



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #186 — JULY 20, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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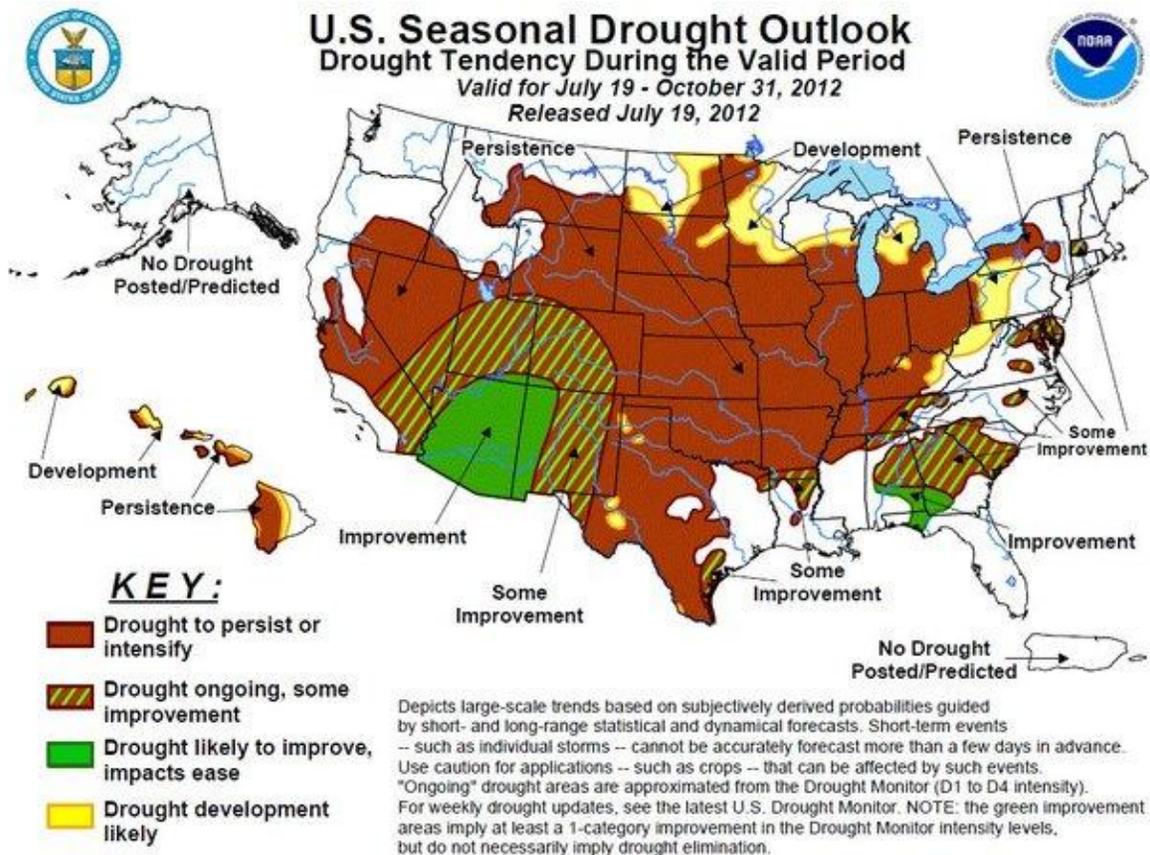
Let There Be Rain

(posted by MarthaH, July 20, 2012)

More of the same...

"Drought Widens Over Past Week, Unlikely to Yield Through October" by Miguel Llanos, NBC News

July 19, 2012, (<http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/07/19/12832813-drought-widens-over-past-week-unlikely-to-yield-through-october>)



The National Weather Service issued this map along with its Seasonal Drought Outlook on Thursday.

A double-barreled dose of bad news came out Thursday: Not only did the drought worsen over the last week, but it's likely to widen and intensify through the end of October, according to the seasonal outlook prepared by government forecasters.

