contained a little sex), I can remember thinking that John Galt (and all of today's 1%) certainly owe society and even their mommies and daddies a huge debt that can never truly be repaid. This article spells out the literal ways this is so. Society is certainly owed more than its destruction at the hands of the super-rich. Ayn Rand must have come from a highly dysfunctional family!

<a href="#">20120718-02</a>	10:05	SteveM	Fw: Best Bartender Joke Ever
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A puppet, a black guy, an illegal alien, a Muslim and a Communist walk into a bar.

Bartender asks...

"What'll it be, Mr. President?"

<a href="#">20120718-03</a>	10:56	SteveM	Fw: A Lesson in Irony
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[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

The Food Stamp Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is proud to be distributing the greatest amount of free meals and food stamps ever.

Meanwhile, the National Park Service, administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, asks us to "Please Do Not Feed the Animals."

Their stated reason for the policy is because the animals will grow dependent on handouts and will not learn to take care of themselves.

This ends today's lesson.

<a href="#">20120718-04</a>	13:58	SteveB	Strange Animated GIF's
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<http://www.mymodernmet.com/profiles/blogs/rrrrrrroll-animated-gifs>

<a href="#">20120718-05</a>	14:49	Ben	Re: Strange Animated GIF's (reply to SteveB, above)
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Very cool!

<a href="#">20120718-06</a>	15:23	SteveG	"Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program"
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There was a decent system in place and Daniels tried to privatize the program – didn't work too well. Add this lost money to the cuts in social programs, the miscalculation of corporate tax money just sitting in a bank account and we all can give thanks that he is not running for president or vice president. Just watch out Purdue!!!!

"Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" by Mary Beth Schneider, *Indianapolis Star*

July 18, 2012, (<http://www.indystar.com/article/20120718/NEWS05/207180332/Judge-Taxpayers-losers-IBM-Indiana-case?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|IndyStar.com>)

Even as Gov. Mitch Daniels vowed to appeal a judge's decision Wednesday awarding \$52 million to IBM, the governor defiantly said that all the money and struggles to fix what was one of the nation's worst welfare systems has been worth it.

Others question both the human and financial costs.

Marion County Judge David Dreyer, who ruled against the state in its lawsuit with IBM, called taxpayers the losers in a "misguided" privatization experiment. It began with the state hiring IBM in 2006 to overhaul welfare and ended with IBM fired in 2009 after hundreds of millions of dollars were spent only for performance to get worse.

Social service advocates point to the human toll the effort extracted. Even if the state now has the right formula for helping a welfare clientele that is poor, sick or elderly, they say improvements could have been achieved without the pain and without the nearly \$10 million spent on attorneys.

"In the end, I think everybody agrees that the best thing for needy individuals is that the best system possible is in place," said David Sklar, president of the Indiana Coalition of Human Services. "We probably could have staved off a lot of these problems if the administration had been more willing to work with those involved in the system and those advocating on behalf of those (welfare) clients to put a better system in place from the get-go."

Daniels argued that Indiana was right to try something dramatic to turn around what had been among the worst-performing welfare systems in the nation but also right to fire IBM, even though it led to the state and IBM suing each other.

He pointed to the numbers: 93 percent of applications now are processed in a timely manner, up from 65.6 percent in 2009 before the \$1.3 billion IBM contract was ditched; error rates for people incorrectly denied assistance is below the national average, at 5.64 percent compared with 13.68 percent under IBM; and the error rate for payment accuracy has been cut nearly in half.

Indiana, he said, "now has its most timely, most accurate, most cost-effective and fraud-free system ever."

U.S. Department of Agriculture rankings show Indiana ranks 16th best in the nation for its error rate on public assistance, though that is down from being 10th in the nation in 2010.

Sen. Vaneta Becker, an Evansville Republican, was among the first to raise concerns about the privatization. Soon after the contract with IBM was signed and the state began rolling out the new system in some counties, constituents bombarded her with horror stories of lost paperwork and benefits wrongly denied.

One woman lost her Medicaid, food stamps and transportation because she missed an appointment. The reason? The woman was in the hospital. The benefits, with Becker's help, were restored — the day after the woman died.

Becker agrees that things have improved under the hybrid public-private system now in place.

But, she said, "the change that made things work down here was bringing back caseworkers that they had originally let go." "The human touch was what was necessary to make it work."

"The whole thing could have been avoided if the state from the beginning had just provided new computers and additional training to caseworkers," she said. "A lot of this could have been avoided and a lot of costs."

In Dreyer's ruling, IBM gets \$12 million, mostly for equipment the state kept after canceling the contract, on top of the \$40 million that he had ordered the state to pay IBM earlier. The state also will have to pay 8 percent interest on that money for the period leading up to the judgment.

That is far short of the \$113 million IBM wanted.

The state, which had been trying to recoup more than \$150 million of the \$437 million it had paid IBM before scrapping the deal, got nothing. Dreyer found that IBM did not breach its contract and that IBM had, in fact, laid the groundwork for the current success.

And he cited trial evidence that showed the state, even while publicly praising IBM, was trying to cancel the contract because it would cost additional money the state didn't have to adjust what had been a flawed plan.

So far, the state has paid Barnes & Thornburg, the Indianapolis law firm who handled the lawsuit, \$9.6 million. Attorney Peter Rusthoven said that represents two years of work leading up to a five-week trial. The cost of an appeal, he said, would probably not exceed \$250,000.

Daniels said that even if the appeals challenging the IBM reward fail, it will have "zero" impact on the state's \$2 billion surplus that will allow taxpayers a rebate of about \$100 each on their next tax bill.

He and Budget Director Adam Horst said the state has a contingency fund for lawsuits that will cover the costs.

Clint Roswell, a spokesman for IBM, said the company was reviewing its own legal options but seemed surprised the state planned to continue the legal fight.

"We had hoped this decision would mark the end of the state's costly efforts to avoid its contract obligations and pursue unsupported and now rejected claims against IBM," he said.

Daniels argued that even if the state eventually has to pay IBM, “the dollars are so tiny compared to the savings we’re achieving.”

He said the new “post-IBM” hybrid system is saving something like \$60 million-plus a year now.”

Daniels stressed, though, that what is important is not the dollars but the improved services for those Hoosiers who need welfare assistance.

John Cardwell, chairman of the Indiana Home Care Task Force, agreed that people should be the priority. But, he said, that is why the state’s privatization plan was so wrong from the beginning.

He laid the blame as much on ACS, the subcontractor that the state kept after firing IBM, and noted that when the decision to launch the privatization plan was made, the head of the Family and Social Services Administration was a former ACS executive, Mitch Roob.

“ACS benefitted far more than IBM from welfare privatization and was involved in the actions at the local level that harmed senior citizens, persons with disabilities and families,” Cardwell said.

He called for the legislature and Congress to demand an independent audit of Indiana’s welfare system “to determine who is benefitting from those programs: citizens that need medical care, food and shelter or private companies.”

Rep. Gail Riecken, an Evansville Democrat, said Indiana’s welfare privatization experiment, which the state plunged into even though a similar effort in Texas had failed, should be a cautionary tale about privatization of public services.

She tried and failed in 2009, after the IBM contract was canceled, to pass legislation that would prevent welfare from ever being put in the hands of private, for-profit companies.

Under Daniels, the state has privatized one prison as well as prison food and medical services and the Indiana Toll Road. An attempt to privatize the Hoosier Lottery to raise money for higher education flopped, though the state is now seeking proposals from private companies for a 10-year contract to assist in running the lottery to improve its bottom line.

Riecken said the state needs to think long and hard about putting public jobs in private hands.

“When you turn (government duties) over to a private concern, you have to be concerned about user fees and quality because their main core is to make a profit,” she said.

The state’s current hybrid system is now in all 92 counties after a long rollout.

It wasn’t Dreyer’s job to judge the merits of privatization in general. But he was critical of Indiana’s experience with welfare.

“Neither party deserves to win this case,” he wrote in his 65-page ruling. **“This story represents a ‘perfect storm’ of misguided government policy and overzealous corporate ambition. Overall, both parties are to blame, and Indiana’s taxpayers are left as apparent losers.”**

(*Star* reporter Jon Murray contributed to this story.)

[20120718-08](#)

15:39

Pam

Re: “Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program” (reply to SteveG, above)

Good Lord! I gather from your remark, Steve, that Daniels is going to head up Purdue. Isn't that special? (said in Dana Carvey mode.)

[20120718-14](#) 16:14 SteveG Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to Pam, above)

Daniels appointed 8 of Purdue's 10 trustees. Those 8 contributed to his campaigns. All ten voted for him to be the next president of Purdue when his term as governor expires. The 10 trustees also determine his salary which will be about 6 times higher than the governor's salary.

[20120718-18](#) 16:30 Pam Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to SteveG, above)

Think of something nasty, and pretend I said it.

[20120718-20](#) 18:15 Beth Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to Pam, above)

What a great guy. No wonder he wasn't interested in running for president.

[20120718-22](#) 18:50 SteveB Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to all, above)

I hear all you guys complain about Daniels, but (good grief!) Purdue's my alma mater! ...and Dale's and GaryC, SteveBA, GaryF, and David and more FotM members. [Beth, for instance. -SteveB]

I have a feeling that the education of Purdue students will suffer, just as the education of Indiana's public K12 students has suffered.

Beth, you're so right about how lucky we are Mr. Zero is running for Prez instead of Mitch. I guess...

[20120718-26](#) 19:24 Beth Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to SteveB, above)

I am also a Purdue alum as is my ex. College presidents make way too much money. They have been successful in convincing their corporate executive board members that they are CEO's.

[20120718-24](#) 19:04 Art Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to all, above)

Is anyone else bothered by the fact that once again we have the president of a (OK middle sized) university making more money than the President of the United States or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There is just something fundamentally wrong with our whole system.

[20120718-25](#) 19:22 SteveG Re: "Judge Rules Indiana Owes IBM \$12M Over Botched Welfare Program" (reply to Art, above)

Not to mention collegiate football and basketball coaches.

20120718-09 15:44 Art Fw: The B\*tch Needs Bucks!

See what you get [great fascist emails –SteveB] when you run in the right circles. I can't decide if this is just laughable or extremely sad.

from Michele Bachmann:

Dear Fellow Conservative,

I will get straight to the point because I know your time is incredibly valuable.

Sunday night was the deadline for candidates to file their fundraising report with the Federal Election Commission -- and the news proved my wealthy opponent is prepared to buy this election. In fact, he is his best donor.

My Democrat opponent has raised over \$500,000 -- but what is worse -- he has loaned his campaign \$250,000. Unfortunately, I'm afraid this is just the beginning. Because as you know, my opponent is worth up to \$111 million.

[Crybaby! –SteveB]

There is no doubt that liberals are going to continue to pour millions into their campaign to defeat me and I need your immediate help. Can I count on you to contribute \$25, \$50, \$100 or more today?

Since becoming a Member of Congress in 2007, I have worked overtime to take our fiscally conservative message of limited government and individual responsibility to the American public. Time and again, I've gone head-to-head against some of the most dedicated deficit-spending liberals on the campaign trail, on national television, and on the House floor.

I've made it a top priority to create jobs, fight for individual liberty and to keep our country safe. But in order to do this we must ensure Barack Obama is a one-term President and we must completely repeal the big-government monstrosity known as "Obamacare."

Of course, being such a vocal proponent of constitutional conservatism and an opponent of President Obama and his disastrous policies has made me a top target for defeat this year. That's why the liberals have gone so far as to recruit and nominate a liberal multi-millionaire from Minneapolis with the ability to pour millions of personal wealth into the campaign to defeat me.

That's why I need your immediate and continued support.

Will you follow this link to make an immediate donation to my campaign today?

Make no mistake, they're putting everything they have directly into my race and it's absolutely critical that I'm not outspent in this race!

Sincerely, Michele Bachmann

P.S. Your steadfast support will not only allow us to fight leftist Democrats like Nancy Pelosi in Congress, but also enable me to continue taking our message of limited Constitutional government and personal responsibility into the homes of millions of Americans. Please follow this link to make a donation to my campaign today. Thanks.

20120718-10 15:56 Pam Re: The B\*tch Needs Bucks! (reply to Art, above)

Art (above): "I can't decide if this is just laughable or extremely sad."

Evil and stupid, I'd say.

[20120718-12](#) 16:10 SteveG Re: The B\*tch Needs Bucks! (reply to Art, above)

Laughable and a sad commentary on the state of America.

[20120718-13](#) 16:13 Art Re: The B\*tch Needs Bucks! (reply to SteveG, above)

We are entering the Age of Stupid.

[20120718-17](#) 16:24 Mark Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K."

[http://video.staged.com/localshops/vw\\_passat\\_785\\_mpg\\_in\\_the\\_uk](http://video.staged.com/localshops/vw_passat_785_mpg_in_the_uk)

[20120718-33](#) 23:33 SteveB Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to Mark, above)

Thanks for this. Hope you're getting some rain there!

Well...this sounds good...and I'm all for 70-some MPG cars...in the U.S. and everywhere, but this video is very dishonest.

Just for starters, I don't know if you've ever been to the U.K., but the British gallon is larger than the U.S. gallon! For the rest, see:

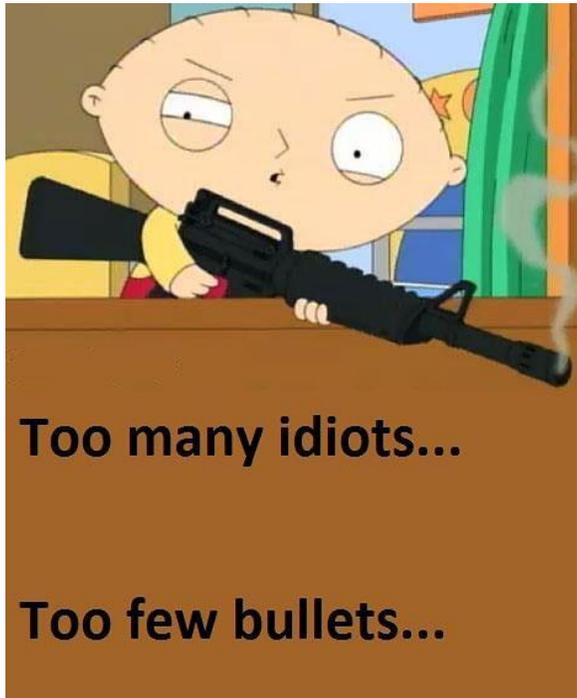
<http://www.snopes.com/politics/business/passat.asp>.

I wish the people spending all their time generating destructive diatribes against government, taxes, the President, etc., etc., etc., would spend their time doing something constructive, like seeking comprehensive, collective solutions to our many problems. We live in perilous times, my friend.

20120718-21 18:51 SteveG Fw: Photo: 'Dinner with Veggies': Delicious-Looking Bloody Mary [from Jim Reeves, gracias!]



20120718-23 18:55 SteveG Cartoon: Too Many Idiots...



Obama vs. Obama:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Czo5Vf8KZs>

The Ineptocracy continues to add one failure on top of another failure, and we will pay for it...

"TSA Let 25 Illegal Aliens Attend Flight School Owned by Illegal Alien" by Edwin Mora, CNSNews

July 18, 2012, (<http://cnsnews.com/news/article/tsa-let-25-illegal-aliens-attend-flight-school-owned-illegal-alien>)

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) approved flight training for 25 illegal aliens at a Boston-area flight school that was owned by yet another illegal alien, according to the Government Accountability Office.

The illegal-alien flight-school attendees included eight who had entered the country illegally and 17 who had overstayed their allowed period of admission into the United States, according to an audit by the GAO.

Six of the illegal aliens were actually able to get pilot's licenses.

Discovery of the trouble at the flight school began when local police--not federal authorities--pulled over the owner of the school on a traffic violation and were able to determine that he was an illegal alien.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R.-Ala.), chairman of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security, said he found the GAO's findings "amazing."

"We have cancer patients, Iraq War veterans and Nobel Prize winners all forced to undergo rigorous security checks before getting on an airplane," said Rogers, "and at the same time, ten years after 9/11, there are foreign nationals in the United States trained to fly just like Mohammed Atta and the other 9/11 hijackers did, and not all of them are necessarily getting a security background check."

Stephen Lord, who is the GAO's director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues, testified about the matter Wednesday in Rogers' subcommittee. Rogers asked him: "Isn't it true that, based on your report, the Transportation Security Administration cannot assure the American people that foreign terrorists are not in this country learning how to fly airplanes, yes or no?"

Lord responded: "At this time, no."

Although the illegal alien who owned the Massachusetts flight school had not undergone a required TSA security threat assessment and had not been approved for flight training by the agency, he nonetheless held two Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) pilot licenses, also known as FAA certificates.

The GAO report, released today, is entitled General Aviation Security: TSA's Process for Ensuring Foreign Flight Students Do Not Pose a Security Risk Has Weaknesses.

In response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S. homeland perpetrated by terrorists who learned how to pilot aircraft at flight schools in Florida, Arizona, and Minnesota, the TSA, a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), developed the "Alien Flight Student Program (AFSP) to help determine whether foreign students enrolling at flight schools pose a security threat," said the GAO's Stephen Lord in written testimony prepared for Wednesday's hearing in the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security.

According to the 911 Commission Report, four of the Sept. 11 hijackers who entered the United States with legal visas had overstayed their authorized period of admission.

Under the Alien Flight Student Program, foreign nationals are supposed to be subjected to a TSA security threat assessment prior to receiving flight training to determine whether they pose a security threat to the United States.

"According to TSA regulations, an individual poses a security threat when the individual is suspected of posing, or is known to pose, a threat to transportation or national security, a threat of air piracy or terrorism, a threat to airline or passenger security, or a threat to civil aviation security," Lord said in his written testimony.

"According to TSA officials, when a foreign national applies to AFSP to obtain flight training, TSA uses information submitted by the foreign national--such as name, date of birth, and passport information--to conduct a criminal history records check, a review of the Terrorist Screening Database, and a review of the Department of Homeland Security's TECS [anti-terrorism] system," Lord testified.

However, a "weakness" in TSA's Alien Flight Student Program, noted by GAO, is that it does not check for immigration status.

"AFSP is not designed to determine whether a foreign flight student entered the country legally; thus, a foreign national can be approved for training through AFSP after entering the country illegally," stated the GAO in its report. "In March 2010, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigated a Boston-area flight school after local police stopped the flight school owner for a traffic violation and discovered that he was in the country illegally. In response to this incident, ICE launched a broader investigation of the students enrolled at the flight school."

"ICE found that 25 of the foreign nationals at this flight school had applied to AFSP and had been approved by TSA to begin flight training after their security threat assessment had been completed; however," reads the GAO report, "the ICE investigation and our subsequent inquiries revealed the following issues, among other things:

- "Eight of the 25 foreign nationals who received approval by TSA to begin flight training were in 'entry without inspection' status, meaning they had entered the country illegally. Three of these had obtained FAA airman certificates [pilot's license]: 2 held FAA private pilot certificates and 1 held an FAA commercial pilot certificate.
- "Seventeen of the 25 foreign nationals who received approval by the TSA to begin flight training were in 'overstay' status, meaning they had overstayed their authorized period of admission into the United States.
- "In addition, the flight school owner held two FAA airman certificates. Specifically, he was a certified Airline Transport Pilot (cargo pilot) and a Certified Flight Instructor. However, he had never received a TSA security threat assessment or been approved by TSA to obtain flight training. He had registered with TSA as a flight training provider under AFSP."

A GAO official told CNSNews.com that, based on their names, none of the 25 illegal aliens who attended the flight school appeared to be from Muslim countries. Instead, they had Latin American names.

The GAO found that, "From January 2006 through September 2011, 25,599 foreign nationals had applied for FAA airman certificates, indicating they had completed flight training." That information is placed on the FAA airmen registry.

The GAO provided information from the FAA's airmen registry to TSA "so that the agency could conduct a matching process to determine whether the foreign nationals in the FAA airmen registry were in TSA's AFSP database and the extent to which they had been successfully vetted through the AFSP database."

The GAO found that not everyone in the FAA registry had been vetted properly.

"TSA's analysis indicated that some of the 25,599 foreign nationals in the FAA airmen registry were not in the TSA AFSP database, indicating that these individuals had not applied to the AFSP or been vetted by TSA before taking flight training and receiving an FAA airman certificate," stated the GAO.

The GAO continued, "TSA's analysis indicated that an additional number of the 25,599 foreign nationals in the FAA airmen registry were also in the TSA AFSP database but had not been successfully vetted, meaning that they had received an FAA airman certificate but had not been successfully vetted or received permission from TSA to begin flight training."

The GAO did not provide the full number of individuals who were not properly vetted.

The GAO's Stephen Lord, in his prepared remarks, told lawmakers that the TSA does not screen new and existing FAA pilot license holders against the Terrorist Screening Database until after the foreign national has completed flight training.

"Thus, foreign nationals obtaining flight training with the intent to do harm, such as three of the pilots and leaders of the September 11 terrorist attacks, could have already obtained the training needed to operate an aircraft before they received any type of vetting," warned the GAO.

The TSA and ICE are working on a pilot program for vetting the names of foreign nationals against immigration databases.

However, the GAO noted that the two agencies "have not specified desired outcomes and time frames, or assigned individuals with responsibility for fully instituting the program."

The GAO further stated, "We recommended that TSA and ICE develop a plan, with time frames, and assign individuals with responsibility and accountability for assessing the results of their pilot program to check TSA AFSP data against information DHS has on applicants' admissibility status to help detect and identify violations, such as overstays and entries without inspection, by foreign flight students, and institute that pilot program if it is found to be effective."

"DHS concurred with this recommendation and stated that TSA will prepare a plan by December 2012 to assess the results of the pilot program with ICE to determine the lawful status of the active AFSP population," said the GAO.



When President Obama's Security Team arrived they were greeted with this sign:



[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Anagram: "The reordering of letters in a word or phrase to create a totally different word or phrase."

Whoever did this must be "deadly" at Scrabble! Wait till you see the last one!

PRESBYTERIAN — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

BEST IN PRAYER

ASTRONOMER — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

MOON STARER

DESPERATION — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

A ROPE ENDS IT

THE EYES — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

THEY SEE

GEORGE BUSH — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

HE BUGS GORE

THE MORSE CODE — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

HERE COME DOTS

DORMITORY — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

DIRTY ROOM

SLOT MACHINES — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

CASH LOST IN ME

ANIMOSITY — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

IS NO AMITY

ELECTION RESULTS — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

LIES - LET'S RECOUNT

SNOOZE ALARMS — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

ALAS! NO MORE Z 'S

A DECIMAL POINT — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

I'M A DOT IN PLACE

THE EARTHQUAKES — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

THAT QUEER SHAKE

ELEVEN PLUS TWO — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

TWELVE PLUS ONE

MOTHER-IN-LAW — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

WOMAN HITLER

AND FINALLY...THE COUP De GRACE:

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA — Rearrange the letters, it reads:

STRUGGLING INCOMPETENT LIAR

The first 15 anagrams took great skill to envision, but the last one should be evident to every American citizen.

<http://projects.cerias.purdue.edu/IFIPTM/>



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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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



# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #186 — JULY 20, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

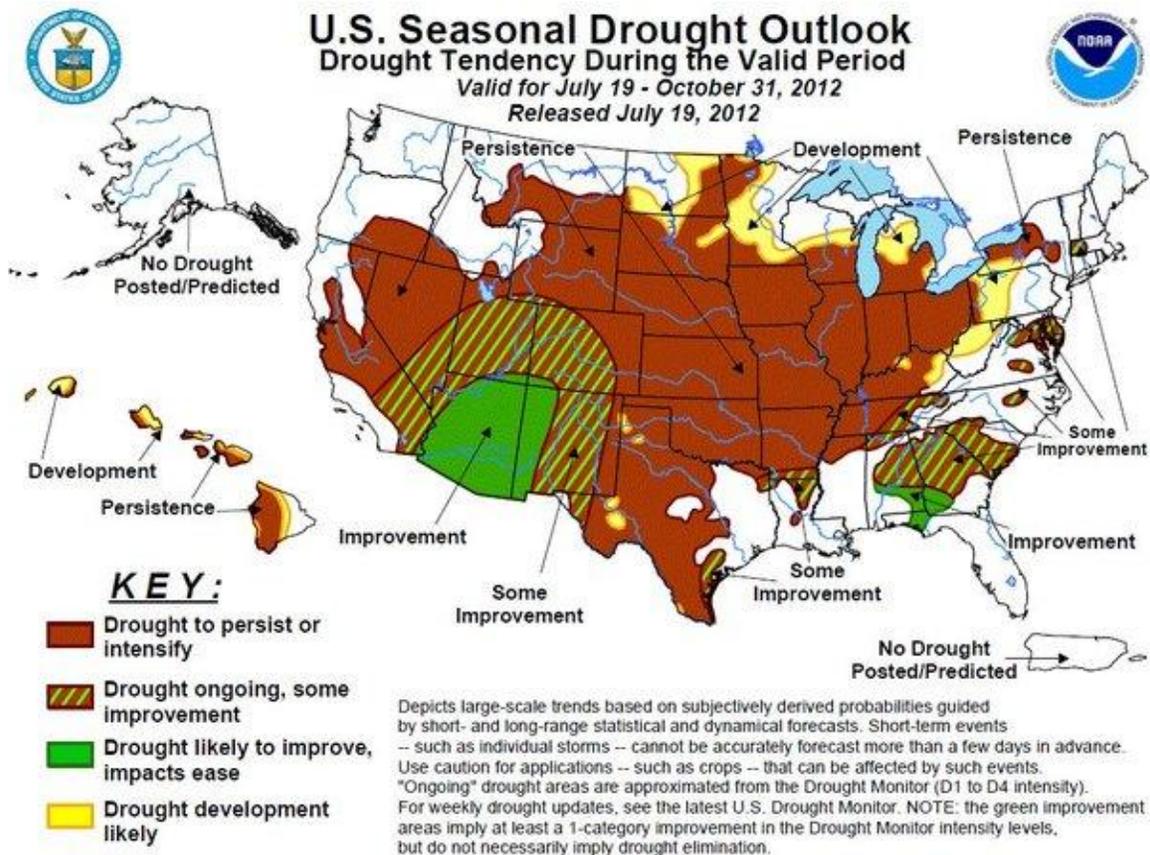
## **Let There Be Rain**

(posted by MarthaH, July 20, 2012)

More of the same...

"Drought Widens Over Past Week, Unlikely to Yield Through October" by Miguel Llanos, NBC News

July 19, 2012, (<http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/07/19/12832813-drought-widens-over-past-week-unlikely-to-yield-through-october>)



The National Weather Service issued this map along with its Seasonal Drought Outlook on Thursday.

A double-barreled dose of bad news came out Thursday: Not only did the drought worsen over the last week, but it's likely to widen and intensify through the end of October, according to the seasonal outlook prepared by government forecasters.

"Unfortunately, all indicators (short and medium-term, August, and August-October) favor above normal temperatures," the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center said in its Seasonal Drought Outlook released Thursday.

"We don't see a reason to say it will improve," Kelly Helm Smith, a specialist at the National Drought Mitigation Center, told reporters. "I'm in the Midwest," she said, referring to her office at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, "it's really unpleasant."

The outlook noted that "a dramatic shift in the weather pattern" would be required "to provide significant relief to this drought, and most tools and models do not forecast this."

Drought could take hold in the northern plains by October, the Climate Prediction Center added.

Moreover, last week saw a continued "downward spiral of drought conditions," according to the weekly Drought Monitor issued Thursday.

Nearly 81 percent of the contiguous U.S. was "abnormally dry" or in drought, weather.com reported in analyzing the data, while 64 percent was in some degree of drought, up 3 percentage points from the previous week. About 42 percent was "severe" or worse.

The Weather Channel's Carl Parker reports on the worst drought in years, and the state of agriculture in the Midwest.

The monitor also noted these dire indicators for food production:

- 38 percent of the U.S. corn crop was in "poor to very poor condition" -- up from 30 percent a week ago.
- 30 percent of soybeans were in poor to very poor condition -- up from 27 percent.
- 54 percent of pastures and rangelands were in poor to very poor condition -- up from 50 percent and an all-time high since that measure began in 1995.
- Stream flows were at or near record low values across much of the Midwest and parts of the central Plains, West, Southeast, and even parts of New England.

Forecasters have called the drought the most widespread since 1956, though 1988 was worse in terms of crop losses due to an extremely dry year for the Midwest.

Experts said that could still change.

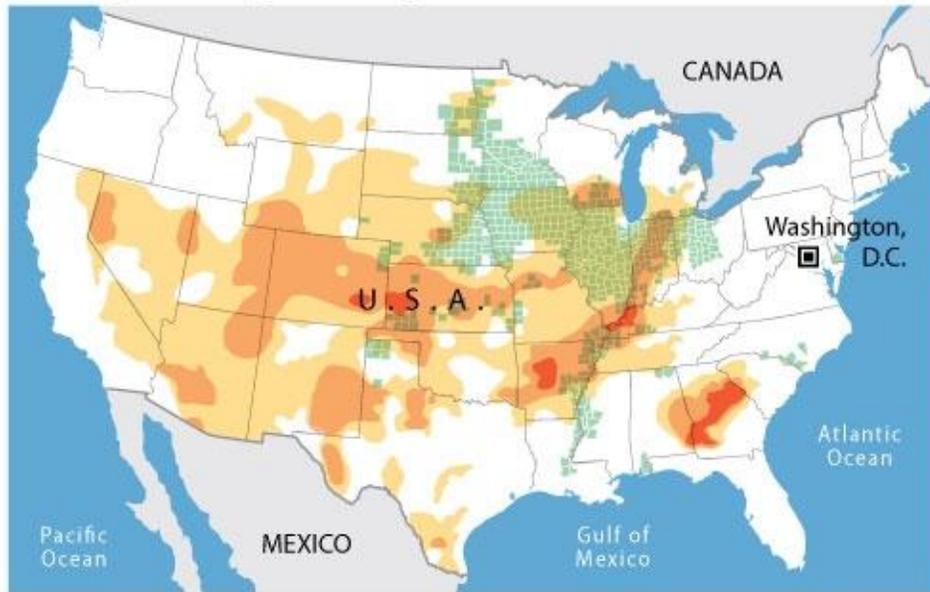
"It's too soon to know how much this one will cost" since farmers are still harvesting, Helm Smith told NBC News.

"There's a possibility that this could get worse," added Jake Crouch, an expert at the National Climatic Data Center.

"It's something to keep an eye on in the next couple of weeks," he told NBC News.

## U.S. DROUGHT

Severe drought   Extreme drought   Exceptional drought   Main corn-/soy-producing counties



Sources: Reuters, U.S. Drought Monitor, U.S. Department of Agriculture



The federal government on Wednesday added 39 more counties to its drought disaster list, speeding up low-cost loans for farmers and ranchers. That's now 1,297 counties across 29 states with access to those loans.

The head of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, said it was particularly painful for farmers because they planted for bumper crops, with many now instead potentially facing bankruptcy.

"Part of the problem we're facing is that weather conditions were so good at the beginning of the season that farmers got in the field early, and as a result this drought comes at a very difficult and painful time in their ability to have their crops have good yield," Vilsack told reporters Wednesday after briefing President Barack Obama on the drought.

"I get on my knees everyday and I'm saying an extra prayer right now," he added. "If I had a rain prayer or a rain dance I could do, I would do it."

[20120719-13](#) 16:23 Pam Re: Let There Be Rain (reply to MarthaH, above)

Want to bet water becomes the new "oil"?

[20120719-19](#) 19:41 Art Re: Let There Be Rain (reply to Pam, above)

No!

[20120719-01](#) 07:08 MarthaH "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare"

**NO** doubt in my mind:

"Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" by Cynthia Tucker, *The National Memo*

July 16th, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/racism-tinges-opposition-to-obamacare/>)

Last week, the GOP-dominated House of Representatives voted to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act — or "Obamacare." As expected, the vote fell largely along party lines.

House Speaker John Boehner and his partisans knew perfectly well that the vote was political theater. In the very unlikely event that the Senate followed suit, President Obama would surely veto any effort to repeal his most significant achievement. It was the 33rd time the House has voted to repeal all or parts of the law, so Boehner's minions are well-practiced at this tedious bit of drama.

It plays well to the GOP electorate. While the nation is closely divided on the merits of health care reform — polls show about half the voters support it, while about half do not — the Republican base is strongly opposed. Independent voters want Congress to move on to other matters, such as kick-starting the sluggish economy, but very conservative voters want the Affordable Care Act ripped out, root and branch.

Given the broad merits of the law — which guarantees virtually universal access to health care — that's odd. It's especially curious when you consider that Obamacare still has private health insurance at its heart; that's unlike Medicare, a single-payer system of health insurance delivered entirely by the government. The senior citizens who rant that the Affordable Care Act takes the country down the path to "socialism" may have missed the irony.

Some part of the opposition to the Affordable Care Act is based on gross misperceptions. Even before the law passed, conservative opponents started a disinformation campaign based on distortions, deceit and outright lies. The most infamous of those was the claim about death panels, which was so outrageous it was hard to believe that responsible people would repeat it. But arch-conservatives such as Sarah Palin have no trouble being irresponsible in support of their causes.

But there is another, equally troubling facet of the opposition to health care reform — simple racial prejudices. Allow me to be as clear: There are certainly critics of the Affordable Care Act who hold no racial animosity. But there is also an impressive body of research that strongly suggests racial prejudice fuels some of the opponents.

In 2009, for example, Stanford University researchers offered volunteers information about a health care plan supported by Obama and one supported by former President Bill Clinton. In fact, the plans were identical. But those who showed unconscious racial biases were much more likely to reject Obama's plan, the researchers reported.

Social scientists have concluded that many conservative white voters harbor a racial animosity that fuels their opposition to certain forms of government largess, especially if they believe it benefits the undeserving (black) poor. Political scientists Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders, authors of *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*, call it a "subtle prejudice for modern times."

That helps explain why working-class whites are especially hostile to the Affordable Care Act. Polls show that they are among the groups most likely to believe that health care reform will benefit someone else, not them.

They're wrong, of course. Working-class voters — white, black and brown — are among those who will benefit most. Professionals either get insurance at the office or can afford their own policies. The very poor are eligible for Medicaid. But people employed in jobs that don't require a college degree are more likely to be stranded by the high costs of health care.

If the law is fully implemented, those voters may eventually figure out what a benefit they've received from Obamacare. But a cadre of Republican governors has insisted that won't happen; they are prepared to take a figurative stand in the schoolhouse door against the law, even though the Supreme Court has upheld it.

That's the very definition of political cynicism. Many of those polls have pandered to white voters' racial fears. And they want racial antagonisms to keep those voters frozen in their partisan loyalties.

(Cynthia Tucker, winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, is a visiting professor at the University of Georgia.)

[20120719-02](#) 08:58 Art Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to MarthaH, above)

This is really the basis of the issue. It is not the economy and it is not things like the ACA, most of which the general populace really doesn't understand at all. I really think for about 90% of the tea party types it is just plain old racism.

[20120719-03](#) 09:27 SandyI Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to MarthaH & Art, above)

The antagonism here in FL toward anything "Obama" is amazing, appalling and totally supported by Rick Scott. It has come to the point that at social gatherings one can hear derogatory comments about Obama, Dems, etc. said in an overly loud whisper. One can choose to ignore the "whisper" or talk in a louder whisper about the weather or how one will vote straight "DEM".

In addition to the damage that the Sara Palins and Newts and Mitts of the world have done to civility, I blame the increasing temptation to not try to engage the "other" but to escape into one's IPAD, Blackberry, Bluetooth, cell phone, TV or other escape mechanism. If I truly do not understand how & why the "other" can believe such things based on their history, upbringing, and possibly DNA, we'll never truly reach a civil society again.

Thus spaketh the cynic.

May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human, and enough hope to make you happy. —unknown

[20120719-04](#) 09:53 SteveB Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to SandyI, above)

And one hopes that, as in 2008, there aren't enough racists in all of America to keep a black man from being President...again!

[20120719-06](#) 10:11 Pam Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to SteveB, above)

I heard somewhere recently that 90% of the campaign ads are negative. At some point Mitt is going to have to explain just how he intends to create jobs, reduce the deficit, and bring the country to its feet. All he says is that he'll do it, never how. Obama has actually done (tried to) things that are real: his jobs bill, Obamacare, and tax reform (proposed), to say nothing of keeping us out of a depression--so far. It seems Presidents who act decisively for the good (Washington, Lincoln, FDR, Johnson -- even if you don't like him) are despised, and the power mongers and egomaniacs are lauded to the skies. I hyperbolate (is that a word?), but you know what I mean.

[20120719-05](#) 10:04 Pam Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to all, above)

It continues to amaze me that we are so dismissive of Canada. Their economy is much stronger than ours, their government more equitable, their population more peaceful, yet our origins are much the same, if you leave out slavery. I wish we would study what successful countries are doing and learn from them, rather than constantly crowing about how great we are. We are so deluded it's risible. I'm so disgusted with our politics, and all I do is read the news. How any sane person could choose to deliberately submit himself to the absurdities of the world of politics is beyond me. It's got to the point where when news about the campaigns comes on, I switch it off. Almost as bad as being a politician would be working as a journalist, trailing around after a bunch of money-mad

egos. There is no discussion of political philosophy or history or even any rational argument. The world waits with bated breath for a candidate to "misspeak" and thereby prove his worthlessness, and if he doesn't make a mistake on his own, a quotation taken out of context will do just as well. I used to find the election season exciting. Even Watergate was more fun than this. I suppose it was ever thus; I know Lincoln was hated in his day, as was FDR. I expect politics to be messy, but what galls me most is the fecklessness of the American people, who are so stupid and uninformed they act against their own interests and play into the hands of the calculating b\*stards who have them by the throat.

[20120719-09](#) 13:34 Art Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to Pam, above)

Very well said!

[20120719-15](#) 16:58 SteveB Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to Pam, above)

I think Canada should be our next target after Iran and Russia!

[20120719-07](#) 10:59 MarthaH Fw: What Do Teachers Make?

What Do Teachers Make?

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life.

One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?"

To stress his point he said to another guest; "You're a teacher, Robin. Be honest. What do you make?"

Robin, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I make? She paused for a second, then began...

Well, I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could.

I make a C+ feel like the Congressional Medal of Honor winner.

I make kids sit through 40 minutes of class time when their parents can't make them sit for 5 without an I Pod, Game Cube or movie rental.

You want to know what I make? She paused again and looked at each and every person at the table.

I make kids wonder.

I make them question.

I make them apologize and mean it.

I make them have respect and take responsibility for their actions.

I teach them to write and then I make them write.. Keyboarding isn't everything.

I make them read, read, read.

I make them show all their work in math. They use their God given brain, not the man-made calculator.

I make my students from other countries learn everything they need to know about English while preserving their unique cultural identity.

I make my classroom a place where all my students feel safe.

I make my students stand, placing their hand over their heart to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, One Nation Under God, because we live in the United States of America.

Finally, I make them understand that if they use the gifts they were given, work hard, and follow their hearts, they can succeed in life. (Robin paused one last time and then continued.)

Then, when people try to judge me by what I make, with me knowing money isn't everything, I can hold my head up high and pay no attention because they are ignorant. You want to know what I make? I MAKE A DIFFERENCE. What do you make, Mr. CEO?

His jaw dropped, he went silent.

THIS IS WORTH SENDING TO EVERY TEACHER, EVERY CEO, EVERY PERSON YOU KNOW.

Even all your personal teachers like mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, coaches and your spiritual leaders/teachers.

A profound answer!!!

[20120719-08](#)

13:29

Ben

Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #185)

The Imperial Gallon thing crossed my mind when I read the mailing. I didn't want to assume that the writer knew about this, or not, or had taken it into account, or not. Since it seemed that the letter had a political agenda, I read it with vague interest, and thought "...small diesel, yeah, big deal, of course it's going to get good mileage, but who's gonna want a wimpy tiny diesel without a turbo, anyway?" and "Why is this person even raving about this?" If ever there was an example of "make an issue where none exists", here it is. Now, who's said those words most famously and most recently...?

Almost all emails that attach horror to the Obama administration seem to be misguided or misleading; I almost added "these days", but in fact, it's been pretty venomous since before the inauguration. I was pretty sure this article was at best misguided, too, so the Snopes content came as no surprise. The members of the current administration are a good deal more tech-savvy than any we've had for quite a while, so this in particular didn't seem a kind of issue where they'd throw a flag on the play.

[20120719-11](#)

13:38

Mark

Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #185)

I shoulda known better... And hey, Steve, we had a thunder boomer last night thanks to your hopes...the soybeans and corn are celebrating...

Happy to hear about rain!



Hey, Steve, thought you might enjoy a photo of my 1929 Ford racecar...hope to go 180+ mph during Speed Week at Bonneville. We stay in Wendover, NV where the bombing group was stationed and trained for Hiroshima, Nagasaki... Still hangars there and a pit because "Fatman" was too big to wheel under the plane.





[20120719-14](#) 16:55 SteveB Re: Bonneville 2012 (reply to Mark, above)

Too bad her breathing is so restricted! ;-)

But she's a beaut!

[20120719-10](#) 13:37 Marci Video: Amazing 6 Year Old Ethan Bortnick - Piano Prodigy on 'Tonight Show'

You are going to love this little guy!!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahYb1uFzf34>

[20120719-17](#) 17:31 SteveB Gomez Concert in Indy

Where: Indianapolis

When: July 27, 2012

What: an atomic bomb for your head!

[20120719-18](#) 18:02 SteveG Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveB, above)

When are they coming to Yakima?

[20120719-20](#) 19:42 SteveB Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveG, above)

When hell freezes over?

No...don't know, the website I saw only listed Indy and Columbus. I'm hoping to see them (and you) when we come next year.

[20120719-21](#) 19:44 Art Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveB, above)

What?????

[20120719-22](#) 22:48 SteveG "It's Time for Schools to Seize Control of Athletic Programs & Penn State Should Lead the Way"

"It's Time for Schools to Seize Control of Athletic Programs, and Penn State Should Lead the Way" by Pat Forde, Yahoo! Sports

July 19, 2012, (<http://sports.yahoo.com/news/ncaaf--fbc-college-football-needs-to-be-reined-in.html>)

Penn State made a football coach bigger than the school itself, accountable to no person and no moral imperative, and now we see the devastating consequences.

North Carolina sold its esteemed academic soul for the pursuit of greater athletic glory, and now we see a proud institution embarrassed and divided.

Yet amid these raw cautionary tales about the dangers of misplaced priority on college campuses, along comes this news item: Oregon is dumping \$68 million of Nike kingpin Phil Knight's money into a new "football operations center." Among the accoutrements you get for \$68 mil, the (Eugene) Register-Guard reported, is a private hot tub and steam room for the coaches, "each with a waterproofed video center ... so they can watch games while taking a soak."

As long as Chip Kelly keeps winning Pac 12 titles, nothing else seems to matter. (Getty Images)

While taking a soak in that absolutely necessary hot tub, I suppose coach Chip Kelly could cue up the largely useless video his school paid \$25,000 for from "talent scout" Will Lyles, who was closely tied to Ducks running backs Lache Seastrunk and LaMichael James. That's part of an ongoing NCAA investigation into Oregon football – but who really wants to think about that when Kelly has won three consecutive Pac-12 championships? On with the building projects.

This is the inherent problem with college athletics: No amount of scandal and no level of embarrassment seem capable of stopping the charge to make sports programs wealthier, more powerful and more disconnected from the universities that give them a name, location, identity and built-in following.

We've seen so many scandal cycles filled with so much consternation and followed by so little change. There is no convenient opportunity for introspection or self-examination when BCS dollars are there for the grabbing.

But here is the thing: If we're ever going to get the athletic genie back in the university bottle, this is the time. The re-examination has to come now. While delivering the worst storyline in college sports history, Penn State ironically also has provided the lever by which the enterprise can save itself.

The Penn State scandal is so bad that it could do good. It could force a day of reckoning at colleges across America. Specifically, it could force a day of reckoning in the offices of university presidents.

Take back your revenue-producing sports programs, school leaders. Take them back or cut them loose from the university educational mission and declare them professional farm teams.

Last week, North Carolina history professor Jay Smith articulated to me the options facing his school and many others in an email: "The problems that have come to light [at UNC] thus far are not specific to 'athletics.' This is a university problem, a systemic problem, and quite obviously so. We clearly have a long way to go. UNC, and all other universities with good intentions, must refuse to walk this tightrope any longer."

You know the first school that should get off the tightrope? The first school to voluntarily fall, then get up and go in a new direction, daring others to follow?

Penn State.

It has to start there.

The school did take some steps last fall: It created a Center for the Protection of Children, pumping \$1.1 million into the project. It donated \$1.5 million in bowl proceeds to a pair of sex-crime advocacy organizations. But now it's time to advance the cause much further, using the football program as its change agent.

As the debate has raged about what the school and the NCAA should do with its scandal-rocked football program, friend and colleague Ray Ratto has had the best solution I've seen so far. As he wrote last week:

"Keep the football program and have it fight for something more noble than the Leaders Division of the Big Ten Conference. Make it a standing advertisement for what went wrong, and how it can be made right. Penn State president Rodney Erickson has a chance to make a big impact on all of college sports. (Reuters) Make the money a tool, rather than its own reward. Make Penn State stand for rebirth rather than degeneration."

Ratto's solution was to make Penn State football non-profit. Turn over the usual massive revenues to the victims of Jerry Sandusky. I love it.

In the coming days, this is the statement I'd like to hear from school president Rodney Erickson: "We're playing football in 2012, but we're not playing for glory or money. Every dime of profit over expense will go to victims of child sexual abuse in the State College area. Every Penn State helmet will bear the child sexual abuse blue ribbon symbol. Every home game will have a moment of silence before kickoff in recognition and support of those who have suffered from our school's failure. If we earn a bowl bid, every member of the travel party – including administrators and coaches – will spend an eight-hour day at the bowl site interacting with abuse victims.

"And we challenge our fellow Big Ten members and Division I schools nationwide to donate their first \$100,000 of athletic profit this school year to the same cause in their communities. Who's with us?"

