



## 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*.)

### **FotM NEWSLETTER #180 (July 12, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX**

<b>DATE-ID</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>FROM</b>	<b>SUBJECT/TITLE</b>
<a href="#">20120712-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Drop Dead!</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("GOP to the Uninsured: Drop Dead")
<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="#">20120711-03</a>	14:49	Ben	"A Phone That Knows Where You're Going"
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<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="#">20120711-08</a>	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Congress Unmasked
<a href="#">20120711-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Cayman Islands

<a href="#">20120711-01</a>	10:42	Art	Re: Taxes: Not a 'Bad Word' (FotM Newsletter #179)
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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.

<a href="#">20120711-02</a>	11:02	Pam	Re: Taxes: Not a 'Bad Word' (FotM Newsletter #179)
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"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.

<a href="#">20120711-03</a>	14:49	Ben	"A Phone That Knows Where You're Going"
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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.)

<a href="#">20120711-04</a>	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.

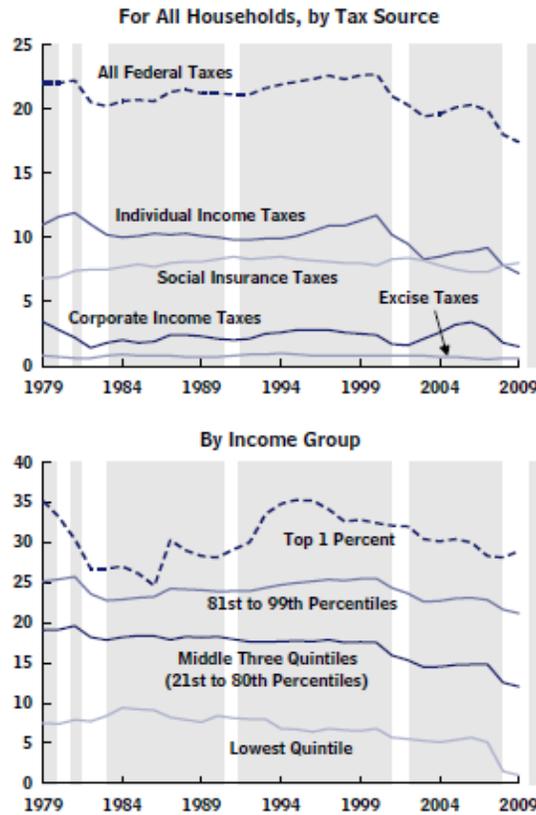
By the end of the series, the average U.S. household was paying 17.4% of their income in federal taxes, compared to 22% in 1979. The main culprit is the income tax; all the others in the figure stay relatively constant.

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

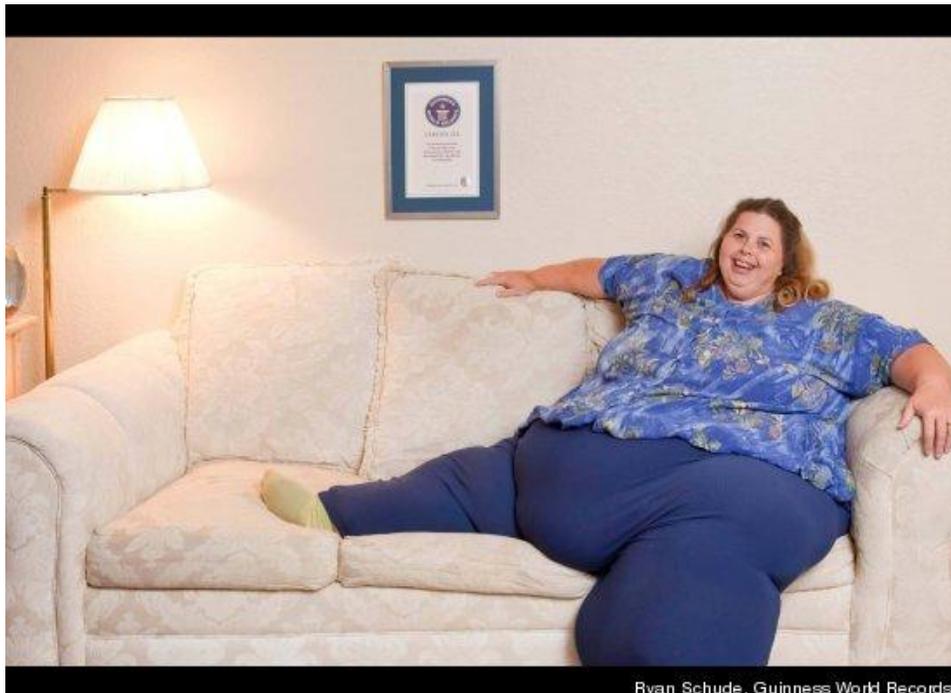
SteveB

"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.

