



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #191 — JULY 27, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Mitt's Anglo-Saxon Blood No Help in London

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, July 27, 2012)

A Romney advisor reportedly told the *The Telegraph*, "We are part of an Anglo-Saxon heritage, and he feels that the special relationship is special," the adviser said of Mr. Romney, adding: "The White House didn't fully appreciate the shared history we have." [Oh, but no racism underlying that remark! –SteveB]

Funny. Mitt doesn't seem to appreciate our shared history as much as Mr. Obama, who would never offend our old ally with insulting comments, as Romney has done. London and all the U.K., hell, all the Commonwealth are proud of the Olympic Games in London. Until the games fall flat on their face (which they have not), why be insulting? Even then, why be insulting? Unless you're an insensitive, arrogant fool!



This incident reminds me of Romney's huge gaffe when he called Russia "our number one geopolitical foe." I'm sure that the British, now, like the Russians, wonder what the hell is going on in an American Republican Party where

the only two concrete statements, apparently, their presidential candidate has made about the world outside the U.S. are just incredibly stupid!

from *This Week*:

"Insulting your host is a "strange way to build bridges," says Alex Spillius in Britain's *The Telegraph*, particularly when you're visiting a country that you supposedly see as "the umbilical ally of the United States." It's also an awfully "strange way to demonstrate the persuasive qualities needed as leader of the free world," which was what Romney's overseas adventure was supposed to be all about. Why go on a charm offensive if you're going to be more offensive than charming?

"Mitt Romney Walks Back London Olympics Criticism" by Luke Johnson, Huffington Post

July 26, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/26/mitt-romney-olympics-london_n_1705657.html)

Mitt Romney, in his first trip abroad as the presumptive GOP presidential nominee, is trying to walk back comments he made questioning London's Olympics preparation -- comments that have drawn a sharp response from Prime Minister David Cameron.

The dustup began Wednesday, as Romney, who ran the 2002 Salt Lake City games, said there were "disconcerting" signs in the days before this year's games.

"The stories about the private security firm not having enough people, the supposed strike of the immigration and customs officials -- that obviously is not something which is encouraging," he told NBC News.

"Do they come together and celebrate the Olympic moment? And that's something which we only find out once the games actually begin," he said.

Cameron soon rebuked Romney. "We are holding an Olympic Games in one of the busiest, most active, bustling cities anywhere in the world. Of course, it's easier if you hold an Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere," he said.

"I think we will show the whole world not just that we come together as a United Kingdom, but also we're extremely good at welcoming people from across the world," Cameron added. "I will obviously make those points to Mitt Romney. I look forward to meeting him."

In comments before meeting with Labour Party leader Ed Miliband, Romney was more measured. "My experience with regards to the Olympics is it is impossible for absolutely no mistakes to occur," he said. "Of course, there will be errors from time to time, but those are all overshadowed by the extraordinary demonstrations of courage, character and determination by the athletes."

UPDATE: 3:35 p.m. -- Mitt Romney's disastrous British trip continued Thursday when, according to The Huffington Post UK, he "caused amusement" by saying he had spent a great day in the "backside" of Downing Street, rather than the back garden.

In another faux pas, Romney announced his meeting with MI6, the U.K. Secret Intelligence Service whose existence was only acknowledged by the British government in 1994.

"I appreciated the insights and perspectives of the leaders of the government here and opposition here as well as the head of MI6," he told reporters.

MI6 was mum about the meeting, according to the Wall Street Journal. "[MI6 Chief] Sir John Sawers meets with lots of people," said an aide in the British foreign press office, "but we don't give a running commentary of any of these meetings."

London Mayor Boris Johnson hit back at Romney's comments about the Summer Games before a crowd of 60,000 in Hyde Park. "There is a guy called Mitt Romney who wants to know if we are ready. Yes, we are," he declared.

Romney also seemed to break the longstanding rule for U.S. politicians not to criticize the president overseas. At a fundraiser for American expats, he reportedly said, "I'm looking forward to the bust of Winston Churchill being in the Oval Office again," referring to the White House returning the artwork to the British Embassy in early 2009. President Barack Obama replaced it with a bust of Abraham Lincoln.