Would it be costly? Yeah. So what? Just make sure the cost does not come out of the school's non-revenue sports. This is a football issue; whatever slashing needs to be done to the Penn State football budget, just do it.

Instead of accepting millions in cash and gear from Nike, ask the company to donate that money to the cause. If the players have to wear last year's sweats and the coaches don't get a shoe bonus, they'll survive.

Instead of the entire team spending the night before home games at Toftrees Resort outside State College, try the radical notion of staying in the dorms like most non-revenue athletes do before they compete.

If the training table needs to be stripped down, so be it. If the travel party and travel method have to be downgraded for road games, so be it. If the Nittany Lions can only afford to offer 10 scholarships a year over the next couple years, so be it.

And if anyone associated with the school whines about any of it, remind them of a little boy in the shower in 2001.

Truth be told, a one-year de-emphasis of King Football would not require much courage from the Penn State leadership – it has to do something, and that something has to be substantial. The courage would have to come from Penn State's peers.

Would others join the cause? Would others step forward and question why the four-star defensive end who is borderline illiterate has to be granted admission to a school where he will struggle? Why the football program has to have another \$100 million facility? Why the basketball coach has to have a practice gym? Why the offensive coordinator has to make nearly a million dollars? Why the recruiting coordinator has to have a private jet at his disposal? Why the jock dorm has to feature every creature comfort allowable under NCAA rules (and maybe a few that aren't)? Why a school has to abandon a conference of peers for a geographically nonsensical new conference to earn more TV revenue?

It's not just the money that is the problem. It's also the priority. It's the certainty that the only way to keep up with your rival is to further blow everything out of perspective – and that it's far better to lose perspective than to lose games.

That's the pervasive mentality university presidents must try to refute, then reverse. Popularity and profitability cannot be the sole guiding forces of athletics, not if colleges are going to stand behind their founding principles.

"If we can't be competitive by recruiting players who are capable of succeeding academically, and then holding them to high academic standards once admitted, then we have to quit the race," Smith wrote. "We have to admit we can't be competitive, and focus on the things that are supposed to matter to a university. Or, conversely, we can begin agitating for a revamping of the system and pursue a solution that would allow us to treat these athletes as the semi-professionals they are."

A revamping of the entire system would take years, but the reformation of a single school can start soon.

Penn State is uniquely positioned to be that school. Let it lead the way. And let its peers find the courage to follow.



Republicans say they're moving to Canada because of the SCOTUS decision on Obamacare. They may not realize Canada has socialized medicine too ... so I've got another suggestion.

A country that has:

- No Universal Healthcare
- Few entitlement programs
- Low, flat tax system
- A deep reverence for God
- Faith based government
- Extremely strict limitations on abortion
- Marriage is strictly defined as a man and woman
- Homosexuality is a sin and is illegal
- Enforcement of appropriate dress codes
- Tattoo's, piercings, etc... widely banned
- Death Penalty, which they aren't shy about using
- Strong private school system with dominate religious focus
- Widespread oil drilling and natural resource utilization
- Growing nuclear program
- Nonexistent environmentalist nuisance
- Culture that promotes family and appropriate roles for men and women

**WHERE, you ask, is this conservative paradise? Is this Heaven? Is this Nirvana?**

**Actually ... It's IRAN**

<http://favim.com/image/258587/>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #187 — JULY 23, 2012

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

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

### **The Race Heats Up**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 23, 2012)

I thought this article, mainly from the Republican perspective, did a good job of summarizing, in detail, where the campaigns stand at this point in time. There seems to be an impression of bumbling—on the part of both candidates.

"Mitt Romney Searches for a Hit, Scores on an Error" by Jason Linkins and Elyse Siegel, Huffington Post

July 20, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/20/mitt-romney-barack-obama\\_n\\_1690835.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics&utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/20/mitt-romney-barack-obama_n_1690835.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&utm_hp_ref=politics))

(The 2012 Speculatron Weekly Roundup For July 20, 2012)

As we've said before, the first set of tasks in a political campaign are simply summarized: Define yourself, define your opponent, define the stakes of the race. The 2012 race has been fairly interesting thus far, in that the challenger candidate, Mitt Romney, has not seemed able -- or perhaps the right word is "willing" -- to engage in these tasks.

For his nominal allies, it has not been an easy spectacle to watch. That said, there's some indication that Romney has figured out that he's supposed to be doing at least some of this sort of work.

For some time now, conservatives have been somewhat aggrieved by the way the Romney camp hasn't done much to establish his core identity in the race. We've sort of generically dated the beginning of this outpouring of discontent with Peggy Noonan's June 1 op-ed, in which she wrote, "Mr. Romney has to give us a plan. He has to tell us his priorities. To lead is to prioritize, to choose."

From there, it became rather popular for conservative pundits to raise the same concerns. The matter escalated considerably when Team Obama Re-Elect mounted its attacks on Romney's history with Bain Capital, and Romney responded by ... conceding the space to Obama's allies to make the attacks.

Things came to a head this week, when Charlie Cook's observations on the matter started off the news cycle with this detonation:

The strategic decision by the Romney campaign not to define him personally -- not to inoculate him from inevitable attacks -- seems a perverse one. Given his campaign's ample financial resources, the decision not to run biographical or testimonial ads, in effect to do nothing to establish him as a three-dimensional person, has left him open to the inevitable attacks for his work at Bain Capital, on outsourcing, and on his investments. It's all rather inexplicable. Aside from a single spot aired in the spring by the pro-Romney super PAC Restore Our Future, not one personal positive ad has been aired on Romney's behalf. The view that any day or dollar spent on talking about anything other than the economy is a waste has been taken to such an extreme that Romney has no positive definition other than that of being a rich, successful, and presumably smart businessman. People see and feel the reasons for firing Obama every day in the economic statistics and the struggle that so many Americans face daily. The Romney campaign seems focused on reinforcing a message that hardly needs reinforcing, while ignoring a clear and immediate danger to its own candidate's electability.

*Businessweek's* Joshua Green followed hard upon this with an article about Romney's "wimp factor," and the news cycle evolved into a steady drumbeat of GOP figures badgering Romney for his failure to release tax returns -- a tangential matter, but one that still related to Romney's unwillingness to fill the vacuum.

But now that the murmur had built itself into a din, the Romney camp finally acted. Its initial response, however, was a little lacking: Romney's team indicated that it was poised to go "full Breitbart" and resurrect the old, wild-eyed nonsense of the 2008 campaign. The name "Tony Rezko" got dropped on a conference call. Campaign surrogate John Sununu got deep into the Dinesh D'Souza weeds, calling Obama un-American. The Romney camp seemed, for a time, to be genuinely poised to unleash a barrage of negativity -- the kind that frosts the affections of independent voters. As Kevin Drum put it: "Operation 'Pi\*s Off Mitt' Seems to be Working."

We eyerolled, "Wow, Obama should *be* so lucky." But the luck didn't endure, and after a couple decent weeks on the offensive, the president gave Romney the material he needed to get off his duff and start hustling again, when Obama, riffing on a set of themes concerning the interplay between government and the public's largesse in making the private sector a success, offered up this statement: "If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen."

Slate's Dave Weigel traced the way that statement slowly made its way into Romney's consciousness. It doesn't really need to be said that we've got another one of those examples of merely poor phrasing that ballooned into a *reductio ad absurdum* political weapon.

At the same time, is anyone really surprised that Obama wields this sort of language with considerably less deftness than, say, Elizabeth Warren? The irony here is that while Romney wants to depict Obama here as the embodiment of class warfare run amok, the president actually does not have a deep connection to or facility with these kinds of populist arguments. But he ends up getting portrayed by Romney as a wilder, more radical version of himself, anyway.

But Romney was smart to seize the moment and make hay. He ends the week with all those tormentors on the right off his back and back to cheering him from the sidelines.

The one thing we'd point out, however, is that Romney is still reacting instead of acting. Sure, the points you score when your opponent turns the ball over get counted. They're not unimportant.

But Romney still needs to start creating his own shots. And he still needs to take a proactive stance on defining who he is at his core and what he wants to do. David Brooks still wants Romney to provide an affirmative defense of Bain Capital(ism).

Peggy Noonan, in all likelihood, still wants priorities. The fact that it seemed as if the first nonpassive move for members of the Romney camp was to briefly rush off into 2008's fever swamp is telling; they don't seem to actually have a plan, yet.

Primary Colors

Or maybe Romney does have a strategy? It could be that the lesson that the Romney camp has extracted from the primary season is that he can withstand all manner of personal attacks so long as he has 10 times the amount of cash on hand at the right moment to drown out his competition. That's easy enough to do when you're facing Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich and they're either close to skint or upside down in debt.

But Obama will have cash to toss around, too -- even at the end. In general, we're not inclined toward this strategy. But candidates with the sort of wealth that Romney commands are very rare. For all we know, the rules don't apply.

### The Bain of Fact-Checkers

Is everyone done talking about Bain Capital, yet? Ha, ha: No. Not by a long shot. That's a product of Romney providing the press with an interesting puzzle to solve and then not filling in any of the details affirmatively, when he's been given a million chances to do so.

So, the extant question is and shall remain: What involvement did Mitt Romney have with Bain Capital during the period he was tending to the Olympics. The Romney camp's generic response has been to wave the matter away by saying that he had no time to do anything else but bring bobsledding to America, a curious admission from a guy seeking the ultimate multitasking job.

Still, it's sort of understandable. Bain Capital is presumably staffed by capable managers who can tend to the matters of Bain Capital whether Romney is micromanaging their efforts or not. Everyone can get their head around that. It's still pretty clear that Romney's involvement with Bain is not "the null set," however. His name went on various and sundry filings, he was offered up as the Head Capitalist in Charge to various regulators, and there were presumably moments when Romney was briefly briefed on how things were going.

Romney has been periodically under attack for the goings-on at Bain during his Olympics work, dating back to his gubernatorial bid. His defense is well-worn and was sufficiently backed up so that when the attack came again from Team Obama Re-Elect, fact-checkers were well-armed to slap Romney's tormentors with Pinocchios.

Funny thing, though, about reporters. They keep reporting. And over the past few weeks, they've been working at adding to what we know about Romney's Bain involvement and when Romney was involved.

Brendan Nyhan noted that this matter has demonstrated that our fact-checking industry has limits to its utility. Fact-checkers, Nyhan observed, often "help create controversies that paradoxically increase the attention paid to misleading charges." That, in turn creates incentives for political dark artists to "intentionally make misleading claims" in order to run up the "earned media" scoreboard.

Nyhan went on to point out that it's important to remember that fact-checkers and reporters are not on the same team, and that even as the fact-checkers were rendering judgments, reporters were picking over the ticktock of Romney's involvement with Bain, and taking up Romney's "lack of consistency in describing his role at Bain in the 1999-2002 period."

This week, *Daily Intel's* Jonathan Chait sort of got caught between and betwixt with the Bain story as it was developing, and responded to the new revelations with his typical thoughtful candor. When Chait started off on his effort to explain "What's True and False in Obama's Bain Attacks," he came down hard on Obama: "President Obama and his allies instead have attacked Romney's record itself," wrote Chait, "And what they're saying is, on the basis of the facts available to us, untrue."

In the hours after Chait published, however, a lot of interesting new facts became available. Chait went back and added an update: "Numerous revelations today cast severe doubt on Romney's claim to have abandoned any role with Bain in 1999. I'll reevaluate again soon, but as of now it looks like the rigid distinction between Bain's work before his leave of absence and after -- the distinction that forms the basis of all the fact-checkers' judgments that Obama's ad is false -- has crumbled."

So here's one important lesson: We too often give fact-checkers the "final say" on an issue. We shouldn't necessarily do that, though. Reporters are still reporting!

Nyhan moved to this question, posed by Nick Baumann: "Is it possible that even without day-to-day managerial control, Mitt Romney may bear some moral or personal responsibility for the actions of Bain Capital post-1999, given that no one is disputing that he benefited financially from its actions and that his name was on the door? Is that question even fact-checkable?"

And Nyhan responded thusly:

The answer to the latter question, in fact, is no, which highlights the second limitation of fact-checking. Readers are often frustrated with the narrow and seemingly pedantic nature of fact-checking by watchdogs like PolitiFact and Factcheck.org, which typically focus on the specifics of a given claim rather than the larger issue or debate in question. But there's a good reason for the narrow focus of the genre -- broader questions about significance and responsibility are simply beyond their purview and cannot be answered within the realm of facts.

Right there is the path forward to the larger and more interesting question for Romney. Does Romney not believe in what Bain was doing? Does he disagree with the business practices that were practiced during the 1999-2002 period? Did Bain suddenly become something in which he could no longer take pride? Something that would prompt him to make the claim that he had "retroactively retired?"

And we can extract a pretty important question from Chait's work as well -- to be directed at the Obama campaign. As Chait wrote, "The existence of a 'larger truth' does not justify the Obama campaign's ads that assume a role that they haven't proven and probably isn't accurate." Our question would be "Did the Obama camp know that there was enough left for reporters to uncover, beyond what the fact-checkers had found, when they made the attacks? If so, did the Obama campaign help those reporters out? If not, didn't they just luck out, after playing fast and loose with the facts?"

### New Polling Woes for Obama

So, welcome, everyone, to the end of the Bain attacks life cycle of effectiveness. (Maybe.) This week is ending with a spate of bad polling news for Obama. Once again, the race is tightening, with Romney taking a lead in the latest CBS/*New York Times* poll. (Once again, Obama's ahead in the Fox News poll and behind in the New York Times poll, making everyone question their tribal politics.)

As Sam Stein reported, Obama's having trouble with the economy. (As always, we'll point out that Obama's "trouble with the economy" is not the same "trouble" that the rest of you are experiencing.):

Romney leads Obama among respondents by a margin of 49 percent to 41 percent on who can best handle the economy and jobs. People who think the economy is getting better dropped from 33 percent in April to 24 percent now -- owed largely to a series of bad jobs reports.

Obama is perceived as the candidate who can best help the middle class, with 52 percent citing the president on that question, including 15 percent of Republicans. But even then, he gets a heaping of blame for not turning the economy around. Almost two-thirds of respondents said the president's policies contributed to the economic downturn. Only 17 percent of respondents said the president's policies on the economy were "improving it now."

Per Stein: "The economy, in short, is drowning out the political conversation surrounding Romney's private equity career, at least on the national level." Of course, that is as it should be. And the "Bain attacks" should be understood in this context: They are a tactical gambit, designed to give Obama time and space to close the gap on the larger matter of the economy.

Additionally, the "Bain attacks" should be understood as part of a larger series of strategic moves that will eventually end in a poorly defined Romney holding the bag for a whole slew of unpopular GOP "solutions." Already, Team Obama Re-Elect is moving to a discussion of what Romney would do to Medicare, which is the next part of a longer game plan.

Still, the nation is now leaving the fiscal quarter that political science has found is most critical to voters as they decide on whether they'll leave Obama in charge or not. Was the economy particularly awesome during these past three months? Not really.

There's also something to be said about how costly a negative attack can be on the negative attacker. (Though we'd gently criticize the piece from The Week -- which takes up that matter -- for persisting in its belief that Obama, in 2008, wasn't a negative campaigner. He was.)

### Moving Around the Wealth

Rich people are doing very awesomely. As Ezra Klein reported (and graphed), "in 2010, 93 percent of income gains went to the top 1 percent."

In other words, the very rich had a bad 2009, but an incredible 2010. Their share of national income bounced back to 19.77 percent. So inequality is marching upward once again. And there's reason to believe this will keep going.

It sure seems awfully silly that Joe the Plumber was so concerned over Obama's talk of "moving the wealth around." The wealth is clearly moving in the precise direction Joe the Plumber wanted. (Which is, specifically, "away from actual plumbers.")

### A Sign of Gary Johnson's Potency?

Interesting confluence of small-ball news stories this week. Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson is polling at about 5 percent nationally. In New Mexico, where he served as governor, he's up to 13 percent. Meanwhile, President Obama's lead in New Mexico, over Romney, is shrinking.

According to the conventional wisdom, this isn't what's supposed to be happening. Johnson is supposed to help deliver New Mexico's votes to Obama. But Johnson has never characterized himself as an election-year spoiler and has always maintained that he'd pull votes from both Romney and Obama.

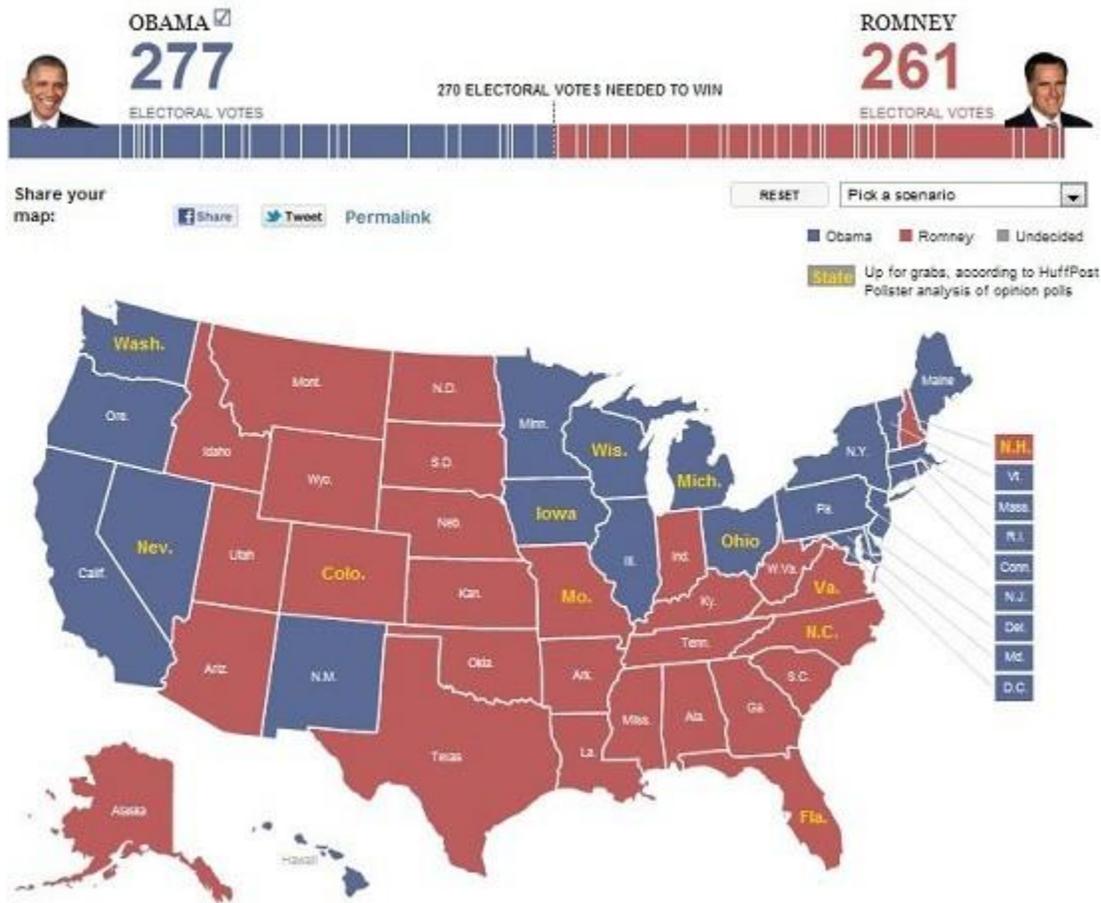
As Johnson told our own Lucia Graves, "The idea is to actually win." He's not crazy for suggesting this was possible. Unlike the lion's share of vapid, third party efforts (looking at you, Americans Elect!), Johnson has been very careful, thoughtful, and specific in defining the ways he presents a contrast to both the big party candidates.

You can read Lucia's interview with Johnson here: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lucia-graves/gary-johnson-2012\\_b\\_1672175.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lucia-graves/gary-johnson-2012_b_1672175.html).

### Electoral Projection

Okay, time once again for your Speculatrons to make their trademarked Electoral College projection, which is -- as always -- a mix of careful poll study, an analysis of prevailing economic trends, guesstimates and careful study of animal entrails under the guidance of experienced augurs from ancient legend.

So, this week, the economy is dragging Obama down. Romney is faring better in New Hampshire and Virginia. Obama shows life in Nevada and Wisconsin. New Mexico's tightening. So, we'll go with this:



20120722-01 06:05 SteveB Bolivian Bakery Biz — Update

Well, it's been a very busy week, but we've made a lot of progress. The remodeling is essentially complete, except for a little touch-up that will be required after the gas installation is completed, and that should be on Monday. The plumbing and painting are finished. The sign painter, a very sweet old guy named Raúl Huanca, finished his work in just one day.

Our colors are ING orange and Hershey chocolate, so we had Raúl paint "GOURMET COOKIE FACTORY" in chocolate on orange above our big front window, and "CAFÉ 7-558-9914" over the entrance. I must say, it looks very good! The neighbors have been stopping-in regularly to complement us on how good our place looks and to ask what we're up to. Now, everyone on our busy street will know.

Later next week, our big fancy sign will be installed—large 3D, backlit block letters—"Snicker-Doodle".

Jesus and his crew were such a blessing to our enterprise, and they have deservedly come by other work as a result of the job they did for us. What a fine bunch of young men! We are very proud of them and so happy to find people with such pride in their work. These kinds of things, I have always found, are one of the great rewards of having a business. You get to meet and get to know a lot of interesting people. We miss having our work crew on the job already, but they all promised to stop by and grab a cookie whenever they're in the area.

The misadventures of the week were all focused around our fancy marble sink and special commercial kitchen-grade spray faucet. I think I told you already that we had to have a piece of marble kludged to the back in order to use the \$270 faucet we had already purchased. We were told this was necessary because they couldn't drill through the concrete-reinforced marble making up the flange of the sink.

Yet when we picked the sink up for a second time, that is exactly where they had drilled, AND the kludge has also been added. We swore and got out of there with the sink as soon as possible. It still looked good and we were relieved to have any fix to our problem.

The installation by Jesus' plumber went well, but when we started-up the system, the sink leaked and the hose didn't have as much pressure as we really wanted. So...a guy will have to come and fix the leaks (easy with this kind of sink) and we'll work with the water pressure as it is for now (not much of a problem), working toward an eventual solution in the background of all the other daily tasks needed to be completed if we are to bake cookies by August 1, and open soon after. We still have, by far, the best looking restaurant sink in town! And since we're a "Visible Cookie Factory" where we do everything in sight of the people in the Café and on the street, it's good if things look good.

We also got our custom counter ordered this week. It will have a marble top to match the sink. Very attractive.

Next, we get the gas work done, bring in a cleaning crew, then we'll be ready, late this coming week, to start moving in equipment, including the monster oven that we must remove door and window to accommodate. It will also need a good exhaust pipe up through a hole in the ancient tile roof above our pride and joy, and many virgin acolytes to keep the fiery monster fed with sacrificial grain and cane and soda, so that the gods will continue to rain down upon mankind the miracle of the cookie—up to 10,000 per day!

Here's a video about our oven: [http://www.progas.com.br/2010/video.php?id\\_produto=134](http://www.progas.com.br/2010/video.php?id_produto=134).

<a href="#">20120720-01</a> 06:30 MarthaH "Are Bachmann and Sununu Attacks Part of a New McCarthyism?"
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Where's HONOR?

"Are Bachmann and Sununu Attacks Part of a New McCarthyism?" by Mary C. Curtis, *The Washington Post*

July 19, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/post/are-bachmann-and-sununu-attacks-part-of-a-new-mccarthyism/2012/07/19/gJQAVULZvW\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/post/are-bachmann-and-sununu-attacks-part-of-a-new-mccarthyism/2012/07/19/gJQAVULZvW_blog.html))

John Sununu apologized, not for the sentiment but for these words: "I wish this president would learn how to be an American."

The former New Hampshire governor and White House chief of staff was speaking as a Mitt Romney surrogate, and the message was an old one, heard since Barack Obama was a presidential candidate. "This guy is not really one of us. He's someone and something else." Got it. Heard it. Sure we'll hear it again and again. Birth certificates are no longer enough. From now on, one must pass the Sununu citizenship test.

Even for those who accept that Barack Obama was born in Hawaii, it is, don't you know, a state unlike any other – multiracial, multicultural and in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Sununu, who was born in Havana, Cuba, has looked at the president's background and decided it doesn't fit, all irony apparently lost amid the bluster.

His guy Romney, whose father was born in Mexico, mostly stood back looking sheepish. Plausible deniability is what it's usually called.

In another case of "are you now or have you ever been," a voice rising in defense of the latest accused American was Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, living up to his one-time maverick label.

He strongly defended Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton aide Huma Abedin against unproven accusations that tie her to a supposed conspiracy of the Muslim Brotherhood to infiltrate the U.S. government.

McCain said on the Senate floor: "Huma represents what is best about America: the daughter of immigrants, who has risen to the highest levels of our government on the basis of her substantial personal merit and her abiding commitment to the American ideals that she embodies so fully."

While that should be the end of it, with Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) and other members of Congress floating the charges and asking for investigations, the issue is not likely to die. All it takes is murky guilt by association and a dose of hysteria.

I'm still trying to figure out these new rules. What do they mean? That some later additions to the United States — we're talking Alaska, home of Sarah Palin — are unquestionably American. Presumably, extreme weather conditions, oil pipelines and the whole shooting wolves from helicopters thing help it pass muster. While Hawaii, after all its years flying the American flag, remains a nice place to visit but you can't trust anybody who lives there kind of place.

And some children of immigrants, Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) of Louisiana, who is on Romney's vice presidential short list, and Gov. Nikki Haley (R) of South Carolina are loyal Americans, while others are security risks. It helps if you're a conservative Republican governor.

What sounds silly at first, the blunders of clumsy political opportunists, is starting to veer into frightening and familiar territory, a throwback to a part of life in the 1950s for which no one should harbor any nostalgia.

Americans aren't endorsing a return to the "Red Scare," when being a union or civil rights activist could be enough to warrant an appearance before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. But plenty of people are shouting accusations of communist, socialist and fascist from placards and rooftops. At the top of their list is the democratically elected president of the United States.

You would think Obama's achievements and the life he's made with his wife and children illustrate the fulfillment of the American dream — a man without family name or fortune rising through hard work and education to the nation's highest office — even if you disagree with his economic plan or health-care law and want to vote him out in November.

But some opponents need to make him a man without a country, to use the ugly language of an ugly time to do it and to put his supporters in the same boat, preferably one headed away from U.S. shores.

This year, Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) echoed the language of senator Joe McCarthy when he said, "I believe there is about 78 to 81 members of the Democratic Party that are members of the Communist Party," and he didn't back down.

It's troubling when Sununu, Bachmann, West and so many others are only too willing to take on the un-American job of deciding who belongs in America, the first and only one rule being, agree with us on matters of politics and policy or — as West instructed liberals — get out.

Where are all the voices of reason to pull them back, to ask, as the Army's lawyer Joseph Welch once asked of McCarthy, "Have you no sense of decency?" McCain has stepped up; who's in line behind him?

[20120720-02](#)

12:24

SteveB

Fw: USAction Action: Make Calls to Congress to End the Bush Tax Cuts for the Richest 2%!

from USAction:

End the Bush tax cuts for the top 2%!

This is it. Join thousands of other concerned Americans for our National Call Congress Week to end the Bush tax cuts for the richest 2%.

When you call Congress – remember that you’re speaking on behalf of the other 98%. That's the secretary that pays higher income taxes than her CEO, the schoolteacher that pays more taxes than some big corporations, and the millions of Americans that want to see an end to tax breaks for people that don't need them.

You, along with over 32,000 USAction members, have already sent messages to Congress demanding an end to the Bush tax cuts for the richest 2%. So thank you. Now, let's back up those messages with personal calls to have even more impact.

Call our toll free line today and make your voice heard — (888) 744-9958:

<http://www.americansfortaxfairness.org/action/call/>.

Now more than ever it's important for supporters of tax fairness to rally and stand up for what's right. The U.S. Senate will vote as early as July 23rd about whether to extend the Bush tax cuts. The U.S. House will vote the week of July 30th.

Tell Congress to support President Obama's proposal to save \$1 trillion by ending the Bush tax cuts for the richest 2% now.

Remember, people who earn more than \$1 million a year get an average tax break of about \$143,000 from the Bush tax cuts. People making about \$50,000 a year get an average tax break of only about \$1,000.

When the rich get tax breaks they don't need and the country can't afford — hard-working, middle-class Americans like you and me have to make up the difference — and that's not fair.

Let's make some calls.

Sincerely, Ross Wallen, USAction / TrueMajority

20120720-03	13:06	SteveB	"Want A Real Recovery? Raise the Minimum Wage."
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Greed!

["Want A Real Recovery? Raise the Minimum Wage."](#) by Terrance Heath, NationofChange

July 20, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/want-real-recovery-raise-minimum-wage-1342791951>)

Scratch the surface of just about any economic debate this election year, and you'll find one issue that goes all the way to the core: the yawning gap between the 1% and the rest of us, as skyrocketing income inequality. A new report from the National Employment Law Project (NELP), "Big Business, Corporate Profits, and the Minimum Wage," shows the extremes of that divide, and makes the case for raising the federal minimum wage as a means of closing that gap, and putting the national economy on the road to a *real* recovery.

The report explores the connection between stagnant —and falling — wages, and it's central finding explodes the argument that raising the minimum wage will cause employers to stop hiring, and the hurt small businesses that opponents of a minimum wage increase (and of the idea of a minimum wage itself) claim are the primary employers of low-wage workers.

**The central finding of this report is that the majority of America's lowest-paid workers are employed by large corporations, not small businesses, and that most of the largest low-wage employers have recovered from the recession and are in a strong financial position.**

The data in the report only strengthens the case:

- The majority (66 percent) of low-wage workers are not employed by small businesses, but rather by large corporations with over 100 employees.
- The 50 largest employers of low-wage workers have largely recovered from the recession and most are in strong financial positions: 92 percent were profitable last year; 78 percent have been profitable for the last three years; 75 percent have higher revenues now than before the recession; 73 percent have higher cash holdings; and 63 percent have higher operating margins (a measure of profitability).
- Top executive compensation averaged \$9.4 million last year at these firms, and they have returned \$174.8 billion to shareholders in dividends or share buybacks over the past five years.

Got that? In a "recovery" in which most of the new jobs being created are low-wage jobs, the biggest corporations and biggest employers of low-wage workers are enjoying record profits — upwards of \$1.97 trillion in the third quarter of 2011, according to the report. Most of them have recovered. Most have been profitable for the last three years, and nearly all were profitable in the past year. Most of them have more money to spend on operations. Executive pay at these companies averaged nearly \$10 million last year, and shareholders enjoyed returns of nearly \$175 million.

(I'd love to know how many of these same corporations have nothing or next-to-nothing in taxes. But I'll have to find that in another report, or do the research myself. Still, I'm willing to bet that most of these companies aren't any better at paying taxes than they are at paying their employees.)

The losers in all this are the workers, the very people who are creating value for these companies. If they're getting paid the federal minimum wage, they're getting paid about \$7.25 an hour — hasn't been adjusted for inflation in 40 years. If it had, those workers would be earning about \$10.55 per hour. (It's even worse for workers like the waiters and waitresses with whom Mitt Romney recently said he sympathizes. The federal minimum wage for tipped employees like them is \$2.13., and in states like Florida — where tipped employees make just over twice the federal minimum wage for their jobs — the restaurant lobby fought to lower the minimum wage.)

They're working for a wage that put the basic necessities out of their reach. Health care and education are priced far out of their reach — not to mention things like milk and gas, as prices rise but paychecks don't. Most can't afford a two-bedroom apartment, even working 40 hours per week.

Meanwhile, as NELP reported around this time last year, nearly all the new jobs created in this "recovery" are low wage. In fact, the United States now leads the rest of the wealthy nations in the share of the workforce in low-wage jobs. In places like New York State, low-paying jobs have replaced high-paying jobs.

As NELP co-director Christine Owens pointed out, these companies can afford to pay fair wages, and give the economy a much needed shot in the arm.

"Large corporations employ the biggest share of low-wage workers in the U.S., but while those businesses have emerged from the recession with strong profits, their lowest-paid workers are still struggling to make ends meet," Owens said. "It's deeply worrisome that the very businesses that can most afford to pay fair wages and boost consumer demand are also driving the stagnant wage growth that is holding the economy back."

In other words, as income inequality grows as a result of a "recovery" that's mostly replacing high-paying jobs with low paying jobs, the result is also an increase in consumption inequality. In other words, people have less money to spend. Even those who have jobs or find jobs are being *paid* less, and thus have less to spend. In a consumer economy that means less demand for goods and services, which puts the brakes on what "recovery" there is to speak of.

Low wage workers aren't the only losers in this equation. We all lose.

It's no exaggeration to say that the business model of America's low-wage employers depends on a generous government safety net, since without that net many of their workers would not be able to survive. **So all of us are**

**subsidizing the wealthy owners and executives of Wal-Mart, McDonalds, and Target.** Alas, few of us seem to realize this.

All of us are hurt, too, by the way that the low-wage model drags down economic growth. If you give a low-wage worker higher wages, they immediately pump that money back into the economy through more spending. But if you give a CEO another few million dollars in compensation, he'll most likely just plow that money into his stock portfolio or other savings vehicles, which doesn't do much for the economy since capital is cheap right now and customers are scarce.

If we want an economy with robust consumer demand, workers need to a bigger slice of the pie. Business leaders once understood that elementary fact.

In 2010, the many of the most high-profile GOP candidates opposed raising the minimum wage, even at though at the timetwo thirds of Americans supported an increase in the federal minimum wage. Now the "inevitable" Republican candidate for the White House, Mitt Romney actually flip-flopped to the right side of an issue, and at least supports automatically raising the minimum wage to keep pace with inflation. Mighty progressive, especially for a Republican.

It's been three years since the federal minimum wage was increased, during which economic realities have made Americans more sympathetic with low-wage workers (and turned many of them into low wage workers). There are now bills in both the House and the Senate to increase the federal minimum wage.

It's time to give working America a raise, for the good of our families, our communities, and our national economy.

20120720-04	13:16	SteveB	"Obscuring a Debate Over Butlers" ('Competing' Tax Proposals)
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A\*s kissing!

"Obscuring a Debate Over Butlers" by David Sirota, NationofChange

July 20, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/obscuring-debate-over-butlers-1342792702>)

For all the superheated rhetoric of yet another election cycle, it's as clear as ever that the Republican and Democratic parties in Washington pretty much support the same economic policies. Indeed, any honest perusal of congressional votes proves that the party establishments are roughly the same when it comes to financial deregulation (less of it), job-killing free trade (more of it), bailouts (more of them) and corporate taxes (less of them).

Politicians and partisan media outlets deny this obvious reality, of course. But they do so because they have a vested interest in the red-versus-blue "polarization" narrative from which they generate campaign contributions and ratings, respectively. This is why their hysterical attacks on their foes — and their refusal to acknowledge the political duopoly — has such a grating "doth protest too much" quality. It's also why more Americans are wholly tuning out of politics — we're less and less interested in gazing at two heads of the same economic monster.

That said, if you are still gullible enough to believe the illusion of huge differences on economics, behold the "debate" over taxes that is now roiling the presidential race.

President Obama kicked it off with his claim last week that he wants to stop "another tax cut for the wealthy." As supposed proof, he asserts that by proposing to extend all of the Bush tax cuts except those applying to top marginal tax rates, he will make sure everyone "making over \$250,000 a year (will) go back to the income tax rates (they) were paying under Bill Clinton." In response, Mitt Romney, who wants every Bush tax cut extended, played his role in the kabuki theater, claiming Obama "plans on extending (the tax cuts), just for certain classes of Americans" — an idea that the Republican presidential nominee says "will kill jobs." Not surprisingly, almost every

news outlet echoed it all, insisting that this is an epic dispute over whether to only extend "the Bush-era tax cuts for people earning less than \$250,000 a year," as *The New York Times* put it.

**There's just one problem: Obama, Romney and the media are all lying.**

Because of America's progressive tax system, all taxpayers under Obama's plan — including those making more than \$250,000 a year — will get a tax cut on their first \$250,000 of income. According to the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy, this means that **Obama's initiative, which would cost \$150 billion, will give a one-year \$20,130 tax cut to the top 1 percent of income earners. Meanwhile, the \$210 billion Republican plan would give that income group a \$70,790 tax cut.**

**In other words, this supposedly monumental debate isn't over whether to punish or further enrich households in the top 1 percent — both proposals do the latter. Instead, this is a minute dispute over whether the tax code should give each of those households the equivalent salary of one butler (Obama's plan) or three butlers (Romney's plan). For every other income group, the two proposals are identical.**

Now sure, at a time of deficits, Obama is right to oppose devoting an additional \$60 billion to giving the wealthy two more butler salaries on top of the one they will already get under his plan. And he's especially right when we know that, despite Romney's hysterical job-loss claims, the economy did far better when the rich were paying Clinton tax rates on their top income.

However, pretending this is some big divide is yet another farce. Both parties are proposing to enrich the already rich, meaning the whole conflagration is yet another attempt to hide the two-headed monster behind a mask of conflict.

Unfortunately, that monster is still under there — still rigging the economy against us.

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Flowering Field near Volubilis, Morocco (by Dennis Cox, [www.DennisCox.com](http://www.DennisCox.com))

For those who follow these things, one of the major questions I have for Candidate Romney, is "what are you going to do to address the deficit?" This has been a major talking point with Bonehead and the tea party House for some time now. Of course, they haven't actually done anything but that discussion is for another day.

The below is an interview with a Romney policy adviser on how Romney plans to address the issue. Note there is not one factual statement made throughout her entire dialogue. I certainly hope they have something better than this in mind.

"Romney Adviser Stumped on How Romney Would Reduce the Debt" by Travis Waldron, ThinkProgress

July 19, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2012/07/19/547281/romney-adviser-cant-specify-how-romneys-plan-would-reduce-the-debt-because-she-is-not-an-economist/?mobile=nc>)

**Mitt Romney's campaign has fired back at questions about his tenure at Bain Capital and his failure to release tax returns by blaming President Obama's campaign for not wanting to talk about the economy. Given a chance to talk about the economy this morning, though, a Romney adviser failed to deliver specifics about how his plan would boost economic growth while also balancing the budget, as Romney claims he will do.**

As ThinkProgress has noted, Romney's plan to provide a massive tax cut to the rich would blow a hole in the federal budget Romney promises to balance by 2020. When MSNBC's Luke Russert asked Romney adviser Tara Wall how Romney would offset the lost revenue, she failed to offer any specifics, telling Americans they could instead "research" his plan to find them. When Russert returned to the subject, Wall again failed to deliver an answer, saying Romney's business experience is the reason he would balance the budget:

**RUSSERT:** What are the offsets? What are we specifically going to do to balance the budget?

**WALL:** Well, I believe Americans will hear a lot more about Governor Romney's plan, and if you want to see in depth what his plan is, you can certainly research that and look at that more in depth. But overall, there have been a number of new regulations, over-zealous regulations, on small businesses enacted by this administration, and we have to look at those things. [...]

**RUSSERT:** Even with those small business cuts you're talking about, they're in the billions. We're talking trillions with a T. Non-partisan: increase by the debt, Mr. Romney's plan with these tax cuts, by \$2.6 trillion. Why are there no specifics? You guys want to talk about big ideas, you don't want to talk about Bain and the tax issues. I don't want to talk about that. I'm asking you specifically: How does Mitt Romney's plan balance the budget by 2020?

**WALL:** I think, if you look at the economic numbers, I'm not an economist and I'm not going to play an economist, I think that Mitt Romney has a proven record of bringing economies back. He brought down unemployment as governor, he created jobs as a governor, he was effective as a businessperson overall, and I think you have to apply those concepts. [...] You can't discount that, and you can't discount the fact that we have to be able to look at how we begin solving the debt problem and bringing that down, and to do that, number one, is to start with streamlining our tax code, bringing down our marginal tax rate, the regulations that have been overburdensome, and making real true spending cuts.

Watch it: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5bdjXF7Vyk&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5bdjXF7Vyk&feature=player_embedded)

Despite Wall's assertions, Americans can't research Romney's plan to offset the lost revenue from the tax cuts because he hasn't yet provided one. He has instead named just a few tax breaks he would end, but those would not generate nearly enough revenue to make up the cost of his tax cuts.

Wall isn't alone among Romney advisers, though. Multiple members of his campaign — including the candidate himself — have had the chance to describe in detail how his plan would reduce the deficit and balance the budget. But even though the Romney campaign claims to want to talk about the budget and economy, it has nothing to say when they actually become the topic of discussion.

<a href="#">20120720-08</a>	13:55	Pam	Re: "Romney Adviser Stumped on How Romney Would Reduce the Debt" (reply to Art, above)
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Double speak. No, triple speak. When in doubt, repeat the question and tell the interviewer to do his own research. Wow, how impressive can you get?! This lady ought to give classes in "How to use lots of words to say absolutely nothing." If these are the "arguments" Republicans are relying on, they are beyond--dare I say it?--stupid.

<a href="#">20120720-07</a>	13:46	Pam+	Sen. Marco Rubio's View of 'Free Speech'
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from Sen. Marco Rubio to SandyI:

Thank you for writing me regarding a constitutional amendment to regulate the spending in federal elections. I appreciate hearing thoughts of Floridians on important issues.

As you know, Senator Whitehouse of Rhode Island introduced the "Democracy Is Strengthened by Casting Light On Spending in Elections Act of 2012" or the DISCLOSE Act (S. 3369). If passed, this legislation would require additional information be given to the Federal Elections Commission, beyond what is already required, regarding political contributions. I believe this legislation is an attempt to restrict political activity and could threaten our first amendment right to free speech, for this reason, I voted against S. 3369.

I am a strong supporter of free speech in all forms, and I believe that speech includes political contributions. Free speech is vital to the elections process and should be vigorously defended. That being said, I respect and support the Supreme Court's ruling in favor of free speech in Citizens United vs. the Federal Elections Commission.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your United States Senator. Although we may not agree, I appreciate you offering your opinion on this issue. If I can ever be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely, Marco Rubio, United States Senator

**Pam:** Free speech, my a\*s. I suppose offering bribes is free speech too...

**Art:** What the heck do secret political contributions have to do with free speech? Notice he blathers on about free speech after making that very vague connection. "I believe that speech includes political contributions" Another hack.

**Pam:** What is it with these people? I'm really trying to understand how seemingly normal, decent people can believe such garbage. My only conclusion is that they don't; therefore, they must have some nefarious intent to rig the system in their favor. I heard a comment on NPR this morning that summed up our political differences this way: There are those, like Romney, who believe successful people achieve so much because of hard work and commitment, that success is an individual matter that should be rewarded. Then there are others (like me/us) who believe that no one can achieve anything all on his own. Our success doesn't arise ex nihilo but is built on structures and institutions put in place by others. A successful society is one in which the least of us has a decent life unless he deliberately throws it away. The old individual vs. community conundrum. You'd think tea baggers had the moral reasoning of twelve year olds, who see things in black and white and are contemptuous of gray. Either we're free and leave the individual absolutely to his own devices, or we're socialists who coddle slackers. Where's the balance?

Didn't you just love it when Anne Romney told an interviewer that the American people know "all they need to know" about the Romneys' finances?! I am appalled that Romney and Obama are in a statistical dead heat. Romney moans about the last 3 1/2 years; what about the last ten?

There's an interesting article in this week's New Yorker about Grimms' Fairy Tales. I quote, "[fairy tales] do not detain us with hope but simply validate what is. Even people who have never known hunger, let alone a murderous stepmother, still have a sense--from dreams, from books, from news broadcasts--of utter blackness, the erasure of safety and comfort and trust. Fairy tales tell us that such knowledge, or fear, is not fantastic but realistic....Though Wilhelm [Grimm] tried to Christianize the tales, they still invoke nature, more than God, as life's driving force, and nature is not kind."

I just wanted to end on a cheerful note. ;-)

<a href="#">20120720-11</a>	16:10	SteveG	Re: Sen. Marco Rubio's View of 'Free Speech' (reply to all, above)
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There were clips of a speech by Elizabeth Warren stating that no one makes it on their own – teacher, infrastructure, friends, banks, family, etc. all enable a person to make it. There are clips of Obama saying the same things in a speech and there are clips of Romney saying the exact same things in a speech. No one makes it in a vacuum, not even Romney.

This is a very good interview with David Stockman who is a former Congressman and was the Federal Budget Director under Ronald Reagan. He does a great job outlining the insanity that makes up the various markets of today in the context of history and what will inevitably happen if we stay on the same course of public and private overspending enabled by the Fed manipulation of interest rates. It is a pretty sobering reminder of where the stock market, treasury and corporate bond markets inevitably will end up if we continue with this status quo approach. I think it is a message we should all hear and remember since I read so frequently that US Treasury Bonds yields can't go too much lower than they are now. You can watch the interview or read the text of the interview at the bottom.

"David Stockman: Austerity Is Not Discretionary" (w/ video) by Alex Daley, Casey Research

July 18, 2012, (<http://www.caseyresearch.com/cdd/david-stockman-austerity-not-discretionary>)

Interview of David Stockman by Alex Daley, Chief Technology Investment Strategist, Casey Research:

**Alex Daley:** Hello. I'm Alex Daley. Welcome to another edition of Conversations with Casey. Today our guest is former Reagan Budget Director and Congressman David Stockman. Welcome to the show, David.

**David Stockman:** Glad to be here.

**Alex:** So we're here in Florida talking at the Recovery Reality Check Casey Summit. What do you think: is the United States economy on the road to recovery?

**David:** I don't think we are at the beginning of the recovery. I think we are at the end of a disastrous debt supercycle that has gone on for the last thirty or forty years, really. It started when Nixon defaulted on our obligations under Bretton Woods and closed the gold window. Incrementally, year after year since then, we have been going in a direction of extremely unsound money, of massive borrowing in both the private and the public sector. We now have an economy that is saturated with debt: \$54 trillion or \$53 trillion – 3.5 times the GDP – way off the charts from where it was for a hundred years prior to the beginning of this. The idea that somehow all of that debt is irrelevant, as the Keynesians would tell us, is fundamentally wrong – and the reason why the economy can't get up off the mat.

