



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #174 — JULY 4, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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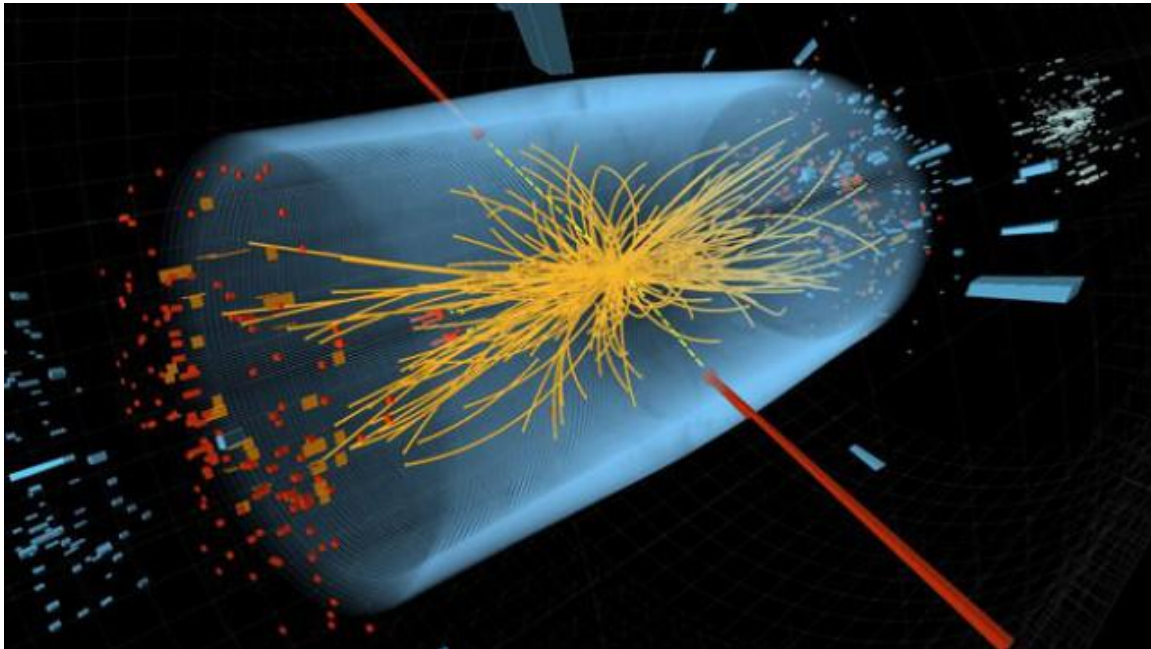
Fireworks of the Gods

(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 can 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.

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[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, obseved, 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

[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!

20120703-03 11:21 Phil Colorado Wildfires

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)

20120703-04 11:26 Art Re: Health Care Myths (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #173)

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

20120703-05 12:25 SteveB "Affordable Care Act Means \$1.1 Billion Insurance Rebate"

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!

20120703-06	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.

20120703-08	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?

20120703-10	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.

20120703-11	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
Dear Steve,
Stop Voter Suppression

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.¹

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

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.²

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.³

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

¹<http://bit.ly/N8uGZS>

²<http://bit.ly/MR01Rh>

³<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)

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.

[20120703-15](#) 23:57 Marci Graphic: The Zen of Thin



[20120703-16](#) 23:58 SteveG Graphic: 'Fair & Balanced'



<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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