<https://twitter.com/jameschappers/status/228551719171284992>

James Chapman (Mail) @jameschappers

"Serious dismay in Whitehall at Romney debut. 'Worse than Sarah Palin.' 'Total car crash'. Two of the kinder verdicts #romneyshambles."

FotM NEWSLETTER #191 (July 27, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120727-00		SteveB	Mitt's Anglo-Saxon Blood No Help in London by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney Walks Back London Olympics Criticism")
20120726-01	05:24	MarthaH	"Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'"
20120726-02	09:28	Pam	Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120726-09	22:26	Art	Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to MarthaH & Pam, above)
20120726-03	10:46	SteveM	Feeling Sorry for Obama
20120726-06	14:32	SteveB	Re: Feeling Sorry for Obama (reply to SteveM, above)
20120726-04	12:50	SteveB	"Million-Dollar Donation in Indiana Race May Skirt Limits on Corporate Giving"
20120726-05	14:03	MarthaH	Latest Midwest Drought Map
20120726-11	23:52	SteveB	Re: Latest Midwest Drought Map (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120726-07	16:00	SteveB	Fw: Kucinich Action!
20120726-08	21:50	SteveG	Fw: Working America Action: Tell Your Representative to Vote for Tax Cuts for 98% of Americans!
20120726-10	23:01	Tom	Note from Wife
20120726-12	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Mitt R0mney as Michigan 'State Trooper'
20120726-13	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Tower Bridge, London

20120726-01	05:24	MarthaH	"Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'"
-----------------------------	-------	---------	--

"Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" by Bill Briggs, NBC News

July 25, 2012, (<http://usnews.nbcnews.com/news/2012/07/25/12927498-gun-owners-we-are-your-neighbors-co-workers-friends?lite>)

(DENVER) Fishing guide Nate Zelinsky tallies the firearms in his personal collection: six hand guns, eight shotguns, four rifles and one "home-defense shotgun."

That's 19 — and 20, if you include the 9-millimeter weapon carried by his wife, Mandi.

"I have a firearm close at all times," said Zelinsky, who lives near the foothills town of Conifer, Colo., 30 miles southwest of Denver. "A gun is a part of my life. As an outdoorsman, it's something I have as a tool." On the plains below, in a suburban home not far from the site of Friday's Aurora theater shootings, certified public accountant Stephanie Lidke watches her infant daughter while she lists her guns: there are at least 10, she says, including the two .40 caliber pistols that she and her husband, an HVAC technician, are permitted to carry and conceal.

"When we found out we were pregnant, we bought a crib and a stroller and a gun safe," Lidke said. "We don't have guns to kill human beings. That's not our goal. It's a privilege to be able to protect your family."

These are two faces of America's gun owners, and they happen to live in Colorado. They span white collar, blue collar — and, in Zelinsky's case, camo collar.

Stephanie Lidke, an accountant who lives near Aurora, Colo., and her husband own at least 10 guns.

"We're your neighbors, your co-workers and your friends," Lidke said. "We're moms and dads. We're responsible, ethical and educated."

They're also fed up with the way some gun-control advocates and media members clump all firearm owners into a single, fringy-sounding "gun culture" — which is like saying, Zelinsky adds, that every person who owns a motor vehicle is part of a homogenized, think-alike, drive-alike "car culture."

And now, interest in guns is expanding — swiftly. In the three days following the Friday's mass shooting at a midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises*, nearly 3,000 Colorado consumers were approved for gun purchases after passing instant criminal background checks — 39 percent higher than Colorado's rate of firearm purchases during the two previous weekends, according to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

"Foot-traffic wise, we've had a lot more people in the store who are interested in looking at what's out there, considering their options," said Brad Lightner, general manager of the Firing-Line, an Aurora gun retailer that offers more than 1,500 firearms plus a practice range. "Many are here for home defense."