We're doing all the wrong things. We're adding to the problem, not subtracting. We are not allowing the debt to be worked down and liquidated. We're not asking people to save more and consume less, which is what we really need to do. And so therefore I think policy is just making it worse, and any day now we will have another recurrence of the kind of economic crisis we had a few years ago.

**Alex:** You paint a very stark picture, but if people just stop spending, start saving, won't companies like Apple see their earnings hurt? Won't the stock market then start to tumble, people's net worth fall? Isn't that a negative cycle that feeds on itself?

**David:** Sure it does, but you can't live beyond your means because it's pleasant. It's not sustainable. Clearly the level of debt that we have is not sustainable. We have a whole generation – the Baby Boom – that's about ready to retire, and they have no retirement savings. We have a federal government that is bankrupt, literally. Its [debt is] \$16 trillion and growing by a trillion a year. Something's going to give. We can't pay for all these entitlements. There won't be the revenue generation in the economy to do it.

So as a result of that, we are deluding ourselves if we think we can just continue to spend. Look at the GDP that came out in the first quarter of this year. It was only 2.2%. Most of it was personal consumption expenditure, and half of that was due to a drawdown of the savings rate, not because the economy was earning more income or generating more real output. It was because of a drawdown of savings. That is exactly the wrong way to go – an indication of how severe the crisis is going to be.

I'm not saying the economy should stop spending entirely. I'm only saying you can't save 3% of GDP and spend 97% if you are going to get out of this fix. As the savings rate goes up both in the public sector (which means reduction of spending and the deficit) and the household sector (to seriously reduce debt burden, which has not really happened) we are going to, on the margin, spend less, save more. It will slow down the economy. It will undermine profits, I agree. But profits today are way overstated. They're based on a debt-bloated economy that isn't sustainable.

**Alex:** So we can only live beyond our means for so long, as any family knows.

**David:** Yes.

**Alex:** Now, the government can reduce its expenses at any time by simply reducing spending, and it can reduce debt if it brings in more tax revenue. That's austerity – I think that's how they refer to it. But won't austerity cause massive joblessness? Won't there be millions more people in this country not receiving a paycheck?

**David:** Yes, but the critique, the clamoring and clattering that you hear from the Keynesians (or even mainstream media, which is pretty clueless economically) that austerity is bad forgets the fact that austerity isn't an elective course. Austerity is something that happens to you when you're broke. And yes, it is painful and spending will go down and unemployment will go up and incomes will be impaired, but that is a consequence of the excess debt creation that we've had for the last thirty years. So austerity is what happens when you break the rules.

And somehow we have this debate going on. They're making a mistake. They chose the wrong strategy. Do you think Greece chose the wrong strategy with austerity? No. No one would lend them money. That's why they ended up in the place they were. Do you think that Spain today is teetering on the brink because they said, "Oh, wouldn't it be a good idea to have austerity?" No, they had a gun to their head. They were forced to do this because the markets would not continue to lend, and even now their interest rate is again rising. The markets are losing confidence, and unless the ECB prints some more money and bails them out some more, they are going to have austerity. So the austerity upon us is the backside of the debt supercycle we had for the past thirty years. It's not discretionary.

**Alex:** Austerity hasn't been forced upon us yet. The dollar is up, people are continuing to buy Treasuries – both nations and banks are buying Treasuries. To all extents and purposes, people are continuing to show massive confidence in the US government, lend it money at extremely cheap interest rates, and letting it build up its debt.

So you are advocating that, unlike Greece or Spain taking it to the edge and having austerity forced on them, we should volunteer for austerity today? Instead of just kicking the can down the road and living high a little bit longer, until the bill collectors finally come knocking? Why go today, why start austerity now instead of doing what Greece did and going as long as you possibly can?

**David:** Because Greece is a \$300 billion economy. Tiny. A rounding error in the great scheme of things. It's – last time I checked – about eight and a half months' worth of Walmart sales. Okay? That's a little different than when you have the \$15 trillion heartland of the world economy, and the \$11 trillion Treasury market which is at the center of the whole global financial system buckle and falter. That's the risk you're taking if you say, "Mañana. Kick the can; let's just wait for something good to happen."

This market isn't real. The two percent on the ten-year, the ninety basis points on the five-year, thirty basis points on a one-year – those are medicated, pegged rates created by the Fed and which fast-money traders trade against as long as they are confident the Fed can keep the whole market rigged. Nobody in their right mind wants to own the ten-year bond at a two percent interest rate. But they're doing it because they can borrow overnight money for free, ten basis points, put it on repo, collect 190 basis points a spread, and laugh all the way to the bank. And they will keep laughing all the way to the bank on Wall Street until they lose confidence in the Fed's ability to keep the yield curve pegged where it is today. If the bond ever starts falling in price, they unwind the carry trade. They unwind the repo, because then you can't collect 190 basis points.

Then you get a message, "Do not pass go." Sell your bonds, unwind your overnight debt, your repo positions. And the system then begins to contract – exactly what happened in September and October of 2008. Only, that time it

was an unwind to the repo on mortgage-backed securities and CDOs and so forth. That was a minor trial run for the great unwind that is going to happen when the Treasury market is finally shattered with a lack of confidence because, on the margin, no one owns a Treasury bond: they just rent it on borrowed money. If the price starts falling, they'll get out of that trade as fast as they got out of toxic CDOs.

**Alex:** So when people run away from the US, they will run away all at once.

**David:** Well, if they run away from the Treasury, it sends compounding forces of contagion through the entire financial system. It hits next the MBS and the mortgage market. The mortgage market then scares the hell out of people about the housing recovery, which hasn't happened anyway. And if there isn't a housing recovery, middle-class Main-Street confidence isn't going to recover, because it is the only asset they have, and for 25 million households it's under water or close to under water.

**Alex:** We saw something much like that in 2008. All the markets correlated. Stocks went down. Bonds went down. Gold went down with them. It sounds like what you're saying is that the Fed is effectively paying bankers to stay confident in the Fed, and that the moment that stops – either because the Fed stops paying them or something else shakes their confidence – this all goes down in one big house of cards?

**David:** Yes, I think that's right. The Fed has destroyed the money market. It has destroyed the capital markets. They have something that you can see on the screen called an "interest rate." That isn't a market price of money or a market price of five-year debt capital. That is an administered price that the Fed has set and that every trader watches by the minute to make sure that he's still in a positive spread. And you can't have capitalism if the capital markets are dead, if the capital markets are simply a branch office – branch casino – of the central bank. That's essentially what we have today.

**Alex:** Last night you told our audience that if you were elected president, the first thing you would do is quit. Or at least demand a recount, I believe were your words, which I thought was telling. Are you saying there are no policy changes we could make today that would get us out of this? Or at least that wouldn't get you assassinated?

**David:** Yeah, there is a paper blueprint. People who believe in sound money and fiscal responsibility, that you create wealth the old-fashioned way through savings and work and effort and not simply by printing money and trading pieces of paper – there is a plan that they could put together. One would be to put the Fed out of business. You don't have to "end the Fed," although I like Ron Paul's phrase. You have to get them out of discretionary, active, day-to-day meddling in the money markets. Abolish the Open Market Committee.

The Fed has taken its balance sheet to \$3 trillion. That's enough for the next 50 years. They don't have to do a damn thing except maybe have a discount window that floats above the market, and if things get tight, let the interest rate go up. People who have been speculating will be carried out on a stretcher. That's how they used to do it. It worked prior to 1914. That's the first step: abolish the Open Market Committee. Abolish discretionary monetary policy.

Let the Fed, if you're going to keep it – I don't even know that you need to do that, but if you are going to keep it – be only a standby source. As Badgett said (Walter Badgett, the great 19th-century British financial thinker): provide liquidity at a penalty rate to sound collateral.

Now, that's what J.P. Morgan did in 1907, in the great crisis of 1907, from his library. He didn't have a printing press. He didn't bail out everybody. He didn't do what Bernanke did and say: "Stop the presses, freeze everybody, and prop up Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs and all the rest of the speculators." The interest rate, the call-money interest rate, which was the open-market interest rate at the time, some days went to 30, 40, 70% – and they were carrying out the speculators left and right, liquidating margin debt, taking out the real estate speculators. Eight or ten railroads went bankrupt within a couple of months. The copper magnates got carried out on their shields.

This is the only way a capital market can work, but it needs an honest interest rate. And we have no interest rate, so therefore we solve nothing and we have the kind of impaired, incapacitated markets that we have today. They're

very dangerous, because they're all dependent on twelve people. It is what I call "the monetary Politburo of the Western world," and they are just as dangerous as the Politburo in Beijing or the Politburo of memory in Moscow.

**Alex:** A twelve-person Open Market Committee determining the future of our economy by manipulating rates. Sounds like central planning to me.

**David:** It is. They are monetary central planners who are attempting to use the crude instrument of interest-rate pegging and yield-curve manipulation and essentially buying debt that no one else would buy, in order to keep this whole system afloat. It's Ponzi economics. Anybody who had financial training before 1970 would instantly recognize this as Ponzi economics. It is only because of the last twenty years we got so inured to prosperity out of the end of a printing press and massive incremental debt that people lost sight of the fundamental principles of sound money, which, there's nothing arcane about it. It's just common sense. It is not common sense to think that 50, 60, 70% of all the debt that's being created by the federal government can be bought by the Federal Reserve, stuffed in a vault, and everybody can live happily ever after.

**Alex:** So the government has certainly put us in a precarious position, but I don't think they alone have put America in this position, have they? You mentioned consumer debt becoming a major burden on the economy. How do we shed ourselves of that? I mean, the federal government can repudiate its debts if we walk away from it. We might see a few wars or something from that. It could inflate its way out of it. It can tax its way out of it. But how do households get out from under the debt burden that they have today?

**David:** Well, it's very tough, and they were lured into it by bad monetary policy when Greenspan panicked in December 2000. The interest rate was 6.5%; we had an economy that was threatened by competitors around the world. We needed high interest rates, not low. He panicked after the dot-com crash, and as you remember in two years they took the interest rate all the way down to 1%, and they catalyzed an explosion of mortgage borrowing, which was crazy.

When they cut the final rate down to 1% in May, June 2003, in that quarter – the second quarter of 2003 – the run rate of mortgage borrowing was \$5 trillion at an annual rate. That was nuts! There had never been even a trillion-dollar annual rate of mortgage borrowing previously. In that quarter the run rate was \$5 trillion, 40% of GDP. Why? Because the Fed took the rate down to 1%. Floating-rate product got invented everywhere. Anybody that had a pulse was being given mortgage loans by the brokers. The mortgage brokers didn't have any capital or funding. They went to Wall Street. They got warehouse lines, and the whole thing got out of control. Millions of households were lured into taking on debt that was insane, and now we have a generation of debt slaves.

There are 25 million households in America who couldn't move if they wanted to, because their mortgages are under water. They cannot generate a down payment and the 5% or 6% broker fee that you need to move. So we've got 25 million households immobilized, paralyzed, and worried every day about when they are going to lose property, because of what the Fed did. It's a terrible indictment.

**Alex:** Mobility itself is the American dream, isn't it? It's the ability to pick up and find work and then move and do all that. So now we have people who are slaves to their debt. How do we get ourselves out of this? Is this just a matter of personal financial discipline? Is there a policy move that can happen?

**David:** It's policy. If we don't do something about the Fed, if we don't drive the Bernankes and the Dudleys and the Yellens and the rest of these lunatic money-printers out of the Federal Reserve and get it under the control of people who have at least a modicum of sanity, we are just going to bury everybody deeper.

It's unfortunate. The American people are as much a victim of the Fed's massive errors as anything else. People were not prudent when they took on debt at 100% of the peak value of their property at some moment in 2004 and 2005. They were lured into it. But now we're stuck with something that didn't need to happen.

**Alex:** The Federal Reserve was founded in 1914, and it saw America through World War I, World War II. It saw America through Vietnam, saw America through the biggest boom in the economic history of the world. Yet now, today, you are calling for the abolishment of the Fed. Wasn't the Fed here the entire time that America was a prosperous, growing, wealthy, technology-driven nation? What's changed?

**David:** The greatest period of growth in American history was 1870-1914 – the Fed didn't exist. Right after 1870, when we recovered from the Civil War we went back on the gold standard. It worked pretty well. World War I was a catastrophe for the financial system. The Fed financed it, but I don't give them any credit for that, okay? We shouldn't have been in that war. It was a stupid thing to get involved in. But once we got involved in it, the Fed printed money like crazy, it facilitated borrowing, set the groundwork for the boom of the 1920s and the collapse of the 1930s.

Even then though, we had great minds who coped with reality in a pragmatic way in the Fed. Even Marriner Eccles wasn't all that bad. He stood up to Truman in 1951, when Truman wanted to force the Fed to continue to peg interest rates at 2% or 2.5% when inflation was 5%. Then we had William McChesney Martin: brilliant, pragmatic. He wasn't some kind of gold-standard guy in a pure sense, but a pragmatic guy who understood that prosperity had to come out of private productivity, out of investment, out of risk-taking, and the Fed had to be very careful not to allow speculation to start or inflation to get ignited. In 1958, he invented the phrase, "The job of the Fed is to take the punchbowl away." And we had a small recession. Six months after the recession was over he was actually raising the margin rate on the stock-market loans in order to quell speculation, and raising interest rates so that the economy didn't start to inflate again.

Now that was the regime we had until, unfortunately, Lyndon Johnson came along with his "guns and butter," took William McChesney Martin down to the ranch, and beat the hell out of him and forced him to capitulate. But here's the point I would make: In 1960, at the peak of what I call the golden era – the twilight of fiscal and financial discipline – we had \$30 billion on the balance sheet of the Fed. It had taken 45 years to build that up. Then, as they began to rapidly expand the balance sheet of the Fed during the inflation of the '70s and the '80s, even then it took us until September 2008 – the Lehman collapse – to get to \$900 billion. Had the balance sheet only grown at 3%, which is what the capacity of the economy to grow, I think, really is, it would have been \$300 billion, so they were overshooting.

**Alex:** We're three times where we should be.

**David:** Where we should have been by the Lehman crisis event. In the next seven weeks, this crazy lunatic who's running the Fed increased the balance sheet of the Fed by \$900 billion, in seven weeks. In other words, they expanded the balance sheet of the Fed as rapidly in seven weeks as it had occurred during the first 93 years of its existence. And that's not all, as they say on late night TV: in the next six weeks they added another \$900 billion. So in thirteen weeks they tripled the balance sheet of the Fed.

**Alex:** Wow, that's an incredible...

**David:** So no wonder we are in totally uncharted waters, and it's being run by people who are clueless as to how to get out of the corner they've painted this country into. They really ought to be run out of town on a rail.

**Alex:** I think you'd find that a lot of our viewers would agree with you on that one. You know, the average American is suffering. It looks like the average American is going to have to suffer more to get us out of this, but it seems like the only thing the Fed is interested in these days is propping up the stock market. Why is that? Where does that come from?

**David:** The Fed has taken itself hostage with this whole misbegotten doctrine of wealth effects, which was created by Greenspan. In other words, if we get the stock market going up and we get the stock averages going up, people feel wealthier, they will spend more. If they spend more, there is more production and income and you get a virtuous circle. Well, that says you can create wealth through speculation. That can't be true, because if it is true, we should have had a totally different kind of system than we've had historically.

So they got into that game, and then the crisis came in September, 2008. They panicked and pulled out the stops everywhere. As I said, tripled the balance sheet in thirteen weeks, [compared to what] they had done in 93 years. They are now at a point where they don't dare begin to reduce the balance sheet, begin to contract, or they'll cause Wall Street to go into a hissy fit. They are afraid to death of Wall Street going into a hissy fit, **so essentially, the robots and the boys and girls and the fast-money traders on Wall Street run the Fed indirectly.**

**Alex:** So, in the 1960s, the Fed is taking away the punchbowl. Sounds like in 2010 the Fed is the one adding the alcohol. They are afraid to stop, lest everybody riot.

**David:** Yes, they got the party going, and they're afraid to stop it. As a result of that you have a doomsday machine.

**Alex:** At some point we are going to be forced to stop. Market forces will kick in and Europe and China and India will stop lending us money.

**David:** Yes. As I say, when the crisis comes in the Treasury market, it will be the great margin call in the sky. They'll start unwinding all of the carry trades, all of the repo. Asset prices generally will be affected, because this will ricochet and compound through the system.

**Alex:** When does this happen?

**David:** People looked at the housing market and the mortgage market way back in 2003 – there were some smart people looking at this. They looked at the run rate of gross mortgage issuance, the \$5 trillion I was talking about, and said: "This is insane, this is off the charts, this is so far beyond anything that has ever happened before, something bad is going to come of this." It's obvious, if you pour debt into markets... I mean a lot of people leveraged 98%, or whatever they were doing at the time with so-called mortgage insurance, and just high loan to value ratios. They were driving up prices, and so there was a housing-price boom going on. It was sucking the whole middle class into speculation. So that's the nature of the system, and now they don't know how to unwind it.

**Alex:** That's a pretty stark picture. So as an individual investor, what are we to do? How do we protect ourselves in this type of situation? Should I be owning bonds and staying out of stocks? Should I be owning stocks?

**David:** No, I would stay out of any security markets. These are unsafe markets at any speed. It's all tied together. As I was saying when the great margin call comes and they start selling the Treasury bond, they'll take everything else with it. Real estate is priced off Treasuries. Mortgaged-backed securities are priced off Treasuries. Corporates are priced off Treasuries. Junk bonds are priced off Treasuries. Everything. The stock market will go into a panic. We don't know when the timing will come – we've never been in a world where there is \$15 trillion worth of central-bank balance sheets, like we have today. The only thing I think you can conclude is preservation is the only thing you are about as an investor. Forget about yield. Forget about return. Just keep yourself liquid and preserve your capital, because you can't predict the day when, as I say, the great margin call in the sky comes down.

**Alex:** So if it's not about coming out ahead, it's about coming out not behind everybody else. It's just losing a little less. What's the most effective way to do that? Do you want to hold cash? Alternative options?

**David:** Yes. I don't even think there's nothing wrong with owning Treasury bills. I mean, if you want to get, for a one-year Treasury, what is the thing now? Twenty basis points or something?

**Alex:** So when the great Treasury crash comes, I should own Treasury bills?

**David:** Well, it doesn't mean the price of the Treasury is going to crash, no.

**Alex:** Okay, so we are just going to see interest rates skyrocket on new issues. The US government is not going to be able to borrow.

**David:** That's why you're short. If you're in a thirty-day piece of paper, you're not going to lose principal.

**Alex:** What happens to the dollar in all of this? If I'm holding dollar denominated assets –?

**David:** Well, the dollar, in theory, people would think is going to crash. I don't think it is because all the rest of the currencies in the world are worse.

**Alex:** So once again, America is not that bad off.

**David:** Well, we're bad off because when the financial markets reprice drastically, it's going to have a shocking effect on economic activity. It's going to paralyze things. It's going to finally cause consumption to come down. It's going to cause government spending to be retracted.

You know, the Keynesians are right. Borrowing does add to GDP accounts. But it doesn't add to wealth. It doesn't add to real productivity, but it does add to GDP as it's calculated and published – because GDP accounts were designed by Keynesians who don't believe in a balance sheet. So they said, "If the public sector and the household sector are borrowing, let's say, \$10 trillion next year, run it through GDP, you'll get a big bump to GDP." But sooner or later your balance sheet will collapse. They forgot about that one. So my point is that we've gone through a thirty-year expansion of the balance sheet, an artificial growth in GDP; now we're going to have to be retracting the collective balance sheets. That means that GDP will not grow. It may even contract, and no one's prepared for that.

**Alex:** So the economy will collapse. The dollar will be okay, because we still need a medium of exchange and the dollar is the least-bad currency in the world. How does gold fit into the picture? Do you think that gold is a good asset?

**David:** Yes, I think that gold is a good asset. It's the only currency that anybody is going to believe in after a while.

**Alex:** Okay, so maybe hold that as an insurance policy. Do you own gold yourself?

**David:** Yes, as an insurance policy.

**Alex:** Where else do you invest in today?

**David:** I'm preserving capital. I'm in cash. I don't think the risk of the system is worth it.

**Alex:** So you are practicing what you preach, 100%?

**David:** Yes.

**Alex:** That's great. It's good to hear. This is excellent advice for our subscribers as well, to consider that there's a lot of potential energy built up in the system. You've articulated it well, a lot of painful policy moves ahead of us, and probably something that makes 2008 look like a preview, if you will.

**David:** It was just a warm-up.

**Alex:** Just a warm-up. Thank you very much.

**David:** Thank you.

<a href="#">20120720-10</a>	15:50	Pam	Re: "David Stockman: Austerity Is Not Discretionary" (reply to Dennis, above)
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OK. I think I understand maybe 2/3 of this. I am persuaded that all the speculation in recent decades has been a very, very bad thing. I had a student once--a kid of 19 or 20--who was day trading and raking in a ton of money. There's something about that that doesn't sit quite right with me. If I understand Stockman correctly, he's saying we need to put the kybosh on speculators, which we could do by letting banks lend money to folks they know and keeping the loans local. I'm so confused about whether the Fed. saved us from a depression or whether it's spinning plates in the air. I generally like what Robert Reich says about the economy: the government needs to spend to put people to work by investing in education, infrastructure, and maybe even some kinds of production (energy). That makes sense to me. Let the private sector take over once the ball gets rolling, as seems to be happening with the space industry. We need a bridge to get from here to there, and it looks to me like government spending is it. But I agree with everything Stockman says about wild speculation and the ridiculous housing

market. Didn't anyone's mother ever talk to them about being "house poor?" There's a greedy streak in most people, I guess. If they can game the system and get an advantage for themselves, they go for it, whether it's good for the community (nation) or not. Of course, government colluded in the great pyramid in the sky by making a fetish of home ownership (which I do believe in BTW). Rather than low-interest mortgages, we should have encouraged people to save up for a downpayment. When my ex- and I bought our first house (modest), the interest rate was 10%, and we didn't blink an eye. Now my husband is considering refinancing our house at 2.99%. I'd love a lower monthly payment, but doesn't this cheap credit just exacerbate the problem? I would really love to see Stockman and Reich sit down and discuss all this.

<a href="#">20120720-12</a>	16:30	Dennis	Re: "David Stockman: Austerity Is Not Discretionary" (reply to Pam, above)
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None of Stockman's analysis is new to me since I've been reading all of this for the past ten years in investment newsletters, mostly written by libertarians. My only bone to pick with him is his discrediting or dismissing pro-stimulus (or anti-austerity) economists as being Keynesians. As I have written before, I believe Keynesian theory would have consisted of building up a surplus in prosperous times and not just borrowing (pump-priming) during recessions. From what Stockman is saying, he should agree with at least the first part and would be a semi-Keynesian (or half-ass Keynesian, if you prefer).

<a href="#">20120720-13</a>	16:43	Pam	Re: "David Stockman: Austerity Is Not Discretionary" (reply to Dennis, above)
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That makes sense. Some days the whole human race seems more like Keystone Kops than Nobel laureates. It's a wonder we manage to accomplish anything.

<a href="#">20120720-14</a>	17:22	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Stand Against Gun Violence!
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from MoveOn:

We all woke up to the tragic news of the killing of at least 12 people and the wounding of many more at a late-night screening of the new Batman movie in Colorado.

Reports indicate that the disturbed individual who committed this horrifying act had a bulletproof vest, used some kind of gas canister, and had multiple guns when he opened fire in the crowded theater.<sup>1</sup> A three-month-old is among the injured.<sup>2</sup>

We are immeasurably sad for those who lost their lives, those wounded, and their families—and for all those who experienced the horror of those terrible moments. Let our thoughts and prayers go out to them today.

We're also so angry. From children's lives lost in school shootings, to Trayvon Martin, the Representative Gabrielle Giffords attack, and this latest slaughter of innocents, we are not safe from gun violence.

Mayors Against Illegal Guns has been campaigning to put a stop to senseless gun violence like this with commonsense measures, like fixing gun checks to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people. They've started a petition in SignOn.org to demand action on ending gun violence.

Sadly, it often takes moments like these to bring politicians to their senses about guns. And while signing a petition seems so inadequate in the face of what happened last night, it's important to do what we can. Today that means taking a small step toward preventing this kind of tragedy from happening again.

Sign the Mayors Against Illegal Guns petition to our leaders: "Join me in standing with the victims and families of the Aurora, Colorado shooting and pledge to end gun violence."

<http://www.signon.org/sign/stand-with-the-aurora?source=homepage>

The people who died at the Colorado theater last night are only 12 of the 34 people statistics tell us will die from gun violence today—and among 19,000 murdered with guns since the attack on Representative Giffords in Tuscon.<sup>3</sup>

And yet today isn't about statistics. It's about the pain of human loss—the loss suffered by the community of Aurora, Colorado. And the losses to gun violence suffered today and every day by other communities, whose tragic stories won't be covered on the news.

It's in the power of Congress to greatly reduce these senseless shootings and make tragedies like today's far less possible. They can start by enacting commonsense measures, like fixing giant loopholes in gun checks, that are supported by the vast majority of Americans—including gun owners.<sup>4</sup>

Let our anger today help give them the courage to act tomorrow.

Sign the Mayors Against Illegal Guns petition to our leaders: "Join me in standing with the victims and families of the Aurora, Colorado shooting and pledge to end gun violence."

The strength and support we draw from our friends, families, and communities are never more important than on days like today.

Thanks for all you do. –Justin, Robin, Ryan, Elena, and the rest of the team

Sources:

<sup>1</sup>"Gunman turns movie into surreal horror: 'This is real,'" CNN, July 20, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277858&id=46725-20195165-XVgYQGx&t=3>.

<sup>2</sup>"Gunman turns Batman screening into real-life 'horror film,'" CNN, July 20, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277863&id=46725-20195165-XVgYQGx&t=4>.

<sup>3</sup>"Background Checks," Mayors Against Illegal Guns, accessed July 20, 2012 <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277860&id=46725-20195165-XVgYQGx&t=6>.

<sup>4</sup>"Poll: Majority Of Americans, Including Gun Owners, Support Tougher Restrictions," The Huffington Post, January 18, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277861&id=46725-20195165-XVgYQGx&t=7>.

<a href="#">20120720-15</a>	18:56	Art	Fw: Change.org Petition: Remove Michele Bachmann from the Intelligence Committee
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This is one we can all get behind. My reasoning was the contradiction in terms Bachmann - Intelligence???

<http://www.change.org/petitions/us-house-of-representatives-remove-michele-bachmann-from-the-intelligence-committee>

<a href="#">20120721-01</a>	19:34	SteveB	"Is It or Isn't It? The Higgs Boson Story"
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"Is It or Isn't It? The Higgs Boson Story" by Brian Dodson, Gizmag

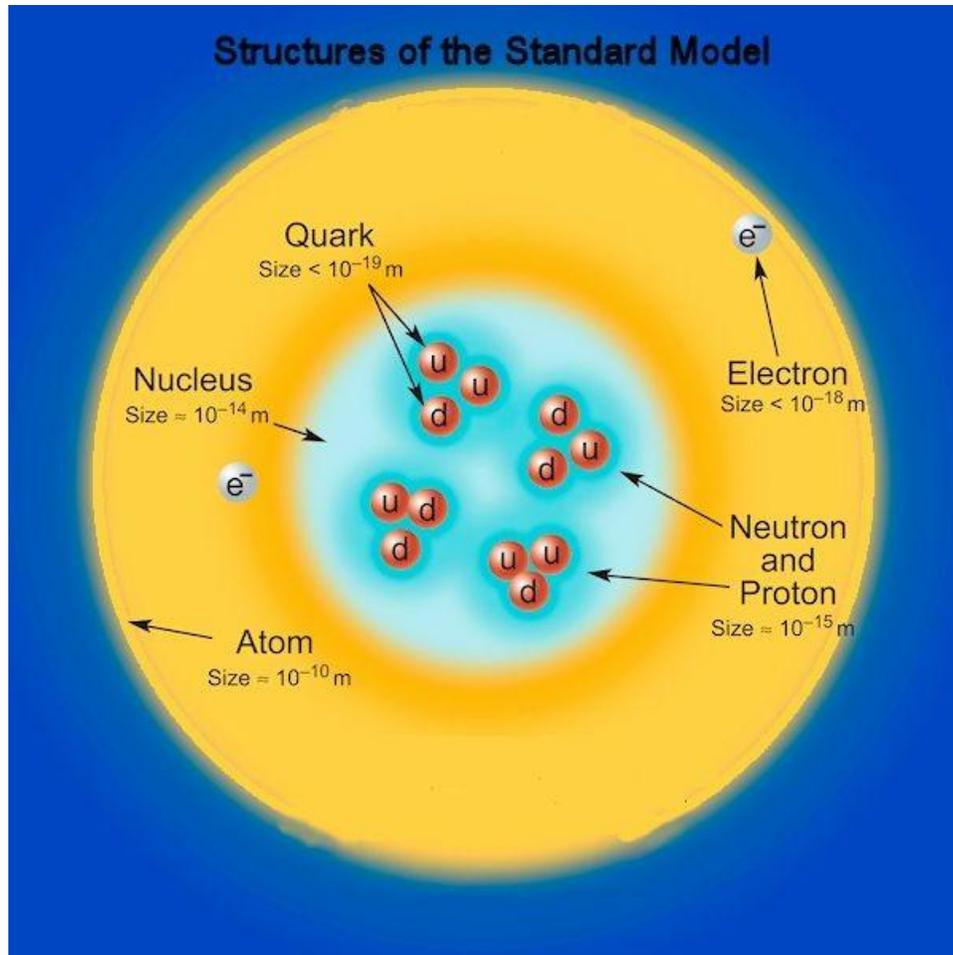
July 16, 2012, (<http://www.gizmag.com/higgs-boson-cern-alternative-particle/23319/>)

The recent discovery at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) of a massive particle "consistent with" the predicted properties of the Higgs boson hit the news with the force of a

hurricane. But the phrase "consistent with" suggests that the CERN observation may also be "consistent with" other types of particle. Is it or isn't it? We're going to attempt to clarify the situation for you.

Before we start, let's get rid of one widespread misconception being thrown about by the news media. The Higgs boson is often called the God particle (but never by scientists). The reason for that moniker is that Leon Lederman, Director Emeritus of Fermilab and Nobel Prize winner, wrote a popular book on the Higgs boson. He wanted to call the book "The Goddamn Particle" because of the difficulty and expense of finding the Higgs, but the publisher thought that sales might suffer. The publisher then suggested "The God Particle" as an alternative, to which Lederman eventually acceded. The name is thus a response to a bad joke, rather than an indication of spirituality or divine origin.

[Read more at Gizmag...](#)



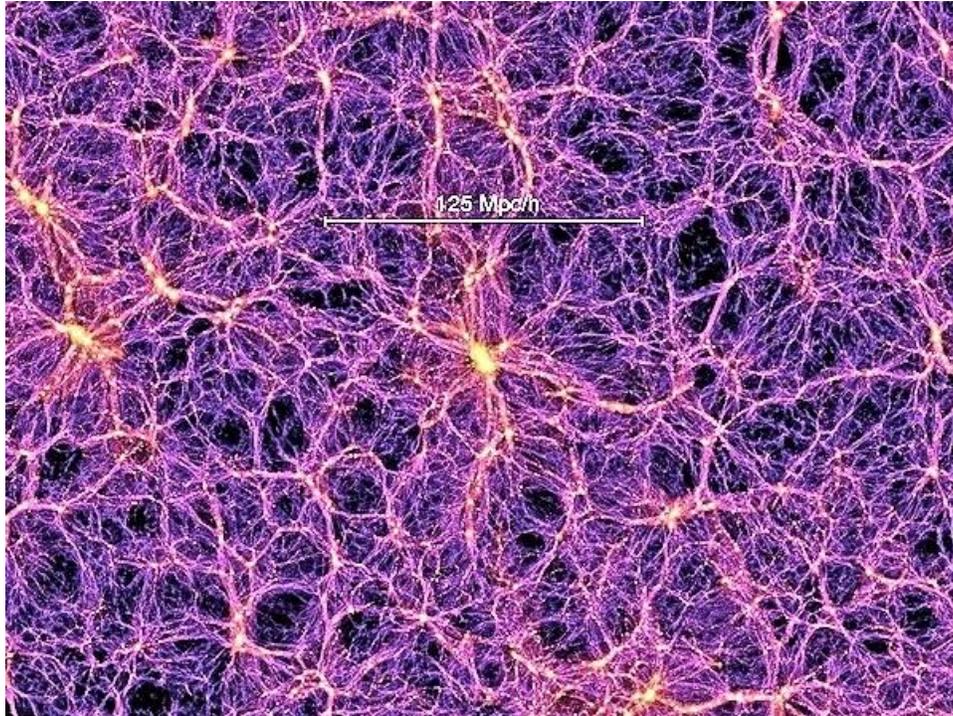
20120721-02 19:41 SteveB "Dark Matter Filaments Detected for the First Time"

"Dark Matter Filaments Detected for the First Time" by Brian Dodson, Gizmag

July 14, 2012, (<http://www.gizmag.com/dark-matter-filaments-found/23281/>)

For the first time, a team of astronomers has "observed" a filament of dark matter connecting two neighboring galaxy clusters. Dark matter is a type of matter that interacts only very weakly with light and itself. Its very nature is mysterious. Mapping the dark matter filament's gravity was the key to the breakthrough. The result is considered a crucial first step by scientists. It provides the first direct evidence that the universe is filled by a lacework of dark matter filaments, upon which the visible matter in the universe is distributed like small beads.

[Read more at Gizmag...](#)



A view of the distribution of dark matter in our universe, based on the Millennium Simulation. The simulation is based on our current ideas about the universe's origin and evolution. It included ten billion particles, and consumed 343,000 cpu-hours (Image: Virgo Consortium)

<a href="#">20120722-02</a>	07:04	Marci	Video: Cool French Commercial
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<http://vimeo.com/29416289>

<a href="#">20120722-03</a>	16:48	SteveB	Videos: Charo (to Marci)
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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfVf7N8CJEA>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1kOIWkjEHo>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passiflora\\_edulis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passiflora_edulis)



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<http://publicpolicy.pepperdine.edu/faculty-research/new-deal/roosevelt-speeches/>

<http://www.fanpop.com/spots/cookies/images/161527/title/cookie-photo>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #188 — JULY 24, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

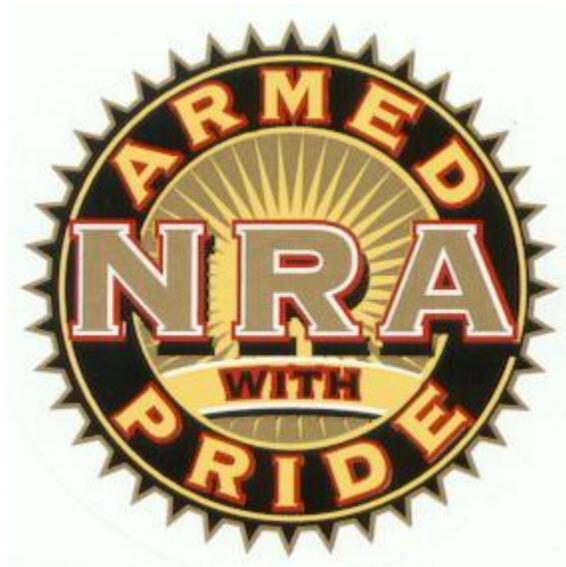
### **Blessed Be Thy Killing Guns**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 24, 2012)

You want yer guns, America, you got `em!

"Congress Cowers to Terrorist-Enabling NRA" by Brad Friedman, The Brad Blog/OpEdNews

July 23, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Congress-Cowers-to-Terrori-by-Brad-Friedman-120723-547.html>)



The fact that they haven't yet been labeled a terrorist-associated group is due only to the fact that if they were, they would rain down hellfire -- and one of the mightiest propaganda and lying campaigns you've ever seen -- against those associated with having made that decision.

That, of course, is how any terrorist group worth its assault plies its trade: Scare the hell out of those who might oppose them. Let them know there will be serious consequences to those who even try, to those who even discuss it. So that anyone even thinking of it becomes crippled with fear to the point they won't do a thing to even appear to threaten the terrorists' agenda in any way.

In this case, of course, it's mostly just political terrorism. But in the real world, given the carnage they continue to enable year after year and tear after tear, it's difficult to say whether the NRA should best be described as terrorist enablers, or just plain terrorists, for the all of the indescribable violence they help perpetuate and, arguably, even help to fund.

Without the help of the NRA and those who fund them, James Holmes, the alleged gunman of Colorado's latest massacre, might not have been able to shoot nearly 70 Americans in a matter of minutes, killing 12 of them, in a sold-out movie theater just after midnight last Friday night. Neither would it have been so simple for Jared Loughner to shoot 19 Americans and kill 6 of them, including nearly murdering Rep. Gabrielle Giffords in Tucson, AZ just over a year ago, leading to her eventual resignation from Congress.

Thanks to years of terror-enabling by the National Rifle Association, both the AZ and CO sociopaths were able to maximize their rage through a maximum of carnage against their fellow citizens. And both incidents are just a drop of blood in the NRA's great American bucket.

Despite AZ and CO and the tens of thousands of deaths by firearm in this country each year, despite even coming within a hair's breadth of losing one of their own last year in the bargain, Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Congress are unable and unwilling to lift a finger to do a damn thing about any of it. Neither is the President of the United States. They are all cowards, shriveling in abject fear of the almighty menace to sanity and common-sense and domestic tranquility that is today's NRA...

Remember, the NRA is the same organization which has been fighting for years to ensure that those on the government's "terrorist watch list," who may not even board a commercial airplane without triggering extra security scrutiny, may go out and buy any number of deadly weapons they like without even being flagged. Because, ya know, "freedom"! And if they make their purchases at a gun show, they may do so without even the need to pass a minimal criminal background check.

Thanks in no small part to the NRA, the apparent CO shooter was able to legally buy some 6,000 rounds of ammo and a 100-round drum clip for use with his semi-automatic AR-15 (which he also purchased legally), enabling him to fire on some 50 to 60 Americans per minute, according to the Aurora Police Chief left to clean up the mess. Holmes was even able to pick up 150 lbs. of ammunition from FedEx, without ever having to answer a question.

But want to buy Nicotine patches? Be prepared to have your drivers license scanned at the point of purchase.

Holmes' Friday Night "freedom," of course, was nothing short of a great victory for the NRA, which has worked for years to make sure the modest, almost entirely useless restrictions on some automatic weapons and large, multiple round magazines contained in the Brady Law (named for Ronald Reagan's Press Secretary, who was nearly killed by a would-be assassin soon after Reagan took office in 1981) would not be renewed, after those modest 10-year restrictions had sun-setted in 2004.

So let's be sure to thank the NRA for all they've done for this nation through their long campaign of terror and money and lying which are all waged against any elected official or candidate for political office who even dares to display the temerity to even discuss the "well regulated" part of our 2nd Amendment. (You remember that part, right? "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." Did you forget that "well regulated" part? You can thank the NRA for that too. They've been working hard for years to help you do exactly that.)

Of course, one needn't discuss "well regulating" the right to bear arms, to become the victim of the NRA's Big Lies. Just ask President Obama who expanded gun rights shortly after taking office by signing a bill to allow firearms in our national parks and on trains. His thanks? Another NRA Big Lie campaign to fool more of their gullible, frightened funders into believing Obama has a secret plan to undermine the 2nd Amendment by tricking two-thirds of the U.S. Senate into ratifying a U.N. treaty that would somehow, in defiance of the U.S. Supreme Court, take precedence over the U.S. Constitution and then, naturally, allow your guns to be taken away from you!!!

And, just in case you didn't know about that particular latest Big Lie being circulated by the NRA (because all of the suckers and chumps and dupes and stooges and patsies who watch Fox "News" and receive the NRA's fundraising letters certainly know about it!) be sure to read up on how they're terrifying Americans into believing the completely phony scam about the Obama Administration agreeing to a U.N. international arms treaty which is secretly a back door way to allow them to take away your guns!!!

Despite the most recent tragic slaughter (the second mass shooting of the week, by the way, in case you hadn't heard about what happened in Alabama days earlier, as most haven't, because, ya know, "freedom" and all) it's unlikely a damned thing will be done to make such senseless killings even the tiniest bit more difficult to pull off in the future, because the NRA prefers the "rights" of the terrorists over the people, and the Congress is made up of cowards afraid to stand up to the terrorists-enablers.

As noted by my friend Cenk Uygur yesterday, "Nearly 100,000 people get shot every year. That's 270 people a day and 87 dead because of gun violence every day. That's seven Colorado shootings per day!"

Imagine how many countries we'd have to go war against if even one day's worth of gun deaths in this nation were caused by a foreigner with dark skin.

And yet, despite all of that, and despite the fact that even the majority of gun owners and NRA members believe there should be common sense regulation on the sale of guns, there can, and will, be no such thing.

There can be no limits placed on the number of rounds in any high-capacity magazine used with any weapon. Thanks, NRA! There can be no tracking of someone who buys 6,000 bullets on the Internet, no questions asked. Thanks, NRA! And, worse, there may not even be any legitimate debate in the U.S. Congress about any of it, because best of luck to the soon-to-be-former elected official who tries it. Because "freedom" and "liberty" -- and thanks, NRA!

Thanks to the patriotic works of the NRA, there are now, apparently, millions of gullible Americans who believe that Obama will be signing a U.N. treaty to take away your guns because the NRA would very much like them to believe that, thanks, and remember to send them some money so they can keep protecting your rights against imaginary threats.

How imaginary? Well, according to Politico, within the past few hours, on his way out to comfort the victims of the Aurora, CO Massacre, "White House press secretary Jay Carney told reporters aboard Air Force One...that the Obama administration has no plans to push new gun-control measures in the wake of the deadly shooting rampage at a Colorado movie theater."

Of course he doesn't. Very courageous, Mr. President. The terrorists of the NRA win again.

from "NRA Prepares for Explosion of Common Sense" July 23, 2012,  
(<http://thenewsosphere.wordpress.com/2012/07/23/nra-prepares-for-explosion-of-common-sense/>):

After the horrific shootings in Aurora, Colorado, leading members of the National Rifle Association are telling their members to brace themselves for the worst, particularly an unstoppable flood of common sense when it comes to gun laws. "We pride ourselves on our preparation for and handling of anything, usually by shooting it, but this incident may possibly persuade people to reconsider their attitudes about guns, and we can't have that," said a NRA representative. "Luckily, we have donated to several unnamed Super PACs to make sure it doesn't happen." — Glenn Rogers (a Texan)

20120723-01 10:29 Pam

Re: Franklin D. Roosevelt Speeches (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #188)

The only one I've read so far is the one about saving private industry. It applies in every way to our situation today. WHY can't we look at what FDR did that worked and apply it now? Are people really so selfish? So ignorant? It's deja vu all over again, and most of the country is asleep. I read an article on Obama that faults him for being nebulous and more of an intellectual than a politician. I can't disagree. He's a conciliator, not a strong leader. I know he has a plan and has confidence in it, but he isn't sharing it with the people. I worry about Republicans' ulterior motives; this article suggested that their real aim is to take control of the Middle East, then turn to Russia and China and "make them our bitches." (My quote.) War with Iran factors in, which scares me to no end. Romney is a disaster waiting to happen. Obama is better than that, but I wish he were more forceful.

20120723-02 12:13 SteveB Fw: FMF Action: Help Keep Embattled Clinics Open!

from Feminist Majority Foundation:

Anti-abortion extremist groups – Operation Rescue and Operation Rescue/Operation Save America (OSA) – are out in force in Charlotte, North Carolina. But dozens of pro-choice supporters outnumbered their ranks on Saturday, the first day of the anti-abortion extremists national week-long siege targeting Charlotte clinics. Yes - with your help - we are standing up for abortion providers!

On Sunday, OSA once again targeted individual doctors at their homes. This conduct is outrageous, especially after OSA leader Phillip "Flip" Benham was convicted in a jury trial of criminal stalking of a Charlotte doctor who was brave enough to press charges. Benham is appealing the conviction.

We need your help to keep these courageous women's health care clinics open and safe! Please make a tax-deductible contribution today to support our National Clinic Access Project.

[https://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1400/shop/custom.jsp?donate\\_page\\_KEY=2117](https://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1400/shop/custom.jsp?donate_page_KEY=2117)

Our National Clinic Access Project and our Campus Staff are on the ground in Charlotte leading clinic defense community organizing and working with federal, state, and local law enforcement to protect doctors, staff and patients – but we need your help! Please make a tax-deductible contribution today!

Anti-abortion extremists who have been arrested many times for actions such as blockading clinics and stalking doctors have descended on Charlotte.

This week's siege is preparation for planned actions against clinics during the Democratic National Convention, which will be held in Charlotte in September.

This is just the beginning of OSA's week of intimidation, bullying and fear-mongering. Clinic defenders reported overhearing OSA members discussing their 'warrior assignments.' We will remain on alert and vigilant. We are determined to protect the brave doctors and clinic staff in Charlotte and to keep the clinics safe and accessible to women seeking reproductive health services.

Please help the Feminist Majority Foundation do everything we can to help embattled clinics, healthcare workers and doctors this summer. With your help, we are providing on-the-ground support in Charlotte. And we'll be on the ground in Charlotte again during the Democratic National Convention.

Without clinics and dedicated doctors and health care workers, there simply is no choice.

For Women's Lives, duVergne Gaines, FMF Legal Coordinator and Campus Director

20120723-03 13:15 SteveB "Banks, Global Elite Confirmed to Hold \$32 Trillion in Offshore Accounts"

"Banks, Global Elite Confirmed to Hold \$32 Trillion in Offshore Accounts" by Anthony Gucciardi, NationofChange

July 23, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/banks-global-elite-confirmed-hold-32-trillion-offshore-accounts-1343057197>)

Major banks and the financial global elite are now confirmed to have as much as **\$32 trillion in hidden assets stashed away in offshore accounts** that are subject to little or no taxation. As a result, around \$280 billion is estimated to be lost in tax revenues. In other words, the multi-trillion dollar banks and elite families are avoiding any taxation while **forcing United States citizens to foot the bill**. Amazingly, the \$32 trillion stashed away represents the overall *GDP of the United States and Japan combined*.