"Unfortunately, all indicators (short and medium-term, August, and August-October) favor above normal temperatures," the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center said in its Seasonal Drought Outlook released Thursday.

"We don't see a reason to say it will improve," Kelly Helm Smith, a specialist at the National Drought Mitigation Center, told reporters. "I'm in the Midwest," she said, referring to her office at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, "it's really unpleasant."

The outlook noted that "a dramatic shift in the weather pattern" would be required "to provide significant relief to this drought, and most tools and models do not forecast this."

Drought could take hold in the northern plains by October, the Climate Prediction Center added.

Moreover, last week saw a continued "downward spiral of drought conditions," according to the weekly Drought Monitor issued Thursday.

Nearly 81 percent of the contiguous U.S. was "abnormally dry" or in drought, weather.com reported in analyzing the data, while 64 percent was in some degree of drought, up 3 percentage points from the previous week. About 42 percent was "severe" or worse.

The Weather Channel's Carl Parker reports on the worst drought in years, and the state of agriculture in the Midwest.

The monitor also noted these dire indicators for food production:

- 38 percent of the U.S. corn crop was in "poor to very poor condition" -- up from 30 percent a week ago.
- 30 percent of soybeans were in poor to very poor condition -- up from 27 percent.
- 54 percent of pastures and rangelands were in poor to very poor condition -- up from 50 percent and an all-time high since that measure began in 1995.
- Stream flows were at or near record low values across much of the Midwest and parts of the central Plains, West, Southeast, and even parts of New England.

Forecasters have called the drought the most widespread since 1956, though 1988 was worse in terms of crop losses due to an extremely dry year for the Midwest.

Experts said that could still change.

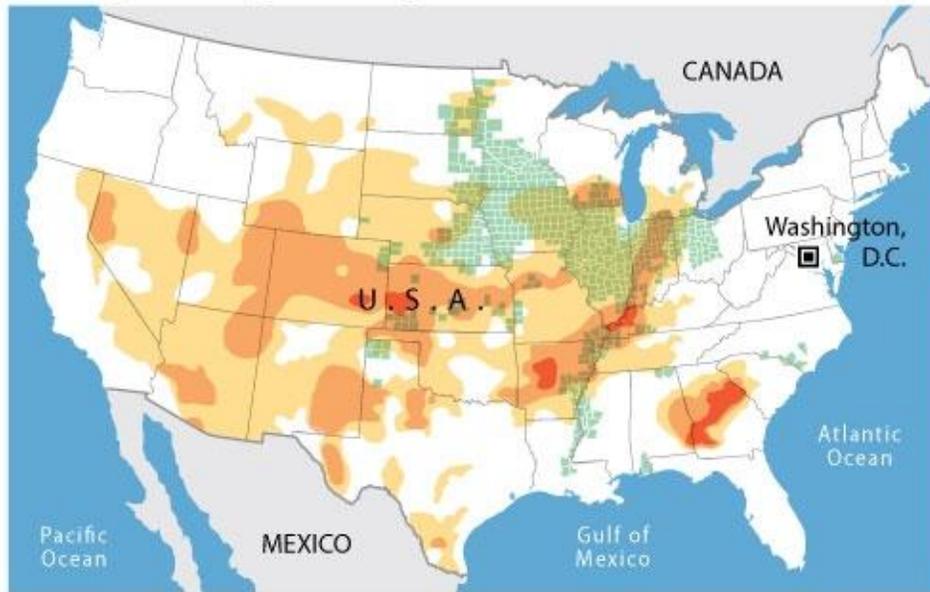
"It's too soon to know how much this one will cost" since farmers are still harvesting, Helm Smith told NBC News.

"There's a possibility that this could get worse," added Jake Crouch, an expert at the National Climatic Data Center.

"It's something to keep an eye on in the next couple of weeks," he told NBC News.