For some Americans who have never owned guns — or who haven't fired or even touched one — there is a deep cultural chasm when it comes to understanding why anyone would seek to possess a single firearm, much less 10 or 20. That gap, widened as well by sharp philosophical and political differences, is hardly a new phenomenon.

But ask Zelinsky or Lidke to break down the various facets of their ample gun collections and you'll hear rational purposes that stretch from sport to safety to a simple appreciation of vintage handicrafts.

"I have a .45 (caliber) handgun and a shotgun for home protection," Zelinsky said. "I hunt with a long-range rifle, a 300 Ultra Mag. The biggest one I carry in the woods, for bears, is a .454 Casull (handgun). The shotguns are probably the most important because I have many more situations with wildlife than I do with people. Every single night, we have this young bear that's been tearing up the neighborhood. When I leave for work, probably 50 percent of the time I walk to my truck, it's me and the bear, and we come to terms every morning."

[Live Poll: Do you own guns? \[73% said Yes. –SteveB\]](#)

Down in the city, Lidke explained: "We have 12- and 20-gauge shotguns for bird hunting plus a 30-aught-six (rifle) and a 7-millimeter (rifle) for large game — those are tools to help feed our family. We have a Taurus .41 (magnum revolver), which is our bear gun for protection in the woods when we're backpacking or camping. We have antique guns handed down from my husband's great-grandfather, all hand-carved from sitting around a fire at a hunting camp."

The two .40-caliber Springfield XD handguns that Lidke and her husband are permitted to conceal and carry "are more for personal protection. I had a little girl in February so it just became even more important to us to protect her, if necessary."

The need to pack extra security seemed to be feeding the recent sales spike in Colorado, according to firearm retailers like Lightner. The day after the midnight cinema shootings that left 12 people dead and more than 50 people wounded, 1,216 Coloradans were approved for gun purchases following background checks — 880 more than the number approved on the same day one week earlier, according to CBI data. The Firing-Line also offers classes that help qualify gun owners to apply for conceal-and-carry permits in Colorado, one of 49 states that allow guns to be covertly toted by licensed individuals.

"Sign-ups indicate we'll have a few more people taking the training course," Lightner said. "If you're going to carry concealed on the streets, that is another level of responsibility. It's a big step. Obviously, I wouldn't recommend it for everyone and we don't. But for somebody who is interested in being able to defend themselves if an emergency should arise, that will give them at least some of the tools to do it with."

"For myself, I don't carry 100 percent of the time. It's a problem — I mean as far as comfort goes. When you go certain places, it's not practical. (Colorado movie theaters don't allow permitted carriers to bring guns onto the premises). For most of us, we don't want to be heroes. In fact, you don't even want to put yourself in that position. But I'll tell you what: if you are in that position, for whatever reason, you can try to better the situation."

Long before the mass tragedy in Aurora, gun sales were soaring nationally. In 2011, federal investigators performed a record 16.4 million instant criminal background checks on potential gun buyers — 14.2 percent more than 2010, FBI figures show.

Many gun owners, including Zelinsky, sniff the strong scent of political panic in that retail rush — namely that if President Obama is elected to a second term, his administration may push legislation to limit or restrain firearm ownership.

"I would say 80 percent of the people I know own way more (firearms) than me," Zelinsky said. "I mean, you walk into their gun-safe rooms or their garage, you really think they're going to some kind of war. But it's not for crazy reasons. They're just worried it's not going to be around."

"Get them while you can, buy them while you can, that's the thinking behind it."

And that fear, Zelinsky says, has truly revved the market for used guns — often weapons without attached ownership records, meaning authorities don't know who currently has them or where they're located.

"People just don't want anything with paperwork so if there ever was a crazy situation where somebody is saying: 'Hey, we're taking away the guns,' (many used-gun owners) want something that's non-traceable," Zelinsky said.

"It's unbelievable, the sale of used firearms just in the market, and not retail. You can have an older, beater pistol and you can sell it (privately) for more than what it costs on the shelf just due to the fact that you have no paperwork behind it."