In order to reach the monetary figure, which many are calling quite conservative, economist James Henry commissioned was by the Tax Justice Network — a group that seeks to bring tax evasion to light. Even the Tax Justice Network was quite shocked by the outcome, with spokesperson John Christensen saying he was ultimately startled by the “scale” of the numbers. What’s more concerning than the numbers, however, is the entities behind them. The report revealed that major banks such as Bank of America and Citigroup were among the many major corporations and banking organizations to hide their assets in offshore tax havens.

In an interview with the news organization Al Jazeera, Christensen explains just how deep the report goes:

We’re talking about very big, well-known brands – HSBC, Citigroup, Bank of America, UBS, Credit Suisse – some of the world’s biggest banks are involved...and they do it knowing fully well that their clients, more often than not, are evading and avoiding taxes.

To find the incriminating information, Henry (the economist working for Christensen and the Tax Justice Network) actually utilized data from deep within the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, United Nations, and central banks to reach his final figure. Embedded in what could potentially be the largest and most publicized breaking story on the subject of large-scale tax evasion by the wealthy elite, Henry also found that the offshore tax havens are actually **“attractive to entire developing nations”** — not just major banks and ultra-rich families.

Used by ‘private elites’ to hide the wealth of developing nations, Henry found the balance sheets of **139 developing countries on record**. Since the 1970s, he estimates that among the richest of these nations currently disguising their true asset value had amassed around \$7.3 to \$9.3 trillion. A figure that is completely unknown to the rest of the world due to the fact that is ‘unrecorded’ as offshore wealth.

The findings are continuing to gain mainstream attention, and pinpoint just how far big banks and major corporations will go in ensuring that they do not have to pay a dime in taxes while at the same time calling for mass tax increases for the average citizen. Furthermore, it shows the financial mischief of the financial elite, depositing trillions upon trillions of dollars into offshore accounts with unknown value

20120723-04	14:21	SteveB	From the Right: “5 Ways to Get America Working Again”
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I’d have to respond: These must be the five things we don’t want to do! Yet, finally, something concrete from the Right!

“5 Ways to Get America Working Again” by David Harsanyi, *Human Events*

July 23, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/07/23/david-harsanyi-5-ways-to-get-america-working-again/>)

Step one? Please, stop.

It would probably strike the average politician as absurd to argue that the best way to fix the economy is to stop trying to “fix it.” But as John Taylor, former economist at the Council of Economic Advisers and professor of economics at Stanford University, argues, the most effective way to regain our edge is to change the way we think about the economy. This means returning to “first principles.” As an economic matter, Taylor defines this by saying

that “families, individuals, and entrepreneurs must be free to decide what to produce, what to consume, what to buy and sell, and how to help others.”

Not exactly a radical notion. Yet, from health care reform to environmentalist policy, from fiscal reform to the gutting of welfare reform, the economic agenda of Washington the past four years—and even longer—has corroded our traditional understanding of economic freedom.

Washington has many immediate tasks in front of it, of course: stopping the fiscal cliff that would result in a bevy of 2013 tax hikes, reforming entitlements and dealing with the explosion of dependency programs. But on a macro level, what the nation needs most, as Taylor argues, is predictable government, the rule of law, incentives that derive from the free-market system rather than activist government.

In other words, we need to get back to basics. Here are five ways Washington can stop “fixing” and start helping:

### 1. Austerity now!

Not long ago, few Americans knew, or cared, about the Baltic nation of Estonia. Nowadays, the small country is mentioned regularly within free-market economic circles as a pristine example of how cutting back government spending can spur economic growth. As Daniel J. Mitchell, an expert on supply-side tax policy at the Cato Institute who recently toured some Baltic nations tells Human Events, the turnaround in Estonia is real and so are the cutbacks. “They asked themselves a simple question,” Mitchell says, “What do we want? Our government to spend our money or the productive sector of our economy to spend it? Estonia—even though they haven’t been perfect—came up with the right answer.”

Like the United States, Estonia experienced a brutal recession in 2008, as its economy shrank nearly 20 percent—a number that took Greece five years to achieve. Rather than devaluing its currency or pumping money into inefficient government institutions, the small nation went the other direction: instituting genuine austerity—unlike the phantom cutbacks of many nations across the continent, or, worse, proposals to raise taxes. Public-sector wages were cut by 10 percent, the retirement age is being raised gradually from 61 to 65 by 2026 and other free-market reforms were instituted.

Estonians didn’t riot, but they did reelect the reform government and watched their economy grow at five times the euro-zone average.

Although every nation has its own set of problems, Mitchell points to comparable success stories over the past few decades in Canada, Ireland and New Zealand. By constraining government growth, the United States could also reduce the burden of government on its ailing economy and allow hundreds of billions of dollars to be reallocated from wasteful enterprises to productive industry.

Then, we can start seriously talking about the debt crisis, allowing the American people to regain some of the confidence they’ve lost in their government.

### 2. Simplify the tax code

[Yes! Let’s rape the country, poor, and middle class even more! –SteveB]

The IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service recently estimated that paperwork associated with the federal tax code costs Americans \$160 billion a year. Paperwork! The code is comprised of 25 volumes, over 76,000 pages, or about nine feet of soul-crushing paper. Two companies publish daily newsletters to keep everyone abreast of the ever-complex changes. We can fix it. Broaden the tax base, close loopholes and flatten the tax rates—all of which would bring more revenue stability and certitude to projections as well as make filing a comparable breeze.

We already have some basis for negotiations. Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles, co-chairmen of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, a group established and then promptly ignored by the president, have come up with a plan that would eliminate most deductions, exclusions and credit in the tax code. It would reduce tax rates and put them into three brackets of 8, 14 and 23 percent.

Is the plan perfect? Hardly. But it's a start.

With the recent Supreme Court decision finding Obamacare constitutional, congressional taxing authority has been expanded and now, Washington can use taxation to do just about anything. Simplification of the tax code would not only unlock dormant economic potential, but, in the process, it would blunt the preferred weapon of social engineers, who reward favored industries, punish success and distort economic incentives.

### 3. Best stimulus? Cheap energy

[But where is this "cheap energy"? Especially if one looks at the real total cost of Republican "solutions" in terms of tax subsidies, drilling subsidies, gifts to big oil, and environmental clean-up costs. –SteveB]

When looking at the states boasting the fastest rate of job creation during this long downturn—Texas, North Dakota, Louisiana, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Utah—you will surely notice that they share one characteristic in common: they produce fossil fuels.

The price of energy is embedded into all of the economy. As a fungible commodity, government has only so much power to affect the cost of energy—and the Obama administration has done nearly all it can to make it more expensive. With less government interference, however, experts estimate that oil and gas industry would create hundreds of thousands of jobs by even modestly expanding on the domestic resources.

Consequently, the Environmental Protection Agency should be regarded as one of the nation's leading job killing institutions. It has not only made oil and natural gas exploration more difficult, but it has instituted draconian rules regarding pollutant limits on coal plants—the same plants that provide us with most of our power. Let energy be, and let the economy grow.

### 4. No more easy money

The prevailing notion among many high-profile economists and financial journalists is that the Federal Reserve should do more to help the economy. By "help" they mean devalue the dollar.

We have not seen much inflation—not yet. But make no mistake: what these experts are advocating with an array of euphemisms is a devaluing of your home, your bank account and your retirement fund. In the past few years, the U.S. Federal Reserve has used quantitative easing (expanding the money supply by increasing the quantity of reserves in the banking system) and other means to try and kick-start the economy. Yet it has done little to help.

And because the economy remains sluggish, Wall Street's welfare queens still eagerly await more easy money and rely on negligible interest rates. Economists at major banks like Goldman Sachs are predicting that we'll soon see a third round of quantitative easing.

But is the problem liquidity? Many banks and companies have vast cash reserves, but they're not lending and they're not hiring.

So why pump more? As economist and scholar Thomas Sowell says, "in the old-time Keynesian economic religion will always say that the only reason creating more money hasn't worked is because there has not yet been enough money created."

And the Fed's game of footsie with Wall Street is only creating more uncertainty. Saying no more will allow the economy to move forward on its own.

### 5. Repeal — then must replace

Health care in America, despite all you hear, still offers us citizens one of the most efficient and highest quality systems in the world. But it's expensive, and it's only getting worse.

**Last year, the average cost of health care for a family of four increased nearly 7 percent to \$20,728 annually.** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services projected that overall national health spending would increase an average of 6.1 percent a year over the next decade. Health care spending will reach about \$4.6 trillion by 2019, according to a report in the journal Health Affairs, accounting for one of every five dollars we spend.

**Republicans need a comprehensive free-market plan that will create more competition, more choices and lower costs.**

[But they seem absolutely incapable of developing such a plan, don't they? –SteveB]

Yes, first Washington must repeal — because not only does Obamacare add tremendous new administrative burdens and cost onto businesses but it bends the cost curve up — but then it needs a plan in place that allows individuals and businesses to come up with their own cost-effective solutions. Right now, no one knows what the future will bring, or what the costs will entail. Again, certainty in health care will go a long way in allowing the economy to move forward.

<a href="#">20120723-05</a>	15:06	SteveB	Fw: Dennis Kucinich Action: Contact Congress to Pass HR 808!
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from Dennis Kucinich:

As we share the grief of the family and friends of the victims in Aurora, it is important to be mindful that each year over 30,000 Americans die from gun violence. This is one of those moments in our national experience when it would be important for all of us to slow down and absorb the impact of a small community of people at a theater, anticipating with excitement the premier of a movie before meeting tragedy. The act is horrific.

There is a level of violence in our society which continues to represent a major social, political and public health challenge. The accounts of violence are so ubiquitous and have become so commonplace, that even the most ghastly events recede in our awareness. We are riveted to aftermaths and consequences of violence, but we have yet to, as a nation, fully explore their origins and roots -- and how to stop these horrific acts from ever happening.

On July 11th, 2001, exactly two months before 9/11, I brought to Congress a broad plan which called forth a new approach to deal with gun violence, gang violence, racial violence, domestic violence, child abuse, spousal abuse, violence in the schools, and violence against gays. The legislation, embodied in HR 808, would create a coordinated, nationwide, systematic approach to dealing with the presence of violence in American society through non-violent conflict resolution, instilled and acted upon through the aegis of a cabinet-level Department of Peace and Non-Violence.

We cannot continue to grope in the dark, hoping to stem a rising tide of violence within our nation through hope or words of consolation alone. We must be resolute in creating a new America, free of the scourge of violence. We must act.

I ask that you contact your member of Congress and ask them to cosponsor HR 808, legislation to form a cabinet level Department of Peace to address violence in our society and create new structures to deal with it directly. Let us grieve for those whose lives ended or have been irrevocably changed by the shootings in Aurora, Colorado. Then let us act to change our nation.

Go to Kucinich Action and get your Representative involved on this meaningful issue:

<http://action.kucinich.us/page/speakout/contact-congress>.

With respect, Dennis Kucinich

20120723-06 15:17 Dennis Re: Morocco (reply to SteveB)

SteveB: When did you go to Morocco? I have a friend there...

I took a Photo Tour group there in May 2010. Are any of these guys your friend?



20120723-09 18:02 SteveB Re: Morocco (reply to Dennis, above)

It looks like that might be Mohammed in the middle, though I don't recognize the colors. It's as exotic there as I have ever wanted to get...

I was happy to see your photos!

20120723-07 15:20 Pam Accountability vs. Greed

I listened to an interesting interview with Eliot Spitzer on NPR today. I wish he had stayed away from ladies of the night, because otherwise I really like him and what he has to say. (Sometimes I really want to ask why some men are so stupid--Jenrette, Clinton, Spitzer, Weiner. Otherwise intelligent men completely lose all judgment when they think they can get something for nothing. Maybe the risk is part of the fun.) Anyway, Spitzer was talking about the financial debacle, including LIBOR and the FED. He named names and didn't hold back, something I wish Obama would do. The banks own the politicians, as we all know, and it's a scandal that no one has been led off in handcuffs, like the Enron creeps. He actually used the word "handcuffs." The Senate committee that questioned Jamie Dimon pretty much licked his boots. I agree with Spitzer that the banks are too big and should be broken up; those responsible for the mess ought to at the very least face stiff fines and be held personally responsible. If Romney gets elected, God forbid, nothing will improve, and things will undoubtedly get worse, as the banks will

figure they can get away with anything. Obama needs to get his ass in gear, fire Geitner and the rest of that crew, stand up to the NRA, and throw some weight around. He won't of course because that might upset too many people, but if he does get re-elected, I want to see him kick some butt. I believe some simple honesty and fair regulation would go a long way toward restoring America's faith in itself, but if we continue to let the Sununu, Geitners, to say nothing of Bonehead and co., keep hold of the reins, we are sunk.

On a much happier note, I'd like to share my recent weekend with my son David. I mention this here because it is more than a personal issue; it's a legal one, which makes it political. David was adopted when he was three weeks old, and I didn't see him until last Friday, when, after 44 years, we met face to face. Words cannot begin to do justice to what that experience was like for both of us. It was beyond incredible, and both of us feel whole for the first time in our lives. There are only a few states that allow adult adoptees and birthparents access to original birth records. New York, where David was adopted, will release absolutely no information, even in the event of extreme medical need. I was able, with the help of sympathetic volunteers, to find David, but I'm one of the lucky ones. So many issues get attention--AIDS, gay rights, racial justice, breast cancer, smoking and drugs--but adoption issues remain the purview of a select and relatively small (though sizable) minority of activists. Much to my surprise, I have discovered that there is a counter movement that wants to keep records sealed indefinitely and has no sympathy for people like David and me who have wanted each other for decades. These opponents would deny access to critical personal information to adults in what is clearly a violation of individual, civil rights. People worry these days about government having access to virtually all of our personal, medical, financial, and educational information, despite HIPPA, and fear losing their privacy and control over their own lives and actions. This is more than a worry for adult adoptees and birthparents; it is a reality we live with every day of our lives. Awareness is the first step toward redressing wrongs, and the way society treated unmarried mothers in the '50s, '60s, and '70s was as wrong as denying black children the right to sit next to white children in school. Historians have brought the "Rape of Nanking" to public attention, and other atrocities have had their day in the public eye. I'm still waiting for adoption and the separation of mothers and their babies to get the attention they deserve. I'm no more optimistic about this than I am about Goldman Sachs becoming a charitable organization, but I would be wrong to say nothing about it. That said, I am happily reunited with a son I love and am proud of. No mother should ever be forced to deny her own child, and every effort should be made to help mothers keep their babies, when questions of abuse, addiction, or mental illness don't arise.

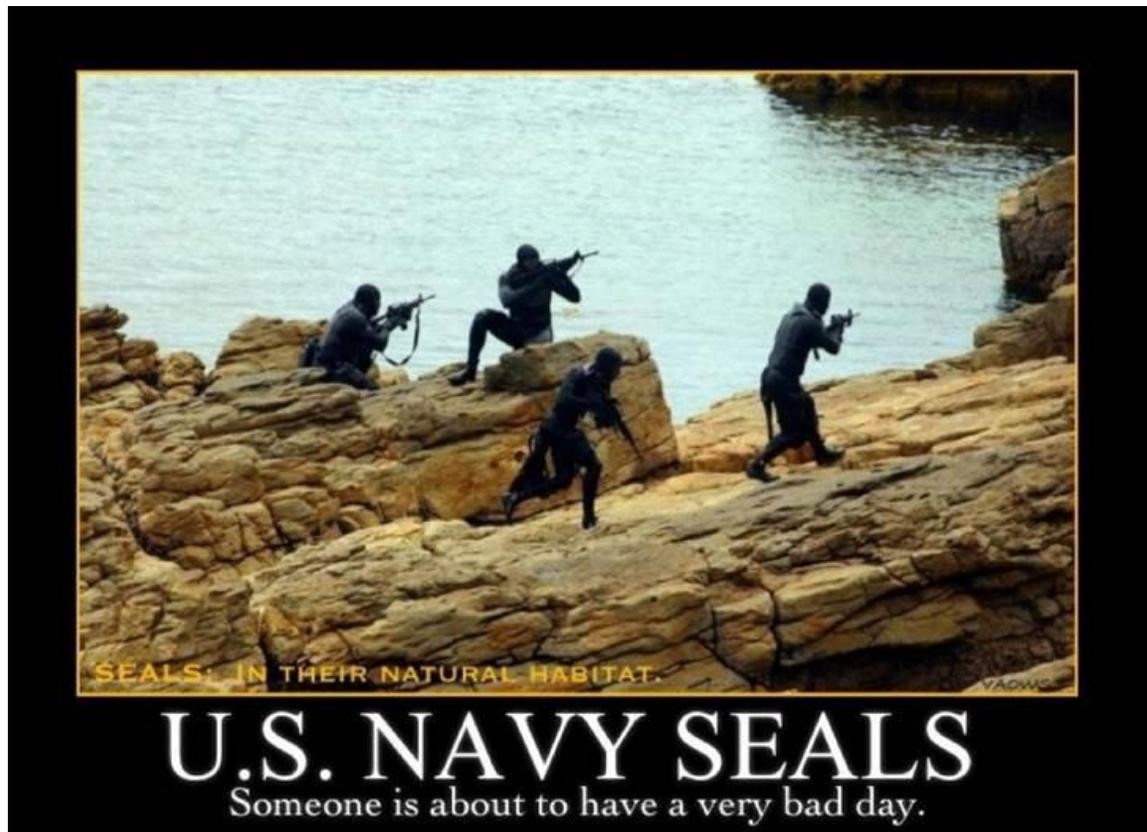
20120723-08	16:05	SteveB	Re: Accountability vs. Greed (reply to Pam, above)
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So there is actually a group (Right-wing, I suppose?) that is opposed to mothers and children reuniting? Amazing!

I don't know why this process should be so difficult. The law should be that once a child is an adult, they have the right to their own information. Where there is the consent of both parties (at this time, the foster parents must yield slightly), they should have the chance to find each other.

Sperm donors are a little different, because they mainly don't want to be found, from what I understand. Yet, I know of at least one case where a woman and son were able to find the father, even though he resided in a foreign country. Perhaps some places have more enlightened laws than the U.S.?

I greatly commend your endeavor, Pam. What a wonderful story and marvelous ending! Thank you for your courage and tenacity, and thank all of you mothers out there for your motherly love, which our world would absolutely not be able to function without!



"Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for dinner. Liberty is a well armed lamb contesting the vote." —unknown

"You only get three choices in life: Give up, give in, or give it all ya got!!" —unknown

[What about: Give a sh\*t? ;-)-SteveB]

For some of you, this is like preaching to the choir. BUT, we should all consider this carefully.

[Source of original email unknown.—SteveB]

This ought to concern anyone and everyone who uses a bank for any transactions!

ON JANUARY 1, 2013, THE US GOVERNMENT WILL BE REQUIRING EVERYONE TO HAVE DIRECT DEPOSIT FOR SS CHECKS.

WONDER WHY?

Subject: HR 4646

Be sure to read entire explanation

Watch for this AFTER November elections; remember this BEFORE you VOTE, in case you think Obama is looking out for your best interest.

A 1% tax on all bank transactions is what HR 4646 calls for.

Do you receive a paycheck, or a retirement check from Social Security or a pension fund and have it direct deposit??

Well guess what ... It looks as if Obama wants to tax it 1% !!!

This bill was put forth by Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA).

YES, that is 1% tax on all bank transactions - HR 4646, every time it goes in and every time money goes out.

Ask your congressperson to vote NO.

FORWARD THIS TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW!

1% tax on all bank transactions ~ HR 4646 - ANOTHER NEW OBAMA TAX SLIPPED IN WHILE WE WERE ASLEEP. Checked this on snopes, it's true! Check it out yourself ~ HR 4646.

President Obama's finance team is recommending a one percent (1%) transaction fee (TAX). Obama's plan is to sneak it in after the November elections to keep it under the radar.

This is a 1% tax on all transactions at any financial institution - banks, credit unions, savings and loans, etc. Any deposit you make, or even a transfer within your own bank from one account to another, will have a 1% tax charged.

If your paycheck or your Social Security or whatever is direct deposit, it will get a 1% tax charged for the transaction.

If your paycheck is \$1000, then you will pay Obama \$10 just for the privilege of depositing your paycheck in your bank. Even if you hand carry your paycheck or any check in to your bank for a deposit, 1% tax will be charged.

You receive a \$5,000 stock dividend from your broker, Obama takes \$50 just to allow you to deposit that check in the bank.

If you take \$1,000 cash to deposit at your bank, 1% tax will be charged.

Mind you, this is from the man who promised that, if you make under \$250,000 per year, you will not see one penny of new tax.

Keep your eyes and ears open, you will be amazed at what you learn about this guy's under-the-table moves to increase the number of ways you are taxed.

Oh, and by the way, if you receive a refund from the IRS next year and you have it direct deposited or you walk in to deposit that check, you guessed it. You will pay a 1% charge of that money just for putting it in your bank.

Remember, any money, cash, check or whatever, no matter where it came from, you will pay a 1% fee if you put it in the bank.

Some will say, oh well, it's just 1%. Are you kidding me? It's a 1% tax increase across the board. Remember, once the tax is there, they can also raise it at will. And if anyone protests, they will just say, "Oh, that's not really a tax, it's a user fee"!

Think this is no big deal? Go back and look at the transactions you made from last year's banking statements. Then add the total of all those transactions and deduct 1%. Still think it's no big deal?

The following is copied from Snopes [Deceitfully! –SteveB]:

snopes.com: Debt Free America Act: Is the U.S.government proposing a 1% tax on debit card usage and/or banking transactions?

It is true. The bill is HR-4646 introduced by US Rep Peter deFazio D-Oregon and US Senator Tom Harkin D-Iowa. Their plan is to sneak it in after the.....moved beyond proposing studies and submitted the Debt Free America Act (H.R. 4646), a bill calling for the implementation of a scheme to pay down the.....[2010] by Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.). His "Debt Free America Act" (H.R. 4646) would impose a 1 percent "transaction tax" on every financial transaction...Wed, 02 Nov 2011, 11:27:37 GMT, <http://www.snopes.com/politics/taxes/debtfree.asp>.

<a href="#">20120723-13</a>	22:38	SteveB	Re: Bank Deposit Transaction Fee Beginning Jan. 1, 2013 on All Transactions (reply to Dick, above)
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This one is so bogus you should be able to smell it across the room. I smelled it way down here in Bolivia!

FALSE! FALSE! FALSE! And is OLD! OLD! OLD! Despite the misquoting of Snopes.com at the end of the email.

If you type "HR 4646" into Google, I believe the entire first page is references which debunk this email.

See, just for examples, [www.snopes.com/politics/taxes/debtfree.asp](http://www.snopes.com/politics/taxes/debtfree.asp),  
<http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/barackobama/a/Obama-One-Percent-Transaction-Tax.htm>,  
[http://www.defazio.house.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=642&Itemid=129](http://www.defazio.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=642&Itemid=129),  
<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/111/hr4646>, <http://www.truthorfiction.com/rumors/d/debt-free-America-act.htm>, [http://www.washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/111\\_HR\\_4646.html](http://www.washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/111_HR_4646.html),  
<http://www.godlikeproductions.com/forum1/message1878502/pg1>.

Funny thing, the truth is incredibly rarely found in these right-wing diatribes we all get in our inboxes—especially the ones containing the word "Obama".

Thanks for sending this one to me. I love to demolish them.

<a href="#">20120723-12</a>	20:58	SteveBA	Keystone Pipeline
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To the liberal idiots who support Obama and his ilk on this leftist web site we are seeing the consequences of the idiots who didn't want Canadian oil coming south. As the pm of Canada said we will sell oil to those that want it. With CNOOC's bid for nexen more energy resources are going to our biggest competitor in the world the Chinese. Instead of sending oil to Houston it's going west to china along with the thousands of jobs that could have come with the pipeline. Oh I know solar and wind will save the day. Of course all we get with that nonsense is solyndra and visual pollution.

<a href="#">20120723-14</a>	23:04	SteveB	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveBA, above)
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OK, but I don't understand why you would call your friends idiots.

I think you should ask yourself, why does this bitter anger (or whatever it is) always have to spoil communications from the Right?

If you look back at our 4000+ pages of books containing our group's activities, you see this predictable pattern repeated over and over.

The left is civil, the right is name-callers. It doesn't say much for the positions or the people of the right.

But I hope you will continue to point-out the error of our ways.

I treasure the truth.

The truth about Keystone is that those jobs would have been a tiny, temporary thing and the oil was supposed to go to China anyway, not the U.S., though I don't know exactly why.

The big deal was that some fat cats wanted to line their pockets with your money. Gee, too bad they lost and are still crying over their loss. I wonder what they did, exactly, that prompted this very welcome email from you? You are being manipulated, my old friend.

20120723-15 23:58 SteveG Graphic: Mitt R0mney: Helping America Lose \$100 Billion per Year

**MITT ROMNEY:**  
**HELPING AMERICA LOSE \$100 BILLION PER YEAR**

Goldman Sachs  
ROMNEY  
BELIEVE IN AMERICA  
INVEST IN THE COUNTRY  
MITTROMNEY.COM  
ExxonMobil

*By stashing money in countries with tiny tax rates, wealthy businesses and individuals like Mitt Romney, Goldman Sachs and Exxon Mobil cost the federal government roughly \$100 billion every year, helping the federal deficit reach over 1 trillion dollars.*

Source: California Public Interest Research Group "Tax Shell Game"

Paid for by Democracy for America and not authorized by any candidate.

DFA  
DEMOCRACY  
FOR AMERICA

<http://www.kuriositas.com/2012/06/amazing-monkey-orchid.html>



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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #189 — JULY 25, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **A Raygun of Hope?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 25, 2012)

Well...I would hope so!

"Gun Owners Surveyed by Frank Luntz Express Broad Support for Gun Control Policies" by Sam Stein, Huffington Post

July 24, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/24/gun-owners-frank-luntz\\_n\\_1699140.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/24/gun-owners-frank-luntz_n_1699140.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))



(WASHINGTON) A survey of National Rifle Association members and non-affiliated gun owners conducted by a prominent Republican pollster shows that there is broad support for certain provisions that would restrict the sale of guns.

According to a study unveiled at the Center for American Progress on Tuesday, 82 percent of 945 self-identified gun owners said they support requiring criminal background checks for gun purchasers. The sample was divided evenly between gun owners who were current or lapsed members of the NRA and non-NRA gun owners. 74 percent of the NRA members said they support the background checks.

The study, which was conducted in May by GOP wordsmith Frank Luntz, revealed the following data points as well:

- 74 percent of NRA members believe concealed carry permits should only be granted to applicants who have completed gun safety training.
- 68 percent of NRA members believe concealed carry permits should only be granted to applicants who do not have prior arrests for domestic violence.
- 63 percent of NRA members believe concealed carry permits should only be granted to applicants 21 years of age or older.
- 75 percent of NRA members believe that concealed carry permits should be granted only to those applicants who have not committed any violent misdemeanors.

Taken in full, the numbers cut against the conventional wisdom, which holds that there is little political will for tackling gun control legislation in the wake of Friday's shooting in Aurora, Colo. But that theory, the study's authors insisted, was always based on a false reading of the public opinion data.

"Gun owners and NRA members overwhelmingly support common sense steps to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, even as the NRA leadership continues to oppose them," said New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, chair of Mayors Against Illegal Guns, which commissioned the study. "It's time for those in Washington — and those running for President — to stand with gun owning citizens who are concerned about public safety, rather than influence peddling lobbyists who are obsessed with ideology."

An equally telling feature of the study is the pollster who put it together. While Luntz's work on the topic alongside Bloomberg's group and the liberal Center for American Progress may seem like the personification of a strange-bedfellows coalition, Luntz explained that his ideological bent is towards sensible gun laws.

"I grew up in an NRA family and strongly believe in Second Amendment rights," he told The Huffington Post in an email. "But I don't believe that anyone with a felony record should automatically be able to own a gun. I don't believe in absolutes."

20120724-01	06:50	MarthaH	"Trophy Backlash: Are We Rewarding Kids for Just Showing Up?"
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Amen! Give them a book, a horn, a savings account for college. Keep the trophies!

"Trophy Backlash: Are We Rewarding Kids for Just Showing Up?" by Sarah Maizes, MSNBC

July 23, 2012, (<http://moms.today.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/07/23/12896389-trophy-backlash-are-we-rewarding-kids-for-just-showing-up?lite>)

(Did he win the championship, or ride the bench? Some parents think we're overdosing on trophies.)

This Friday, 14,000 athletes from 204 countries around the world will gather in London for the opening of the Olympic Games. Imagine their excitement as each of these athletes prepares to compete.

Now imagine each and every one receiving a gold medal – just for "showing up."

Sounds stupid, right? After all, that's not what sports are about. In sports, somebody wins - somebody loses. Somebody gets a gold medal and somebody goes home empty handed. That's sports. That's life.

So tell me, why do we feel the need to award every kid a trophy for every sport they play?

There are few debates in parenthood – with the exception of breast-feeding – that are as heated as that over whether every kid should get a trophy. But there may be a trophy backlash brewing.

My kids have shelves full of trophies for basketball, soccer and Tee-ball despite the fact that none of them have ever shown any real prowess in any of those sports. My oldest daughter even has a bowling trophy that praises her for coming in “2nd place for most spares.” No joke.

Sure, trophies are fun to collect. So were Wacky Packs. But once those trophies come home, their value diminishes rapidly from a symbol of accomplishment to, well, that of an old crayoned kid’s menu.

I say “enough already!”

I can see the value of giving a kid a pat on the head when they’ve accomplished something. But shouldn’t those shiny, gold statues and medals be reserved for real accomplishments? Shouldn’t they be a token of acknowledgement for a marked effort, a honed skill, or even good ol’ sportsmanship – not just for showing up?

Let's start with this list of "accomplishments," and see if we can agree which are deserving of a trophy versus a “Pat on the Head.”

Winning a baseball tournament = Trophy

Eating all their dinner = POH

Exhibiting real, true "Good Sportsmanship" for an entire season = Trophy

Napping = POH

Making the most baskets in a season = Trophy

Wiping themselves = POH (Maybe an extra hair touse for washing hands.)

It occurred to me I might be bitter because I never got any trophies, so I interviewed the experts: a bunch of eight-year-olds. I asked them, “Do you think everybody should get a trophy?”

One kid said “Yeah. It’s nice. Then nobody is left out.”

Fair enough.

But another kid disagreed. And she was angry. “I don’t think it’s fair that everyone gets a trophy when you tried really hard and somebody else gets one who didn’t do anything. Like, there was this kid on my basketball team and he never went to practice. He got a trophy. And it wasn’t fair.”

There were nods of agreement and “Yeah! No fair!” followed by someone yelling “Ice cream truck!” and that was the end of my study.

But I felt vindicated.

Everybody wants their kids to be happy. We all want them to grow-up well-adjusted, fair-minded and confident. But the cold, hard, gold-plated truth just might be that awards for worthy deeds actually encourage children -- and grown-ups -- to try harder, take pride in their own abilities, and do the right thing. And I don’t see how that can be wrong.

Live Poll: Do kids today get too many trophies? (97% said “Yes”.)

[20120724-04](#) 10:07 Pam Re: "Trophy Backlash: Are We Rewarding Kids for Just Showing Up?" (reply to MarthaH, above)

It used to be that kids (like me) played because it was fun, not because we expected a prize for doing it. I think this rewards system is tied to our materialism and what's-in-it-for-me? Attitude. I feel the same way about bribing kids to read. Every time a principal agrees to eat worms if his students read a book over the summer, I groan. I remember when my parents used to tell me to get my nose out of a book and go outside and play. Plato worried that literacy would ruin people's memories; he was right. I worry that the Internet and TV will ruin our kids' imaginations and ability to entertain themselves. I say this as my 3-yr. old grandson is watching "Blue's Clues" on TV. Call me a hypocrite.

[20120724-02](#) 08:26 SteveB Un-American

Republicans are a minority which has given-up on trying to argue its losing (minority) politics and decided, instead, to try to impose its will on the majority in whatever way it can.

What could be more un-American?

[20120724-03](#) 09:53 SteveG Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveBA, FotM Newsletter #188)

Name calling has no place in a civil discourse.

As I understand the Keystone pipeline: it was to get oil shale to refineries; passed through an area that may affect the water table of 7 states; similar pipelines for shale oil have a high rate of leaking; once the oil was refined it was to be exported; part of the pipeline route has been given the go ahead and the remained is under discussion as to the route and to minimize the impact of potential leaks.

[20120724-05](#) 10:25 Pam Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveBA, FotM Newsletter #188)

"Visual pollution?" I find wind farms far more attractive than giant oil rigs. JIMHO The real issue, of course, is global warming and the continuing degradation of our environment. We need to develop clean energy ASAP (jobs will be created) and figure out how we're going to survive in a more environmentally hostile world. The north will need to install air conditioning; we'll need to stop building beach houses where hurricanes erode the coast line; we'll need to develop new vaccines against insect-borne diseases that heretofore have been most prevalent in the tropics; we'll need to figure out how to manage our water supplies so that droughts like the one this summer don't diminish our food supply. So many things need doing, and I believe there are people who are working on them, but who's paying attention?

[20120724-07](#) 11:07 Art Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #188)

Isn't that the truth. Why all the vehemence and name calling from the right? Because we disagree? Science is on our side.

[20120724-11](#) 16:49 Bill Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #188)

Was in Canada last week and read in both the Toronto and Charlottetown papers about the Gateway pipeline project, which will carry crude and related products west from sources in Alberta to coastal British Columbia. My understanding of this pipeline project is that the petroleum products transported are intended primarily for the Chinese market via tanker from B.C. The developer is Enbridge. I don't happen to know who the investors or partners are.

The primary element of last week's news and opinion stories was that the developer of the pipeline had just agreed, as a result of substantial pressure from those concerned about environmental effects, to upgrade the pipeline via use of heavier steel in the pipeline and remotely operable valves. Cost of those accommodations is estimated at half a billion above the current \$6 billion estimate for construction. It is the Alberta government that will make the primary ruling on acceptability of the project. B. C. will certainly have a role, but the larger decision will be made in Alberta.

What occurs to me is that, if the Gateway pipeline gets thumbs up from Alberta and whoever else may have jurisdiction, that will make it easy for the Keystone developers to triumph in their certification efforts, since they inevitably will note the destination of petroleum carried by the Gateway project. Strategic considerations, in other words, may have a large role. In any event, it would be my guess that the U. S.'s mighty thirst for petroleum will cause Keystone to succeed in some measure, in some form, in any longer scenario. There just aren't enough windmills and natural gas wells to supplant petroleum in any longer scenario, e. g. ten years.

Whatever problems with origin in global warming or the economy may occur in the next few years, oil supply will be of huge concern.

Thoughts?

<a href="#">20120724-12</a>	17:54	Dennis	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Bill, above) & "Preventable Errors Led to Pipeline Spill, Inquiry Finds"
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Enbridge has a record of transporting gooey Canadian Tar Sands oil through Michigan, except for what gets spilled (see below) (Disclosure: I was an Enbridge stockholder at the time of the spill, but wisely sold the day after.)

I too was in Canada last week, in Alberta and B.C. Since Alberta is the Texas of Canada, there won't be any problem getting the project approved there. B.C. may be another matter.

Are Canadian Tar Sands, with their high cost of production, huge use of water, and excessive carbon omissions a wise place for the U.S. to rely on for oil? Seems that North Dakota and all the other oil shale deposits that are being fracked around the country may make the U.S. oil independent. I expect the cost of oil, and the stock prices of oil companies, to drop in the months, if not years, ahead. A new route for Keystone XL will probably get approved. It just won't go over the Ogallala Aquifer since there are too many Republican farmers in Nebraska dependent on clean water for irrigation.

"Preventable Errors Led to Pipeline Spill, Inquiry Finds" by Adeshina Emmanuel, *New York Times*

July 10, 2012, (<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/10/preventable-errors-led-to-pipeline-spill-inquiry-finds/>)

<a href="#">20120724-13</a>	18:20	Clark	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Bill & Dennis, above)
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Weird and apropos of nothing but I was in Canada two nights ago as well. Something in the water? (not oil, I hope).

<a href="#">20120724-16</a>	20:07	Bill	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Clark, above)
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Well, we could have been in search of cooler weather, no? But you, Clark, don't have that far to go to be in Quebec, I think.

<a href="#">20120724-18</a>	21:05	Clark	Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Bill, above)
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*Mais oui*, except that I was in B.C. On my way back from Alaska, where they love their pipelines almost as much as their salmon. BTW, they say the wild caught (pink) salmon that we consume in the lower 48 is considered dog food up there. Of course, they also love their dogs, so maybe that's not so bad.

[20120724-14](#) 18:29 Jim Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to all, above)

But the developers of the Keystone XL project going to the US Gulf have admitted that part of the strategy was to raise oil prices in the Midwest by bypassing refineries in places like northern Indiana to reduce American oil availability. As long as they can sell it to somebody who will pay higher prices, they will skip us until we agree to pay those higher prices for their products.

Keystone was never about giving the US more oil to use--just more oil to sell. That is why we are now exporting so much.

[20120724-15](#) 19:23 Pam Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to all, above)

OK. I'm willing to be realistic. We're not getting off oil in the next decade, but that is no reason to delay research in other forms of energy. The last article I read (in the Stanford alumni magazine) talked about how the technology already exists to use hydro, wind, and solar energy if we go global and share sun with cloudy areas and geothermal with icy climates. I truly believe we (scientists with adequate funding) could solve our energy problems if the political will was there. It's like the human race is dragging a huge ball and chain everywhere it goes that makes progress next to impossible. We spend so much on terrible things, like wars and exploiting vulnerable populations, that we ignore problems we could solve with a bit of will-power. I'm such a pessimist, though; I think it's more likely that we'll destroy the planet, at least as a home for humans, than that we'll learn to live sustainably. I won't see the worst, but I worry that my grandchildren will.

It's always about money. The environment, people's health, and long-term planning be damned. I don't understand all the technicalities, but I know we're in trouble if we don't make some changes. Despite my earlier pessimism, I believe (hope) we will stop short of global suicide. I still think the wealthy of the world will burrow underground, while the rest of the population struggles for survival on an increasingly hostile surface. But what do I know?

I'm really a basically happy person, really.

[20120724-17](#) 20:15 Bill Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Pam, above)

Pam (Happy Person), Martin Amis somehow captured the nature of it all in the title of his book, *Moronic Inferno*. But I'd advise some reasonable effort, as you suggest you are doing, by trying to be happy. Life's too short, no?

Pam (above): I still think the wealthy of the world will burrow underground, while the rest of the population struggles for survival on an increasingly hostile surface.

Morlocks and Eloi?

[20120724-19](#) 21:34 SteveB Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to all, above) / CANADA

See? The above emails demonstrate the giant sucking effect of our northerly neighbor, Canada. Half of Friends of the Middle, it seems, have been magnetically(?) pulled north.

Something has to be done! Canada must be the next Iran (after we actually finish with Iran, in about 2025). Canada even has oil! There, shivering amid the lonesome, snowy pines, one can find solace and **the next 9 to 13 U.S. states!** (I don't know what to do with the territories and neither, apparently, does Canada.) Maybe Quebec would be left as an independent country, or a department of France...

### **Manifest destiny of the incredibly exceptional Gringos!**

Now, please pass me that delicious Canadian national dish...er...what was its name...road-kill? I love Canada!

20120724-06 10:55 Dick Fw: Proposed 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment

OK, SteveB, is this true?

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Found this interesting, Children of congress member do not have to pay back their college student loans. How nice!

Monday on Fox news they learned that the staffers of Congress family members are exempt from having to pay back student loans. This will get national attention if other news networks will broadcast it. When you add this to the below, just where will all of it stop?

35 States file lawsuit against the Federal Government

Governors of 35 states have filed suit against the Federal Government for imposing unlawful burdens upon them. It only takes 38 (of the 50) States to convene a Constitutional Convention.

This will take less than thirty seconds to read. If you agree, please pass it on.

This is an idea that we should address.

For too long we have been too complacent about the workings of Congress. Many citizens had no idea that members of Congress could retire with the same pay after only one term, that they specifically exempted themselves from many of the laws they have passed (such as being exempt from any fear of prosecution for sexual harassment) while ordinary citizens must live under those laws. The latest is to exempt themselves from the Healthcare Reform... in all of its forms. Somehow, that doesn't seem logical. We do not have an elite that is above the law. I truly don't care if they are Democrat, Republican, Independent or whatever. The self-serving must stop.

If each person that receives this will forward it on to 20 people, in three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one proposal that really should be passed around.

Proposed 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution: "Congress shall make no law that applies to the citizens of the United States that does not apply equally to the Senators and/or Representatives; and, Congress shall make no law that applies to the Senators and/or Representatives that does not apply equally to the citizens of the United States."

20120724-10 14:40 SteveB Re: Proposed 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment (reply to Dick, above)

1. (LIE) <http://www.factcheck.org/2011/01/congress-not-exempt-from-student-loans/>
2. (LIE) [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Governors\\_of\\_35\\_states\\_have\\_filed\\_suit\\_against\\_the\\_Federal\\_Government](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Governors_of_35_states_have_filed_suit_against_the_Federal_Government)
3. (N/A) The idea (neither TRUTH nor LIE) that congress should be subject to its own laws sounds OK, but I don't think it would solve any of our problems.

20120724-08

12:10

SteveB

From the Right: "Obama's Philosophy Out of Step with American History's 'Self-Made Men'"

"Obama's Philosophy Out of Step with American History's 'Self-Made Men'" by Jarrett Stepman, *Human Events*

July 24, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/07/24/obamas-philosophy-out-of-step-with-american-historys-self-made-men/>)

Nothing symbolized the overall economic philosophy of modern day liberalism and President Barack Obama, than his statements in a Roanoke, Virginia campaign speech last week.

"If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help. There was a great teacher somewhere in your life. Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you've got a business — you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen," Obama said.

This statement by Obama demonstrates a fundamental lack of belief in individual Americans to create their own wealth and become what many in American history have called "self-made men." The philosophical underpinnings of Obama's statement fundamentally contradict the belief in American exceptionalism, that is: Laissez faire economics, equality of opportunity, individualism, and popular but limited self-government.

There are a number of famous examples in American history that show how out of step Obama's beliefs are with the long tradition of dominant American beliefs and attitudes, and some of these examples are of people who generally believed that government action could in fact help in the process of entrepreneurial success. I will use three men of American history demonstrate the powerful ethic of the self-made man. These individuals are Benjamin Franklin, Henry Clay, Frederick Douglass.

The man who almost single-handedly created the image of the self-made man in America was Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin. Franklin demonstrated the virtues of self-reliance and hard work in both his own life and especially in his writings, yet he came from very humble origins.

Franklin believed that by cultivating industry, frugality, and self-sufficiency in its citizens, America would be both strong and prosperous. A society of dependents would have been odious to Franklin, who wrote in Poor Richards Almanack, "A plowman on his legs is higher than a gentleman on his knees."

While the ultimate burden of success fell on the individual, Franklin believed that those who had achieved success should be interested in maintaining and improving their society. He combined the ideas of both individualism and civics that were so critical to the founding.

Franklin would have had no patience for the welfarism demonstrated by the Obama administration and the modern Democratic Party. In early July the Obama administration made a drastic and possibly illegal move to repeal the welfare reform laws of 1996 through a Department of Health Human Services mandate, changing the welfare-to-work programs back into no-strings attached handouts.

Franklin was harsh on even the poor laws of his own day and said that they "encourage idleness and prodigality" and "promote and increase poverty." Obama's change in welfare will make America more like California, which didn't go through the same welfare reform that the rest of the nation did in the 1990's and currently has one-third of all welfare recipients in the nation, a stagnant economy, crushing deficit, staggering debt and a mass exodus of Californians looking for work and better opportunities. This will be a clear setback for this and future generations.

The idea of the self-made man became an even more important force in American culture in the generation after the founding, and it was apparent that the culture of individualism and self-reliance that Franklin and other founders tried to inculcate in future American generations was taking off.

The great American statesman, Henry Clay, is often given credit for popularizing the term "self-made man" in an 1832 speech he gave about the "American System" in the Senate.

In a clarification of his "you didn't build that" statement, Obama said, "What I said was together we build roads and we build bridges...That's the point I've made millions of times, and by the way, that's a point Mr. Romney has made as well, so this is just a bogus issue."

Obama and his followers may point to Clay as a champion of their belief in the government's critical role in economic development, as the American System was about building a system of national roads, protective tariffs to protect and promote manufactures, and a centralized national bank, however, there is a key difference in the ethos of Clay and Obama.

In a speech promoting his program of economic development, Clay said, "In Kentucky, almost every manufactory known to me, is in the hands of enterprising and self-made men, who have acquired whatever wealth they possess by patient and diligent labor."

Notice the key difference in the outlook of Clay versus Obama. Clay believes that the right economic and infrastructure programs can help individuals reap the benefits of their self-sufficiency, while Obama ultimately believes that the wealth and success of individuals is ultimately owed to collective society and government. This is a critical part of modern day liberal thought, that government and society own both you and the fruit of your labor, and that "society" has a right to redistribute it in any way that it sees as "fair" and "equitable". This is the foundation of "positive rights".

Clay, often called the "Mill Boy of the Slashes" to highlight his humble, middle-class origins would undoubtedly have seen the modern day liberal ethos as a warped version of his American System. Clay had a good but uneven education, and was certainly not a product of an Ivy League school, yet he reached the height of American society through incredible talent and ambition, not welfare or affirmative action.

The most dramatic example of the self-made man, perhaps in American history, is Frederick Douglass. Douglass, an former slave from Maryland, the offspring of a black slave mother and white father, had given himself and education despite attempts by his former master to keep him from getting an education. If there was ever a person who should have looked for a handout or given up on success in life, it should have been Douglass, but instead he made himself into one of the most learned and successful men of his age. He didn't let institutional opposition keep him from reaching the pinnacles of success in America.