U.S. DROUGHT

Severe drought Extreme drought Exceptional drought Main corn-/soy-producing counties



Sources: Reuters, U.S. Drought Monitor, U.S. Department of Agriculture

REUTERS

The federal government on Wednesday added 39 more counties to its drought disaster list, speeding up low-cost loans for farmers and ranchers. That's now 1,297 counties across 29 states with access to those loans.

The head of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, said it was particularly painful for farmers because they planted for bumper crops, with many now instead potentially facing bankruptcy.

"Part of the problem we're facing is that weather conditions were so good at the beginning of the season that farmers got in the field early, and as a result this drought comes at a very difficult and painful time in their ability to have their crops have good yield," Vilsack told reporters Wednesday after briefing President Barack Obama on the drought.

"I get on my knees everyday and I'm saying an extra prayer right now," he added. "If I had a rain prayer or a rain dance I could do, I would do it."

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20120719-13	16:23	Pam	Re: Let There Be Rain (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Want to bet water becomes the new "oil"?

20120719-19	19:41	Art	Re: Let There Be Rain (reply to Pam, above)
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No!

20120719-01	07:08	MarthaH	"Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare"
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NO doubt in my mind:

"Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" by Cynthia Tucker, *The National Memo*

July 16th, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/racism-tinges-opposition-to-obamacare/>)

Last week, the GOP-dominated House of Representatives voted to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act — or “Obamacare.” As expected, the vote fell largely along party lines.

House Speaker John Boehner and his partisans knew perfectly well that the vote was political theater. In the very unlikely event that the Senate followed suit, President Obama would surely veto any effort to repeal his most significant achievement. It was the 33rd time the House has voted to repeal all or parts of the law, so Boehner’s minions are well-practiced at this tedious bit of drama.

It plays well to the GOP electorate. While the nation is closely divided on the merits of health care reform — polls show about half the voters support it, while about half do not — the Republican base is strongly opposed. Independent voters want Congress to move on to other matters, such as kick-starting the sluggish economy, but very conservative voters want the Affordable Care Act ripped out, root and branch.

Given the broad merits of the law — which guarantees virtually universal access to health care — that’s odd. It’s especially curious when you consider that Obamacare still has private health insurance at its heart; that’s unlike Medicare, a single-payer system of health insurance delivered entirely by the government. The senior citizens who rant that the Affordable Care Act takes the country down the path to “socialism” may have missed the irony.

Some part of the opposition to the Affordable Care Act is based on gross misperceptions. Even before the law passed, conservative opponents started a disinformation campaign based on distortions, deceit and outright lies. The most infamous of those was the claim about death panels, which was so outrageous it was hard to believe that responsible people would repeat it. But arch-conservatives such as Sarah Palin have no trouble being irresponsible in support of their causes.

But there is another, equally troubling facet of the opposition to health care reform — simple racial prejudices. Allow me to be as clear: There are certainly critics of the Affordable Care Act who hold no racial animosity. But there is also an impressive body of research that strongly suggests racial prejudice fuels some of the opponents.

In 2009, for example, Stanford University researchers offered volunteers information about a health care plan supported by Obama and one supported by former President Bill Clinton. In fact, the plans were identical. But those who showed unconscious racial biases were much more likely to reject Obama’s plan, the researchers reported.

Social scientists have concluded that many conservative white voters harbor a racial animosity that fuels their opposition to certain forms of government largess, especially if they believe it benefits the undeserving (black) poor. Political scientists Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders, authors of *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*, call it a “subtle prejudice for modern times.”

That helps explain why working-class whites are especially hostile to the Affordable Care Act. Polls show that they are among the groups most likely to believe that health care reform will benefit someone else, not them.

They’re wrong, of course. Working-class voters — white, black and brown — are among those who will benefit most. Professionals either get insurance at the office or can afford their own policies. The very poor are eligible for Medicaid. But people employed in jobs that don’t require a college degree are more likely to be stranded by the high costs of health care.