[20120726-02](#)

09:28

Pam

Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to MarthaH, above)

Oh my. I've come to the conclusion that one of the biggest problems we face is our inability to tolerate subtlety. Dividing arguments up into black or white, either or, yes or no completely, perhaps deliberately, simplifies complex issues for the weak-minded (whose number is legion). Call it reductio ad absurdum. (sp?) Personally, I'd be happy if no one but the police and the military were packing, but I recognize that the 2nd Amendment is a sacred cow. That said, I have no problem with antique gun collectors, hunters (don't like 'em, but sort of understand 'em), and cowboys owning guns. If I had to face a bear every morning on the way to my car, I'd probably want a gun too, and I know that if I lived in rattlesnake territory I'd want the biggest, loudest shotgun ever. I can even understand someone living in an isolated area having a gun. There was a time when I owned some land out in the country, where I planned to build a house someday. I knew that if I did that, even I would want a gun handy. It might be comforting to own a gun if you lived in a dangerous city. There are sound reasons why someone might want to own a gun(s). BUT, the issue for me isn't gun ownership; it's gun regulation. Reasonable laws that would prevent

ownership of assault rifles and the 40% of gun sales that are totally unregulated over the Internet or at gun shows are a no brainer. We keep pretty good track of our cars in this country. I don't see why we can't insist on a papertrail for guns and a DGO, Department of Gun Ownership--like the DMV. The NRA is promoted by a bunch of hysterics who fear black helicopters and tanks in the streets. Control and compromise, or is that too subtle a concept?

[20120726-09](#)

22:26 Art

Re: "Gun Owners: 'We Are Your Neighbors, Co-Workers, Friends'" (reply to MarthaH & Pam, above)

The bear thing is absolute BS. "When I leave for work, probably 50 percent of the time I walk to my truck, it's me and the bear, and we come to terms every morning." Do you really think the bear has a clue the guy has a gun and what that means. Think about it. Like most other gun crap, this story is just that.

Having said that, Pam you are right on, Why does anyone need a 38 Special except to rob a 7-11? The NRA long ago sold out to the gun manufactures and will push anything to make a sale. They hide behind this "This is the first step to take away our guns", if anyone even proposes that maybe the common citizen doesn't need a man held anti aircraft missile.

There is no reasoning with the NRA because it is not the second amendment it is all about making lots of money selling guns and all the stuff like 100 round magazines that go with them. (What's that for, to bring down a charging squirrel?) The NRA members are like zombies. All the leadership has to do is whisper ""They want to take away our guns" and the membership's hands go up and they stagger forward moaning "no take our guns, no take our guns".

It's hard to reason with idiots.

[20120726-03](#)

10:46

SteveM

Feeling Sorry for Obama

I feel sorry for Obama. If he gets elected this fall, look at the mess he's going to inherit!

[20120726-06](#)

14:32

SteveB

Re: Feeling Sorry for Obama (reply to SteveM, above)

That's funny! I felt the same way about Bush...and then sorry for both Obama and McCain, one of which was obviously going to be handed the biggest mess ever. I think that's why McCain decided he couldn't cope with it, so he sabotaged his own campaign with his economic bumbles and by picking Mrs. Stupid as his running mate. Smart. You might also remember that McCain didn't really have one good thing to say about Bush...then or since...

[20120726-04](#)

12:50

SteveB

"Million-Dollar Donation in Indiana Race May Skirt Limits on Corporate Giving"

Scary news from the home state of many of us...

["Million-Dollar Donation in Indiana Race May Skirt Limits on Corporate Giving" by Paul Abowd, IWatch News/NationofChange](#)

July 26, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/million-dollar-donation-indiana-race-may-skirt-limits-corporate-giving-1343315419>)

The RGA Right Direction PAC is a Washington, D.C.-based super PAC, registered with federal regulators to make independent expenditures supporting or opposing candidates. So what is it doing giving \$1 million directly to the Republican running for governor of Indiana?

The donation to Mike Pence, the largest to his campaign, appears to be a way around state laws limiting corporate contributions to candidates.