Douglass, a man who had every right to believe in welfare and reparations for himself and others like him, instead expounded upon an entirely different ethic, one of individualism, self-sufficiency, hard work, and independence.

In a famous speech that he gave through most of his life called, "Self-Made Men," Douglas spoke about what the critical elements are for success in America. He explained who the self-made men were and what made them successful. Douglass's speech is the antithesis of everything Obama and modern liberals stand for.

"Self-made men are the men who, under peculiar difficulties and without the ordinary helps of favoring circumstances, have attained knowledge, usefulness, power and position and have learned from themselves the best uses to which life can be put in this world, and in the exercises of these uses to build up worthy character," Douglass continued, "In fact they are the men who are not brought up but who are obliged to come up, not only without the voluntary assistance or friendly co-operation of society, but often in open and derisive defiance of all the efforts of society and the tendency of circumstances to repress, retard and keep them down."

Douglass expounded upon the principles of the modern Americans who wish to conserve the traditional ethos, culture and political system of the Founding Fathers.

Douglass continued to describe self-made men, "Such men as these, whether found in one position or another, whether in the college or in the factory; whether professors or plowmen; whether Caucasian or Indian; whether Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-African, are self-made men and are entitled to a certain measure of respect for their success and for proving to the world the grandest possibilities of human nature, of whatever variety of race or color."

In his speech, Douglass even scoffed at the idea that an Ivy League education is what gives a person ultimate success, and he lambasted do-nothing intellectuals. Douglass also scoffed at the idea that success comes through "good fortune" and circumstance. Douglass said "Detraction is, to many, a delicious morsel."

Modern day Leftists base their values on the idea that society owes you and you owe society, and Obama's statement demonstrates a clear philosophical agreement. However, conservative economist Milton Friedman described exactly how individuals should see government. Friedman said that a free citizen should ask, "'What can I and my compatriots do through government' to help us discharge our individual responsibilities, to achieve our several goals and purposes, and above all, to protect our freedom?"

[20120724-09](#) 12:31 Ben Graphic: Very Demotivational





The Roadfood Tour of Connecticut is only two months away. On the weekend of September 29th & 30th, a band of world-class eaters is going to tackle a menu of four-star pizza, donuts to die for, hot lobster rolls, fried clams, two-foot hot dogs, amazing cheeseburgers, and New England ice cream at its finest.

There are a limited number of places available on this tour, for which several of the state's legendary restaurateurs are planning special tastings, exhibitions, and Roadfood-only meals, so please get your tickets now. Here is the page to order them.

Stephen has secured great rates (including internet) at the newly renovated Sheraton Hotel at Bradley Airport (so if you fly in to Hartford, you'll be right there). Connecticut is small enough that if you come a day or two early or stay a day or two late, you'll be within striking distance of dozens of Roadfood eateries not included in the tour – in Connecticut as well as Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York's Hudson Valley.

When interviewers ask Jane & Michael why they live in Connecticut when, in fact, their job would allow them to live anywhere in the US, they answer, "for the pizza." Then they add, "and for the lobster rolls ... and the hot-relish hot dogs ... and the chocolate donuts ... and, and, and ..." Come join us in September and enjoy a state that overflows with good things to eat.

Connecticut gave birth to the hot lobster roll and the white clam pizza. It also is home of world-class donuts, hot dogs, cheeseburgers, and ice cream.

We will be staying both nights at the Sheraton Bradley Airport hotel in Hartford, where Stephen is arranging special rates (\$99/night). The bus will arrive and depart from this location.

Having lived in Connecticut for over 30 years, Jane and Michael know the state well, and their good relationships with many of its foremost Roadfood chefs guarantee that a ticket on this bus will provide a once-in-a-lifetime weekend eating adventure.

We'll plan to start each day with superior donuts from around the state. From there, we visit bakeries, shoreline lobster shacks, burger stands, and ice cream parlors, ending each day with a feast at one of the state's legendary pizzerias.

The ticket price of \$229 includes a place on the bus and a couple of the special meals, but most food will be pay as you go.

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

<a href="#">20120724-21</a>	22:27	SteveG	From the Right: "Colorado Batman Shooting Shows Obvious Signs of Being Staged"
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How is this for a right wing conspiracy theory?

"Colorado Batman Shooting Shows Obvious Signs of Being Staged" by Mike Adams, NaturalNews

July 20, 2012,

([http://www.naturalnews.com/036536\\_James\\_Holmes\\_shooting\\_false\\_flag.html?fb\\_comment\\_id=fbc\\_10151280867989418\\_27184507\\_10151284003639418#f1d3d0e2f33bc4](http://www.naturalnews.com/036536_James_Holmes_shooting_false_flag.html?fb_comment_id=fbc_10151280867989418_27184507_10151284003639418#f1d3d0e2f33bc4))

...**this guy was equipped with exotic gear by someone with connections to military equipment.** SWAT clothing, explosives, complex booby-traps... c'mon, this isn't a "lone gunman." This is somebody who was selected for a mission, given equipment to carry it out, then somehow brainwashed into getting it done.

[Read more at NaturalNews...](#)

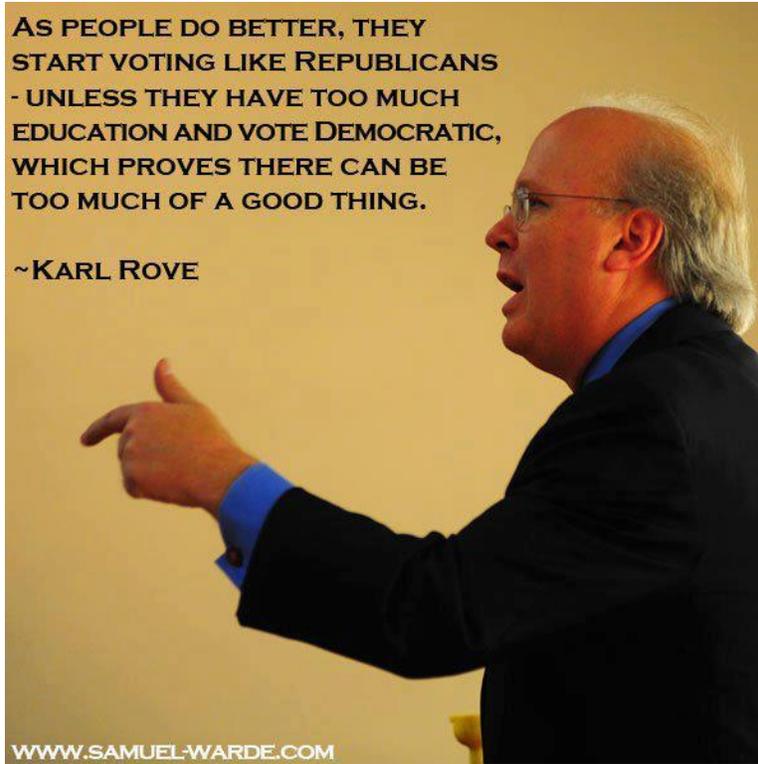
<a href="#">20120724-22</a>	23:57	Tom	Graphic: The Dark Knight Answers
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**AS PEOPLE DO BETTER, THEY  
START VOTING LIKE REPUBLICANS  
- UNLESS THEY HAVE TOO MUCH  
EDUCATION AND VOTE DEMOCRATIC,  
WHICH PROVES THERE CAN BE  
TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING.**

**~KARL ROVE**

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Man, you could put "somebody's eye out" with this thing!

<http://hackedgadgets.com/2008/01/16/disintegrator-rubber-band-gun/>



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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #190 — JULY 26, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Mitt in Mass.**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 26, 2012)

If a Presidential candidate can't win his home state, where he was governor and where he still allegedly lives, when his friends and neighbors don't want to vote for him, then what good can he be for the whole country?

from the article, below:

**"So in his home state, the presumptive 2012 GOP nominee is running an astonishing 40 points behind the 50-year average for the winners of presidential elections....One of Romney's greatest problems may be that Massachusetts remembers him all too well."**

**Willard Romney today accused President Obama of pushing for massive defense spending cuts.**

~ Addressing the 113th VFW Convention  
July 24, 2012 - Reno, NV

**But he didn't mention a minor detail:  
Republicans forced the "radical" defense cuts  
with their budget brinkmanship last year.**

Anklejive.com

(Thanks to SteveG!)

"Romney: Massachusetts's 'Un-Favorite Son'" by Robert McElvaine, Politico

July 25, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0712/78977.html>)

The Obama campaign has had some success in attacking one of Mitt Romney's two key claims for being able to fix the economy and help middle-class Americans: his tenure as head of Bain Capital.

You might then expect the presumptive Republican nominee to focus on his other major asset: his term as Massachusetts governor. But he's not.

One reason, of course, is that talking about this reminds voters of Romney's health care program, which President Barack Obama cites as one model for what Republicans denounce as "Obamacare."

But there is a larger reason: the way Bay State voters now view him as their "un-favorite son."

Massachusetts is vying with New York in polls as the state where Romney trails Obama the most. In Massachusetts, the state's former governor is now estimated to be 21 percentage points behind the president.

Though Massachusetts is a "blue" state, that doesn't fully explain Romney's low ratings. Republicans do win in Massachusetts. Romney demonstrated that in 2002 — as did William Weld, who won two gubernatorial elections in the 1990s.

Consider that Scott Brown won Ted Kennedy's former Senate seat in 2010. Brown is now running an essentially even reelection campaign against popular progressive Elizabeth Warren. That puts Brown more than 20 points ahead of Romney in the state.

It is worth noting that Romney does claim several "home" states. He cites Michigan, where he was born, and New Hampshire and California, where he owns vacation homes. He is now trailing Obama in all these states — though not by as much as where he served as chief executive.

To appreciate how significant this low support is, compare the home-state support of the losers in the three biggest presidential election landslides of the past half-century: 1964, 1972 and 1984.

While Lyndon B. Johnson trounced Sen. Barry Goldwater in 1964, winning 61.1 percent of the nationwide popular vote — the highest ever in a contested United States presidential election — Goldwater still carried his home state of Arizona. Goldwater won Arizona with 50.4 percent of the votes — almost 12 percentage points higher than nationally.

In Richard Nixon's 1972 landslide, Sen. George McGovern carried just one state, winning only 37.5 percent of the popular vote nationwide. Though he didn't win his home state, South Dakota, McGovern still did far better there than nationally. His home state gave him the fourth-highest percentage of the vote he received in any state — a full 8 percentage points above his nationwide average.

In 1984, Ronald Reagan carried every state except Minnesota — the home of his Democratic opponent, Walter Mondale. Reagan took 58.8 percent of the popular vote nationwide, but Mondale narrowly carried his home state. In Minnesota, Mondale ran more than 9 percentage points better than he did nationwide.

Even these figures, however, do not adequately reflect just how unusual Romney's lack of support in his home state is.

Only twice in the past half-century has a major party presidential nominee failed to carry his home state: McGovern lost South Dakota in 1972 by 8.7 percentage points, and Vice President Al Gore lost Tennessee in 2000 by 3.8 percentage points. Romney's current 21-point deficit in home-state support is nearly three times greater than the worst home-state loss by a losing candidate in the past 50 years.

In these 12 presidential elections, the losing candidate nationally received an average of 51.5 percent in his home state. Romney is now polling at 36 percent in Massachusetts — 15.5 percentage points lower than the average for past losers.

In those past dozen presidential races, the losing candidate nationally has run an average of 8.6 points better in his home state than the nation. Romney is now running 9.2 points worse in his home state than nationally. His home-state-to-national support is almost 18 points lower than the average for losing presidential candidates in the past 12 elections.

There's also this: The last Massachusetts governor who won a major party presidential nomination ran on his allegedly successful economic policy as chief executive of the Bay State. In 1988, Michael Dukakis regularly talked about the "Massachusetts Miracle." He was widely ridiculed, however, and lost the national election to George H.W. Bush by nearly 8 points. Yet in Massachusetts, Dukakis won by almost 8 percent — a stunning 29 points better than Romney is now registering.

If Republicans hope to win the presidency in November, they should be even more alarmed at how their nominee's home-state backing compares with that of the winners of the past 12 presidential elections.

Romney's current 36 percent Massachusetts support is 21 percent less than the average home-state totals for the past 12 presidential winners.

In fact, the victor in every presidential election for the past 50 years won his home state — with an average margin of victory at 18.8 percent. Romney, however, now trails Obama in Massachusetts by 21 points. **So in his home state, the presumptive 2012 GOP nominee is running an astonishing 40 points behind the 50-year average for the winners of presidential elections.**

"I will remember Massachusetts," the Bee Gees sang. **But one of Romney's greatest problems may be that Massachusetts remembers him all too well.**

Those who know Romney and his policies best are more opposed to him than voters in virtually any other state — and far more than voters in the home state of any major party nominee in the past 50 years were to them.

If Obama, his campaign team and Democrats in general can't make political hay of this, they are in the wrong line of work.

(Robert McElvaine, a historian, is the Chisholm distinguished professor of arts and letters at Millsaps College. His most recent book is a 25th anniversary edition of *The Great Depression*. He is now completing two nonfiction books.)

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(Thanks to Dennis!)

from CREDO Action:

The shock and trauma from the images and stories from Aurora are still very much with us, and it is impossible to put into words the pain being felt by families and friends of the victims.

But that doesn't mean we shouldn't speak out. In the wake of this massacre, it's time to put aside politics and reinstate the federal ban on assault weapons.

Urge President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney to ask Congress to reinstate the expired federal assault weapons ban today. [Click here to automatically sign the petition.](#)

After the news broke last Friday, President Barack Obama said that "there are going to be other days for politics, this I think is a day for prayer and reflection." Governor Mitt Romney said, "I stand before you today not as a man running for office, but as a father and grandfather, a husband, and American."<sup>1</sup> Both of their campaigns asked networks to pull their negative advertisements.

The gestures from the two men who are running for President were welcome steps. But, we need more than sympathetic words. We need real leadership to start to address the senseless gun violence that holds our communities hostage.

One of the principal weapons used by the shooter in the horrific Aurora massacre was an AR-15 assault rifle.<sup>2</sup> This weapon features a magazine that holds 100 rounds of bullets, and its trigger is capable of firing 50-60 rounds per minute.<sup>3</sup>

The federal assault weapons ban which was passed in 1994, banned the sale of guns like the AR-15.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, that ban expired in 2004 as a result of fierce lobbying by the NRA. It's long past time to reinstate the federal ban on assault weapons like the AR-15.

Urge President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney to ask Congress to reinstate the expired federal assault weapons ban today.

CREDO members worked to pass the federal assault weapons ban in 1994. And we fought to stop its expiration in 2004. And we continue to advocate for a federal ban on assault weapons like the AR-15 used in the Aurora massacre.

Massacres on the scale of the tragedy in Aurora happen in part because our federal gun laws make it easy for civilians to obtain military-level firepower. We need to pass and enforce sensible federal gun laws restricting ready access for civilians to assault weapons. Reinstating a strong version of the federal ban on assault weapons known as the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act is where we should start.

We're not so naïve as to think that sensible gun laws are all that's needed to stop the killings. There are many things that need to change in American culture to stop the next Aurora-like massacre. But we do know one thing we should put at the top of the list — keeping military-level assault weapons like the AR-15 with a high capacity clip out of the hands of civilians. [Click below to sign the petition:](#)

[http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/obama\\_romney\\_guns/?rc=homepage](http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/obama_romney_guns/?rc=homepage).

Thank you for speaking out.

Becky Bond, Political Director

<sup>1</sup>Adam Serwer, "Politicizing Tragedy and the Aurora Theater Shooting," MotherJones.com, July 20, 2012.

<sup>2</sup>Zack Beauchamp, "Expired Assault Weapons Ban Would Have Covered Rifle Used In Colorado Shooting," ThinkProgress.org, July 20, 2012.

<sup>3</sup>Caroline Hedley, "It Was Shockingly Easy For The Batman Shooter To Buy A Massive Arsenal," BusinessInsider.com, July 21, 2012.

<sup>4</sup>Beauchamp, "Expired Assault Weapons Ban Would Have Covered Rifle Used In Colorado Shooting."

[20120725-02](#) 08:10 Pam Re: Keystone Pipeline (reply to Bill, FotM Newsletter #189)

Bill: Martin Amis somehow captured the nature of it all in the title of his book, *Moronic Inferno*. But I'd advise some reasonable effort, as you suggest you are doing, by trying to be happy. Life's too short, no?

I've read a fair amount of Martin Amis but not this one. I'll check it out

[20120725-03](#) 09:56 SandyI From the Right: Fw: What the Supreme Court Decision Really Means (from Rep. Richard Nugent)

So, in case you were interested, here's where Mr. Nugent stands on the ACA. Are you surprised that it is the longest e-mail I ever got from a politician?

from Rep. Richard Nugent (July 24, 2012):

Since the Supreme Court's ruling on the President's healthcare law a few weeks ago, a lot of people on both sides of the issue have asked about my reaction to it. It probably goes without saying at this point that I think the law was an enormous mistake from a policy standpoint - \$800 billion in new taxes (\$675 billion in the most recent estimates by the Joint Committee on Taxation plus roughly another \$125 billion in taxes from their 2010 estimates of the individual mandate, employer mandate, and other revenues - likely to go up further), plus \$500 billion in cuts to Medicare, zero done to control the growing costs in healthcare, etc - but setting aside the specific issue of health reform, my biggest concerns surround the ruling itself and the precedent it sets. These are issues that frankly, I think the media has a responsibility to make sure Americans are informed about.

Here is the short version. The Supreme Court ruled that the individual mandate requiring Americans to buy health insurance could not be allowed under Congress' constitutional authority to regulate interstate commerce. The Court said very plainly that the federal government does not have the authority to require you to buy something and penalize you for failing to do it.

But in the same breath, citing Congress' authority to levy taxes, the Court said that although the federal government can't force you to buy health insurance, they can compel you to buy it by taxing you if you don't. In a nutshell, the government can't fine you for not buying something, but they can hit you with a tax penalty if you don't... I frankly don't see a meaningful difference between the two.

Think about it this way: the federal government has long been able to encourage certain behavior through the tax code (think about the mortgage interest tax deduction), but it has never been able to compel you to go out and buy a house by threatening to hit you with a tax penalty if you didn't. That is a huge difference. On page 39 of his majority opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts used the example of energy efficient windows. He suggested that although the federal government couldn't require you to buy energy efficient windows, it could essentially force you to do so by levying a tax on you if you don't.

I don't think anybody out there disputes the benefits of having health insurance or lowering your electricity bill, but in the United States of America, those decisions have always been up to the people - not up to the federal government. And regardless of how you feel about the healthcare law, I think this is something that all Americans should consider very carefully. Should Congress have the power to force American citizens into buying things that

they don't want? Should the federal government be able to force you to buy a certain car, or windows, or insurance, or anything else that the Congress thinks you should have? Is that a power that We The People want to surrender?

I don't believe it is. But that's what the Supreme Court has done here. Regardless of whether or not the President's healthcare law is repealed, the precedent has been set. The government now has the legal authority to force you to buy things. That wasn't the case before the ruling and it is not something that is easily undone. Following on the heels of our Independence Day, when all Americans gather together to celebrate our freedom and the sacrifices of those who made it possible, this is an issue that I think we should all consider very carefully. Are we less free as a people in the wake of this ruling and is that something we should be comfortable with?

You know where I stand.

Sincerely, Richard B. Nugent, Member of Congress

<a href="#">20120725-04</a>	11:52	Pam	Re: What the Supreme Court Decision Really Means (reply to SandyI, above)
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Mr. Nugent misses a very important point in his weak argument. If everyone is not mandated to contribute to the funding of health care, then only the rich will be able to afford it. The young and healthy must contribute, as they do to Social Security, or the system fails. This issue of the government FORCING people to buy something they don't want simply doesn't fly. Workers don't choose whether or not to contribute to Soc. Sec., and homeowners who don't purchase energy efficient windows are not jeopardizing others with their decision. Saving electricity is nice, but when comparing it to funding health care it's apples and oranges. All I hear is Republicans whining, "You can't make me. Na na na boo boo."

<a href="#">20120725-07</a>	13:54	SteveB	Re: What the Supreme Court Decision Really Means (reply to SandyI, above)
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With health care, I am reminded so much of the automobile industry.

Thanks to government regulations, when I buy a new car in the U.S., I am mandated by the government to buy seatbelts and airbags (and more). I have no choice. For the benefit of all, health-wise, pain-wise and insurance-wise, I am forced to buy things I might think I don't want.

And remember, before these enlightened, fairly minimal laws were passed, both the industry (private enterprise) and many of our politicians told us it would be impossible to profitably make safer vehicles and, therefore, we'd just have to keep dying as bloody masses of blood and guts in our wrecked cars. Thank God common sense prevailed.

The entire story is exactly the history of every battle that has ever been fought to wrest a bit of decent life from the rich and powerful for the common people. Like health care now.

<a href="#">20120725-09</a>	14:20	SteveG	Re: What the Supreme Court Decision Really Means (reply to Pam, above)
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If I remember right: we all paid into Medicaid and Medicare; we all paid for public schools if we owned property whether we had children or not or if they went to private schools or not; we all paid for public libraries whether we used them or not or could read or not. In short, we pay for a lot of things that are mandated by the system. Every new service that has been mandated has initiated complaints, but as time has passed we seem to adjust and complain less.

[20120725-10](#) 14:28 Pam Re: What the Supreme Court Decision Really Means (reply to SteveG, above)

I simply don't get it. What seems like common sense to me (us) is like waving a red flag in front of those who want to say No to everything, just because they don't want the other side to "win." It's so incredibly selfish!

[20120725-11](#) 15:14 Fran Re: What the Supreme Court Decision Really Means (reply to Pam, above)

That's the basic difference between us & them....they only think about themselves and we, as Democrats & Progressives, think about everybody. We understand the statement "the common good" and the rich only understand the statement "me first & only". What I don't understand is how there can be poor Republicans. The Republicans treat all poor Americans as "freeloaders" and see no reason to "give" them any more free help. They just don't have the same world view.

[Welcome aboard, Fran! –SteveB]

[20120725-14](#) 16:38 SandyI Re: What the Supreme Court Decision Really Means (reply to SteveB, above)

Love your analogy. I'm reading *The Fall of Giants* by Ken Follett and it's about WW1 and how the poor were sent into battle that no one could win at Somme and how thousands died. I see a return to the early 1900's when the royalty and rich "used" the poor (99%) as if they owned them. Or am I just being a cynic?

"Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain." —unknown

[20120725-15](#) 17:40 SteveB Re: What the Supreme Court Decision Really Means (reply to SandyI, above)

I think you're right, SandyI. I'm not sure who thought of it, but to me, one of the best descriptions I've heard of the goal of the Right is that they want to return all of us to the 19th Century.

Everything they say and do points in that direction.

And, during their "Golden Age of Capitalism" (and Robber Barons) not only did they use the poor as if they owned them, they actually owned many of them. Isn't that their goal?

But as President Obama says, "Forward!"

(I really love dancing in the rain! But I prefer the rain to be tropical...)

[20120725-05](#) 12:09 SteveM Videos: Anita Moncrief, ACORN 'Whistleblower', at C-PAC

Is anyone shocked the main stream media gave this woman no play?

Video (Part 1): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CmkbShVqNA>.

Video: (Part 2) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy6odnqyLeU>.

[Shocked! "Mainstream media"? I wonder what radio programs you listen to? –SteveB]

"What Five Oil Companies Did with Their \$375 Million in Daily Profits" by Rebecca Leber, NationofChange

July 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/what-five-oil-companies-did-their-375-million-daily-profits-1343222546>)

The Big Five oil companies – BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil and Shell – are slated to announce their 2012 second-quarter profits later this week.

We can expect these companies, all of which rank in the top 10 of the "Fortune 500 Global Ranking," to reveal billions of dollars more in profits, after earning *\$375 million in profits per day* in 2011 (\$261,000 per minute), and \$368 million per day in the first three-months of 2012 — bringing their combined profits to \$1 trillion from 2001 through 2011.

Below is a quick look at just how much these Big Oil companies are making, and where they are spending their billions in profits.

#### Big Oil's Big Profits — In 24 Hours

- The five biggest oil companies earned a combined profit of \$375 million per day, or a record \$137 billion profit for the year, in 2011, despite reducing their oil production.
- In 60 seconds, these five companies earned \$261,000 — more than 96 percent of American households make in one year.
- These five oil companies received \$6.6 million in federal tax breaks every day.
- In 2011, the three largest domestic public oil companies spent \$100 million of their profits each day, or over 50 percent, buying back their own stock to enrich their board, senior managers, and largest share holders.
- The entire oil and gas industry spent on average \$400,000 each day lobbying senators and representatives to weaken public health safeguards and keep big oil tax breaks, totaling nearly \$150 million.
- Each CEO of the Big Five companies received an average of \$60,110 in compensation *per day* last year. On average, their pay jumped 55 percent in 2011. Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson's compensation came close to \$100,000 *per day* last year.

#### Millions in Political Contributions and Lobbying

- Despite ranking as some of the most successful companies in the world, big oil and gas companies continue to receive \$4 billion in tax breaks each year.
- The oil and gas industry has already given over \$30.5 million in federal campaign contributions this year, with a whopping 88 percent going to Republicans.
- Big Oil has spent an additional \$37 million on lobbying Congress this year, with the top spenders being Exxon, Shell, Chevron, Koch Industries and BP.
- Their efforts are paying off. This is the most anti-environment Congress in history, with the House of Representatives averaging one anti-environment vote per day, or a total 247 votes through mid-June. The biggest beneficiary of these votes has been Big Oil. The House voted to enrich the oil and gas industry 109 times, a total 44 percent of its anti-environment votes.
- The House is on track to collect a record amount of oil industry contributions this cycle, having already reached 2008 and 2010 levels. And these are direct donations only — it does not include Super PAC spending or other campaign assistance.

#### Outside Interests and Big Oil Allies Spending Tens of Millions More to Influence the Energy Debate

- Fueled by Koch Industries and other Big Oil interests, the industry is spending hundreds of millions to fund false ads in this year's elections. According to the Annenberg Public Policy Center, 85 percent of the dollars have funded false ad, during a season where most advertising have focused on energy.

- Pro-Romney outside interest groups spent \$24.6 million on energy ads through June 24, according to Kantar Media CMAG data. This is more than ten-times the amount spent by pro-Obama groups, which spent \$2.3 million on energy spots.
- American Energy Alliance, Americans for Prosperity, American Future Fund, and Crossroads GPS – the top outside pro-oil and pro-Romney interest group spenders – have spent a total \$24.9 million on deceptive ads, many of them energy-related, according to the Annenberg Public Policy Center.
- Koch-backed Americans for Prosperity has devoted more than 90 percent of its ad spending to energy ads. Two of the Americans for Prosperity ads pushed patently false claims — roundly debunked by fact checkers — that the stimulus funded jobs overseas.
- Fact checkers have thoroughly debunked these anti-clean energy ads. Both Politifact and the Washington Post Fact Checker have given the ad their worst ratings of “pants on fire” and four Pinocchios, respectively. Politifact found all three examples used to be false, with the ad stringing together “alarming” soundbites that are “ultimately ridiculous.”

20120725-08	14:03	SteveB	From the Right: “Hey, Boston: Leave Chick-fil-A Alone”
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“Hey, Boston: Leave Chick-fil-A Alone” by Michelle Malkin, *Human Events*

July 25, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/07/25/michelle-malkin-hey-boston-leave-chick-fil-a-alone/>)

It’s one thing for Hollywood moppets and television Muppets to protest Chick-fil-A over the fast-food chain president’s support for traditional marriage. They’re private citizens and entities. But when an elected public official wields the club of government against a Christian business in the name of “tolerance,” it’s not harmless kid stuff. It’s chilling.

This week, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino declared, “Chick-fil-A doesn’t belong in Boston.” He recklessly slandered the company by accusing it of “discriminat(ing) against the population.” And he warned ominously: “If they need licenses in the city, it will be very difficult — unless they open up their policies.”

Drawing on the city’s history, he railed against the restaurant empire’s plans to build a franchise near a famed path: “We’re an open city. We’re a city that’s at the forefront of inclusion. That’s the Freedom Trail. That’s where it all started right here. And we’re not going to have a company, Chick-fil-A or whatever the hell the name is, on our Freedom Trail.”

Poverty is on track to rise to the highest nationwide levels since the 1960s. Boston’s jobless rate has been stuck at 6 percent. The city’s May employment numbers were revised downward for the second month in a row; in June, the city shed 2,600 jobs. Chick-fil-A employs some 50,000 workers across the country at 1,500 outlets in nearly 40 states and the District of Columbia. The company generates more than \$2 billion in annual revenues and serves millions of happy customers looking for affordable food in a family-friendly setting.

[This is crazy talk! To be “stuck at 6% unemployment is to be in heaven in today’s Republican economy (Bushonomy). She makes that out to be bad? And Chick-fil-A is some kind of god to be worshipped because they provide minimal, poverty-level jobs at less than minimum-wage (the “part-timer exclusion loophole”)? Because they’re a good Christian, capitalist venture and the rest of us are not? Sounds a lot like Evangelicals pounding on the doors of the convent yelling that everyone inside must be baptized immediately (again?) or suffer eternal damnation (Ouch!). –SteveB]

Menino must have a darned good reason for meddling with government licensing decisions and turning away one of America’s most successful private employers, right?

Wrong. Menino’s beef with the beloved chicken sandwich supplier is as full of holes as Chick-fil-A’s trademark waffle fries. It’s Menino who is engaging in blatant viewpoint and religious discrimination against an out-and-proud company whose leadership embraces biblically based principles and values.

In an interview with the Baptist Press last month, Chick-fil-A President Dan Cathy talked about his personal support of traditional family values and fidelity. "(Guilty) as charged," he told the reporter. "We are a family-owned business, a family-led business, and we are married to our first wives. We give God thanks for that."

As I reported last year, the Cathy family's commitments to "glorify God" and "enrich the lives of everyone we touch" have made them public enemies of the progressive left. Never mind that the company's community service initiatives have supported foster care, summer camp scholarships and marriage enrichment. Never mind Chick-fil-A's family-strengthening and faith-enhancing decision to forgo profits and close every Sunday to give workers a day of worship and rest.

Anti-Christian organizers have been staging boycotts and smear campaigns against "anti-gay" Chick-fil-A for the past year. An activist lesbian reporter for The New York Times poured fuel on the fire. The proprietors of The Muppets are just the latest to take a public stand.

It's their right. It's also the right of Chick-fil-A supporters to organize social media campaigns, exercise their free speech and exercise the power of their pocketbooks to back the company.

What's disturbing is the flippant schadenfreude with which Tinseltown starlets such as actress Eliza Dushku are cheering Menino's threat to Chick-fil-A's First Amendment rights. "That's right, B!" she tweeted along with a link to Menino's attack. What's galling is the self-serving smugness of PC police such as Menino, who defended his vendetta against Chick-fil-A by bragging, "We're a leader when it comes to social justice and opportunities for all."

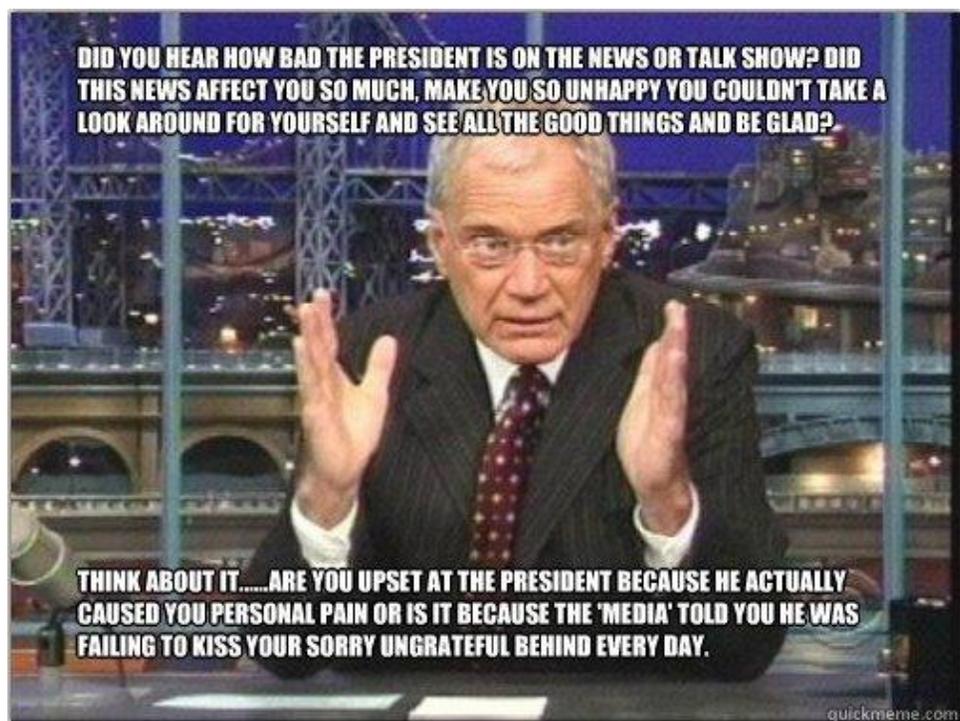
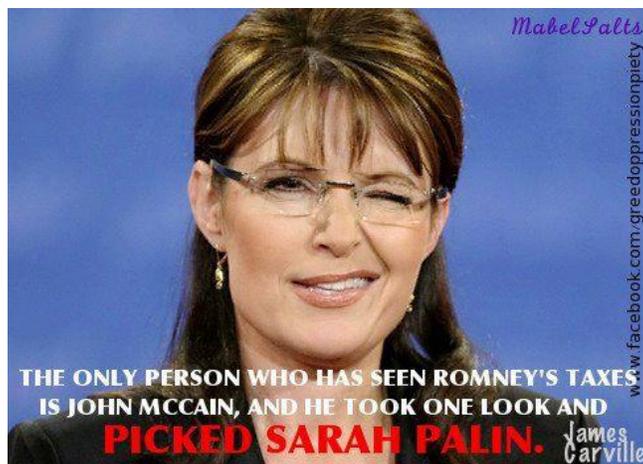
Social justice and economic opportunity "for all" — as long as you hold the proper political and social views. This is ugly repressive civility enforced with government brass knuckles. Boston's Founding Fathers must be steaming in their graves.

[20120725-12](#) 15:42 Sandy Photo: New Indiana Rain Gauge



[20120725-17](#) 22:03 SteveB Re: Photo: New Indiana Rain Gauge (reply to Sandy, above)

Thanks, Sandy! I sure hope it rains there soon! It's dry even here in Bolivia this year.





Life holds on tenaciously, yet her grip can be easily broken...

<https://plus.google.com/106223965383290201748/posts/bxUX5yC6oCK>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #191 — JULY 27, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Mitt's Anglo-Saxon Blood No Help in London**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 27, 2012)

A Romney advisor reportedly told the *The Telegraph*, "We are part of an Anglo-Saxon heritage, and he feels that the special relationship is special," the adviser said of Mr. Romney, adding: "The White House didn't fully appreciate the shared history we have." [Oh, but no racism underlying that remark! –SteveB]

Funny. Mitt doesn't seem to appreciate our shared history as much as Mr. Obama, who would never offend our old ally with insulting comments, as Romney has done. London and all the U.K., hell, all the Commonwealth are proud of the Olympic Games in London. Until the games fall flat on their face (which they have not), why be insulting? Even then, why be insulting? Unless you're an insensitive, arrogant fool!



This incident reminds me of Romney's huge gaffe when he called Russia "our number one geopolitical foe." I'm sure that the British, now, like the Russians, wonder what the hell is going on in an American Republican Party where

the only two concrete statements, apparently, their presidential candidate has made about the world outside the U.S. are just incredibly stupid!

from *This Week*:

"Insulting your host is a "strange way to build bridges," says Alex Spillius in Britain's *The Telegraph*, particularly when you're visiting a country that you supposedly see as "the umbilical ally of the United States." It's also an awfully "strange way to demonstrate the persuasive qualities needed as leader of the free world," which was what Romney's overseas adventure was supposed to be all about. Why go on a charm offensive if you're going to be more offensive than charming?

"Mitt Romney Walks Back London Olympics Criticism" by Luke Johnson, Huffington Post

July 26, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/26/mitt-romney-olympics-london\\_n\\_1705657.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/26/mitt-romney-olympics-london_n_1705657.html))

Mitt Romney, in his first trip abroad as the presumptive GOP presidential nominee, is trying to walk back comments he made questioning London's Olympics preparation -- comments that have drawn a sharp response from Prime Minister David Cameron.

The dustup began Wednesday, as Romney, who ran the 2002 Salt Lake City games, said there were "disconcerting" signs in the days before this year's games.

"The stories about the private security firm not having enough people, the supposed strike of the immigration and customs officials -- that obviously is not something which is encouraging," he told NBC News.

"Do they come together and celebrate the Olympic moment? And that's something which we only find out once the games actually begin," he said.

Cameron soon rebuked Romney. "We are holding an Olympic Games in one of the busiest, most active, bustling cities anywhere in the world. Of course, it's easier if you hold an Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere," he said.

"I think we will show the whole world not just that we come together as a United Kingdom, but also we're extremely good at welcoming people from across the world," Cameron added. "I will obviously make those points to Mitt Romney. I look forward to meeting him."

In comments before meeting with Labour Party leader Ed Miliband, Romney was more measured. "My experience with regards to the Olympics is it is impossible for absolutely no mistakes to occur," he said. "Of course, there will be errors from time to time, but those are all overshadowed by the extraordinary demonstrations of courage, character and determination by the athletes."

UPDATE: 3:35 p.m. -- Mitt Romney's disastrous British trip continued Thursday when, according to The Huffington Post UK, he "caused amusement" by saying he had spent a great day in the "backside" of Downing Street, rather than the back garden.

In another faux pas, Romney announced his meeting with MI6, the U.K. Secret Intelligence Service whose existence was only acknowledged by the British government in 1994.

"I appreciated the insights and perspectives of the leaders of the government here and opposition here as well as the head of MI6," he told reporters.

MI6 was mum about the meeting, according to the Wall Street Journal. "[MI6 Chief] Sir John Sawers meets with lots of people," said an aide in the British foreign press office, "but we don't give a running commentary of any of these meetings."

London Mayor Boris Johnson hit back at Romney's comments about the Summer Games before a crowd of 60,000 in Hyde Park. "There is a guy called Mitt Romney who wants to know if we are ready. Yes, we are," he declared.

Romney also seemed to break the longstanding rule for U.S. politicians not to criticize the president overseas. At a fundraiser for American expats, he reportedly said, "I'm looking forward to the bust of Winston Churchill being in the Oval Office again," referring to the White House returning the artwork to the British Embassy in early 2009. President Barack Obama replaced it with a bust of Abraham Lincoln.

<https://twitter.com/jameschappers/status/228551719171284992>

James Chapman (Mail) @jameschappers

"Serious dismay in Whitehall at Romney debut. 'Worse than Sarah Palin.' 'Total car crash'. Two of the kinder verdicts #romneyshambles."

20120726-01	05:24	MarthaH	"Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'"
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"Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" by Bill Briggs, NBC News

July 25, 2012, (<http://usnews.nbcnews.com/news/2012/07/25/12927498-gun-owners-we-are-your-neighbors-co-workers-friends?lite>)

(DENVER) Fishing guide Nate Zelinsky tallies the firearms in his personal collection: six hand guns, eight shotguns, four rifles and one "home-defense shotgun."

That's 19 — and 20, if you include the 9-millimeter weapon carried by his wife, Mandi.

"I have a firearm close at all times," said Zelinsky, who lives near the foothills town of Conifer, Colo., 30 miles southwest of Denver. "A gun is a part of my life. As an outdoorsman, it's something I have as a tool." On the plains below, in a suburban home not far from the site of Friday's Aurora theater shootings, certified public accountant Stephanie Lidke watches her infant daughter while she lists her guns: there are at least 10, she says, including the two .40 caliber pistols that she and her husband, an HVAC technician, are permitted to carry and conceal.

"When we found out we were pregnant, we bought a crib and a stroller and a gun safe," Lidke said. "We don't have guns to kill human beings. That's not our goal. It's a privilege to be able to protect your family."

These are two faces of America's gun owners, and they happen to live in Colorado. They span white collar, blue collar — and, in Zelinsky's case, camo collar.

Stephanie Lidke, an accountant who lives near Aurora, Colo., and her husband own at least 10 guns.

"We're your neighbors, your co-workers and your friends," Lidke said. "We're moms and dads. We're responsible, ethical and educated."

They're also fed up with the way some gun-control advocates and media members clump all firearm owners into a single, fringy-sounding "gun culture" — which is like saying, Zelinsky adds, that every person who owns a motor vehicle is part of a homogenized, think-alike, drive-alike "car culture."

And now, interest in guns is expanding — swiftly. In the three days following the Friday's mass shooting at a midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises*, nearly 3,000 Colorado consumers were approved for gun purchases after passing instant criminal background checks — 39 percent higher than Colorado's rate of firearm purchases during the two previous weekends, according to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

"Foot-traffic wise, we've had a lot more people in the store who are interested in looking at what's out there, considering their options," said Brad Lightner, general manager of the Firing-Line, an Aurora gun retailer that offers more than 1,500 firearms plus a practice range. "Many are here for home defense."

For some Americans who have never owned guns — or who haven't fired or even touched one — there is a deep cultural chasm when it comes to understanding why anyone would seek to possess a single firearm, much less 10 or 20. That gap, widened as well by sharp philosophical and political differences, is hardly a new phenomenon.

But ask Zelinsky or Lidke to break down the various facets of their ample gun collections and you'll hear rational purposes that stretch from sport to safety to a simple appreciation of vintage handicrafts.

"I have a .45 (caliber) handgun and a shotgun for home protection," Zelinsky said. "I hunt with a long-range rifle, a 300 Ultra Mag. The biggest one I carry in the woods, for bears, is a .454 Casull (handgun). The shotguns are probably the most important because I have many more situations with wildlife than I do with people. Every single night, we have this young bear that's been tearing up the neighborhood. When I leave for work, probably 50 percent of the time I walk to my truck, it's me and the bear, and we come to terms every morning."

[Live Poll: Do you own guns? \[73% said Yes. –SteveB\]](#)

Down in the city, Lidke explained: "We have 12- and 20-gauge shotguns for bird hunting plus a 30-aught-six (rifle) and a 7-millimeter (rifle) for large game — those are tools to help feed our family. We have a Taurus .41 (magnum revolver), which is our bear gun for protection in the woods when we're backpacking or camping. We have antique guns handed down from my husband's great-grandfather, all hand-carved from sitting around a fire at a hunting camp."

The two .40-caliber Springfield XD handguns that Lidke and her husband are permitted to conceal and carry "are more for personal protection. I had a little girl in February so it just became even more important to us to protect her, if necessary."

The need to pack extra security seemed to be feeding the recent sales spike in Colorado, according to firearm retailers like Lightner. The day after the midnight cinema shootings that left 12 people dead and more than 50 people wounded, 1,216 Coloradans were approved for gun purchases following background checks — 880 more than the number approved on the same day one week earlier, according to CBI data. The Firing-Line also offers classes that help qualify gun owners to apply for conceal-and-carry permits in Colorado, one of 49 states that allow guns to be covertly toted by licensed individuals.

"Sign-ups indicate we'll have a few more people taking the training course," Lightner said. "If you're going to carry concealed on the streets, that is another level of responsibility. It's a big step. Obviously, I wouldn't recommend it for everyone and we don't. But for somebody who is interested in being able to defend themselves if an emergency should arise, that will give them at least some of the tools to do it with."

"For myself, I don't carry 100 percent of the time. It's a problem — I mean as far as comfort goes. When you go certain places, it's not practical. (Colorado movie theaters don't allow permitted carriers to bring guns onto the premises). For most of us, we don't want to be heroes. In fact, you don't even want to put yourself in that position. But I'll tell you what: if you are in that position, for whatever reason, you can try to better the situation."

Long before the mass tragedy in Aurora, gun sales were soaring nationally. In 2011, federal investigators performed a record 16.4 million instant criminal background checks on potential gun buyers — 14.2 percent more than 2010, FBI figures show.

Many gun owners, including Zelinsky, sniff the strong scent of political panic in that retail rush — namely that if President Obama is elected to a second term, his administration may push legislation to limit or restrain firearm ownership.

"I would say 80 percent of the people I know own way more (firearms) than me," Zelinsky said. "I mean, you walk into their gun-safe rooms or their garage, you really think they're going to some kind of war. But it's not for crazy reasons. They're just worried it's not going to be around.

"Get them while you can, buy them while you can, that's the thinking behind it."

And that fear, Zelinsky says, has truly revved the market for used guns — often weapons without attached ownership records, meaning authorities don't know who currently has them or where they're located.

"People just don't want anything with paperwork so if there ever was a crazy situation where somebody is saying: 'Hey, we're taking away the guns,' (many used-gun owners) want something that's non-traceable," Zelinsky said.

"It's unbelievable, the sale of used firearms just in the market, and not retail. You can have an older, beater pistol and you can sell it (privately) for more than what it costs on the shelf just due to the fact that you have no paperwork behind it."

<a href="#">20120726-02</a>	09:28	Pam	Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Oh my. I've come to the conclusion that one of the biggest problems we face is our inability to tolerate subtlety. Dividing arguments up into black or white, either or, yes or no completely, perhaps deliberately, simplifies complex issues for the weak-minded (whose number is legion). Call it reductio ad absurdum. (sp?) Personally, I'd be happy if no one but the police and the military were packing, but I recognize that the 2nd Amendment is a sacred cow. That said, I have no problem with antique gun collectors, hunters (don't like 'em, but sort of understand 'em), and cowboys owning guns. If I had to face a bear every morning on the way to my car, I'd probably want a gun too, and I know that if I lived in rattlesnake territory I'd want the biggest, loudest shotgun ever. I can even understand someone living in an isolated area having a gun. There was a time when I owned some land out in the country, where I planned to build a house someday. I knew that if I did that, even I would want a gun handy. It might be comforting to own a gun if you lived in a dangerous city. There are sound reasons why someone might want to own a gun(s). BUT, the issue for me isn't gun ownership; it's gun regulation. Reasonable laws that would prevent ownership of assault rifles and the 40% of gun sales that are totally unregulated over the Internet or at gun shows are a no brainer. We keep pretty good track of our cars in this country. I don't see why we can't insist on a papertrail for guns and a DGO, Department of Gun Ownership--like the DMV. The NRA is promoted by a bunch of hysterics who fear black helicopters and tanks in the streets. Control and compromise, or is that too subtle a concept?