If the law is fully implemented, those voters may eventually figure out what a benefit they’ve received from Obamacare. But a cadre of Republican governors has insisted that won’t happen; they are prepared to take a figurative stand in the schoolhouse door against the law, even though the Supreme Court has upheld it.

That’s the very definition of political cynicism. Many of those polls have pandered to white voters’ racial fears. And they want racial antagonisms to keep those voters frozen in their partisan loyalties.

(Cynthia Tucker, winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, is a visiting professor at the University of Georgia.)

[20120719-02](#) 08:58 Art Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to MarthaH, above)

This is really the basis of the issue. It is not the economy and it is not things like the ACA, most of which the general populace really doesn't understand at all. I really think for about 90% of the tea party types it is just plain old racism.

[20120719-03](#) 09:27 SandyI Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to MarthaH & Art, above)

The antagonism here in FL toward anything "Obama" is amazing, appalling and totally supported by Rick Scott. It has come to the point that at social gatherings one can hear derogatory comments about Obama, Dems, etc. said in an overly loud whisper. One can choose to ignore the "whisper" or talk in a louder whisper about the weather or how one will vote straight "DEM".

In addition to the damage that the Sara Palins and Newts and Mitts of the world have done to civility, I blame the increasing temptation to not try to engage the "other" but to escape into one's IPAD, Blackberry, Bluetooth, cell phone, TV or other escape mechanism. If I truly do not understand how & why the "other" can believe such things based on their history, upbringing, and possibly DNA, we'll never truly reach a civil society again.

Thus spaketh the cynic.

May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human, and enough hope to make you happy. —unknown

[20120719-04](#) 09:53 SteveB Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to SandyI, above)

And one hopes that, as in 2008, there aren't enough racists in all of America to keep a black man from being President...again!

[20120719-06](#) 10:11 Pam Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to SteveB, above)

I heard somewhere recently that 90% of the campaign ads are negative. At some point Mitt is going to have to explain just how he intends to create jobs, reduce the deficit, and bring the country to its feet. All he says is that he'll do it, never how. Obama has actually done (tried to) things that are real: his jobs bill, Obamacare, and tax reform (proposed), to say nothing of keeping us out of a depression--so far. It seems Presidents who act decisively for the good (Washington, Lincoln, FDR, Johnson -- even if you don't like him) are despised, and the power mongers and egomaniacs are lauded to the skies. I hyperbolate (is that a word?), but you know what I mean.

[20120719-05](#) 10:04 Pam Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to all, above)

It continues to amaze me that we are so dismissive of Canada. Their economy is much stronger than ours, their government more equitable, their population more peaceful, yet our origins are much the same, if you leave out slavery. I wish we would study what successful countries are doing and learn from them, rather than constantly crowing about how great we are. We are so deluded it's risible. I'm so disgusted with our politics, and all I do is read the news. How any sane person could choose to deliberately submit himself to the absurdities of the world of politics is beyond me. It's got to the point where when news about the campaigns comes on, I switch it off. Almost as bad as being a politician would be working as a journalist, trailing around after a bunch of money-mad

egos. There is no discussion of political philosophy or history or even any rational argument. The world waits with bated breath for a candidate to "misspeak" and thereby prove his worthlessness, and if he doesn't make a mistake on his own, a quotation taken out of context will do just as well. I used to find the election season exciting. Even Watergate was more fun than this. I suppose it was ever thus; I know Lincoln was hated in his day, as was FDR. I expect politics to be messy, but what galls me most is the fecklessness of the American people, who are so stupid and uninformed they act against their own interests and play into the hands of the calculating b*stards who have them by the throat.

[20120719-09](#) 13:34 Art Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to Pam, above)

Very well said!

[20120719-15](#) 16:58 SteveB Re: "Racism Tinges Opposition to Obamacare" (reply to Pam, above)

I think Canada should be our next target after Iran and Russia!

[20120719-07](#) 10:59 MarthaH Fw: What Do Teachers Make?

What Do Teachers Make?

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life.

One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?"

