



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

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 19th 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!

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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 make 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-brems-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 Negron, 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."

20120713-05	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.

20120714-01	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.

20120713-04	11:06	Pam	Re: "Bain Will Never Go Away" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Follow the money.

20120713-06	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.



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)

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)

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
- Hmmmmmmmmmm

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

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)
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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"
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"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. Let's 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?

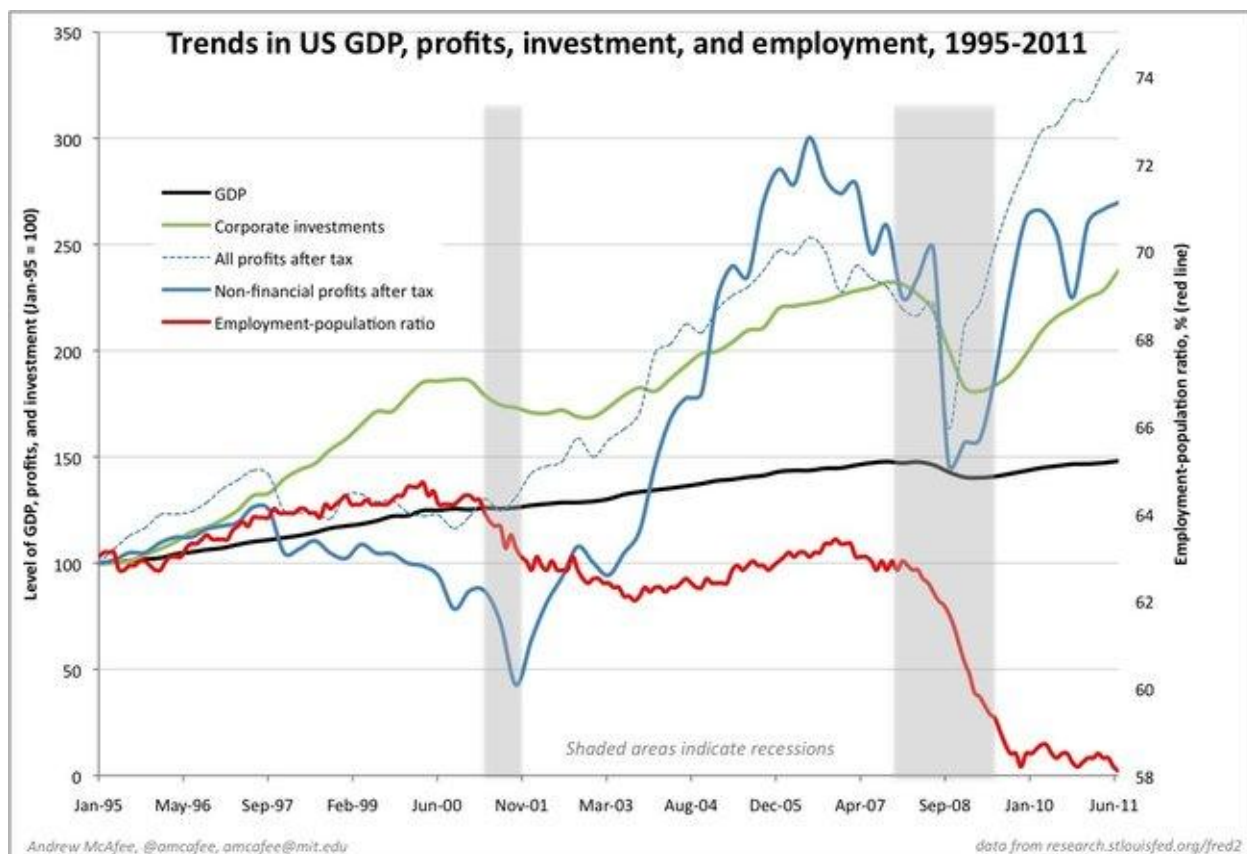
Even though we currently have millions of jobs that need doing, but are not hiring people to do them, there are some who claim that those without jobs are somehow to blame for their own unemployment, or are claiming that we have "structural" reasons for the unemployment emergency. They say we need to 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)

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>)

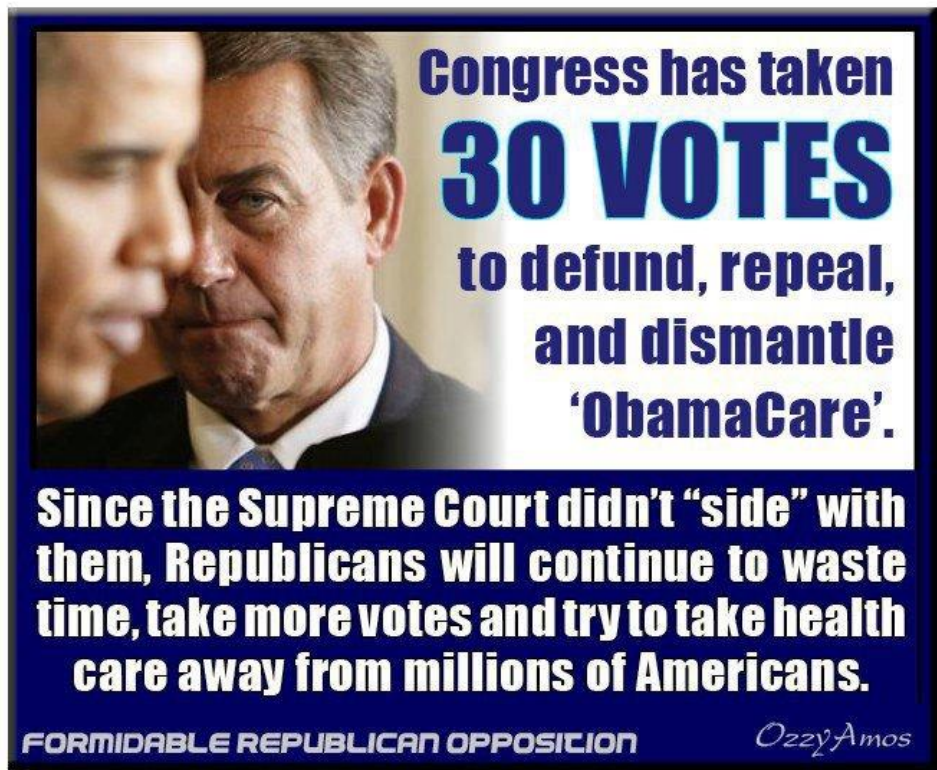
20120715-07 11:52 SteveM Video: Obamaspill Timeline

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://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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