<a href="#">20120726-09</a>	22:26	Art	Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to MarthaH & Pam, above)
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The bear thing is absolute BS. "When I leave for work, probably 50 percent of the time I walk to my truck, it's me and the bear, and we come to terms every morning." Do you really think the bear has a clue the guy has a gun and what that means. Think about it. Like most other gun crap, this story is just that.

Having said that, Pam you are right on, Why does anyone need a 38 Special except to rob a 7-11? The NRA long ago sold out to the gun manufactures and will push anything to make a sale. They hide behind this "This is the first step to take away our guns", if anyone even proposes that maybe the common citizen doesn't need a man held anti aircraft missile.

There is no reasoning with the NRA because it is not the second amendment it is all about making lots of money selling guns and all the stuff like 100 round magazines that go with them. (What's that for, to bring down a charging squirrel? ) The NRA members are like zombies. All the leadership has to do is whisper ""They want to take away our guns" and the membership's hands go up and they stagger forward moaning "no take our guns, no take our guns".

It's hard to reason with idiots.

20120726-03 10:46 SteveM Feeling Sorry for Obama

I feel sorry for Obama. If he gets elected this fall, look at the mess he's going to inherit!

20120726-06 14:32 SteveB Re: Feeling Sorry for Obama (reply to SteveM, above)

That's funny! I felt the same way about Bush...and then sorry for both Obama and McCain, one of which was obviously going to be handed the biggest mess ever. I think that's why McCain decided he couldn't cope with it, so he sabotaged his own campaign with his economic bumbles and by picking Mrs. Stupid as his running mate. Smart. You might also remember that McCain didn't really have one good thing to say about Bush...then or since...

20120726-04 12:50 SteveB "Million-Dollar Donation in Indiana Race May Skirt Limits on Corporate Giving"

Scary news from the home state of many of us...

"Million-Dollar Donation in Indiana Race May Skirt Limits on Corporate Giving" by Paul Abowd, IWatch News/NationofChange

July 26, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/million-dollar-donation-indiana-race-may-skirt-limits-corporate-giving-1343315419>)

The RGA Right Direction PAC is a Washington, D.C.-based super PAC, registered with federal regulators to make independent expenditures supporting or opposing candidates. So what is it doing giving \$1 million directly to the Republican running for governor of Indiana?

The donation to Mike Pence, the largest to his campaign, appears to be a way around state laws limiting corporate contributions to candidates.

"In one way, it's legal," said Andrew Downs of the Center for Indiana Politics, at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. "But if you say this is a way to give in excess of corporate limits, that's also absolutely true."

Right Direction is funded entirely by the Republican Governors Association, a so-called "527" organization dedicated to electing as many Republicans to governorships as possible — a mission fueled by contributions from some of the largest corporations in the country. In Indiana, candidates can accept unlimited donations from individuals and political action committees but only \$5,000 from corporations and unions. Corporations and unions can also give to PACs, but only in small sums.

Whether the check to Pence was drawn on a bank account that contained corporate money is not a matter of public record.

Donations come from one fund

In an email, RGA spokesman Michael Schrimpf said "nothing in our reports suggests" that the organization gave corporate funds to Pence. All RGA expenditures, he said, come from a general fund.

"It's the new model of disclosure subterfuge," said Bob Biersack, a senior fellow at the Center for Responsive Politics and former longtime Federal Election Commission official. "It's not what a normal human being would call transparent."

The donation to Pence appeared in FEC filings July 15. It is the latest in a series of campaign finance maneuvers by the RGA which have prompted legal challenges in two states claiming the group violated limits on corporate giving.

Right Direction reported receiving four contributions totaling \$1.3 million from the RGA since January. Super PACs can accept unlimited donations from corporations and labor unions, thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision.

Right Direction's 2010 boiler-plate registration letter filed with the FEC said it "intends to make independent expenditures" — ad buys and other spending that supports or opposes candidates.

FEC filings show the group has not reported any independent expenditures, but has spent money helping state candidates in Ohio in 2010 when it was known as RGA Ohio PAC.

In addition to Right Direction's \$1 million contribution to Pence, it also made two contributions to the Montana Republican Party totaling \$200,000. The Right Direction PAC is registered with both Indiana and federal election regulators.

#### Source of funds obscured

In federal records, it reports its donors as the RGA — which effectively obscures the original source of the \$1 million check to Pence.

There is no paperwork required by the state of Indiana that shows whether those funds were derived from the RGA's corporate donors. The RGA's Schimpf says it is following the relevant state and federal campaign finance laws "as efficiently as possible."

According to Abbey Taylor with the Indiana Election Division, "It's a pretty nice little loophole, and loopholes are meant to be exploited."

Corporations can give directly to Indiana candidates, but are limited to \$5,000 donations. Drug giant AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson have each given \$2,500 and Nestle USA has given \$5,000 to the Pence campaign since January. These same companies gave \$350,000, \$25,000, and \$12,500 donations respectively to the RGA's 527 organization in the same time period.

A corporation can also support the governor by passing the contribution through a political action committee. It can give \$5,000 to the PAC during each election cycle and the PAC can give unlimited amounts to the candidate.

PACs registered only inside Indiana must itemize contributions in reports to the state, including those from corporations. The Indiana Merit Construction PAC, for example, gathered donations from dozens of construction companies and gave \$32,500 to Mike Pence in June — bringing its total giving to the campaign to \$69,000 this cycle.

#### Nothing to see here

Right Direction is not required to file such a report, according to state election officials.

A 527 can accept unlimited contributions from corporations, unions and individuals. They may not give money directly to federal candidates but can fund issue advertising campaigns and other political activities. They are regulated by the Internal Revenue Service but not the FEC and are required to report their donors and spending.

Because Right Direction is registered with both the state and the FEC, the Indiana Election Division cannot regulate its spending activity. Co-Director Trent Deckard says state law constrains his agency to regulating PACs that are solely registered with the state.

"I truly understand the public concern here," said Deckard, "but there's 150 members of the legislature who would have to vote on this question. We can always hope for greater transparency."

The Election Division usually does not take up its own investigations unless prompted by citizen complaints. So far, none have been lodged against the RGA's activity.

"Whether it passes the smell test is for voters to decide," said Downs. "This is part of the shell game that concerns people about campaign finance."

The RGA donation to Pence is nothing new.

### National campaign

The organization gave seven-figure sums to six different gubernatorial candidates in 2010. The group was a top donor in the Pennsylvania, Illinois, Texas, Oregon, New Mexico, and Iowa races. In 2004 and 2008, its PAC also gave a total of nearly \$3.9 million directly to Mitch Daniels' successful bids for Indiana governor, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

"The RGA is confident they can get away with this — they're riding on a new level of hubris," said Edwin Bender, director of the institute.

The RGA's 527 raised \$16.7 million since April, nearly twice as much as its Democratic counterpart. Fifty-seven percent of that money came from corporate treasuries and corporate PACs, according to a Center for Public Integrity analysis of IRS records.

Koch Industries has given the RGA \$2 million, health insurance giant Blue Cross/Blue Shield \$1.6 million, and Sheldon Adelson's Sands Casino group \$1 million in the 2012 cycle. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Bob Perry have each added \$750,000 to the RGA coffers, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

If Pence were running to keep his 6th District congressional seat, his campaign couldn't touch a dime of donations from the RGA super PAC. But because he's running for a state office, and doing so in a state that allows unlimited PAC contributions to candidates, the RGA super PAC can wire cash direct to his war chest.

The \$1 million gift accounts for a third of Pence's haul since April in his race to replace Daniels in the governor's mansion. A week after getting the super PAC infusion, Pence launched an early TV ad blitz — the first of which featured his wife recounting Pence's homegrown Hoosier credentials.

### Pence leads money race

Pence has twice as much cash as his Democratic opponent John Gregg as of July 16. The Democratic Governors Association has given Gregg \$29,000 since January. The DGA's June filing with the FEC contains small donors as well as \$250,000 checks from each of the national teachers unions.

Its state-registered PAC only lists the DGA's 527 as the donor, raising similar questions about the origin of its contributions to Gregg. Officials at the DGA say the contributions in Indiana are in compliance with state election law.

On top of "the RGA's million-dollar bailout," Gregg's spokesman Daniel Altman cited large donations from billionaire donors including the Koch brothers and Rick Santorum-backer Foster Friess as evidence that Pence is "financed by out-of-state donors who do not have Indiana's best interests at heart."

The Pence campaign did not return calls for comment.

The state has not seen a seven-figure direct contribution to a candidate since 2003 when Bren Simon, the widow of an Indiana mall magnate, gave \$1.3 million to former Democratic National Committee chairman Joe Andrew's unsuccessful gubernatorial bid.

The \$1 million contribution dwarfs one made by conservative industrialist David Koch, who gave \$100,000 to Pence in January. Koch also gave \$1 million to the RGA in February.

### Pervasive force

The RGA has been a pervasive force in state elections. It has spent \$80 million on state races in 40 states since 1999 — more than half of that money has gone directly to candidates, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics. Some states have been concerned about the national group's influence.

North Carolina and Vermont agencies have taken legal action against the RGA, claiming it violated the states' caps on corporate giving and must be regulated as a state PAC. In both cases, the RGA has used its pervasive reach as a defense, claiming that its "major purpose" is not to influence elections in any one state. Therefore, it has argued, no state can regulate it as a state PAC.

"By that logic, they're not a PAC anywhere, and can't be regulated anywhere," said Stetson Law professor Ciara Torres-Spelliscy. "Do we have political entities that are too big to regulate?"

In North Carolina, the RGA carried the day, despite spending way above the state's limits for PACs.

Vermont's Attorney General claims that both governors associations have violated state campaign finance laws. The state's challenge to the DGA-funded Green Mountain Future 527 is headed for the state's Supreme Court. The case against the RGA claims the organization bought ads through its 527 during the 2010 campaign, but did not report that spending to the state. The RGA is yet to present its defense in the case.

"You need a state that's willing to pick a fight with the RGA," said Torres-Spelliscy, "but they're so powerful that there's this natural reticence to ticket them for running the red light."

<a href="#">20120726-05</a>	14:03	MarthaH	Latest Midwest Drought Map
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Putnam County is now in the exceptional range of drought.

# U.S. Drought Monitor

July 24, 2012

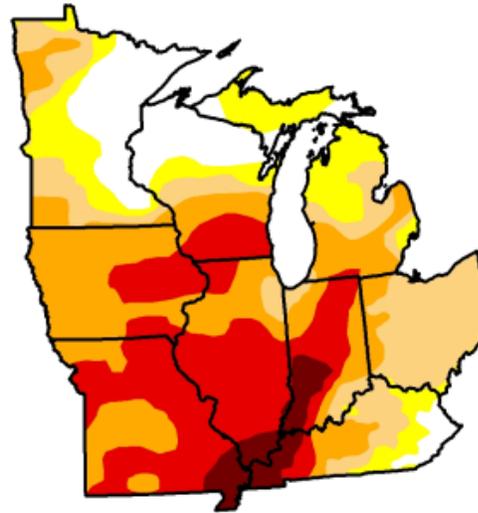
Valid 7 a.m. EST

## Midwest

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	13.13	86.87	73.69	55.53	28.92	4.33
Last Week (07/17/2012 map)	14.09	85.91	72.70	48.12	11.89	0.84
3 Months Ago (04/24/2012 map)	58.78	41.22	16.08	5.98	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	71.84	28.16	13.42	6.80	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/27/2011 map)	58.85	41.15	14.01	5.03	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (07/19/2011 map)	89.78	10.22	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00

### Intensity:

 D0 Abnormally Dry	 D3 Drought - Extreme
 D1 Drought - Moderate	 D4 Drought - Exceptional
 D2 Drought - Severe	



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, July 26, 2012

Richard Heim, National Climatic Data Center, NOAA

[20120726-11](#) 23:52 SteveB Re: Latest Midwest Drought Map (reply to MarthaH, above)

I'm still doing my rain dance, MarthaH!

It's funny. I find that very many "modern" people, both in the U.S. and Latin America, seem completely unaware of rainfall. They certainly aren't unaware of rain, but they lack any sense of "rain over time". City people!

But if you grew up on a farm, live on a farm, or, as in my case, grew up in farming country, knew a lot of farmers, and even come from a long line of farmers, you gain a sense of how thirsty the land, much as you might "sense" north.

The most mythical tales in my family are of my great grandfather, who lived on a farm in Virginia. The story goes that when he turned 16, his father gave him a pig and told him to go make his way in the world. He took that pig and crossed the Appalachians to Indiana along the Cumberland Trail. On the way, high in the mountain forests, he met an archetypal rattlesnake on the path. He could not go around and the snake seemed to want to kill him, so he killed the snake and cut off its many rattles, which is still, I believe, in our family. I used to love it when my Dad would show it to me and tell me the story. When my great grandfather arrived in Indiana (God's Country), he worked his way (and the pig's way) up, until he owned a rather large farm near Ladoga.

I have put up quite a bit of hay in my time, experimentally shucked a little corn, attempted to milk a cow, ridden horses often, and once managed (with help) to hitch a wagon (to a horse, silly), and, as you probably already know, am the proud owner of some cattle here in Bolivia, but I have never actually lived on a farm. Yet, when the land starts to dry and crack, it is as if my throat becomes parched. When the plants start to suffer, I feel a sorrow for them. And when crops, animals, and people become affected...well, that's when I start thinking about giant pipelines of water from the mouths of our mighty rivers to the dying of thirst and wondering why we do not fight this war instead of the terrible ones... When there is plenty of rain, it is as if I can check-off some category in my brain: "OK, let's luxuriate in this, we don't have to worry about the land going dry for at least a while."

I guess many of us Hoosiers are like that. May it rain soon in God's Country!

from Dennis Kucinich:

As you know my term in the United States House of Representatives is coming to an end. But our movement has always been about more than one election, more than one seat. It has been a movement based on a vision of a peaceful and prosperous America. Together, we made our voices heard. And as long as we continue to share our vision, our voices will continue to be heard. This is why I have created a new organization, Kucinich Action, to continue our efforts to grow our national movement and change the debate on the most important issues of our time.

It is through Kucinich Action, with your involvement and the involvement of your friends and family, that we will continue to organize, continue to lead, continue to act, continue to move our nation in a direction which transforms our politics and strives to restore peace, reclaim our liberties, reform our monetary policies, re-ignite civic activism and re-establish a government of the people, by the people and for the people. In order to move forward boldly and broadly, I need your help. We need to demonstrate that our movement is about more than one election. We need to show that we will stick together.

Click here to contribute now and help us re-ignite this movement as Kucinich Action:

<https://donate.kucinich.us/page/contribute/120726>.

We cannot do this alone. You have always been an essential part of our political success. Time and again, whenever my political career hung in the balance, you came forward with financial support to help change the outcome from defeat to victory.

Now we need your help once again. Not for myself. I am not a candidate. But there are other candidates who are deserving of our support and without our help those candidates could be swept away in a tidal wave of special interest money. Kucinich Action, through assisting candidates and campaigns, will provide strategic assistance, by way of emails, phone calls, mailings and even door to door campaigning to change the outcome of elections. We will also be engaged in providing community organizations assistance on issue-based campaigns. Though I will not be in the 113th Congress when it begins on January 3rd, 2013, with your help we will have a number of allies inside the Congress who will continue the work we have begun.

I am asking you to stand with Kucinich Action. Your contribution will prove that our movement is here to stay. That big money and Wall Street interests cannot simply drown out those who wish to see a better world for our children to grow up in. Your financial support will help pay for a small staff of web campaigners, database experts, and grass roots organizers who are devoted to supporting candidates who share our values. The money you put into Kucinich Action will be an investment in continuing a dynamic approach to politics, one that is unafraid to challenge the status quo, and prepared to lead in powerful and positive ways through harnessing the energy of countless citizen-activists who will stand and act boldly for our causes.

Kucinich Action is not just another political organization. It represents the unfolding of a politics of possibility, of creative thinking, of dynamic action. Let us continue to lead the way forward. Please join me and make a contribution today.

Together we can meet any challenge. Together we will restore peace, liberty and social and economic justice to this land we love.

Thank you, Dennis Kucinich

from Working America:

That was unexpected.

Yesterday, the U.S. Senate narrowly passed a bill that would extend Bush-era tax cuts for families who earn less than \$250,000 a year and make the richest 2% pay their fair share.

Working America members from across the country called their Senators and sent thousands of letters urging them to make the right vote. And because of you, they did.

Now the fate of these tax cuts is in the hands of the House of Representatives and they need to remember that they work for us. Will you write to your U.S. Representative now and ask them to support tax cuts for Americans earning less than \$250,000?

Extremists in the House have already indicated that they want to protect their friends in the richest 2% and give them more tax breaks. We can't let them do this. We've paid our fair share. Now it's time for the wealthy to pay theirs.

Send a message to your U.S. Representative now and tell them to extend tax cuts for 98% of Americans. The House of Representative is the last step in passing these middle-class tax cuts and ending huge tax cuts to those who need it least, so we need them to act today. Send your message now:

[http://action.workingamerica.org/c/575/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action\\_KEY=4745](http://action.workingamerica.org/c/575/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=4745).

In solidarity, Christian Norton, Working America

<u>20120726-10</u>	23:01	Tom	Note from Wife
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The wife left a note on the fridge, "It's not working! I can't take it anymore! I've gone to stay at my Mom's!"

I opened the fridge, the light came on and the beer was cold...

God only knows what she was talking about!

[Note: I know you're thinking this picture was Photoshopped, but if you look at it extremely closely, you will see that's not a fake old police car in the picture, and that sure looks like a real police dog to me. Fer sure, Mitt would have the carrier on top, or the dog might stink-up his lapels. The uniform and hat? Those look fake to me! Overall, I think you have to admit this photo is proof positive that the caption must be true. Snopes.com says the story is true, but fails to mention the undeniable photographic evidence of ~~UFO's~~ Mitt's juvenile deeds. -SteveB]



Seems unreal...like a toy...yet with so much history...it's so much nicer not to tear your old stuff down.

<http://www.epilepsylondon2012.org/tours/tours.html>



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

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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #192 — JULY 30, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Krauthammer: 'Unbelievable...Beyond Human Understanding...Incomprehensible'**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 30, 2012)

His campaign keeps telling us that all Romney wants to talk about is the economy (though he doesn't seem to want to talk about actual, concrete economic proposals), but, instead, it turns-out Romney wants to dip his big toe into foreign policy.

He seems a lot like 2008 to me. The closer it gets to the election, the more the Republican candidate, McCain or Romney, appears like he has decided he doesn't want to be President after all, so he starts sabotaging his own campaign, perhaps subconsciously. Romney only seems to think that he deserves to be President. Like Sarah Palin, he's not about to lift a finger to actually study what you might have to know to be President of the most powerful nation on Earth.



Clueless arrogant elitist!

I believe President Obama has done that studying conscientiously. It's just about the minimum I expect of a Presidential candidate. Who in his right mind would want to face the world with a President who innately feels the rest of the world is sh\*t and not worth knowing about? What a recipe for another disaster of the W type!

And Republicans claim foreign policy as a stong suit? "Unbelievable... beyond human understanding... incomprehensible."

"Romney's World" by Fred Kaplan, Slate

July 27, 2012,

[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/war\\_stories/2012/07/mitt\\_romney\\_s\\_insults\\_and\\_mistakes\\_while\\_at\\_the\\_london\\_olympics\\_aren\\_t\\_gaffes\\_as\\_much\\_as\\_a\\_fair\\_representation\\_of\\_his\\_worldview\\_.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2012/07/mitt_romney_s_insults_and_mistakes_while_at_the_london_olympics_aren_t_gaffes_as_much_as_a_fair_representation_of_his_worldview_.html)

(Mitt's insults, mistakes, and blunders abroad aren't gaffes. They actually represent his true worldview.)

Mitt Romney's not-so-excellent adventure abroad ("Romneyshambles," the Brits are calling it) has been many things: shabby, hilarious, scandalous, an enlivening hoot to a dreary election season. One thing it shouldn't be, though, is surprising.

Charles Krauthammer, the right-wing commentator who usually finds every excuse to attack Barack Obama—he took Obama's blinking during a tête-à-tête with Vladimir Putin as a sign of appeasement—pronounced himself befuddled by the GOP candidate's flare of incompetence.

These sorts of trips, Krauthammer said on Fox News Thursday night, are easy. You express solidarity with the allies, listen, nod your head, and say nice things or nothing at all. Instead, Romney questioned his hosts' ability to run the Olympics, raised doubts about Londoners' community spirit, and violated protocol by publicly mentioning a meeting with the head of MI-6. "It's unbelievable, it's beyond human understanding, it's incomprehensible," Krauthammer, normally a paragon of self-confidence, sputtered. "I'm out of adjectives ... I don't get it."

**The thing that Krauthammer doesn't get is that Romney is not the sort of businessman—that his brand of capitalism is not the sort of enterprise—that requires even the most elementary understanding of diplomacy, courtesy, or sensitivity to other people's values, lives, or perceptions.**

[This is exactly why being a businessman is not much preparation for the White House, perhaps to the same degree as being a prisoner of war or the governor of Alaska. —SteveB]

The American capitalists-turned-statesmen of an earlier generation—Douglas Dillon, Averell Harriman, Robert Lovett, John McCloy, Dean Acheson, Paul Nitze—took risks, built institutions, helped rebuild postwar Europe, befriended their foreign counterparts: in short, they cultivated an internationalist sensibility at their core. Whatever you think of their politics or Cold War policies generally (and there is much to criticize), financiers formed an American political elite in that era because finance (through the Marshall Plan, the World Bank, the IMF, and so forth) was so often the vehicle of American expansionism.

By contrast, private-equity firms, such as Bain Capital, where Romney made his fortune, tend to view their client companies as cash cows, susceptible to cookie-cutter formulas from which the firms' partners reap lavish fees, almost regardless of the outcome. Their ends and means breed an insularity, a sense of entitlement, a disposition to view all the world's entities through a single prism and to appraise them along a single scale.

How Romney should have behaved in London may have been obvious to Charles Krauthammer, who studies politics; it would have been obvious to politically ambitious businessmen from more traditional lines of work or from an earlier era. But as we have been graced to see this week, it is not necessarily obvious to Romney himself.

Already, Romney's surrogates back home are spinning with frantic intensity. In the face of merrily savage media coverage of the candidate's remarks and British officials' rejoinders, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal said, with as

much nonchalance as he could muster, "The reality is, we're not worried about overseas headlines ... I think the focus needs to continue to be on what's happening here at home. That's what's important to voters."

This may be, but why then did Romney go abroad in the first place? It wasn't to watch his wife's horse trot and dance in the Olympics' dressage competition (as he scoffed in another head-shaking remark, certain to anger a large number of wives who feel their husbands don't take their interests seriously). The intent, obviously, was to demonstrate his comfort and capabilities on the world scene—a demonstration that, at least so far, has gone about as well as North Korea's last few missile tests. And London, his first stop, was supposed to be the easy part of the trip, the place where the white, patrician candidate could forge bonds through, as one of his spokesmen put it, their common "Anglo-Saxon heritage."

Not only did Romney fail at that no-brainer, he also put a foot through stateside customs. Before leaving on his overseas tour, he said that he would not criticize the current president on foreign soil, a long-standing, universally respected tradition in American politics. But then he spoke at an exclusive, closed-door fundraising dinner (tickets went for \$50,000 to \$70,000 apiece) sponsored by Barclays bank, which is currently in the middle of a whopping financial crisis. Eleven members of Parliament wrote a letter to the bank's board members, demanding that they stop swelling Romney's war chest and instead focus on repairing their own problems. Will Americans express outrage at this whiff of foreign influence? Obama catches hell when he raises money from Hollywood movie stars. What would happen if he flew to London or Paris and raised money from European movie stars (who don't have as much influence as, say, European bankers).

Had Romney's handlers dipped into their candidate's biography, they might have put the kibosh on this trip from the get-go. Joshua Keating, a blogger at *Foreign Policy*, dug up the following passage from Romney's 2010 book, *No Apology: The Case for American Greatness*:

**England is just a small island. Its roads and houses are small. With few exceptions, it doesn't make things that people in the rest of the world want to buy. And if it hadn't been separated from the continent by water, it almost certainly would have been lost to Hitler's ambitions.**

Nice. Anglo-Saxon heritage indeed. Presidential material? Get serious.

"Why Romney Is a Foreign Policy Lightweight" by Fred Kaplan, Slate

June 29, 2012,

[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/war\\_stories/2012/06/mitt\\_romney\\_s\\_foreign\\_policy\\_ideas\\_can\\_t\\_be\\_taken\\_seriously\\_.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2012/06/mitt_romney_s_foreign_policy_ideas_can_t_be_taken_seriously_.html)

(His ideas range from vague to ill-informed to downright dangerous.)

Conventional wisdom holds that U.S. presidential elections do not hinge on foreign policy. On this point, conventional wisdom is almost certainly correct. But it shouldn't be, for two reasons. First, foreign policy is the one realm in which presidents can do pretty much what they want. (Congress may rant at some action but rarely halts it.) Second, in this election in particular, Mitt Romney's statements on foreign policy range from vague to ill-informed to downright dangerous.

Does Romney believe the things that he's said about arms control, Russia, the Middle East, the defense budget, and the rest? Who can say? He has no experience on any of these issues. But his advisers do; they represent, mainly, the Dick Cheney wing of the Republican Party (some, notably John Bolton, veer well to the right of even that). While not all presidents wind up following their advisers, Romney has placed his byline atop some of his coterie's most egregious arguments—not least, several op-ed pieces against President Obama's New START with Russia, pieces that rank as the most ignorant I've read in nearly 40 years of following the nuclear debate.

But let's begin with an instance of Romney's own judgment—his remark, during a May 31 interview with CBS News, that Obama's foreign policy deserves a grade of F, "across the board."

He allowed that the raid on Osama Bin Laden's compound was commendable (one would think that even the most demanding teacher would, on that action alone, give the president a passing mark) but added:

I'd look at the fact that [Obama] was looking to have a force of American troops staying in Iraq, securing what had been so hard won there, and with the Status of Forces Agreement. He failed to achieve it. ... In the Middle East, the Arab Spring has become the Arab Winter. That's hardly a success. As I look around the world, I have to believe his positions in foreign policy have not communicated American strength and resolve.

Let's take these examples one by one.

On Iraq, several Republicans have accused Obama of muffing negotiations with Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, claiming that they were on the verge of striking a deal that allowed the United States to keep a few thousand—some say, several thousand—troops in the country even after the withdrawal of U.S. combat brigades. This is nonsense. It's worth recalling that it was President George W. Bush's administration that negotiated the 2008 Status of Forces Agreement, which required the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces by the end of 2011. As the date drew near, and as Obama's own officials (among them, a few Bush holdovers) negotiated the final details, there were discussions about leaving some American troops behind; Obama was fine with the idea if the Iraqi government wanted them. The obstacle was that the Iraqi government didn't want them. End of story. Romney does not explain how he would have rammed the troops down the Iraqis' throats, or whether that's something we should do with a sovereign ally.

As for the "Arab spring" devolving into an "Arab winter," the jury, as they say, is still out. But a few facts are paramount. First, "Arab spring" was always a misnomer. Marc Lynch, the scholar who coined the phrase, has expressed regrets, and now refers to it, in the title of his very good book, as, more neutrally, *The Arab Uprising*. By the same token, "Arab winter" goes too far in the opposite direction. Tunisia, where it all began, shows signs of promise. The Egyptian elections may not have gone ideally, by the measure of U.S. or Israeli interests, but they were free and fair elections; a democracy of sorts is coalescing, even though the military council still exercises great power (no surprise, since the revolution's first success, the ouster of Hosni Mubarak, was in fact brought about through a military coup).

In any case, Romney does not explain what he would have done differently in Obama's place. Would he have stood shoulder to shoulder with our old ally, Mubarak? (That would have served America's image very badly and wouldn't have saved Mubarak's hide in the end.) Would he have poured billions of dollars in aid and investment into Egypt at the first sign of Mubarak's fall? (Extremely doubtful.) Would he have demanded that the military turn over power more completely to the parliament? (If so, how?)

This gets to the main point: Romney doesn't seem to understand—nor do some of his advisers—the extent to which the world has changed since the end of the Cold War. International politics were never as cut and dried as that era's image suggested—two superpowers, each dominating its sphere of the globe and competing for influence at the margins of the other's domain.

Still, the superpowers did tend to view the politics of "strategic regions" in that broader framework, and the leaders within those regions often acceded to the interests of one superpower, in order to stave off the other, or tried to play the two off each other.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it the demise of the Cold War system, this wedge of entry is no longer open. This is not to say that the United States is a "declining power." By every *traditional measure* of national power, the United States still dominates the rest of the world. But because the world has changed, those measures no longer translate so directly into influence. Or, to put it another way, the rules of the game, the dimensions of the playing field, have changed. The tokens of strength in the old game don't have the same potency in the new one.

Obama seems to understand this (though, for obvious political reasons, he can't say so directly); Romney and his people seem not to. In April, one of Romney's top surrogates, former Navy Secretary John Lehman, told reporters

that Obama was “withdrawing in leading the free world,” leaving us open to “huge new vulnerabilities.” Asked to cite an example, Lehman said, “We are seeing the Soviets pushing into the Arctic with no response from us.”

In one sense, the “mis-speak” (“Soviets” instead of “Russians”) can be forgiven; those of us who came of age during the Cold War have lingering attachments to its vocabulary. (In recent years, I have blithely referred to “West Germany” a few times in conversation, once in print.) But in this case, the anachronism reflects a mentality. Lehman and those of his ilk continue to view not just Russia but world politics as if the Soviet Union still existed. (What is he talking about, for instance, with this business of Russians or Soviets “pushing into the Arctic with no response from us”—how are they “pushing,” and what “response” is warranted?) World politics is no longer bipolar; the game of moves and countermoves is no longer zero-sum. Abrogating a particular playing field doesn’t necessarily mean a defeat for us or a victory for ... whomever the “other” might be.

Which leads to Romney’s final complaint: that Obama’s foreign policies “have not communicated American strength and resolve.” It’s not clear what Romney means by this; he cites no examples. The one case in which he had to concede Obama did well—ordering the killing of Bin Laden—certainly communicates more strength and resolve than anything Bush did on that front. To the extent America’s image has been tarnished under Obama’s presidency, the main reason has to do with what some see as an excess of “strength and resolve”—the quintupling of drone attacks launched against targets in Pakistan, Sudan, and Somalia under Bush.

Which leads to some questions: What is Romney’s position on drone strikes? What’s his position on Afghanistan? During the Republican debates, he once said that his position was not to negotiate with the Taliban but to defeat them. What does that mean? Does he want to keep tens of thousands of U.S. troops there after NATO’s 2014 deadline? To what end? Doing what? He also once said that military spending should consume at least 4 percent of gross domestic product. Obama’s most recent military budget (\$525 billion, not counting the cost of the war in Afghanistan) amounts to 3 percent. So Romney intends to raise the budget by one-third, or by about \$175 billion a year—by more than \$1 trillion in the next six years. Where is he going to get the money? What’s he going to spend it on? No details. None.

**Is Romney an extremist? Or, in keeping with the GOP approach to politics in general these days, has he simply calculated that it’s best not to agree with Obama on *anything*? Either way, one thing is clear: He is not a serious man.**



The Romney family misspells their own name. Freudian slip? (Thanks, SteveG!)

[Note: Truly safe food would mandate irradiating it. The left seeks half-way measures which are better than none, but it's interesting that science is ignored so conveniently by the Right and the Left. And the price of beef will rise, hurting, especially, the poorest among us. The conundrum of caring. -SteveB]

from CREDO Action:

Earlier this month, medical researchers at the University of Montreal linked a difficult-to-treat bladder infection that affects millions of women a year with a form of antibiotic-resistant E. coli commonly found in chicken.<sup>1</sup>

This is just one of a growing number of stories about the rise of antibiotic resistant superbugs making humans sick, which researchers are increasingly connecting with the rampant overuse of antibiotics in meat production.

This is an emergency situation. But federal regulators appear incapable of overcoming pressure from the Big Meat and pharmaceutical lobbies.

Trader Joe's has the power to help get antibiotics out of our food. It's time for major retailers like Trader Joe's to step up and help get antibiotics out of our food. Tell Trader Joe's: Stop selling meat raised with antibiotics! Click here to sign the petition:

[http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/tjs\\_meat/](http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/tjs_meat/).

CREDO is joining with Consumers Union<sup>2</sup> and other groups to call on Trader Joe's to sell only antibiotic-free meat because the company has shown a commitment to safe food in the past — including sourcing only non-GMO ingredients, and meat free of pink slime.

And because the company sells most of its products under its own label, Trader Joe's has direct control of its supply chain.

The company already sells some meat that does not contain antibiotics, but going all the way would create a powerful incentive for other retailers to follow suit, by meeting the strong consumer demand for meat raised without antibiotics.<sup>3</sup>

Tell Trader Joe's: Stop selling meat raised with antibiotics! Click here to automatically sign the petition.

Antibiotics are a crucial tool to cure illness for all of us. And whether or not you eat meat, we're all endangered by the antibiotic-resistant bacteria that continue emerging as a result of antibiotic overuse on factory farms.

80% of all antibiotics are currently fed to livestock — primarily as a growth stimulant and to compensate for filthy, cruel living conditions. That needs to stop.

More than 100,000 CREDO members submitted a public comment to the FDA earlier this month urging the agency to strengthen its voluntary and inadequate antibiotics standards.

While we wait for FDA's response, Trader Joe's can show its commitment to food safety, and start moving meat producers away from their dangerous use of antibiotics.

Click below to automatically sign the petition to Trader Joe's now:

[http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6919616&p=tjs\\_meat&id=44073-3891339-q0JQqDx&t=10](http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6919616&p=tjs_meat&id=44073-3891339-q0JQqDx&t=10)

Thank you for fighting for save and healthy food.

Elijah Zarlin, Campaign Manager

CREDO Action from Working Assets

<sup>1</sup>"REPORT: Superbug Dangers in Chicken Linked to 8 Million At-Risk Women," ABC News, 7/11/12

<sup>2</sup>"Meat without drugs," Consumers Union

<sup>3</sup>"Poll: Americans Don't Want Antibiotics in Their Meat" Mother Jones, 6/21/12

[20120727-02](#)

10:13

SteveB

Fw: CREDO Action Action: Call Upon the Candidates to Ban Assault Weapons Now!

President Barack Obama — 202-456-1111

Governor Mitt Romney — 857-288-3500

Cool!

from CREDO Action:

Call President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney: Tell them to issue a joint call asking Congress to reinstate the expired federal assault weapons ban today.

Thank you for taking action in recent days to join the fight to ban assault weapons now. The response to our campaign so far has been amazing, as over 170,000 CREDO Action members have signed a petition calling on President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney to ask Congress to reinstate the expired federal assault weapons ban as soon as possible.

The pressure is working. After a White House spokesman suggested the president wouldn't press for new gun laws, the president is now hinting that he may lobby for reinstating the ban.<sup>1</sup> Let's keep this momentum going. We need to make sure the pressure on both President Obama and Governor Romney to lead on this issue does not go away. Call President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney: Tell them to issue a joint call asking Congress to reinstate the expired federal assault weapons ban today. Click here for a simple script and the number to call.

It's long past time for senseless gun violence to stop. Around 270 people are shot every day in America and nearly 100,000 each year.<sup>2</sup> Massacres on the scale of the tragedy in Aurora happen in part because our federal gun laws make it easy for civilians to obtain military-level firepower. We need to pass and enforce sensible federal gun laws restricting ready access to assault weapons by civilians. Reinstating a strong version of the federal ban on assault weapons known as the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act is where we should start.

We understand many things need to change in American culture to stop the next Aurora-like massacre. But we do know one thing we should put at the top of the list — keeping military-level assault weapons like the AR-15 with a high-capacity clips out of the hands of civilians. Let's keep the pressure to lead on both President Obama and Governor Romney.

Call President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney: Tell them to issue a joint call asking Congress to reinstate the expired federal assault weapons ban today. Click here for a simple script and the number to call:

[http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/obama\\_romney\\_guns/?rc=homepage](http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/obama_romney_guns/?rc=homepage).

Thank you for speaking out. Becky Bond, Political Director, CREDO Action from Working Assets

<sup>1</sup>Connor Simpson, "Obama Hints Towards Bringing Back Assault Weapons Ban," TheAtlanticWire.com, July 26, 2012.

<sup>2</sup>"Facts: Gun Violence," BradyCampaign.org.

[20120727-03](#)

10:39

SteveG

Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies

Spend a few minutes listening to Lewis Black !!!!!!!

<http://front.moveon.org/hilarious-lewis-black-cuts-presidential-campaign-lies-up-and-spits-them-back-out/?rc=daily.share>

[20120729-01](#) 08:59 SteveB Re: Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies (reply to SteveG, above)

Lewis Black reminds me of me! Minus the funny part. That's scary!

[20120729-02](#) 09:56 Art Re: Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies (reply to SteveB, above)

Very much spot on though.

[20120729-03](#) 10:43 SteveG Re: Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies (reply to Art & SteveB, above)

As long as he doesn't have a stroke, Lewis is worth a listen.

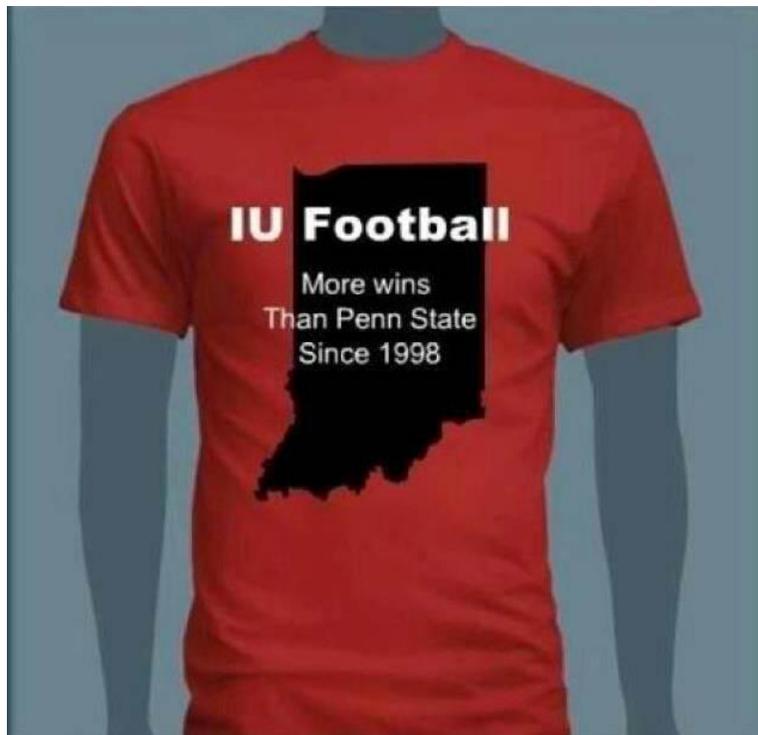
[20120729-04](#) 11:29 SteveB Re: Video: Lewis Black on Campaign Lies (reply to SteveG & Art, above)

Ya, you always worry a little with Lewis that he's going to have a heart attack or his head explode.

Have always loved him ever since I first saw him on the old Daily Show with...the guy I thought (for a while) Jon Stewart would never be able to replace.

Lewis' theme song is also hard to beat! AC/DC!

[20120727-04](#) 12:21 Phil Graphic: IU Football



20120727-05

13:44

Pam

Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #191)

There's really no hope, is there? As with everything else, money rules. I'm so naive I thought the NRA cared about the 2nd amendment. I should have realized it's the profits from massive gun sales that are their real passion. Why is this issue such a difficult one to get a handle on? We got the Civil Rights Act, an end to the prohibition against abortion, and one day soon gay marriage will be no big deal. I'd even bet we'll legalize marijuana eventually, but maybe the folks who make money from the drug trade don't want legalization. They make more money the way things are now. It's always about money; that's the real dangerous drug. (Not that I'm against money, just the extremes to which people will go to get it.)

20120729-08

12:31

Art

"Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise"

Several good articles today in the *WP* on guns. Here's one of the best:

"Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" by Michael F. McNulty, *The Washington Post*

July 27, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-killing-is-a-profitable-enterprise/2012/07/27/gJQAA3RnEX\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-killing-is-a-profitable-enterprise/2012/07/27/gJQAA3RnEX_story.html))

(Michael McNulty is an attorney in Tucson. He was chairman of the Giffords for Congress campaign in 2006, 2008 and 2010.)

It is easy to ignore the issue of gun control, given the perfect leaderlessness it enjoys in Congress. Then again, it becomes harder to ignore when your relatives or friends are murdered in the company of someone you idolize, which describes thousands of us in Tucson.

I have owned guns, continuously, since I was 6. I still own my grandfather's pump-action Winchester, carried for decades in a scabbard behind his saddle as he rode the range where he ranched, in Wikieup, Ariz. All the guns I've owned have been what are quaintly called long guns. I began my brief assault on local fauna at age 12, and I had "taken" four white-tailed deer, a couple of javelina and innumerable quail and dove by the time I got my driver's license at 16. A driver's license is a far greater liberator than a hunting license, and thereafter, trekking around in the wilderness killing things lost its luster. It has been decades since I engaged in those adventures.

There are, today, few who hunt with handguns or assault rifles equipped with 100-clip magazines. There are even fewer reasons to do so. But the National Rifle Association's principal focus has evolved mostly to those. It is news to no one that the NRA has abandoned the sportsman in every practical sense; if the group were honest, it would change its name. Speaking as a rifleman, I think it's an embarrassment.

The NRA not only dependably opposes limits on assault-rifle sales but even opposes reporting bulk sales of assault rifles. Last year, the NRA went to the mat to prevent anyone from cross-checking the names of those on the terrorist watch list against the names of those buying guns. These two actions clarify beyond argument that the safety and welfare of you and yours have simply dropped from the NRA's list of priorities. The NRA represents gun manufacturers, end of story.

Now, handguns excel at certain things. They are unequaled at killing people at close range: quite useful for law enforcement officers and drug dealers. They're genuine security in a drawer for those who have received unambiguous threats, like my friend Gabby Giffords. They're even a useful, if dubious, tool to defend yourself from murderers and rapists breaking in at 2 a.m. That hasn't happened to me in the past 60 years, but maybe your experience is different. NRA President Wayne LaPierre thinks it may happen to you tonight: If you search YouTube for "The NRA's Circus of Fear," you'll find a collection of LaPierre's reasons why he lives in fear, and his arguments as to why you should, too. Personally, I think that "living in fear" is inconsistent with being an American, and I'm not going to play.

But how else are the gun manufacturers going to "grow the market," to sell more than the 3 million handguns they already do per year? Fear is a great motivator; mass murder is great for the gun business.

Just days ago a dozen citizens were murdered and about five dozen plugged with slugs from a trinity of firearms. Setting aside the shotgun, it bears mentioning that the Glock and assault rifle James Holmes is suspected of firing in an Aurora, Colo., movie theater were being used for the purpose for which they were designed, manufactured and sold. But the gun makers have no product-liability litigation to worry about, because in 2005 Congress approved and President George W. Bush signed into law legislation providing immunity for gun manufacturers from the foreseeable consequence of building instruments of murder. Every year three times as many people are murdered with guns in the United States as were murdered on Sept. 11, 2001. But blessed be the gun makers, for they are pardoned in advance.

It strikes me that the NRA is pretty comfortable when debates over mass murder devolve into intellectual discussions relating to civility vs. demagoguery, insanity vs. impressionability, and freedom vs. the tyranny of gun zealots. The more abstract, the better. In the end, however, it's simple: The NRA shills for gun makers who profit from the murder of American citizens. If you think the country's policies are shaped by Judeo-Christian values, you're not paying attention.

[20120729-09](#) 13:05 SteveB Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to Art, above)

I think it's great this is finally being talked about more openly...though few politicians would dare cross the NRA.

Citizens have a written right to guns. Citizens have a written right to life.

Where the two conflict, I say the lives of citizens trump the bullets of other citizens.

Shove it, NRA! Bang!

[20120729-11](#) 13:30 SteveG Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to SteveB, above)

When the Constitution was written, were not "arms" basically muskets (pistols and rifles – each single shot) and cannons? I am not certain many families or people owned cannons, but there was a law for a while that everyone or every man should own a musket. How does the intent of the 2nd amendment written in the late 1700's get interpreted into 2012?

[20120729-12](#) 15:06 Pam Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to Art, above)

Great article. Politicians are afraid of the NRA the way they used to fear J. Edgar Hoover. Just read an article on him in the NYRB about the stranglehold he had on American politics and politicians for decades. He wanted a national security state, and he pretty much had one. I didn't realize the extent to which he manipulated events and violated people's civil rights. He was a one-man national enforcer. I knew he was bad, but I hadn't realized just how bad. If that sort of thing can happen in America, anything can happen. Hoover had the goods on politicians, and they knew it, so they left him alone. What does the NRA have going for it? Money? Is that all? Some brave investigative journalist ought to dig into their finances and secrets. There's got to be something there.

[20120729-13](#) 17:30 Art Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to Pam, above)

The issue is of course the NRA has manufactured this 2nd Amendment crap issue and gotten a large following of not very bright gun owners to buy into it. They further have adopted a clever position that any proposal to regulate some of the more ridiculous aspects of an armed citizenry such as 100 rd magazines for military type assault rifles represents the first step "TO TAKE AWAY ALL OUR GUNS!!!!!" Any political leader who proposes even the most normally logical approach to some of this excess is threatened with political defeat by an almost zombie like gun

owning electorate. These are the same type people who support Norquest and his tax pledge. Both positions are completely idiotic and do not speak well for the intelligence of the electorate but there you have it. Stupidity rules and we keep killing around 10,000 a year with guns. We deserve what we get.