To stress his point he said to another guest; "You're a teacher, Robin. Be honest. What do you make?"

Robin, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I make? She paused for a second, then began...

Well, I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could.

I make a C+ feel like the Congressional Medal of Honor winner.

I make kids sit through 40 minutes of class time when their parents can't make them sit for 5 without an I Pod, Game Cube or movie rental.

You want to know what I make? She paused again and looked at each and every person at the table.

I make kids wonder.

I make them question.

I make them apologize and mean it.

I make them have respect and take responsibility for their actions.

I teach them to write and then I make them write.. Keyboarding isn't everything.

I make them read, read, read.

I make them show all their work in math. They use their God given brain, not the man-made calculator.

I make my students from other countries learn everything they need to know about English while preserving their unique cultural identity.

I make my classroom a place where all my students feel safe.

I make my students stand, placing their hand over their heart to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, One Nation Under God, because we live in the United States of America.

Finally, I make them understand that if they use the gifts they were given, work hard, and follow their hearts, they can succeed in life. (Robin paused one last time and then continued.)

Then, when people try to judge me by what I make, with me knowing money isn't everything, I can hold my head up high and pay no attention because they are ignorant. You want to know what I make? I MAKE A DIFFERENCE. What do you make, Mr. CEO?

His jaw dropped, he went silent.

THIS IS WORTH SENDING TO EVERY TEACHER, EVERY CEO, EVERY PERSON YOU KNOW.

Even all your personal teachers like mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, coaches and your spiritual leaders/teachers.

A profound answer!!!

[20120719-08](#)

13:29

Ben

Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #185)

The Imperial Gallon thing crossed my mind when I read the mailing. I didn't want to assume that the writer knew about this, or not, or had taken it into account, or not. Since it seemed that the letter had a political agenda, I read it with vague interest, and thought "...small diesel, yeah, big deal, of course it's going to get good mileage, but who's gonna want a wimpy tiny diesel without a turbo, anyway?" and "Why is this person even raving about this?" If ever there was an example of "make an issue where none exists", here it is. Now, who's said those words most famously and most recently...?

Almost all emails that attach horror to the Obama administration seem to be misguided or misleading; I almost added "these days", but in fact, it's been pretty venomous since before the inauguration. I was pretty sure this article was at best misguided, too, so the Snopes content came as no surprise. The members of the current administration are a good deal more tech-savvy than any we've had for quite a while, so this in particular didn't seem a kind of issue where they'd throw a flag on the play.

[20120719-11](#)

13:38

Mark

Re: Video: "VW Passat 78.5 MPG in the U.K." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #185)

I shoulda known better... And hey, Steve, we had a thunder boomer last night thanks to your hopes...the soybeans and corn are celebrating...

Happy to hear about rain!



Hey, Steve, thought you might enjoy a photo of my 1929 Ford racecar...hope to go 180+ mph during Speed Week at Bonneville. We stay in Wendover, NV where the bombing group was stationed and trained for Hiroshima, Nagasaki... Still hangars there and a pit because "Fatman" was too big to wheel under the plane.





20120719-14 16:55 SteveB Re: Bonneville 2012 (reply to Mark, above)

Too bad her breathing is so restricted! ;-)

But she's a beaut!

20120719-10 13:37 Marci Video: Amazing 6 Year Old Ethan Bortnick - Piano Prodigy on 'Tonight Show'

You are going to love this little guy!!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahYb1uFzf34>

20120719-17 17:31 SteveB Gomez Concert in Indy

Where: Indianapolis

When: July 27, 2012

What: an atomic bomb for your head!

[20120719-18](#) 18:02 SteveG Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveB, above)

When are they coming to Yakima?

[20120719-20](#) 19:42 SteveB Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveG, above)

When hell freezes over?

No...don't know, the website I saw only listed Indy and Columbus. I'm hoping to see them (and you) when we come next year.