"In one way, it's legal," said Andrew Downs of the Center for Indiana Politics, at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. "But if you say this is a way to give in excess of corporate limits, that's also absolutely true."

Right Direction is funded entirely by the Republican Governors Association, a so-called "527" organization dedicated to electing as many Republicans to governorships as possible — a mission fueled by contributions from some of the largest corporations in the country. In Indiana, candidates can accept unlimited donations from individuals and political action committees but only \$5,000 from corporations and unions. Corporations and unions can also give to PACs, but only in small sums.

Whether the check to Pence was drawn on a bank account that contained corporate money is not a matter of public record.

Donations come from one fund

In an email, RGA spokesman Michael Schimpf said "nothing in our reports suggests" that the organization gave corporate funds to Pence. All RGA expenditures, he said, come from a general fund.

"It's the new model of disclosure subterfuge," said Bob Biersack, a senior fellow at the Center for Responsive Politics and former longtime Federal Election Commission official. "It's not what a normal human being would call transparent."

The donation to Pence appeared in FEC filings July 15. It is the latest in a series of campaign finance maneuvers by the RGA which have prompted legal challenges in two states claiming the group violated limits on corporate giving.

Right Direction reported receiving four contributions totaling \$1.3 million from the RGA since January. Super PACs can accept unlimited donations from corporations and labor unions, thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision.

Right Direction's 2010 boiler-plate registration letter filed with the FEC said it "intends to make independent expenditures" — ad buys and other spending that supports or opposes candidates.

FEC filings show the group has not reported any independent expenditures, but has spent money helping state candidates in Ohio in 2010 when it was known as RGA Ohio PAC.

In addition to Right Direction's \$1 million contribution to Pence, it also made two contributions to the Montana Republican Party totaling \$200,000. The Right Direction PAC is registered with both Indiana and federal election regulators.

Source of funds obscured

In federal records, it reports its donors as the RGA — which effectively obscures the original source of the \$1 million check to Pence.

There is no paperwork required by the state of Indiana that shows whether those funds were derived from the RGA's corporate donors. The RGA's Schimpf says it is following the relevant state and federal campaign finance laws "as efficiently as possible."

According to Abbey Taylor with the Indiana Election Division, "It's a pretty nice little loophole, and loopholes are meant to be exploited."

Corporations can give directly to Indiana candidates, but are limited to \$5,000 donations. Drug giant AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson have each given \$2,500 and Nestle USA has given \$5,000 to the Pence campaign since

January. These same companies gave \$350,000, \$25,000, and \$12,500 donations respectively to the RGA's 527 organization in the same time period.

A corporation can also support the governor by passing the contribution through a political action committee. It can give \$5,000 to the PAC during each election cycle and the PAC can give unlimited amounts to the candidate.

PACs registered only inside Indiana must itemize contributions in reports to the state, including those from corporations. The Indiana Merit Construction PAC, for example, gathered donations from dozens of construction companies and gave \$32,500 to Mike Pence in June — bringing its total giving to the campaign to \$69,000 this cycle.

Nothing to see here

Right Direction is not required to file such a report, according to state election officials.

A 527 can accept unlimited contributions from corporations, unions and individuals. They may not give money directly to federal candidates but can fund issue advertising campaigns and other political activities. They are regulated by the Internal Revenue Service but not the FEC and are required to report their donors and spending.

Because Right Direction is registered with both the state and the FEC, the Indiana Election Division cannot regulate its spending activity. Co-Director Trent Deckard says state law constrains his agency to regulating PACs that are solely registered with the state.

"I truly understand the public concern here," said Deckard, "but there's 150 members of the legislature who would have to vote on this question. We can always hope for greater transparency."

The Election Division usually does not take up its own investigations unless prompted by citizen complaints. So far, none have been lodged against the RGA's activity.

"Whether it passes the smell test is for voters to decide," said Downs. "This is part of the shell game that concerns people about campaign finance."

The RGA donation to Pence is nothing new.