<a href="#">20120729-15</a>	17:36	Beth	Re: "Why Killing Is a Profitable Enterprise" (reply to Pam, above)
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I googled NRA and found an article in the *SF Chronicle* that details the hard right turn the organization took about the time Reagan was elected.

<a href="#">20120729-16</a>	17:43	Art	"Scalia Suggests 'Hand-Held Rocket Launchers' Are Protected Under Second Amendment"
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Just when we thought it couldn't get worse. Remember this is a Supreme Court Justice.

"Scalia Suggests 'Hand-Held Rocket Launchers' Are Protected Under Second Amendment" by Zack Ford, ThinkProgress

July 29, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2012/07/29/602491/scalia-rocket-launcher/?mobile=nc>)

This morning on Fox News Sunday, Justice Antonin Scalia reiterated just how extremely his Constitutional originalism can be applied. Referring to the recent shooting in Aurora, CO, host Chris Wallace asked the Supreme Court Justice about gun control, and whether the Second Amendment allows for any limitations to gun rights. Scalia admitted there could be, such as "frighting" (carrying a big ax just to scare people), but they would still have to be determined with an 18th-Century perspective in mind. According to his originalism, if a weapon can be hand-held, though, it probably still falls under the right o "bear arms":

WALLACE: What about... a weapon that can fire a hundred shots in a minute?

SCALIA: We'll see. Obviously the Amendment does not apply to arms that cannot be hand-carried — it's to keep and "bear," so it doesn't apply to cannons — but I suppose here are hand-held rocket launchers that can bring down airplanes, that will have to be decided.

WALLACE: How do you decide that if you're a textualist?

SCALIA: Very carefully.

Scalia's across-the-board defense of weapon-carrying laws is not new, having been at the heart of his majority opinion in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, which protected an individual's right to possess firearms. However, his nonchalant suggestion that private citizens could legally carry rocket launchers so long as they're "hand-held" suggests just how willing he is to protect an armed nation.

Such originalism is a dangerous distortion of 21st-Century reality. There is no conceivable way to apply the Founding Fathers' understanding of a "well-regulated militia" armed with slow-to-load, hard-to-aim muskets to today's weapon technology. Arguably, the full extent of alleged gunman James Holmes' munitions could have easily decimated an entire brigade of musketeers before they'd even loaded their first ball.

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2tQjaK0HfU&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2tQjaK0HfU&feature=player_embedded).

[I'd have to say that, based on my reading of the Constitution and why we have the Second Amendment (so citizens can revolt, essentially), I'd say Scalia is probably correct. Our Constitution badly needs amending. —SteveB]

[20120729-20](#) 19:18 Pam Re: "Scalia Suggests 'Hand-Held Rocket Launchers' Are Protected Under Second Amendment" (reply to Art, above)

Scalia and Thomas. One is stupid (!), the other evil (!!). What I still don't understand is WHY?!!! When folks put ideas above people, I get very, very nervous. Absolutism is a death grip, and rigid adherence to principle, despite obvious mitigating circumstances, is contemptible. Stalin was crazy. What's the SC's excuse?

[20120727-06](#) 13:50 Pam No 'College Democrats' at DePauw

I just got a message from DePauw announcing their new presence on Facebook. I looked at the site and noticed that listed under campus organizations they have College Republicans, but no College Democrats. Some things never change.

[20120727-09](#) 15:30 SteveG Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to Pam, above)

I did send them a message through Facebook asking if they had a Young democrat group on campus. Will be interesting to see what they say.

[20120729-05](#) 11:53 SteveB Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to Pam & SteveG, above)

Wouldn't the Young Socialist Club count?

Or maybe they have a Young Communist Club?

Maybe the Obama Wannabees of DePauw University?

Perhaps an organization with another name? I thought the university system existed solely to indoctrinate the future intelligencia in Karl Marx, especially at the liberal bastions like DePauw and Wabash? Where are the commies?

[20120729-06](#) 12:02 Pam Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to SteveG & SteveB, above)

Admittedly, it's been a while (quite a while), but when I was at DePauw it was pretty conservative. The 'sixties arrived after I graduated in '67. It was still 1955 when I was a student. All my sorority sisters were Goldwater fans, and the troubled California campuses seemed a world away, as did Viet Nam war protests. I felt like a duck amongst swans.

Speaking of the liberal professoriate, I read an article yesterday that referred to universities as bastions of liberalism, as opposed to the rest of society. Maybe. Here in the South, not so much. As a bona fide liberal, I feel outnumbered sometimes and heave a sigh of relief when I encounter a fellow progressive. Mostly, I keep my mouth shut, unless I'm writing to you guys. I think it's pretty funny, actually, that professors are depicted as pointy-headed liberals. Maybe in New England and California, but not where I live. IMHO.

I do think most would support equal marriage rights--most, but not all.

[20120729-07](#) 12:23 Art Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to Pam, above)

Commie pinkos.

[20120729-10](#) 13:25 SteveG Re: No 'College Democrats' at DePauw (reply to Pam, above)

Out here it depends on the professor's expertise. I know a philosophy, English, and math that are progressive in nature. A geologist and dean that seem to be right in their thinking, at least they think they are right.

<a href="#">20120727-07</a>	14:22	SteveB	"Overturn <i>Citizens United</i> " (incl. Video)
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"Overturn *Citizens United*" by Sen. Bernie Sanders, NationofChange

July 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/overturn-citizens-united-1343408181>)

Sen. Bernie Sanders told a Senate panel on Tuesday that a constitutional amendment is needed to undo the Supreme Court ruling that let corporations and wealthy individuals spend unlimited sums to sway American elections. Vermont and five other states have adopted resolutions asking Congress for a constitutional amendment to overturn the *Citizens United* decision. More than 200 local governments, including about 60 towns in Vermont, have passed similar measures.

Sanders revealed for the first time that at least 23 billionaire families have contributed a minimum of \$250,000 each so far in this year's campaigns. "My guess is that number is really much greater because many of these contributions are made in secret. In other words, **not content to own our economy, the 1 percent want to own our government as well,**" he said his appearance before the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights.

Sanders said a handful of billionaires own a significant part of the wealth of America and have enormous control over our economy. The wealthiest 400 individuals own more wealth than the bottom 150 million Americans - half the country. One family, the Walton family of Wal-Mart fame, is worth \$89 billion, more than the bottom 40 percent of America.

"What the Supreme Court did in *Citizens United* is to say to these same billionaires and the corporations they control: "You own and control the economy, you own Wall Street, you own the coal companies, you own the oil companies. Now, for a very small percentage of your wealth, we're going to give you the opportunity to own the United States government."

"That is the essence of what *Citizens United* is all about - and that's why it must be overturned," said Sanders, the sponsor of the Saving American Democracy Amendment. A companion measure in the House is sponsored by Florida Rep. Ted Deutch.

The amendment would say that for-profit corporations are not people, that they are not entitled to any rights under the Constitution, that they are subject to regulation by state legislatures consistent with free press protections, and that they are prohibited from making contributions or expenditures in political campaigns. The amendment also would declare that Congress and the states have the right to regulate and limit all political expenditures and contributions.

"I'm proud to say the American people are making their voices heard on this issue-they are telling us loud and clear it is time to reverse the trend," Sanders said.

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=fKV2iJj9Quc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=fKV2iJj9Quc).

<a href="#">20120727-08</a>	15:10	Art	"Hospitals Limit Medical Bills for Aurora Theater Shooting Victims"
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Here's an interesting little test. Apparently, many of the recipients of the Colorado version of the "stand your ground" right of every red blooded American, do not have any health insurance. Surprise, surprise! So, who is going to pay for treatment? The below captures some of the reality of the situation. So for all who feel the ACA is the worst communist plot ever, how do we handle this? I think at tea party rally recently, the cheering was for the

"Let'm die" solution. I suspect, once the spotlight dims slightly, these hospitals will be reassessing their current generosity.

I also understand in the aftermath of Mr. Holmes' "expression of his 2nd Amendment rights" (trying to put a positive NRA spin on all this) 3000 more Colorado citizens applied for gun permits. More to follow, quite literally I suspect.

"Hospitals Limit Medical Bills for Aurora Theater Shooting Victims" by Annie-Rose Strasser, ThinkProgress

July 26, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/health/2012/07/26/588831/hospitals-medical-bills-shooting-victims/?mobile=nc>)

Days before the birth of their first child, Caleb and Kate Medley went to a midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises* in Aurora, Colorado, that turned into the horrible massacre. Katie made it out without any serious injury, but Caleb wasn't so lucky. He took a bullet to the eye and is in a medically induced coma, expected to take years to recover. Neither have insurance.

On Tuesday, their son Hugo was born, adding some joy to the tragedy but also more expenses.

While Caleb's family is still raising money for his care, uninsured victims of the shooting at other hospitals are seeing some relief. Three of the five hospitals where victims are being treated announced Thursday that they will be limiting or eliminating their hospital costs:

- Children's Hospital Colorado announced it would use donations and its charity care fund to cover the medical expenses of the uninsured. For those who do have insurance, the hospital says it will waive all co-pays. [...]
- HealthOne, which owns the Medical Center of Aurora and Swedish Medical Center, also says it will limit or eliminate charges based on the individual circumstances of the patients. Those hospitals have treated 22 shooting victims. However, the company cautioned its policy may not apply to all doctors working in its hospitals.
- Denver Health Medical Center and University of Colorado Hospital, where Caleb and other victims are being treated, haven't said what they'll do, but the hospitals are Colorado's top safety net hospitals in a state where 14 percent of residents are uninsured.

"We're going to do everything that we can for these patients on a case by case basis," said a representative of the Colorado hospital where Caleb is being treated. "The University Colorado Hospital provides \$300 million in uncompensated care every year."

Money donated from concerned citizens and the studio that released the movie *The Dark Knight Rises* has already totaled \$2 million, the AP reported today. But that's a drop in the bucket for victims who will leave the hospital with lifelong injuries and special needs.

Indeed, Caleb's medical bills alone could add up to \$2 million. So far, the family has raised one-quarter of the amount.

A German plumber finds remedy for a common occupational problem. I am just sure he was at the fair!

[Hilarious! Martha, is this what a Hoosierland County Fair looks like there days? –SteveB]



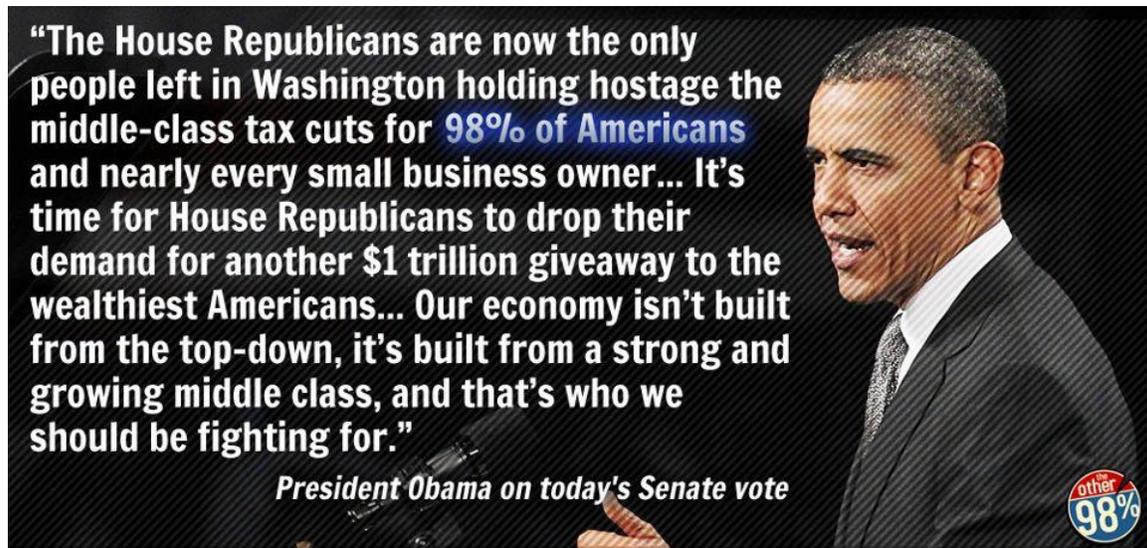
How thoughtful.

[20120727-12](#)

17:24

SteveG

Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts



[20120727-13](#)

18:46

SteveM

Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveB's forward of SteveG's email, above)

Really, Dummy?

You, like a majority of Americans, don't know what happened to more than 2,000 dealers that closed and 100,000 main street jobs that were lost, when the Obama administration squeezed General Motors and Chrysler to shutter those privately owned auto dealerships, without considering jobs that would be forfeited.

Where was the lying mofo when his socialist policies let them down, and on a more personal note, the loss of those dealer cost me 4 years of contract work.

F\*ck him

[20120727-14](#)

19:33

SteveB

Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveM, above)

The Republicans and R0mney wanted to let the whole thing die. And you're crying about a few dealers?

You're right though, that would have been much better than saving an entire industry and having a black President look good.

Please name one "socialist" policy? Even your conservative Supreme Court has decided that Obamacare is not socialistic.

If Obamacare is not, then what is? Sucking up to the big banks, military-industrial complex, and big bucks? Killing Osama bin Laden, etc., etc.?

Those sound like very Republican activities to me!

What is the source of your statistics and alleged evidence tying the Obama Administration to lost auto dealerships? Maybe the same source as R0mney had for his erroneous and embarrassingly stupid information that the bust of Winston Churchill had been removed from the White House by President Obama? Believe me, the whole world is laughing at the fool!

But, I guess if R0mney can't get his facts straight, I shouldn't expect you to either, my friend. And sorry about the lost work, but can the President do anything right, as far as you're concerned?

Did President Obama do the right thing this morning by having pancakes for breakfast? Or do you think he was all wrong and should have had waffles instead?

That dude just can't do anything right! He's such a socialist! *Response: But why 'a socialist'?* Because Rush says he is!

<a href="#">20120727-15</a>	23:13	SteveM	Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveB, above)
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Hey, Dummy, all you had to do is read *Automotive News*, the *Detroit Free Press* or any of the books by the former Auto Czars. Or even Google.

- Video: "Layoff Artist in Chief hits Romney on Bain" (<http://hotair.com/archives/2012/05/14/video-layoff-artist-in-chief-hits-romney-on-bain/>)
- TARP audit claims Obama admin destroyed "tens of thousands" of jobs in dealer closures (<http://hotair.com/archives/2010/07/19/tarp-audit-claims-obama-admin-destroyed-tens-of-thousands-of-jobs-in-dealer-closures/>)
- Obama auto task force warns against dealer plan (<http://abcnews.go.com/Business/story?id=8139627&page=1>)
- Fact Checking Obama's Auto Bailout (<http://gop.com/news/gop-blog/fact-checking-obamas-auto-bailout/>)
- Obama Fact Check: Bush Responsible for Bailouts and is 'GM really No. 1? (<http://www.theblaze.com/stories/obama-fact-check-bush-responsible-for-bailouts-and-gm-is-number-one/>)
- President Obama, the Auto Dealer Layoff King (<http://www.nationalreview.com/campaign-spot/299841/president-obama-auto-dealer-layoff-king>)
- Interesting time for Obama's closing of auto dealerships to come back into the news (<http://granitegrok.com/blog/2012/03/interesting-time-for-obamas-closing-of-auto-dealerships-to-come-back-into-the-news>)

If you knew half of what you think you know you...

<a href="#">20120728-03</a>	06:20	SteveB	Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveM, above)
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No wonder the "mainstream" news media barely picked this 2010 story up...it's almost pure radical right-wing BS.

<http://www.factcheck.org/2009/09/playing-favorites-with-chrysler-dealers/>

<http://politicsorpoppycock.com/2012/05/20/100000-auto-jobs-lost-under-obama/>

<a href="#">20120729-22</a>	20:19	SteveG	"Camry Edges Out F-150 for 'Most American'"
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As far as cars/trucks go, it is interesting as to what we think is American made and what is actually made here. It seems that we also are close to considering Canada and the US as one country.

"Camry Edges Out F-150 for 'Most American'" by Kelsey Mays, Cars.com/Yahoo! News

July 26, 2012, (<http://autos.yahoo.com/news/camry-edges-out-f-150-for--most-american-.html>)

In today's global economy, there's no easy way to determine just how American a car is. Many cars built in the U.S., for example, are assembled using parts that come from elsewhere. Some cars assembled in the U.S. from largely American-made parts don't sell well, meaning fewer Americans are employed to build them. Cars.com's American-Made Index recognizes cars that are built here, have a high percentage of domestic parts and are bought in large numbers by American consumers.

### **F-150 is back; Toyota, Honda and GM still lead**

The Toyota Camry topped this year's American-Made Index, extending its No. 1 status to four years running. Ford's F-150 landed by a photo-finish at No. 2, falling behind the Camry by fewer than two days of sales. The F-150 was once a common AMI leader, topping the index from 2006 to 2008, but lower domestic parts content had dropped the best-selling pickup off the list. With its domestic parts content back to 75 percent — up from 60 percent last year — the F-150 returns to the AMI for 2012.

Toyota, Honda and GM combined for eight of the AMI's 10 vehicles. Honda fielded two vehicles, the Ohio-built Accord and Alabama-built Pilot, while GM's related three-row crossovers — the Chevrolet Traverse, GMC Acadia and Buick Enclave, all assembled in Michigan — landed at sixth, ninth and 10th, respectively. Besides the Camry, Toyota's Tundra pickup and Sienna minivan also made the list. The Jeep Wrangler's domestic parts content fell below 75 percent this year, but Chrysler fielded another entrant in the Jeep Liberty. Like the Wrangler, the Liberty is assembled in Ohio.

<b><u>Rank</u></b>	<b><u>Make/Model</u></b>	<b><u>U.S. Assembly Location(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Rank in July 2011</u></b>
1	Toyota Camry	Georgetown, Ky.; Lafayette, Ind.	1
2	Ford F-150	Dearborn, Mich.; Claycomo, Mo.	-
3	Honda Accord	Marysville, Ohio	2
4	Toyota Sienna	Princeton, Ind.	6
5	Honda Pilot	Lincoln, Ala.	-
6	Chevrolet Traverse	Lansing, Mich.	8
7	Toyota Tundra	San Antonio, Tex.	9
8	Jeep Liberty	Toledo, Ohio	-
9	GMC Acadia	Lansing, Mich.	10
10	Buick Enclave	Lansing, Mich.	-

The Chevrolet Malibu, Ford Explorer and Honda Odyssey fell off the AMI, as all three cars' domestic parts content fell. Of the models that made the index, the Accord and Sienna had the highest domestic parts content, at 80 percent each. In last year's AMI, four cars had 80 percent domestic parts content or higher, reflecting a dwindling number of cars with high domestic content. For the 2012 model year, 21 models assembled in the U.S. have a domestic parts content rating of 75 percent or higher, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. That's down from 32 cars a year ago.

### **Homegrown by label**

Domestic parts content labels, required on all new cars since 1994 as a result of the American Automobile Labeling Act, denote the percentage, by cost, of U.S. and Canadian parts in a given model, as well as the final assembly location and country of origin for the model's engines and transmissions. If you're looking for a car with high domestic parts content, U.S. assembly and U.S. sourcing for the engines and transmissions, you'd get a different list:

1. Toyota Avalon: 85 percent DPC, built in Georgetown, Ky.
2. Honda Crosstour: 80 percent DPC, built in East Liberty, Ohio
3. Ford Expedition/Lincoln Navigator: 80 percent DPC, built in Louisville, Ky.

4. Buick Enclave/Chevrolet Traverse/GMC Acadia: 76 percent DPC, built in Lansing, Mich.
5. Jeep Liberty: 76 percent DPC, built in Toledo, Ohio
6. Chevrolet Corvette: 75 percent DPC, built in Bowling Green, Ky.
7. Toyota Sequoia: 75 percent DPC, built in Princeton, Ind.
8. Honda Pilot: 75 percent DPC, built in Lincoln, Ala.

*Source: Automaker data, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*

Of course, the above list underrepresents the overall impact of a car. The Corvette is directly responsible for 514 autoworkers at GM's Bowling Green, Ky., assembly plant. By contrast, GM's plant in Lansing, Mich., employs nearly 4,000 to assemble the Enclave, Traverse and Acadia.

It shows the auto industry's global nature. Even the AMI's top cars — the Camry, F-150 and Accord — have some international sourcing. NHTSA says the F-150's 5.0-liter V-8 comes from Canada, while Toyota sources certain Camry drivetrains from Canada. The Accord's transmissions come from the U.S., Japan and the Philippines.

A globalized industry may mean fewer cars that hail mostly from the U.S., but it works for many companies' bottom lines. Ford's global One Ford strategy coincides with falling domestic parts content in its vehicles. Five years ago, Ford had 20 models with 75 percent or higher domestic parts content. For the 2012 model year, that figure fell to three. Yet the same strategy has helped to bring Ford into the black with 11 straight quarterly profits.

"They have one of the highest content vehicles, the old Escape, and one of the lowest content vehicles, the Transit," said Kristin Dzikczek, who directs the Labor and Industry group at Michigan's Center for Automotive Research. "There's a global supply chain for most things, and that ebbs and flows with currency, with trade and free-trade agreements. It ebbs and flows with union agreements with capturing outsourced work."

Ford isn't alone. Cars.com surveyed domestic parts content for the top 113 models on the market, which make up 89 percent of all the cars sold through May. More than 80 percent of those cars — the vast majority of what shoppers are buying — have domestic parts content below 75 percent or are assembled in Canada, Mexico or abroad.

Many consumers still say they would only consider cars built by the Detroit Three. Cars.com conducted a survey in June 2012, asking consumers if they had a preference between a domestic- or foreign-made car. Of the 1,004 respondents, 23 percent said they would only consider an American manufacturer. Their top reasons, unsurprisingly, were brand loyalty and supporting the local economy. But nearly half of that group said that a car from a foreign automaker would be more appealing if they knew the car was built in the U.S.

**Romney's Free Market vs. Obama's Socialism**

<p><b>Romney's Bain Capital invested private money in;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⦿ AMC Entertainment</li> <li>⦿ Burger King</li> <li>⦿ Burlington Coat Factory</li> <li>⦿ Clear Channel Communications</li> <li>⦿ Dominos Pizza</li> <li>⦿ Dunkin' Donuts</li> <li>⦿ Guitar Center</li> <li>⦿ The Sports Authority</li> <li>⦿ Staples</li> <li>⦿ Toys "R" Us</li> <li>⦿ Warner Music Group</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obama's Invested taxpayer money in;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⦿ Solyndra – Bankrupt</li> <li>⦿ Ener 1 – Bankrupt</li> <li>⦿ Beacon Power – Bankrupt</li> <li>⦿ Abound Solar – Bankrupt</li> <li>⦿ Amonix Solar – Bankrupt</li> <li>⦿ Spectra Watt – Bankrupt</li> <li>⦿ Eastern Energy – Bankrupt</li> <li>⦿ All of these companies were Obama Campaign contributors.</li> </ul>
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CHOICE IS CLEAR... DO YOU WANT  
A BUSINESSMAN WHO GENERATED **BILLIONS**  
OR  
A PRESIDENT WHO WASTED **TRILLIONS**

[www.facebook.com/obamapuke](http://www.facebook.com/obamapuke)



[See? The Big Guy just can't do anything right? What about his great family values? –SteveB]

[If this actually happens, and they kick-out Pepsi too, I'm moving back to the U.S. Some misguided souls may conjecture that President Obama is a socialist, but this is the kind of thing a true socialist does, though in both countries, it's really just all about the money. –SteveB]

"Coca Cola Booted from Bolivia" by Kochie's Business Builders, Yahoo! Finance

July 23, 2012, (<http://au.smallbusiness.yahoo.com/article/-/14344893/coca-cola-booted-from-bolivia/>)

To tie in with the end of the Mayan calendar, the Bolivian Government has announced that as of December 21 Coca Cola will be banned in their country in a move towards "community spirit"

There has been much speculation surrounding the end of the Mayan calendar this December. But rather than Armageddon style prophesies it may be the end-of-the-capitalist-world changes that make the most significant mark.

On December 21, 2012 Coca Cola will be officially banned in Bolivia. The announcement comes from Foreign Minister David Choquehuanaca, who stated that his Government is supporting the beginning of a new era free of capitalism and embracing "the culture of life" and "community spirit".

With the support of President Evo Morales by his side, Choquehuanaca said December 21 is "the end of egoism, of division. December 21 has to be the end of Coca Cola, and the beginning of moco-chinchi (a traditional Bolivian soda)".

Coca Cola is one of the world's most recognised brands and can be found in just about every corner of the earth. Currently only three countries continue to be coke-free: Cuba, North Korea and Myanmar. But even the latter of those is about to see waves of the drink return to shelves and fridges after 60 years of US investment sanctions.

The Foreign Minister announced that the move will be part of the celebrations taking place at the Island Of The Sun in Lake Titicaca, high in the Bolivian Andes.

[I have a feeling this is going to be one helluva end-of-the-world party! Wouldn't miss it for the...world! (Unless there's no Coke or Pepsi.) –SteveB]

From SteveG:

## Soda vs Marijuana

		
<b>Active Ingredient</b>	Sugar/High fructose corn syrup, caffeine	THC
<b>Health Risks Associated</b>	Obesity, slower immune system, dissolving bone and teeth, leading cause of childhood diabetes and obesity	Short term impairment, long term effects have been debated but never proven, no fatal health risks
<b>Addictive</b>	High fructose corn syrup and caffeine are extremely addictive chemicals	No addictive chemicals, though psychological addiction is possible
<b>Carcinogens</b>	Coloring, flavor additives, artificial sweeteners	None
<b>Medical use</b>	Doctors recommend zero soda consumption	Used to treat cancer patients, glaucoma, AIDS patients, etc.
<b>Availability</b>	Sold in public schools	Illegal (Also sold in public schools)

20120728-02 03:52 Tom "Strategy for an Unthinkable Conflict"

"Strategy for an Unthinkable Conflict" by T.X. Hammes, *The Diplomat*

July 27, 2012, (<http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2012/07/27/military-strategy-for-an-unthinkable-conflict/>)

The Obama administration's "rebalancing to Asia" has generated a great deal of discussion about how it impacts the defense acquisition budget but little about the military strategy necessary to support the shift. Although conflict in the Asia-Pacific is unlikely and extremely undesirable, the United States still needs a strategy. The primary strategic goal is to deter such a conflict. An effective military strategy can reduce the probability of conflict by achieving four objectives:

1. Assuring Asian nations that the United States is both willing and capable of remaining engaged in Asia.
2. Deterring China from using military action to resolve disputes.
3. Achieving victory with minimal risk of nuclear escalation in the event of conflict.

4. Credibility in peacetime. A strategy should consist of critical assumptions, ends-ways-means coherence, and a theory of victory.

### Assumptions

Assumptions are suppositions about current or future conditions that are inherently unknowable but are necessary for planning. Essentially, they are a planner's best guess. One military strategy that could be utilized, **offshore control**, includes the following five key assumptions.

- China starts the conflict.
- It will be a long war.
- It will result in massive damage to the global economy.
- The United States does not understand China's nuclear decision-making process.
- In space or cyber domains, a first strike provides major advantages. Thus any operational approach that requires the robust use of space and cyber capabilities is inherently destabilizing in a crisis.

### Ends, ways and means coherence

The combination of decreasing defense spending and rapid increases in the cost of new weapons suggests that a strategy for conflict with China should assume limited means, at least initially. In addition to limited means, the United States must accept that China's nuclear arsenal imposes restrictions on the ways in which American forces may attack Chinese assets. The United States must select ways that minimize the probability of nuclear escalation simply because no one can win a major nuclear exchange. With limited means and restricted rules of engagement, the ends should therefore also be modest. They must attain U.S. strategic goals but not risk a major nuclear exchange.

This logic leads to the concept of Offshore Control. Operationally, Offshore Control uses current forces and restricted ways to cripple China's maritime trade and thus its economy. It establishes a set of concentric rings that *denies* China the use of the sea inside the first island chain, *defends* the sea and air space of the first island chain, and *dominates* the air and maritime space outside the first island chain. To reduce the possibility of nuclear escalation and make war termination easier, no operations will penetrate Chinese airspace.

*Denial* as an element of the campaign plays to U.S. strengths by employing primarily attack submarines, mines, and a limited number of air assets inside the first island chain. This area will be declared a maritime exclusion zone with the warning that ships in the zone will be sunk. While the United States cannot initially stop all sea traffic in this zone, it can prevent the passage of large cargo ships and tankers. In doing so, it will cripple China's export trade.

The *defensive* component will bring the full range of U.S. assets to defend allies. It takes advantage of geography to force China to fight at longer ranges while allowing U.S. and allied forces to fight as part of an integrated air-sea defense over their own territories. Essentially, Offshore Control makes use of anti-access/area denial capabilities to keep Chinese forces away from allied territory. U.S. assistance will include convoy operations to maintain the flow of essential imports and exports in the face of Chinese interdiction attempts.

The dominant phase of the campaign will be fought outside the range of most Chinese assets and will use a combination of air, naval, ground, and rented commercial platforms to intercept and divert the post-Panamax container ships that are essential to China's economy. China relies on these large container ships for competitive cost advantage. These ships are the easiest to track and divert. While such a concentric campaign will require a layered effort from the straits to China's coast, it will largely be fought at a great distance from China—effectively out of range of most of China's military power.

That leads us to modest ends. Rather than seeking a decisive victory against the Chinese, Offshore Control seeks to use a war of economic attrition to bring about a stalemate and cessation of conflict with a return to a modified version of the status quo.

### Theory of Victory

Offshore Control seeks termination of the conflict on U.S. terms through China's economic exhaustion. It seeks to allow the Chinese Communist Party to end the conflict in the same way it ended its conflicts with India, the United Nations in Korea, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam. It allows Chinese leaders to declare they "taught the enemy a lesson" and thus end the conflict. By forgoing strikes that destroy Chinese facilities or economic infrastructure on the mainland, Offshore Control reduces the probability of escalation and makes it easier for Chinese leaders to terminate the war while saving face at home. Offshore Control does not seek decisive victory in the traditional military sense but secures U.S. objectives effectively. It recognizes the fact that the concept of decisive victory against a nation with a major nuclear arsenal is fraught with risks if not entirely unattainable.

### Does it deter?

A key factor in deciding which approach to pursue is the impact each has on deterrence. Genuine deterrence is based on the opponent's belief that he cannot attain his strategic goals in a conflict, at least at an acceptable cost. In short, the deterrent strategy must be able to defeat the potential enemy in a conflict. A strategy based on investments in Air-Sea Battle capabilities seems to believe that attacking unspecified Chinese assets can force China to quit fighting through punishment. In contrast, Offshore Control is based on the idea that an indirect attack on China's economy is the most effective available approach.

However, the most important aspect of deterrence is how the enemy sees the potential conflict. A strategy that deters through attack requires that Chinese leaders believe they cannot overcome American technological superiority. Given China's rapid strides in space and cyber and the stated U.S. reliance on these domains to successfully execute an Air-Sea Battle campaign, this is a dubious belief. A Chinese technological breakthrough, real or perceived, can quickly render deterrence obsolete.

In contrast, Offshore Control directly attacks China's inability to protect the shipping lanes that are vital to its economy -- what Hu Jintao has called the "Malacca Dilemma." To defeat Offshore Control, China will have to build a sea control navy capable of protecting its global trade network. The Chinese understand developing such a navy will take decades and be extremely expensive. In short, the question is "Will China find it easier to overcome U.S. technology or geographic distance?"

### Does Offshore Control reduce the pressure for rapid escalation?

A second major consideration in a conflict with a nuclear power is whether a strategy encourages or discourages rapid escalation. U.S. space and cyber systems remain a vulnerable and high payoff target. And both domains are currently dominated by offensive weapons. The nation that strikes first will gain a major advantage. Thus, any operational approach that depends heavily on these capabilities creates the unintended consequence of raising the value of a first strike.

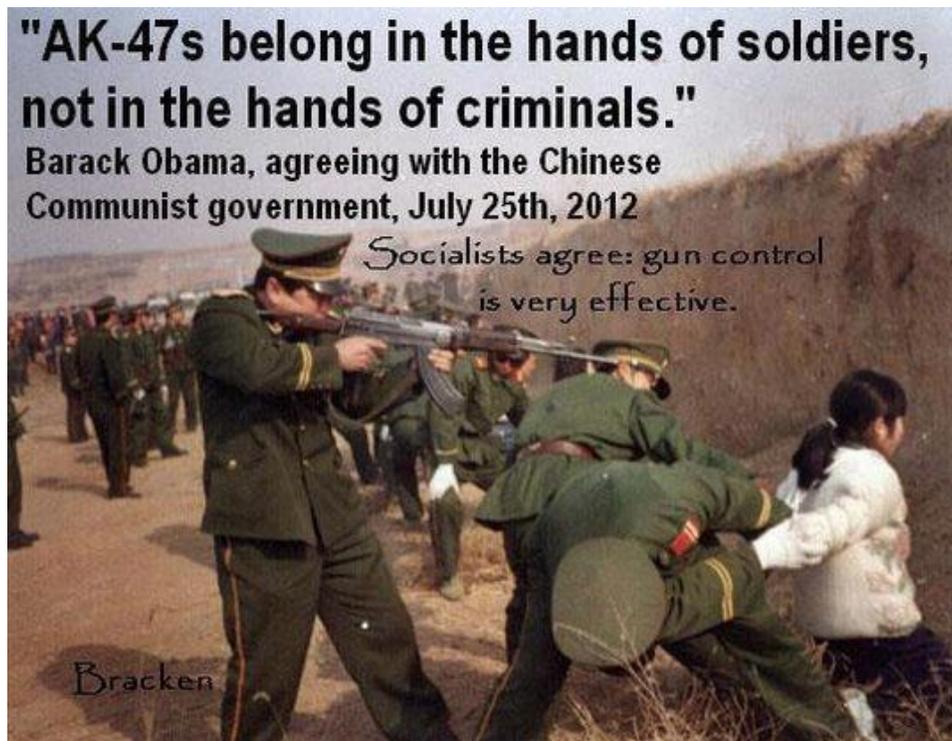
Offshore Control proposes a different approach. It does not require extensive use of space or cyber systems. Offshore Control can be executed even if China conducts a highly successful first strike in space and/or cyber domains. Further, this capability can be demonstrated in peacetime exercises. This is particularly important in a crisis because it devalues a first strike. While a distant blockade is an escalation, its execution and impact will take a few weeks to be felt. This gives diplomats time to seek a solution free from the demand for sudden escalation in space or cyber.

### Summary

It is essential to understand that there is no "good" strategy for a conflict between the United States and China. Any major conflict will cause massive damage to the global economy and risk nuclear escalation. Thus the United States must seek a "least bad" strategy. Offshore Control presents China with the generational challenge of

establishing sea control at great ranges from its shoreline. By moving the conflict away from Chinese territory, it reverses the cost imposition. Developing penetration and sea control capabilities will cost China more than maintaining America's defensive and sea denial capabilities. Finally, it minimizes the potential for escalation by providing time for China's leaders to decide if escalation is a good strategic solution.

(Dr. T. X. Hammes is a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic Research at National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies INSS. He is the author of *Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* and, most recently, *Offshore Control: A Proposed Strategy for an Unlikely Conflict*. The views expressed are his own and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.)



[20120729-14](#) 17:33 SteveB Re: "Strategy for an Unthinkable Conflict" (reply to Tom, above)

Bad photo, but really good article. Thanks! ;-)

[20120728-04](#) 12:28 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Tell the U.K. We Too Think R0mney Is an Idiot!

from [Daily Kos](#):

Please sign our letter to the people of the United Kingdom, letting them know Mitt Romney's oafish comments do not represent the views of most Americans toward one of our oldest and strongest allies. [Click here](#) to add your name—we will send the letter and the signatures to the British press.

During his recent trip to the United Kingdom, Mitt Romney questioned London's Olympic preparedness, forgot the name of the leader of the Labour Party, and said it would be terrible if the United States were to become like Europe. The people of the United Kingdom are so outraged over Romney's behavior that even two leading members of the Conservative Party, Prime Minister David Cameron and London Mayor Boris Johnson, went out of their way to issue harsh rebukes.

In just two days, Mitt Romney has put a real dent in an alliance that took two world wars and forty years of the Cold War to build. That's why we're putting together a letter to the people of the United Kingdom, letting them know Mitt Romney does not speak for most Americans. We'll send the signatures to the British press, and hopefully mend some of the wounds which Romney has so ineptly managed to inflict.

An open letter to the people of the United Kingdom:

We are writing to express our concern over Mitt Romney's recent comments, and to let you know that he does not represent how most Americans view your great country.

First, we do not believe, as Mitt Romney implied in 2007, that you have become a second-tier nation. Rather, we are impressed at how the United Kingdom has consistently been able to punch above its weight on the world stage.

Additionally, we do not share the opinion which Romney expressed in his 2010 book, *No Apologies*, that "England [sic] is just a small island," and that "with few exceptions, it doesn't make things that people in the rest of the world want to buy." Please continue sending us your many wonderful products, especially the upcoming third season of "Downton Abbey". [And Halls! –SteveB]

We look forward not only to the London Olympics, but also to many years of continuing the special relationship between our two nations. Rest assured we will do our level best to prevent Mitt Romney from becoming our next president.

Cheers

Please sign our letter to the people of the United Kingdom letting them know that Mitt Romney does not speak for us:

[http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=184](http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=184).

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers, Campaign Director, Daily Kos

<a href="#">20120728-05</a>	13:24	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Request the Justice Dept. Investigate Mitt R0mney's Apparently Fraudulent Bain Capital SEC Filings!
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from MoveOn.org:

Numerous sources—from *The Boston Globe* and Mother Jones to ABC News—have produced detailed documentation, including SEC filings, which appears to indicate that Mitt Romney has lied to the SEC regarding his roll at Bain Capital between 1999 and 2002. I would like the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate if criminal laws have been broken regarding these matters!

That's why I created a petition on SignOn.org to Eric Holder, the Attorney General of the United States, which says:

We the people would like the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate whether W. Mitt Romney violated U.S. criminal laws as a result of his documented lies and misrepresentations in SEC filings regarding his roll at Bain Capital between 1999 and 2002.

Click here to add your name to this petition, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://www.signon.org/sign/request-the-justice-dept?source=homepage>.

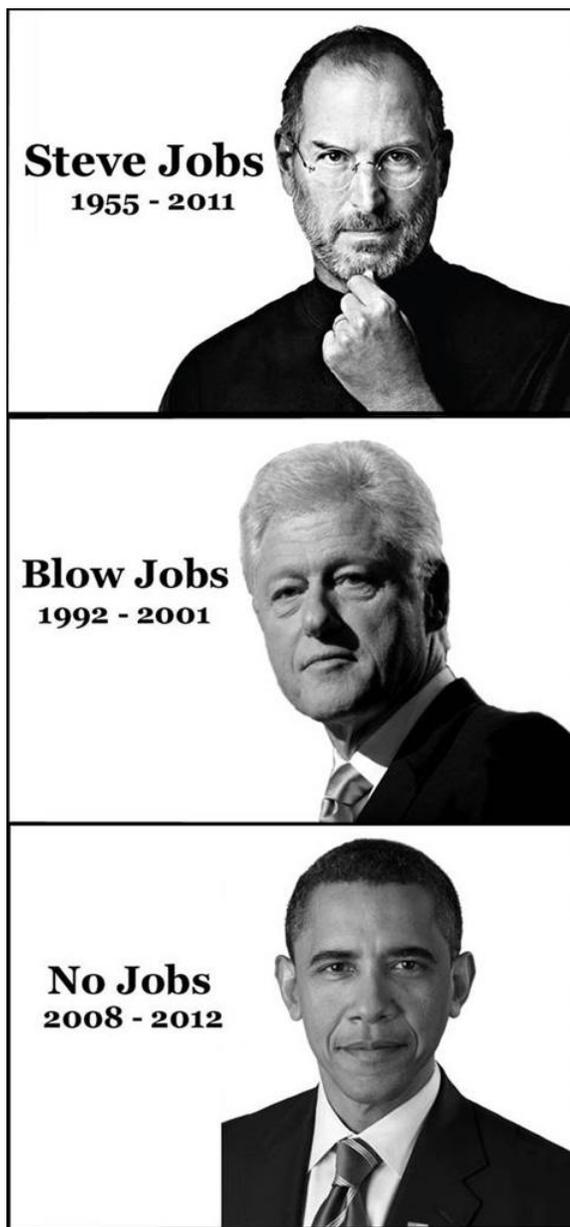
Thanks! –Jeffrey L. Etter

This petition was created on SignOn.org, the progressive, nonprofit petition site. SignOn.org is sponsored by MoveOn Civic Action.

20120728-06 17:03 Tom Graphic: Three Legendary Americans

<http://www.pigazette.com/pigprattle.html>

Maybe something to this!? Every man wants to leave a legacy, something he will be remembered for. These three certainly left their mark:



20120728-07 17:19 Tom Fw: People Said It Didn't Matter [Thank Goodness! -SteveB]

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

WHEN - he refused to disclose who donated money to his election campaign, as other candidates had done, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he received endorsements from people like Louis Farrakhan, Muramar Qaddafi and Hugo Chavez, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - it was pointed out that he was a total newcomer and had absolutely no experience at anything except community organizing, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he chose friends and acquaintances such as Bill Ayers and Bernadine Dohrn who were revolutionary radicals, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - his voting record in the Illinois Senate and in the U.S. Senate came into question, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he refused to wear a flag lapel pin and did so only after a public outcry, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - people started treating him as a Messiah and children in schools were taught to sing his praises, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he stood with his hands over his groin area for the playing of the National Anthem and Pledge of Allegiance, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he surrounded himself in the White House with advisors who were pro-gun control, pro-abortion, pro-homosexual marriage and wanting to curtail freedom of speech to silence the opposition, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he said he favors sex education in kindergarten, including homosexual indoctrination, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - his personal background was either scrubbed or hidden and nothing could be found about him, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - the place of his birth was called into question, and he refused to produce a birth certificate, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he had an association in Chicago with Tony Rezco - a man of questionable character and who is now in prison and had helped Obama to a sweet deal on the purchase of his home - people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - it became known that George Soros, a multi-billionaire Marxist, spent a ton of money to get him elected, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he started appointing White House Czars that were radicals, revolutionaries, and even avowed Marxist /Communists, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he stood before the Nation and told us that his intentions were to "fundamentally transform this Nation" into something else, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - it became known that he had trained ACORN workers in Chicago and served as an attorney for ACORN, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he appointed cabinet members and several advisors who were tax cheats and socialists, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he appointed a Science Czar, John Holdren, who believes in forced abortions, mass sterilizations and seizing babies from teen mothers, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he appointed Cass Sunstein as Regulatory Czar who believes in "Explicit Consent," harvesting human organs without family consent and allowing animals to be represented in court, while banning all hunting, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he appointed Kevin Jennings, a homosexual and organizer of a group called Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Education Network as Safe School Czar and it became known that he had a history of bad advice to teenagers, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he appointed Mark Lloyd as Diversity Czar who believes in curtailing free speech, taking from one and giving to another to spread the wealth, who supports Hugo Chavez, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - Valerie Jarrett, an avowed Socialist, was selected as Obama's Senior White House Advisor, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - Anita Dunn, White House Communications Director, said Mao Tse Tung was her favorite philosopher and the person she turned to most for inspiration, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he appointed Carol Browner, a well known socialist as Global Warming Czar working on Cap and Trade as the nation's largest tax, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he appointed Van Jones, an ex-con and avowed Communist as Green Energy Czar, who since had to resign when this was made known, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - Tom Daschle, Obama's pick for Health and Human Services Secretary could not be confirmed because he was a tax cheat, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - as President of the United States, he bowed to the King of Saudi Arabia, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he traveled around the world criticizing America and never once talking of her greatness, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - his actions concerning the Middle East seemed to support the Palestinians over Israel, our long time ally, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he took American tax dollars to resettle thousands of Palestinians from Gaza to the United States , people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he upset the Europeans by removing plans for a missile defense system against the Russians, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he played politics in Afghanistan by not sending troops early-on when the Field Commanders said they were necessary to win, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he started spending us into a debt that was so big we could not pay it off, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he took a huge spending bill under the guise of stimulus and used it to pay off organizations, unions, and individuals that got him elected, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he took over insurance companies, car companies, banks, etc., people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he took away student loans from the banks and put it through the government, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he designed plans to take over the health care system and put it under government control, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he claimed he was a Christian during the election and tapes were later made public that showed Obama speaking to a Muslim group and 'stating' that he was raised a Muslim, was educated as a Muslim, and is still a Muslim, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he set into motion a plan to take over the control of all energy in the United States through Cap and Trade, people said it didn't matter.

WHEN - he finally completed his transformation of America into a Socialist State, people woke up--- but it was too late. Add these up one by one and you get a phenomenal score that points to the fact that Barrack Hussein Obama is determined to turn America into a Marxist-Socialist society.

All of the items in the preceding paragraphs have been put into place. All can be documented very easily. Before you disavow this do an Internet search. The last paragraph alone is not yet cast in stone. You and I will write that paragraph.

Will it read as above or will it be a more happy ending for most of America?

Don't just belittle the opposition. Search for the truth. We all need to pull together or watch the demise of a free democratic society. Pray for Americans to seek the truth and take action for it will keep us FREE. Our biggest enemy is not China , Russia, North Korea or Iran. Our biggest enemy is a contingent of politicians in Washington, DC. The government will not help, so we need to do it ourselves.

It's your decision. I believe it does matter. How about you?