[20120719-21](#) 19:44 Art Re: Gomez Concert in Indy (reply to SteveB, above)

What?????

[20120719-22](#) 22:48 SteveG "It's Time for Schools to Seize Control of Athletic Programs & Penn State Should Lead the Way"

"It's Time for Schools to Seize Control of Athletic Programs, and Penn State Should Lead the Way" by Pat Forde, Yahoo! Sports

July 19, 2012, (<http://sports.yahoo.com/news/ncaaf--fbc-college-football-needs-to-be-reined-in.html>)

Penn State made a football coach bigger than the school itself, accountable to no person and no moral imperative, and now we see the devastating consequences.

North Carolina sold its esteemed academic soul for the pursuit of greater athletic glory, and now we see a proud institution embarrassed and divided.

Yet amid these raw cautionary tales about the dangers of misplaced priority on college campuses, along comes this news item: Oregon is dumping \$68 million of Nike kingpin Phil Knight's money into a new "football operations center." Among the accoutrements you get for \$68 mil, the (Eugene) Register-Guard reported, is a private hot tub and steam room for the coaches, "each with a waterproofed video center ... so they can watch games while taking a soak."

As long as Chip Kelly keeps winning Pac 12 titles, nothing else seems to matter. (Getty Images)

While taking a soak in that absolutely necessary hot tub, I suppose coach Chip Kelly could cue up the largely useless video his school paid \$25,000 for from "talent scout" Will Lyles, who was closely tied to Ducks running backs Lache Seastrunk and LaMichael James. That's part of an ongoing NCAA investigation into Oregon football – but who really wants to think about that when Kelly has won three consecutive Pac-12 championships? On with the building projects.

This is the inherent problem with college athletics: No amount of scandal and no level of embarrassment seem capable of stopping the charge to make sports programs wealthier, more powerful and more disconnected from the universities that give them a name, location, identity and built-in following.

We've seen so many scandal cycles filled with so much consternation and followed by so little change. There is no convenient opportunity for introspection or self-examination when BCS dollars are there for the grabbing.

But here is the thing: If we're ever going to get the athletic genie back in the university bottle, this is the time. The re-examination has to come now. While delivering the worst storyline in college sports history, Penn State ironically also has provided the lever by which the enterprise can save itself.

The Penn State scandal is so bad that it could do good. It could force a day of reckoning at colleges across America. Specifically, it could force a day of reckoning in the offices of university presidents.

Take back your revenue-producing sports programs, school leaders. Take them back or cut them loose from the university educational mission and declare them professional farm teams.

Last week, North Carolina history professor Jay Smith articulated to me the options facing his school and many others in an email: "The problems that have come to light [at UNC] thus far are not specific to 'athletics.' This is a university problem, a systemic problem, and quite obviously so. We clearly have a long way to go. UNC, and all other universities with good intentions, must refuse to walk this tightrope any longer."

You know the first school that should get off the tightrope? The first school to voluntarily fall, then get up and go in a new direction, daring others to follow?

Penn State.

It has to start there.

The school did take some steps last fall: It created a Center for the Protection of Children, pumping \$1.1 million into the project. It donated \$1.5 million in bowl proceeds to a pair of sex-crime advocacy organizations. But now it's time to advance the cause much further, using the football program as its change agent.

As the debate has raged about what the school and the NCAA should do with its scandal-rocked football program, friend and colleague Ray Ratto has had the best solution I've seen so far. As he wrote last week:

"Keep the football program and have it fight for something more noble than the Leaders Division of the Big Ten Conference. Make it a standing advertisement for what went wrong, and how it can be made right. Penn State president Rodney Erickson has a chance to make a big impact on all of college sports. (Reuters)Make the money a tool, rather than its own reward. Make Penn State stand for rebirth rather than degeneration."

Ratto's solution was to make Penn State football non-profit. Turn over the usual massive revenues to the victims of Jerry Sandusky. I love it.