National campaign

The organization gave seven-figure sums to six different gubernatorial candidates in 2010. The group was a top donor in the Pennsylvania, Illinois, Texas, Oregon, New Mexico, and Iowa races. In 2004 and 2008, its PAC also gave a total of nearly \$3.9 million directly to Mitch Daniels' successful bids for Indiana governor, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

"The RGA is confident they can get away with this — they're riding on a new level of hubris," said Edwin Bender, director of the institute.

The RGA's 527 raised \$16.7 million since April, nearly twice as much as its Democratic counterpart. Fifty-seven percent of that money came from corporate treasuries and corporate PACs, according to a Center for Public Integrity analysis of IRS records.

Koch Industries has given the RGA \$2 million, health insurance giant Blue Cross/Blue Shield \$1.6 million, and Sheldon Adelson's Sands Casino group \$1 million in the 2012 cycle. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Bob Perry have each added \$750,000 to the RGA coffers, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

If Pence were running to keep his 6th District congressional seat, his campaign couldn't touch a dime of donations from the RGA super PAC. But because he's running for a state office, and doing so in a state that allows unlimited PAC contributions to candidates, the RGA super PAC can wire cash direct to his war chest.

The \$1 million gift accounts for a third of Pence's haul since April in his race to replace Daniels in the governor's mansion. A week after getting the super PAC infusion, Pence launched an early TV ad blitz — the first of which featured his wife recounting Pence's homegrown Hoosier credentials.

Pence leads money race

Pence has twice as much cash as his Democratic opponent John Gregg as of July 16. The Democratic Governors Association has given Gregg \$29,000 since January. The DGA's June filing with the FEC contains small donors as well as \$250,000 checks from each of the national teachers unions.

Its state-registered PAC only lists the DGA's 527 as the donor, raising similar questions about the origin of its contributions to Gregg. Officials at the DGA say the contributions in Indiana are in compliance with state election law.

On top of "the RGA's million-dollar bailout," Gregg's spokesman Daniel Altman cited large donations from billionaire donors including the Koch brothers and Rick Santorum-backer Foster Friess as evidence that Pence is "financed by out-of-state donors who do not have Indiana's best interests at heart."

The Pence campaign did not return calls for comment.

The state has not seen a seven-figure direct contribution to a candidate since 2003 when Bren Simon, the widow of an Indiana mall magnate, gave \$1.3 million to former Democratic National Committee chairman Joe Andrew's unsuccessful gubernatorial bid.

The \$1 million contribution dwarfs one made by conservative industrialist David Koch, who gave \$100,000 to Pence in January. Koch also gave \$1 million to the RGA in February.

Pervasive force

The RGA has been a pervasive force in state elections. It has spent \$80 million on state races in 40 states since 1999 — more than half of that money has gone directly to candidates, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics. Some states have been concerned about the national group's influence.

North Carolina and Vermont agencies have taken legal action against the RGA, claiming it violated the states' caps on corporate giving and must be regulated as a state PAC. In both cases, the RGA has used its pervasive reach as a defense, claiming that its "major purpose" is not to influence elections in any one state. Therefore, it has argued, no state can regulate it as a state PAC.

"By that logic, they're not a PAC anywhere, and can't be regulated anywhere," said Stetson Law professor Ciara Torres-Spelliscy. "Do we have political entities that are too big to regulate?"

In North Carolina, the RGA carried the day, despite spending way above the state's limits for PACs.

Vermont's Attorney General claims that both governors associations have violated state campaign finance laws. The state's challenge to the DGA-funded Green Mountain Future 527 is headed for the state's Supreme Court. The case against the RGA claims the organization bought ads through its 527 during the 2010 campaign, but did not report that spending to the state. The RGA is yet to present its defense in the case.

"You need a state that's willing to pick a fight with the RGA," said Torres-Spelliscy, "but they're so powerful that there's this natural reticence to ticket them for running the red light."

Putnam County is now in the exceptional range of drought.

