



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

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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### **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.

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<a href="#"><u>20120704-01</u></a>	09:04	Pam	Re: "Jonathan Krohn, Reformed Conservative Boy Wonder, Responds to Criticism" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #174)
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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>6</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]





<http://beyondborders.wordpress.com/2010/01/12/revised-patriotism/>



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

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