In the coming days, this is the statement I'd like to hear from school president Rodney Erickson: "We're playing football in 2012, but we're not playing for glory or money. Every dime of profit over expense will go to victims of child sexual abuse in the State College area. Every Penn State helmet will bear the child sexual abuse blue ribbon symbol. Every home game will have a moment of silence before kickoff in recognition and support of those who have suffered from our school's failure. If we earn a bowl bid, every member of the travel party – including administrators and coaches – will spend an eight-hour day at the bowl site interacting with abuse victims.

"And we challenge our fellow Big Ten members and Division I schools nationwide to donate their first \$100,000 of athletic profit this school year to the same cause in their communities. Who's with us?"

Would it be costly? Yeah. So what? Just make sure the cost does not come out of the school's non-revenue sports. This is a football issue; whatever slashing needs to be done to the Penn State football budget, just do it.

Instead of accepting millions in cash and gear from Nike, ask the company to donate that money to the cause. If the players have to wear last year's sweats and the coaches don't get a shoe bonus, they'll survive.

Instead of the entire team spending the night before home games at Toftrees Resort outside State College, try the radical notion of staying in the dorms like most non-revenue athletes do before they compete.

If the training table needs to be stripped down, so be it. If the travel party and travel method have to be downgraded for road games, so be it. If the Nittany Lions can only afford to offer 10 scholarships a year over the next couple years, so be it.

And if anyone associated with the school whines about any of it, remind them of a little boy in the shower in 2001.

Truth be told, a one-year de-emphasis of King Football would not require much courage from the Penn State leadership – it has to do something, and that something has to be substantial. The courage would have to come from Penn State's peers.

Would others join the cause? Would others step forward and question why the four-star defensive end who is borderline illiterate has to be granted admission to a school where he will struggle? Why the football program has to have another \$100 million facility? Why the basketball coach has to have a practice gym? Why the offensive coordinator has to make nearly a million dollars? Why the recruiting coordinator has to have a private jet at his disposal? Why the jock dorm has to feature every creature comfort allowable under NCAA rules (and maybe a few that aren't)? Why a school has to abandon a conference of peers for a geographically nonsensical new conference to earn more TV revenue?

It's not just the money that is the problem. It's also the priority. It's the certainty that the only way to keep up with your rival is to further blow everything out of perspective – and that it's far better to lose perspective than to lose games.

That's the pervasive mentality university presidents must try to refute, then reverse. Popularity and profitability cannot be the sole guiding forces of athletics, not if colleges are going to stand behind their founding principles.

"If we can't be competitive by recruiting players who are capable of succeeding academically, and then holding them to high academic standards once admitted, then we have to quit the race," Smith wrote. "We have to admit we can't be competitive, and focus on the things that are supposed to matter to a university. Or, conversely, we can begin agitating for a revamping of the system and pursue a solution that would allow us to treat these athletes as the semi-professionals they are."

A revamping of the entire system would take years, but the reformation of a single school can start soon.

Penn State is uniquely positioned to be that school. Let it lead the way. And let its peers find the courage to follow.



Republicans say they're moving to Canada because of the SCOTUS decision on Obamacare. They may not realize Canada has socialized medicine too ... so I've got another suggestion.

A country that has:

- No Universal Healthcare
- Few entitlement programs
- Low, flat tax system
- A deep reverence for God
- Faith based government
- Extremely strict limitations on abortion
- Marriage is strictly defined as a man and woman
- Homosexuality is a sin and is illegal
- Enforcement of appropriate dress codes
- Tattoo's, piercings, etc... widely banned
- Death Penalty, which they aren't shy about using
- Strong private school system with dominate religious focus
- Widespread oil drilling and natural resource utilization
- Growing nuclear program
- Nonexistent environmentalist nuisance
- Culture that promotes family and appropriate roles for men and women

WHERE, you ask, is this conservative paradise? Is this Heaven? Is this Nirvana?

Actually ... It's IRAN

<http://favim.com/image/258587/>



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

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