U.S. Drought Monitor

July 24, 2012

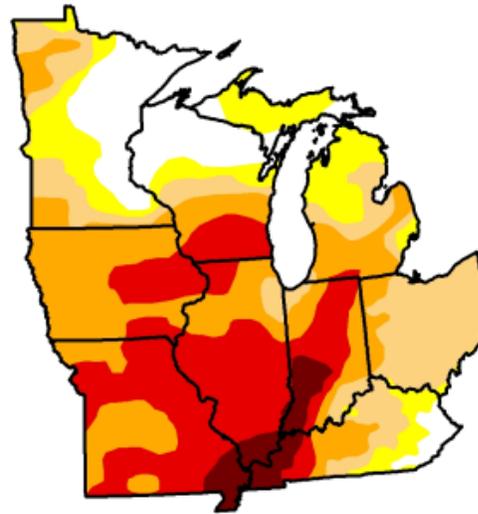
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Midwest

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	13.13	86.87	73.69	55.53	28.92	4.33
Last Week (07/17/2012 map)	14.09	85.91	72.70	48.12	11.89	0.84
3 Months Ago (04/24/2012 map)	58.78	41.22	16.08	5.98	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	71.84	28.16	13.42	6.80	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/27/2011 map)	58.85	41.15	14.01	5.03	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (07/19/2011 map)	89.78	10.22	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

 D0 Abnormally Dry	 D3 Drought - Extreme
 D1 Drought - Moderate	 D4 Drought - Exceptional
 D2 Drought - Severe	



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, July 26, 2012
Richard Heim, National Climatic Data Center, NOAA

[20120726-11](#) 23:52 SteveB Re: Latest Midwest Drought Map (reply to MarthaH, above)

I'm still doing my rain dance, MarthaH!

It's funny. I find that very many "modern" people, both in the U.S. and Latin America, seem completely unaware of rainfall. They certainly aren't unaware of rain, but they lack any sense of "rain over time". City people!

But if you grew up on a farm, live on a farm, or, as in my case, grew up in farming country, knew a lot of farmers, and even come from a long line of farmers, you gain a sense of how thirsty the land, much as you might "sense" north.

The most mythical tales in my family are of my great grandfather, who lived on a farm in Virginia. The story goes that when he turned 16, his father gave him a pig and told him to go make his way in the world. He took that pig and crossed the Appalachians to Indiana along the Cumberland Trail. On the way, high in the mountain forests, he met an archetypal rattlesnake on the path. He could not go around and the snake seemed to want to kill him, so he killed the snake and cut off its many rattles, which is still, I believe, in our family. I used to love it when my Dad would show it to me and tell me the story. When my great grandfather arrived in Indiana (God's Country), he worked his way (and the pig's way) up, until he owned a rather large farm near Ladoga.

I have put up quite a bit of hay in my time, experimentally shucked a little corn, attempted to milk a cow, ridden horses often, and once managed (with help) to hitch a wagon (to a horse, silly), and, as you probably already know, am the proud owner of some cattle here in Bolivia, but I have never actually lived on a farm. Yet, when the land starts to dry and crack, it is as if my throat becomes parched. When the plants start to suffer, I feel a sorrow for them. And when crops, animals, and people become affected...well, that's when I start thinking about giant pipelines of water from the mouths of our mighty rivers to the dying of thirst and wondering why we do not fight this war instead of the terrible ones... When there is plenty of rain, it is as if I can check-off some category in my brain: "OK, let's luxuriate in this, we don't have to worry about the land going dry for at least a while."

I guess many of us Hoosiers are like that. May it rain soon in God's Country!

20120726-07 16:00 SteveB Fw: Kucinich Action!

from Dennis Kucinich:

As you know my term in the United States House of Representatives is coming to an end. But our movement has always been about more than one election, more than one seat. It has been a movement based on a vision of a peaceful and prosperous America. Together, we made our voices heard. And as long as we continue to share our vision, our voices will continue to be heard. This is why I have created a new organization, Kucinich Action, to continue our efforts to grow our national movement and change the debate on the most important issues of our time.