"When you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing; when you see that money is flowing to those who deal not in goods, but in favors; when you see that men get rich more easily by graft than by work, and your laws no longer protect you against them, but protect them against you, you may know that your society is doomed." —Ayn Rand

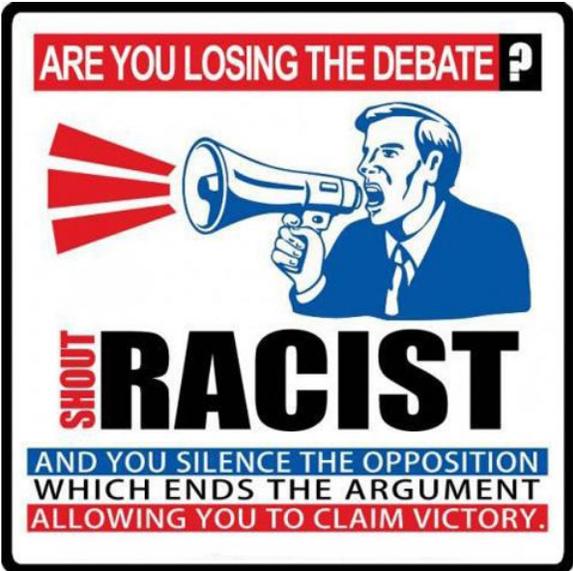
<a href="#">20120729-17</a>	17:51	SteveB	Re: People Said It Didn't Matter (reply to Tom, above)
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This is old, revised a little. Debunked here:

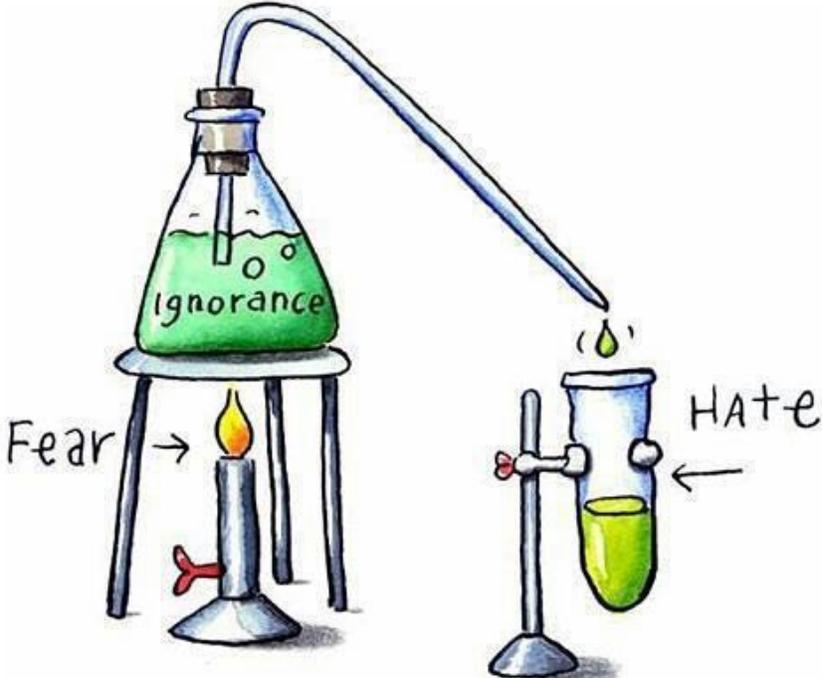
<http://crazyemailsandbackstories.wordpress.com/2011/09/08/they-said-it-didnt-matter-a-giant-mess-of-propaganda-and-lies/>.

It looks like the Right has quite an "education" and indoctrination program for the cadre. Maybe this is where all the strategies come from: name calling, avoiding direct answers, ignoring logic, spreading the blatant lies, shouting racist!

<http://www.pigazette.com/pigprattle.html>



Related to many subjects, including Religion, freedom to disagree with a "Politically Correct" subject, and Constitutional Rights!



[20120729-21](#) 19:29 SteveB Re: Graphic: Where Hate Comes From (reply to Tom, above)

I like it. My Dad always used to tell me, "Fear is the great enemy."

And this certainly explains where the hatred the Right exhibits comes from: Fear + Ignorance.

[20120729-23](#) 21:42 Tom Re: Graphic: Where Hate Comes From (reply to SteveB, above)

How 'bout the "Liberal Progressives" getting some 'fear' credit? :-)

[20120729-24](#) 22:41 SteveB Re: Graphic: Where Hate Comes From (reply to Tom, above)

Fear, OK. But where's the hatred???

[20120729-25](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Weeki Wachee Springs, Florida

<http://floridamemory.com/items/show/80947>



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

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Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #193 — JULY 31, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

## **The Dismal Science**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 31, 2012)

Today: Everything you ever wanted o know about economics and free trade...

"Escape from Economics" by Paul Craig Roberts, OpEdNews

July 30, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Escape-From-Economics-by-Paul-Craig-Roberts-120730-11.html>)



(<http://www.cargonewsasia.com/index.aspx>)

Readers ask me from time to time to recommend a book from which they can learn about economics.

The problem with reading a book to learn economics that is taught in the universities and practiced in Washington is that economics is now a highly formalized subject based on abstract models and assumptions and has been mathematized. It is not that the subject is totally useless and without any applicability to real world problems. Rather, the problem is that the discipline both lags an ever-changing world and got some things wrong at the

beginning. Consequently, learning economics places one inside a box where some of the tools and understanding provided are outdated and incorrect.

For example, every textbook will draw a picture of agriculture as the perfect example of competitive markets in which "no producer's output is large enough to affect price." This made sense when one-third of the US work force was on family farms. Today, American agriculture is dominated by corporations and agribusiness. Additionally, part of the disastrous financial deregulation pushed by no-think economists and special interests was the removal of position limits on speculators. Formerly, speculators smoothed agricultural and commodity markets by buying and selling in order to stabilize price over periods when supply and demand were out of balance. Now speculators can dominate markets and rig prices to the benefit of their profits.

There are many such examples where economics no longer speaks to the real world.

Two other examples will suffice:

Most intelligent people are aware that natural resources are finite, including the environment's ability to absorb the wastes or pollution from productive activities (see for example, Jared Diamond, *Collapse*, 2005). But few economists are aware, because economists assume that man-made capital is a perfect substitute for nature's capital. **This assumption implies that there are no finite environmental limits to infinite economic growth. Lost in such a make-believe world, economists neglect the full cost of production and cannot tell if the value of the increases in GDP are greater or less than the full cost of producing it.**

Economists have almost universally confused jobs offshoring with free trade. Economists have even managed to produce "studies" purporting to show that a domestic economy is benefitted by being turned into the GDP of some other country. Economists have managed to make this statement even while its absurdity is obvious to what remains of the US manufacturing, industrial, and professional skilled (software engineers, for example) workforce and to the cities and states whose tax bases have been devastated by the movement offshore of US jobs.

The few economists who have the intelligence to recognize that jobs offshoring is the antithesis of free trade are dismissed as "protectionists." Economists are so dogmatic about free trade that they have even constructed a folk myth that the rise of the US economy was based on free trade. As Michael Hudson, an economist able to think outside the box has proven, there is not a scrap of evidence in behalf of this folk myth (see *America's Protectionist Takeoff 1815-1914*).

My advice to readers who wish to develop economic comprehension is to begin with the outside-the-box economists who are addressing real issues. For example, Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb's *For the Common Good* is accessible to ordinary readers willing to take the effort to google the definitions of unfamiliar terms. However, the most important development in trade theory is not. *Global Trade and Conflicting National Interests* by Ralph E. Gomory and William J. Baumol (MIT Press, 2000) is apparently even over the heads of professional economists, who prefer to babble on ignorantly about the "benefits of free trade" than to learn what they don't know. Nevertheless, readers should understand that the case for free trade will never been the same after its dissection by Gomory and Baumol.

With this preface to the column, I now turn to its subject: economist Michael Hudson. Hudson is totally outside the matrix in which economists imprison themselves. Hudson doesn't live in the artificial reality of economists or shill for corporations and Wall Street.

A person can learn a lot from Hudson. His book, *Trade, Development and Foreign Debt* (2009) explains how foreign trade and economic development have been used to concentrate economic power in the hands of dominant nations. What is really going on is covered up with do-good verbiage and formal models. In reality, trade and development are ways to colonize countries that think they are independent. (Another good book on this subject is Michel Chossudovsky's *The Globalization of Poverty*.)

Perhaps the best place to begin with Hudson is his latest book, *The Bubble and Beyond*, which should be available within a few days of the appearance of this column. In this book Hudson addresses the crisis in the economy and

the crisis in the discipline of economics. From this book you can understand not only the crisis but also why economists have misdiagnosed the crisis and are applying incorrect remedies.

Hudson shows that a central problem is that economic theory ignores the role of debt in the economy. Economic theory also pretends that economic policy, such as the Federal Reserve's monetary policy, serves the public's interest rather than the interests of powerful private interests.

As Lenin and others predicted, industrial capitalism has turned into finance capitalism. Finance capitalism does not finance or create new real investments such as manufacturing facilities. Instead, finance capitalism functions as a rentier. It leverages debt and extracts interest payments (and today taxpayer bailouts for its over-leveraged gambles). Finance capitalism flourishes by converting more and more of society's resources into payments to itself.

One result is that markets cease to expand and economies cease to grow as austerity is imposed to service the build-up in debt. Austerity pushes economies down as consumption and investment are cut back in order to service debt. Hudson concludes that the result is that bankers now receive the rents (a form of unearned income) that once flowed to the landed aristocracy. Unlike the aristocracy, who were dispossessed of their rents, the bankers have not been.

Hudson knows the history of economic thought and economic history. Reading *The Bubble and Beyond* lets readers see how economic ideas developed in ways that leave economists unable to perceive the real character of the problems that are challenging them. Trapped in the matrix that they have constructed for themselves, economists are unable to devise solutions.

Hudson writes that western economies are at a turning point. GDP growth consists increasingly of the build-up of financial overhead. The wealth gains are paper gains, not gains from real plant and equipment, and are increasingly concentrated in the hands of the one percent. Financial earnings are extracted from the earnings of tangible capital and labor. Matt Taibbi captured the point with his imagery of Goldman Sachs as "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money."

My suggestion is that you read Hudson along with Taibbi's *Griftopia*, Nomi Prins' *It Takes A Pillage*, Gretchen Morgenson and Joshua Rosner's *Reckless Endangerment*, and Daly and Cobb's *For the Common Good*. Then if you ever do study economics, you will be armored against being ensnared in the matrix that produces economists as skills for finance capitalism, environmental destruction, and the offshoring of the economy.

Everyone always wants a solution. Hudson offers suggestions how to reconstruct the economy in order that it serves the needs of the 99% instead only of the needs of the 1%.

Get busy. Reading these books will do you much greater good than playing video games, watching TV or hanging out in bars. Our country needs a larger informed younger generation to replace the smaller informed older generation.

(Note to readers: Accompanying my column today is an article, below, in the guest section by Herman Daly (titled: "Nationalize Money, Not Banks"). For those looking for solutions to the banking crisis, this astute and highly experienced economist tells you what can be done.)

"Nationalize Money, Not Banks" by Herman Daly, Institute for Political Economy

July 30, 2012, (<http://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2012/07/30/nationalize-money-not-banks-herman-daly/>)

(In the article below, Herman Daly, a University of Maryland and former World Bank economist, makes the case for 100% reserves. This reform, once a principle goal of important economists, would terminate the ability of the banking system to create credit to finance its own speculations and return the power over money to the government from private banks. Herman Daly is one of the few economists who are capable of thinking outside the box and who can devise reforms that benefit the people rather than the vested interests.)

If our present banking system, in addition to fraudulent and corrupt, also seems “screwy” to you, it should. Why should money, a public utility (serving the public as medium of exchange, store of value, and unit of account), be largely the by-product of private lending and borrowing? Is that really an improvement over being a by-product of private gold mining, as it was under the gold standard? The best way to sabotage a system is hobble it by tying together two of its separate parts, creating an unnecessary and obstructive connection. Why should the public pay interest to the private banking sector to provide a medium of exchange that the government can provide at little or no cost? Why should seigniorage (profit to the issuer of fiat money) go largely to the private sector rather than entirely to the government (the commonwealth)?

Is there not a better way? Yes, there is. We need not go back to the gold standard. Keep fiat money, but move from fractional reserve banking to a system of 100% reserve requirements. The change need not be abrupt—we could gradually raise the reserve requirement to 100%. Already the Fed has the authority to change reserve requirements but seldom uses it. This would put control of the money supply and seigniorage entirely with the government rather than largely with private banks. Banks would no longer be able to live the alchemist’s dream by creating money out of nothing and lending it at interest. All quasi-bank financial institutions should be brought under this rule, regulated as commercial banks subject to 100% reserve requirements.

Banks cannot create money under 100% reserves (the reserve deposit multiplier would be unity), and banks would earn their profit by financial intermediation only, lending savers’ money for them (charging a loan rate higher than the rate paid to savings or “time-account” depositors) and charging for checking, safekeeping, and other services. With 100% reserves every dollar loaned to a borrower would be a dollar previously saved by a depositor (and not available to the depositor during the period of the loan), thereby re-establishing the classical balance between abstinence and investment. With credit limited by saving (abstinence from consumption) there will be less lending and borrowing and it will be done more carefully—no more easy credit to finance the leveraged purchase of “assets” that are nothing but bets on dodgy debts.

To make up for the decline and eventual elimination of bank- created, interest-bearing money, the government can pay some of its expenses by issuing more non interest-bearing fiat money. However, it can only do this up to a strict limit imposed by inflation. If the government issues more money than the public voluntarily wants to hold, the public will trade it for goods, driving the price level up. As soon as the price index begins to rise the government must print less. Thus a policy of maintaining a constant price index would govern the internal value of the dollar. The external value of the dollar could be left to freely fluctuating exchange rates.

Alternatively, if we instituted John M. Keynes’ international clearing union, the external value of the dollar, along with that of all other currencies, could be set relative to the “bancor,” a common denominator accounting unit used by the payments union. The bancor would serve as an international reserve currency for settling trade imbalances—a kind of “gold substitute”.

The United States opposed Keynes’ plan at Bretton Woods precisely because under it the dollar would not function as the world’s reserve currency, and the US would lose the enormous international subsidy that results from all countries having to hold large transaction balances in dollars.

The payments union would settle trade balances multilaterally. Each country would have a net trade balance with the rest of the world (with the payments union) in bancor units. Any country running a persistent deficit would be charged a penalty, and if continued would have its currency devalued relative to the bancor. But persistent surplus countries would also be charged a penalty, and if the surplus persisted their currency would suffer an appreciation relative to the bancor.

Keynes’ goal was balanced trade, and both surplus and deficit nations would be expected to take measures to bring their trade into balance. With trade in near balance there would be little need for a world reserve currency, and what need there was could be met by the bancor. Freely fluctuating exchange rates would also in theory keep trade balanced and reduce or eliminate the need for a world reserve currency. Which system would be better is a complicated issue not pursued here. In either case the IMF could be abolished since there would be little need for financing trade imbalances (the IMF’s main purpose) in a regime whose goal is to eliminate trade imbalances.

Returning to domestic institutions, the Treasury would replace the Fed (which is owned by and operated in the interests of the commercial banks). The interest rate would no longer be a target policy variable, but rather left to market forces. The target variables of the Treasury would be the money supply and the price index. The treasury would print and spend into circulation for public purposes as much money as the public voluntarily wants to hold. When the price index begins to rise it must cease printing money and finance any additional public expenditures by taxing or borrowing from the public (not from itself). The policy of maintaining a constant price index effectively gives the fiat currency the “backing” of the basket of commodities in the price index.

In the 1920s the leading academic economists, Frank Knight of Chicago and Irving Fisher of Yale, along with others including underground economist and Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, Frederick Soddy, strongly advocated a policy of 100% reserves for commercial banks. Why did this suggestion for financial reform disappear from discussion? The best answer I have received is that the great depression and subsequent Keynesian emphasis on growth swept it aside because limiting bank lending to actual savings was too restrictive on growth, which became the big panacea. Also there is the obvious vested interest of commercial banks in retaining the privilege of creating money and lending it at interest.

Now suppose for a moment that aggregate growth has begun to increase environmental and social costs faster than production benefits, thus becoming uneconomic growth. There is much evidence that this is the case. Then a financial constraint on growth (balancing investment with abstinence) would be much needed, and 100% reserves would be a good way to accomplish it. If, however, growth remains the summum bonum of the economy, then we will inevitably borrow against our hoped for larger future income to finance the investments needed to produce it.

Financing investment by saving would require less present consumption, which many will deem to be an unacceptable drag on growth. But real growth has encountered the biophysical and social limits of a “full world.” Financial growth is being stimulated ever more in the hope that it will pull real growth behind it, but it is in fact pushing uneconomic growth— growth of “illth.” Since illth is negative wealth it can hardly redeem the growing debt that is financing it.

The original 100% reserve proponents mentioned above were in favor of aggregate growth, but wanted it to be steady growth in wealth, not speculative boom and bust cycles. Soddy was especially cautious about uncontrolled physical growth, but his main concern was with the symbolic financial system and its disconnect from the real system that it was supposed to symbolize. The result was confusion between wealth and debt. One need not advocate a steady-state economy to favor 100% reserves, but if one does favor a steady state the attractions of 100% reserves are increased.

#### How would the 100% reserve system serve the steady-state economy?

1. As just mentioned it would restrict borrowing for new investment to existing savings, greatly reducing speculative growth ventures—for example the leveraging of stock purchases with huge amounts of borrowed money (created by banks ex nihilo rather than saved out of past earnings) would be severely limited. Down payment on houses would be much higher, and consumer credit would be greatly diminished. Credit cards would become debit cards. Long term lending would have to be financed by long term time deposits, or by carefully sequenced rolling over of shorter term deposits. Growth economists will scream, but a steady-state economy does not aim to grow, for the very good reason that growth has become uneconomic.
2. The money supply no longer has to grow in order for people to pay back the principal plus the interest required by the loan responsible for the money’s very existence in the first place. The repayment of old loans with interest continually threatens to diminish the money supply unless new loans compensate. With 100% reserves money becomes neutral with respect to growth rather than biasing the system toward growth by requiring more loans just to keep the money supply from shrinking.
3. The financial sector will no longer be able to capture such a large share of the nation’s profits (around 40%!), freeing some smart people for more productive, less parasitic, activity.

4. The money supply would no longer expand during a boom, when banks like to loan lots of money, and contract during a recession, when banks try to collect outstanding debts, thereby reinforcing the cyclical tendency of the economy.

5. With 100% reserves there is no danger of a run on a bank leading to a cascading collapse of the credit pyramid, and the FDIC could be abolished, along with its consequent moral hazard. The danger of collapse of the whole payment system due to the failure of one or two "too big to fail" banks would be eliminated. Congress then could not be frightened into giving huge bailouts to some banks to avoid the "contagion" of failure, because the money supply is no longer controlled by the private banks. Any given bank could fail by making imprudent loans, but its failure, even if a large bank, would not disrupt the public utility function of money. The club that the banks used to beat Congress into giving bailouts would have been taken away.

6. The explicit policy of a constant price index would reduce fears of inflation and the resultant quest to accumulate more as a protection against inflation. Also it in effect provides a multi-commodity backing to our fiat money. Keynes bancor scheme or a regime of fluctuating exchange rates would automatically balance international trade accounts, eliminating large surpluses and deficits. Thus, there would no longer be any need for the International Monetary Fund and the austerity it "conditionality" imposes on weaker economies.

To dismiss such sound policies as "extreme" in the face of the repeatedly demonstrated failure and fraud of our current financial system is quite absurd. The idea is not to nationalize banks, but to nationalize money, which is a natural public utility in the first place. The fact that this idea is hardly discussed today, in spite of its distinguished intellectual ancestry and common sense, is testimony to the power of vested interests over good ideas. It is also testimony to the veto power that our growth fetish exercises over the thinking of economists today.



(<http://www.automotivedigitalmarketing.com/profiles/blogs/that-money-machine>)

It's been a very busy week for the Snicker-Doodle crew and there were several bumps in the road. At this time, the Cookie Factory is remodeled, painted, clean (finally), and we're buying and moving in the big equipment. Shiny new business cards have been printed.

The sink, as you know, is already installed, but has a leak that must be repaired. We've been waiting for the guy for a week. Today he is actually supposed to show-up. We shall see. The commercial spray faucet still doesn't have the water pressure we expected, though it is functional. We have to get the plumber and faucet people to look at it, and hope we don't have to dig up the walls and/or floor tile to run a ¾" pipe from the street (we have ½", which I think should be sufficient).

We had a big scare this week when our neighbors, the Transfer Company/American Express Office next door told us they had been without water since the day our plumber connected our new plumbing. We share water and a meter, so the most likely scenario was that it was our fault. But Jesus saved us again, it turned out to be their problem and a big coincidence. Weird, huh? Fortunately, we didn't have to demolish floors and walls again to find out.

Our big, commercial refrigerator arrived yesterday. We were so proud that Marci cheered and clapped when the delivery guys removed the outer packing box. Strangely, the plug wouldn't fit our outlets. They said I'd need an adapter, which they sell everywhere, but...uh...they didn't have. The delivery team left. I rounded up an adapter. Plugged it in. The refrigerator sounded like a semi chugging up a mountain—loud! Something was wrong. I was supposed to leave it on for 3 hours continuously, but as soon as it seemed to reach temperature (after about 3 minutes) and automatically(?) turned off, I unplugged it and started to get curious. Why would the refrigerator have an American 3-prong plug? Guess what? It was a 110V refrigerator, not 220V like we need here in Santa Cruz. I probably fried the thing rather than it reaching temperature! Evidently there was some kind of mix up because the capitol, La Paz, strangely, uses 110V, not 220V like the rest of the country. How convenient! They're supposed to bring a replacement fridge this morning. We'll try again.

The giant oven will be delivered tomorrow, though we don't have the gas completely hooked-up yet. We have to remove a big plate (tempered, security) glass window to be able to get the monster inside. Fortunately, as I figured, Jesus' arched doorway to the Bake Room is just big enough for the oven to pass through—it seems! It will be fun coordinating these activities.

The company doing the bulk of the gas hook-up hired a sub-contractor to do part of the work, which he should have finished a week ago Saturday. But it got late, his engineer supervisor was out of town, and he wanted us to pay him even though he wasn't done and it wasn't our place. He claimed he couldn't finish because he didn't have the parts he needed, they were in a warehouse somewhere the engineer would have to access. When the worker finally showed-up on Wednesday, there were the required parts, right there with his tools. They'd been at our place the whole time. The work was finally finished, but we weren't very happy about the timing and apparent lies.

We have one more step to complete at the government tax office before we can actually collect tax from customers, but the lines have been so long that we have been daunted. Next week!

Meanwhile, I have entered kind of a state of limbo here in Bolivia because my visa and, hence, my Bolivian ID have expired. Here, you can't do much at all without a valid ID. I'm in the process of attaining my next visa (which will be for two years) but it will be about two months before I have my passport back and can obtain another ID card. I have a paper from Immigration which makes me legal without a passport, but I can't even take money out of my own bank account except with my ATM card. So, this week, we had to spend time doing a power of attorney for Marci, so we don't get hung-up during this strange period.

We continue to meet a lot of very nice, interesting people. That's a lot of compensation for problems. I find that friendship, or even the veneer of friendship, works so much better than anger when problems must be solved.

By this time next week, we should have all our equipment purchased and moved-in, gas connected, and maybe have the oven exhaust finished, ready to do some experimental baking. And Marci has just invented a new cookie—fresh locotos (habañero/Scotch Bonnet pepper) and chocolate-chips. Hot! I think our toughest problem is maybe going to be packaging. I have some workable possibilities, but we need an optimal solution in this important area.

"What Super PAC Donors Really Want Is a Return on Their Investment" by Howard Fineman and Paul Blumenthal, Huffington Post

July 29, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/29/super-pac-donors-2012\\_n\\_1711696.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/29/super-pac-donors-2012_n_1711696.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

(WASHINGTON) Heed their names for they are the country's new power brokers: Sheldon Adelson, David and Charles Koch, Harold Simmons, and Bob Perry, among others. Along with similarly wealthy individuals and groups, they're pouring unprecedented sums into the 2012 election -- tens, perhaps even hundreds, of millions of dollars.

When asked why, they prefer to offer lofty motives. The billionaire Koch brothers speak about libertarianism and the need to save free enterprise. Casino magnate Adelson talks in equally apocalyptic terms about preserving the security and Jewish identity of Israel. Institutions such as the AFL-CIO and the National Education Association tend to stress liberal agenda items such as expanded health care and progressive taxation.

Some super donors say they want to level the playing field in the interest of a fair fight. Jeffrey Katzenberg of DreamWorks, President Barack Obama's most influential ally in Hollywood, has said that his goal is to blunt the efforts of Republican strategist Karl Rove, the Koch brothers and other hard-core conservatives to run away with the election.

But all these super donors have other goals that are less high-minded and more specific. Simply put, they want the federal government to do something or to stop doing something. For their money, they want results that will help their bottom line, their industry or their members.

"When people contribute to political action committees," then-Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) said in 1983, "they expect something in return other than good government." And the money back then was trifling, and the rules back then were strict. Now it's anything goes.

So what do the big boys want? What do they really, really want? The Huffington Post looked behind the rhetoric for the potential policy payoffs -- there's truly no other word for it -- sought by 15 individual and institutional super donors in the 2012 campaign.

With the Koch brothers, for example, the motivation has less to do with libertarian ideology than with the fact that many of their industrial and mining companies are environmentally invasive -- to put it mildly. They expect a Republican administration and Congress, if they can buy one, to abolish laws, regulations and regulatory bureaucracies that interfere with their business.

For Adelson, the real close-to-home issue isn't in the Middle East; it's in the Far East -- and in Washington, D.C. Federal investigators are examining whether Adelson's company violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act by offering large payments to officials in Macau, where it has a major casino operation. Adelson would like an administration more likely to see his side of that story.

As for the AFL-CIO and the teachers' union, their goal is to preserve collective bargaining rights and union prerogatives at a time when membership has declined in all but public employee unions. Indeed, the main goal is to preserve public employees' collective bargaining rights and benefits, which are under attack at the state level. For these institutions, the identity of the president who has the power to nominate members of the National Labor Relations Board -- an obscure agency to most Americans -- is paramount.

Huey Long, the famously corrupt governor of Louisiana long ago, said that voters in his state "one of these days are going to get good government -- and they aren't going to like it." Well, that day has yet to come, in Louisiana or the 2012 election.

(Check out the slideshow (link, above) for more details about these and other super donors -- and what they really want for their money. Alexander Becker and Melissa Bendixen contributed research to this article.)

Just what we need! Immortality for the 1%!

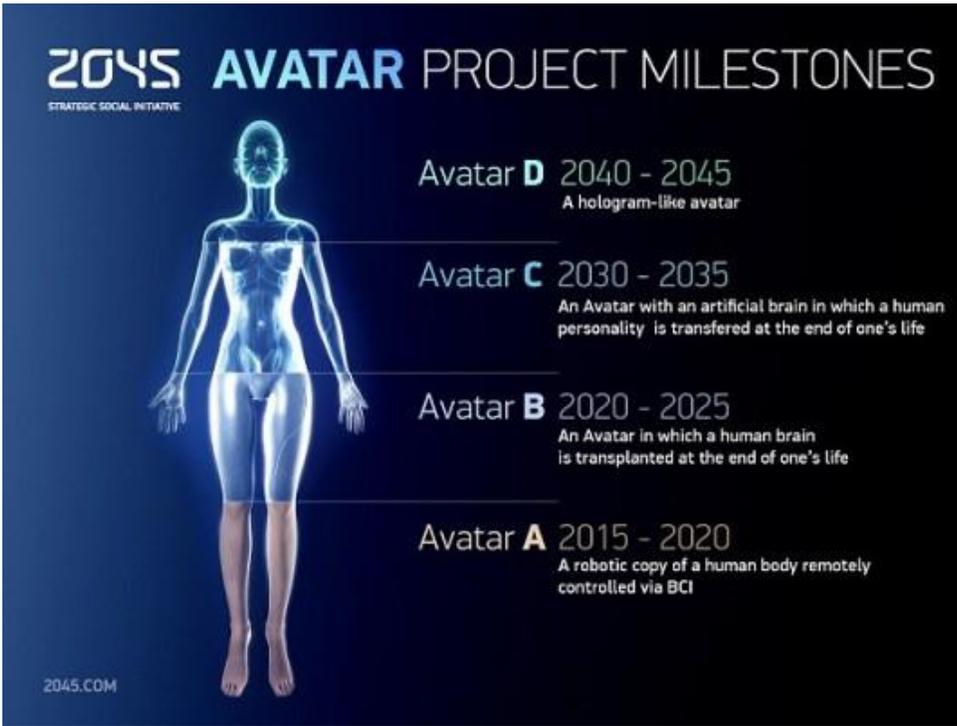
"Avatar' Project Aims for Human Immortality by 2045" by Dario Borghino, Gizmag

July 25, 2012, (<http://www.gizmag.com/avatar-project-2045/23454/>)

Russian media magnate Dmitry Itskov is heading "Avatar," a tremendously ambitious and far-reaching multidisciplinary research project that aims to achieve immortality in humans within the next three decades. He plans to do it by housing human brains in progressively more disembodied vehicles, first transplanting them into robots and then, by the year 2045, by reverse-engineering the human brain and effectively "downloading" human consciousness onto a computer chip.

When speculating on seemingly unobtainable goals such as this, one must be careful not to believe that improbable technological advances automatically become more likely simply by looking further away in the future. This is the cognitive trap that, for instance, has seen many leading IT experts predict the development of a human-level artificial intelligence at roughly twenty years in the future for at least the past five decades.

Looking at Avatar's proposed timeline, Itskov's project seems to suffer from the same fallacy. Certainly, if we borrow Carl Sagan's rule that "extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof," the project comes up short for the time being; it does, however, have the merit of basing most of its steps on technology that is either in the works or of general interest. And with the rate of technological change continuing to accelerate, the project's goals may be within reach, although not necessarily within the project's aggressive timeline.



The first of the proposed steps, to be completed before the end of the decade, would be to create an android "avatar" controlled entirely by a brain-computer interface. The system would at first be of interest to physically challenged people, but might also enable people to work in hazardous environments or perform dangerous rescue operations.

As futuristic as this vision may seem, Itskov is not the only person to share it. DARPA allotted US\$7 million of next year's budget to the development of interfaces enabling a soldier to guide a semi-autonomous bipedal machine and

allow it to act as the soldier's surrogate. Other researchers have reported being able to exert basic control over the movement of a humanoid robot using brainwaves alone, and many are working on refining this technology.

The second step would be the creation of an autonomous life support system for the human brain, which could then be integrated into the previously developed "avatar" by 2025. If the efforts are successful, immobile patients with an intact brain would be able to regain the ability to move via their new synthetic bodies, and a varied range of bio-electronic devices might become possible, creating superimpositions of electronic and biological systems.

Not a great deal of research is going into this at the moment – in fact, the closest match would have to be the research of Dr. Robert J. White who, back in the 70s, managed to perform several head transplants in monkeys. Building an artificial environment in which a brain could not only survive, but also continue working to full effect, is sure to prove a much harder task.

By 2035, Itskov hopes to be able to reverse-engineer the human brain and find a means of "downloading" its consciousness to a synthetic version. Coupled with the previous advancements, this would allow humans to achieve cybernetic immortality. It would also lead to the creation of a human-like artificial intelligence, and even provide opportunities for ordinary people to restore or enhance their own brains, for instance by manipulating memories.

While there is no current research going into transferring your consciousness into a silicon chip, there is plenty of interest among neuroscientists in better understanding the inner workings of the brain. Although we are just scratching the surface, recent advancements – such as a robotic arm that can analyze the electricity patterns of single neurons – are certainly steps in the right direction.

The fourth and final step is also the most science-fictiony. By the year 2045, Itskov would like to see "substance-independent minds" uploaded not onto a computer chip, but into bodies of different compositions. A holographic body could walk through walls or move at the speed of light, while a body made of nanorobots would be able to take on a number of different forms at will. "Humanity, for the first time in its history, will make a fully managed evolutionary transition and eventually become a new species," he writes.

Itskov says he has invested plenty of his own money to kick start the necessary research, hiring 30 scientists to reach this goal, organizing meetings, with plans to establish offices in San Francisco later this summer. He is also working on building a social network to raise awareness in his initiative, and on a "business incubator" for the creation of commercial applications - mostly in the medical field - that would capitalize on the research and fund further development. In other words, as crazy as this sounds, Itskov is absolutely serious about this, and the wheels are turning on this project.

Of course, the sheer pace of scientific inquiry required to make this project succeed will require very large - perhaps prohibitive - amounts of capital. To address this, Itskov recently addressed a letter to billionaires in the Forbes richest list in an appeal for funds, but he is also looking for government support.

Surprisingly, the Russian Ministry of Education and Science announced its support of the initiative, and has scheduled talks to discuss a specialized research and development center. Oddly enough, the initiative has also received the support and blessing of the Dalai Lama.

The video below is a short presentation detailing the steps and goals of the "Avatar" project ("2045: A New Era for Humanity", <http://2045.com/>): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=01hbkh4hXEK](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=01hbkh4hXEK)

20120730-04	12:51	SteveB	"How Mitt Got His"
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"How Mitt Got His" by Jim Hightower, NationofChange

July 30, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-mitt-got-his-1343661639>)



**What a blessing it is for Mitt Romney to serve as the Republican nominee for president.**

He's a living portrait of Mr. Wall Street Man. As his candidacy unfolds, it's allowing us commoners to get a peek into how the privileged few rig the rules for their own gain — at our expense.

Romney is, of course, a full-fledged initiate in the Uppermost One-Tenth-of-1-Percenters Club. He's got at least a quarter-billion dollars stashed away.

It's not Mitt's wealth, however, that's troubling. We've had many rich politicians who've become admirable servants of the common good. Rather, it's how he got it — and where he put it.

The "how" has now been well documented: Romney's corporate takeover outfit, Bain Capital, practiced the hocus-pocus of legalized Wall Street robbery known as private equity deals. Bain continues to put millions in Mitt's pocket, even as it has bankrupted companies, cut thousands of jobs, and slashed workers' pay.

But where did he put his booty? We don't know about all of it, for Romney keeps playing hide-and-seek with his fortune, refusing to release his tax returns or fully report his holdings on legally required disclosure forms. Good investigative reporters, however, are now digging out some rich nuggets, such as the secret \$3-million Swiss bank account he has used to bet against the U.S. dollar. That's legal, I guess, but not nice.

Also uncovered is his tax shelter in the Cayman Islands, where he uses a tricky dodge called a "blocker corporation" to shield his IRA investments from business taxes — and from public scrutiny. Other assets turn out to be hidden in offshore accounts and tax havens in Australia, Bermuda, Luxembourg, and elsewhere.

How sneaky! As the old saying goes, Romney can run, but he can't hide.

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

An 8 years old child was caught in a market in Iran for stealing bread. In the name of Islam he is being punished, his arm will be crushed by a car. He will lose forever the possibility to use his arm again. Is this a religion of peace and love?



Photos by Siamak Yari for Peykiran

1

www.metacafe.com



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[20120730-06](#) 14:02 SteveB Re: Boy's Arm Crushed by Islam (reply to SteveM, above)

This is a famous, old trick! (Though I agree with you that Islam is not necessarily "a religion of peace and love", but then, neither is Christianity, if you look at actual historical deeds rather than rhetoric.)

You might want to read this about your very old (2004), lying email:

<http://www.snopes.com/photos/gruesome/crushboy.asp>.

Why do you always believe this right-wing cr\*p?

I wish you wouldn't send this type of email because all of us liberal progressives love Islam! Long live Mohammed!

LOL!

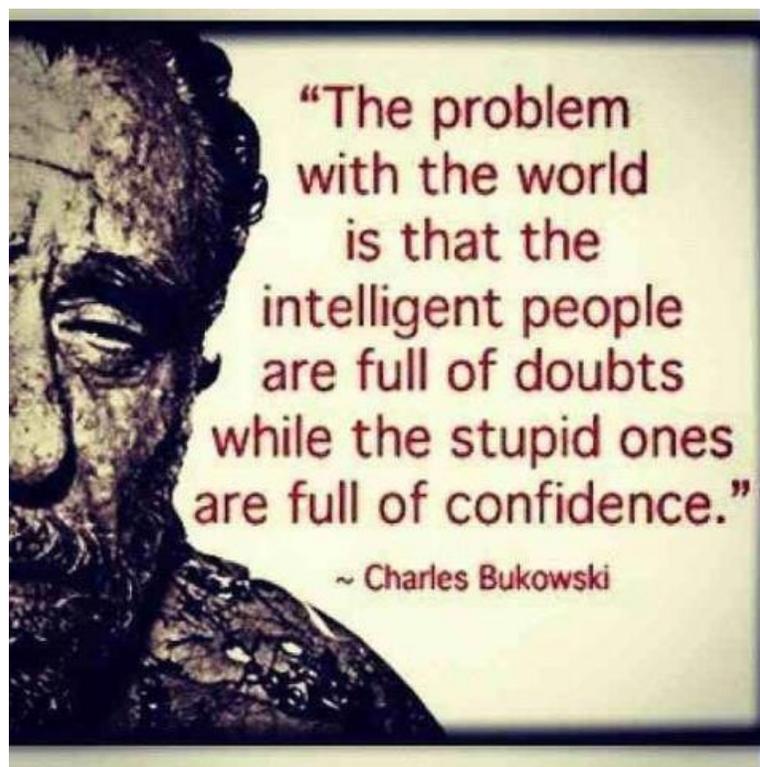
[20120730-07](#) 14:39 Art Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #192)

I thought you might find the following article from snopes.com interesting:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/business/chrysler.asp>.

[20120730-08](#) 14:45 Art Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #192) & Quote: Charles Bukowski on the Problem with the World

Good newsletter again. The car dealership thing is somewhat an old story that has come out from more than a few angels. It is also largely BS. SteveM seems to really harbor a lot of hate. I really can't understand people who think anyone who disagrees with their particular line of thought is utterly stupid and feels compelled to tell them so.



[20120730-09](#) 15:30 SteveB Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to Art, above)

Thanks, Art.

It's a good thing I'm not too fragile or these fricking right-wingers would have me convinced I'm an idiot.

But I'm kinda older and set in my ways. Do they really think I'll fall for that after a lifetime of solid accomplishments? I'm stupid? Interesting.

So far, not one of them has been able to face the light of honest debate. \_\_\_\_ came close, but he couldn't hack it either.

They all run away because they're really scaredy-cats and bullies. Maybe hate does come from fear + ignorance after all.

[20120730-10](#) 15:57 Art Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to SteveB, above)

There is something about people who support a political party that believes:

- A. People in the American mid west are fat because of a genetic disorder, but being gay is a lifestyle choice.
- B. They know more about global warming then 97% of the world's climate scientists,
- C. The earth was invented 6000 years ago.

Calling me stupid—that I find mildly disturbing, but then I realize what Mr. Bukowskui said above makes it sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

[20120730-11](#) 20:01 SteveB Re: Quote: President Obama on Middle-Class Tax Cuts (reply to Art, above)

Mmmm...yes...but maybe not so much a self-fulfilling prophecy as one of the inevitable(?) axioms of life??? As  $E=mc^2$  arises logically from the nature of physical existence, Bukowski's quote arises from something even more fundamental than the nature of man—the universal nature of intelligence and stupidity. It would be as true for intelligent aliens who can swim in hot lava as for man.

**Intelligence seeks. Stupidity defends and attacks, and, once those decisions are made, a man can convince himself of anything and no longer cares to listen.**

High Summer (St. Joseph, MI)

The stillness settles softly  
As the silky heat waves rise  
Taking silent circling birds higher  
Midday in midsummer in the Midwest.

Down by the languid lake  
I know kids are splashing  
Cooling their smooth bodies  
But not near this non-shore.

Some sleep-inducing drug  
Seems to flow through the still heat

And I'm reminded of boyhood afternoons  
When my mother would take a nap.

I'd be forced down too, else she  
Could have no carefree rest  
But if I could keep sleep at bay  
Freedom and adventure would be mine.

After a wait quietly out I'd sneak  
Opening the noisy screen door with care  
To run through this same weighted air  
Not caring that I would be in trouble.

Some sense of that old exhilaration lingers  
I refuse to be still like the dead air  
I must explore these deserted streets  
Happy to be alive in high summer.

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20120730-12	20:16	SteveG	"We Won't Know the Cause of Gun Violence Until We Look for It"
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"We Won't Know the Cause of Gun Violence Until We Look for It" by Jay Dickey and Mark Rosenberg, *The Washington Post*

July 27, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-wont-know-the-cause-of-gun-violence-until-we-look-for-it/2012/07/27/gJOAPfenEX\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-wont-know-the-cause-of-gun-violence-until-we-look-for-it/2012/07/27/gJOAPfenEX_story.html))

(Jay Dickey, a Republican and life member of the NRA, represented Arkansas in the House from 1993 to 2000. Mark Rosenberg, president and chief executive of the Task Force for Global Health, was director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from 1994 to 1999.)

A few years ago, one of us came across a young woman who had just been hit by a car. She was the mother of two young children and one of Atlanta's star runners. I found her unconscious and bleeding profusely from a severe head injury. She died in my arms while I tried to resuscitate her.

Her death was tragic, but it wasn't "senseless." In scientific terms, it was explicable. The runner, who had competed in 15 marathons and broken many records, wore no lights or reflective vest in the early-morning darkness; she crossed the street within crosswalk lines that had faded to near-invisibility; there were no speed bumps on this wide, flat street to slow cars down.

Scientists don't view traffic injuries as "senseless" or "accidental" but as events susceptible to understanding and prevention. Urban planners, elected officials and highway engineers approach such injuries by asking four questions: What is the problem? What are the causes? Have effective interventions been discovered? Can we install these interventions in our community?

The federal government has invested billions to understand the causes of motor vehicle fatalities and, with that knowledge, has markedly reduced traffic deaths in the United States. Since the mid-1970s, research has inspired such interventions as child restraints, seat belts, frontal air bags, a minimum drinking age and motorcycle helmets. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 366,000 lives were saved through such efforts from 1975 to 2009.

Through the same scientific, evidence-based approach, our country has made progress understanding and preventing violence. Once upon a time, law-abiding citizens believed that violence generated by evil always had

existed and always would exist. By the mid-20th century, that sense of fatalism was yielding to discoveries by social scientists, physicians and epidemiologists. Now a body of knowledge exists that makes it clear that an event such as the mass shooting in Aurora, Colo., was not a "senseless" occurrence as random as a hurricane or earthquake but, rather, has underlying causes that can be understood and used to prevent similar mass shootings.

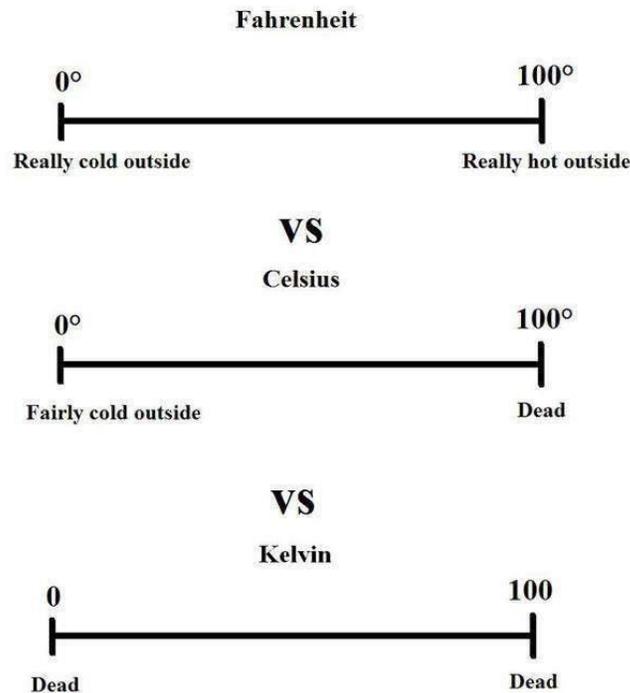
We also recognize different types of violence, including child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, elder abuse, suicide and economically and politically motivated violence. Like motor vehicle injuries, violence exists in a cause-and-effect world; things happen for predictable reasons. By studying the causes of a tragic — but not senseless — event, we can help prevent another.

Recently, some have observed that no policies can reduce firearm fatalities, but that's not quite true. Research-based observations are available. Childproof locks, safe-storage devices and waiting periods save lives.

But it's vital to understand why we know more and spend so much more on preventing traffic fatalities than on preventing gun violence, even though firearm deaths (31,347 in 2009, the most recent year for which statistics are available) approximate the number of motor vehicle deaths (32,885 in 2010).

[20120730-13](#) 21:22 Tom Graphic: The Number Representing Temperature Is Relative

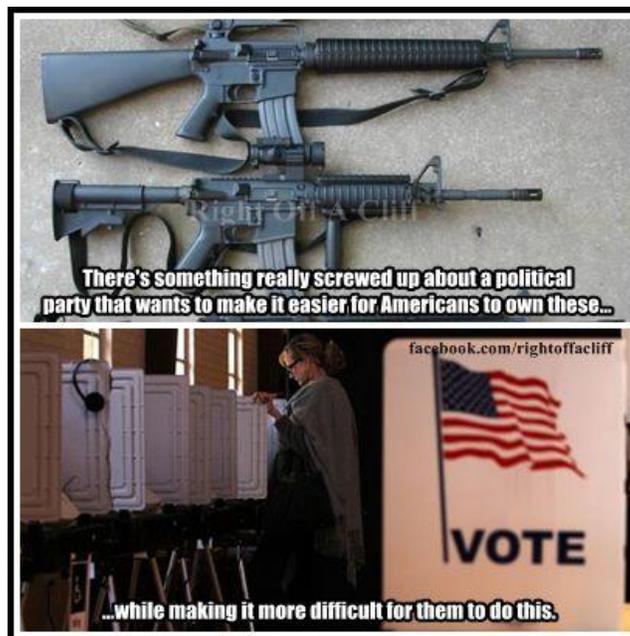
Are you hot or cold? It is all contingent on what "Scale" you use! It relates to the system.





[Unfortunately, He never told me either! ;-)-SteveB]





<http://fineartamerica.com/featured/southern-drive-live-oaks-and-spanish-moss-dustin-k-ryan.html>



(by Dustin K. Ryan)

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

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