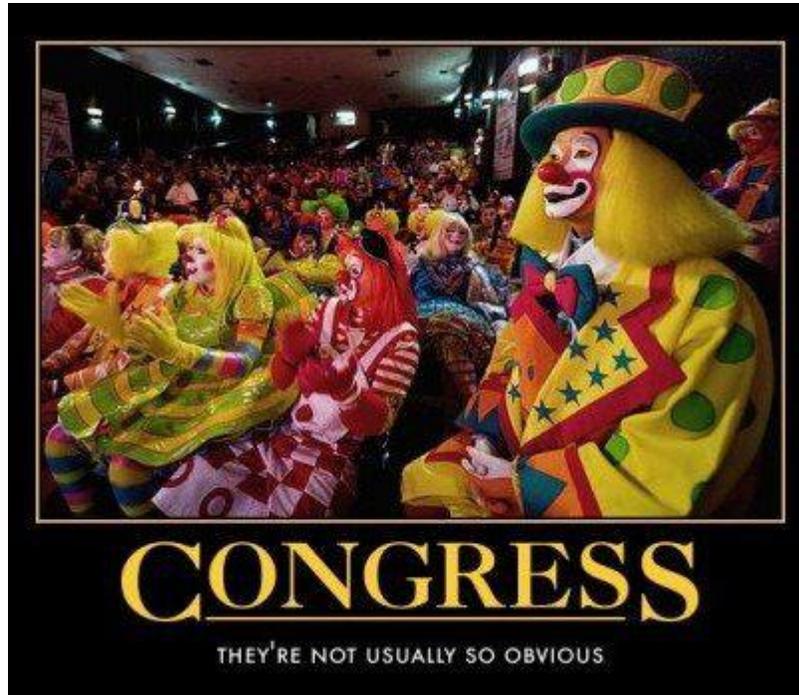
Other large women's photos from the article above. As a friend from near Chicago used to say, "They haven't missed many meals!"



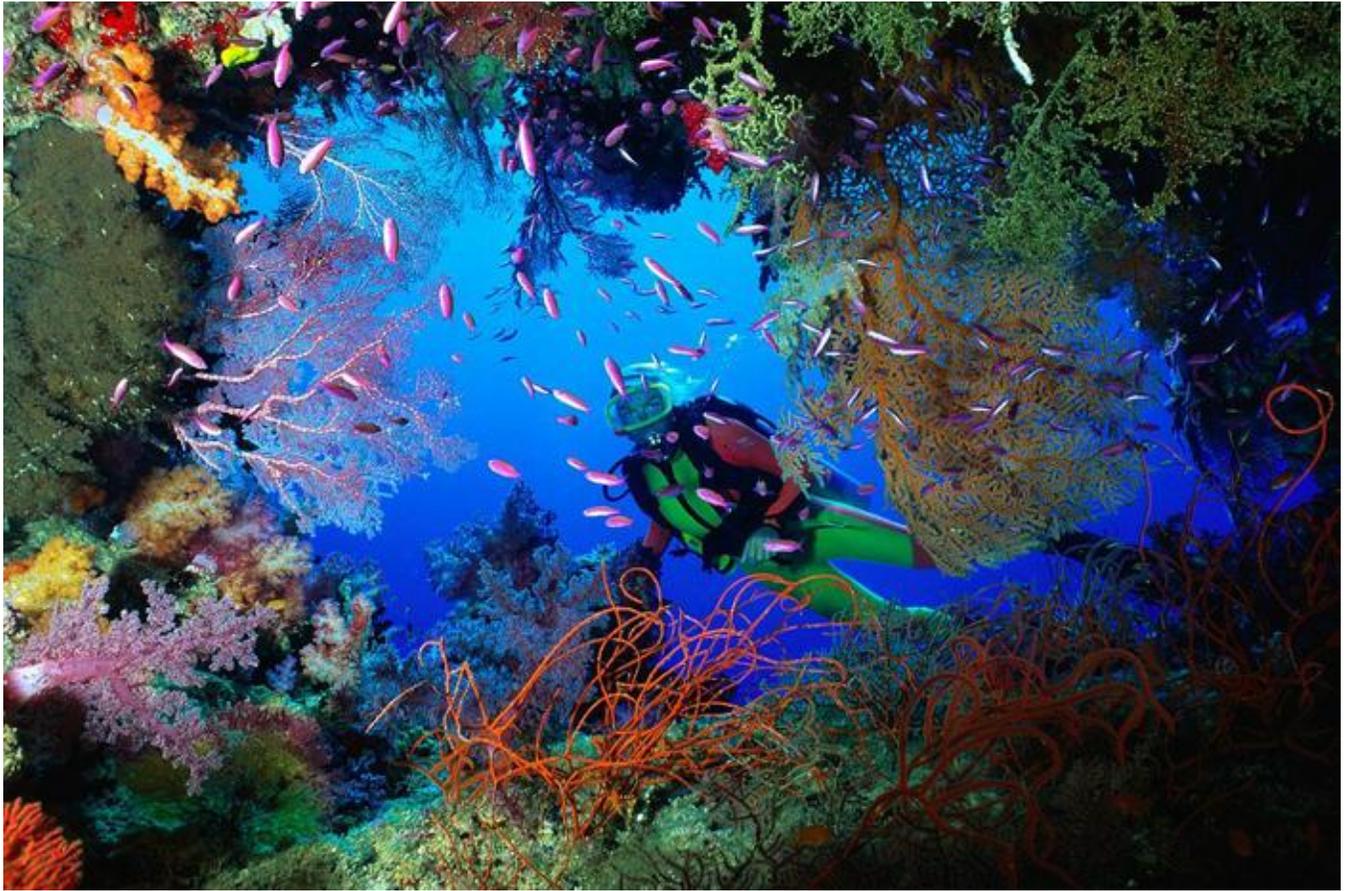
Barcroft / Fame Pictures



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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