It is through Kucinich Action, with your involvement and the involvement of your friends and family, that we will continue to organize, continue to lead, continue to act, continue to move our nation in a direction which transforms our politics and strives to restore peace, reclaim our liberties, reform our monetary policies, re-ignite civic activism and re-establish a government of the people, by the people and for the people. In order to move forward boldly and broadly, I need your help. We need to demonstrate that our movement is about more than one election. We need to show that we will stick together.

Click here to contribute now and help us re-ignite this movement as Kucinich Action:

<https://donate.kucinich.us/page/contribute/120726>.

We cannot do this alone. You have always been an essential part of our political success. Time and again, whenever my political career hung in the balance, you came forward with financial support to help change the outcome from defeat to victory.

Now we need your help once again. Not for myself. I am not a candidate. But there are other candidates who are deserving of our support and without our help those candidates could be swept away in a tidal wave of special interest money. Kucinich Action, through assisting candidates and campaigns, will provide strategic assistance, by way of emails, phone calls, mailings and even door to door campaigning to change the outcome of elections. We will also be engaged in providing community organizations assistance on issue-based campaigns. Though I will not be in the 113th Congress when it begins on January 3rd, 2013, with your help we will have a number of allies inside the Congress who will continue the work we have begun.

I am asking you to stand with Kucinich Action. Your contribution will prove that our movement is here to stay. That big money and Wall Street interests cannot simply drown out those who wish to see a better world for our children to grow up in. Your financial support will help pay for a small staff of web campaigners, database experts, and grass roots organizers who are devoted to supporting candidates who share our values. The money you put into Kucinich Action will be an investment in continuing a dynamic approach to politics, one that is unafraid to challenge the status quo, and prepared to lead in powerful and positive ways through harnessing the energy of countless citizen-activists who will stand and act boldly for our causes.

Kucinich Action is not just another political organization. It represents the unfolding of a politics of possibility, of creative thinking, of dynamic action. Let us continue to lead the way forward. Please join me and make a contribution today.

Together we can meet any challenge. Together we will restore peace, liberty and social and economic justice to this land we love.

Thank you, Dennis Kucinich

20120726-08	21:50	SteveG	Fw: Working America Action: Tell Your Representative to Vote for Tax Cuts for 98% of Americans!
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

from Working America:

That was unexpected.

Yesterday, the U.S. Senate narrowly passed a bill that would extend Bush-era tax cuts for families who earn less than \$250,000 a year and make the richest 2% pay their fair share.

Working America members from across the country called their Senators and sent thousands of letters urging them to make the right vote. And because of you, they did.

Now the fate of these tax cuts is in the hands of the House of Representatives and they need to remember that they work for us. Will you write to your U.S. Representative now and ask them to support tax cuts for Americans earning less than \$250,000?

Extremists in the House have already indicated that they want to protect their friends in the richest 2% and give them more tax breaks. We can't let them do this. We've paid our fair share. Now it's time for the wealthy to pay theirs.

Send a message to your U.S. Representative now and tell them to extend tax cuts for 98% of Americans. The House of Representative is the last step in passing these middle-class tax cuts and ending huge tax cuts to those who need it least, so we need them to act today. Send your message now:

http://action.workingamerica.org/c/575/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=4745.

In solidarity, Christian Norton, Working America

20120726-10	23:01	Tom	Note from Wife
-----------------------------	-------	-----	----------------

The wife left a note on the fridge, "It's not working! I can't take it anymore! I've gone to stay at my Mom's!"

I opened the fridge, the light came on and the beer was cold...

God only knows what she was talking about!

[Note: I know you're thinking this picture was Photoshopped, but if you look at it extremely closely, you will see that's not a fake old police car in the picture, and that sure looks like a real police dog to me. Fer sure, Mitt would have the carrier on top, or the dog might stink-up his lapels. The uniform and hat? Those look fake to me! Overall, I think you have to admit this photo is proof positive that the caption must be true. Snopes.com says the story is true, but fails to mention the undeniable photographic evidence of ~~UFO's~~ Mitt's juvenile deeds. -SteveB]



Seems unreal...like a toy...yet with so much history...it's so much nicer not to tear your old stuff down.

<http://www.epilepsylondon2012.org/tours/tours.html>



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved