



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #194 — AUG. 1, 2012

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

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R0mney Praises Socialized Health Care

(posted by Art Hotop, graphics posted by SteveG, Aug. 1, 2012)

As we struggle to come up with a health care system that is better than what we have, apparently Israel has one that works pretty well and is much cheaper to execute, according to Mr. Romney. Now exactly what is the difference between the philosophy behind this one and our own new ACA? Other than the Obama part of course.

Hmmmm. Confused. Is he for real????

"Do you realize what health care spending is as a percentage of the GDP in Israel? 8 percent. And you're a pretty healthy nation. We spend 18 percent of our GDP on health care. We have to find ways, not just to provide health care to more people, but to find ways to finally manage our health care costs." — Mitt Romney

Note to Mitt: Israel has **socialized health care.**

The Pragmatic Progressive Page

"Romney Praises Health Care in Israel, Where Research Says 'Strong Government Influence' Has Driven Down Costs" by Sarah Kliff, *The Washington Post*

July 30, 2012, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/wp/2012/07/30/romney-praises-health-care-in-israel-where-strong-government-influence-has-driven-down-costs/>)

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney had some very kind things to say about the Israeli health care system at a fundraiser there Monday. He praised Israel for spending just 8 percent of its GDP on health care and still remaining a "pretty healthy nation:"

When our health care costs are completely out of control. Do you realize what health care spending is as a percentage of the GDP in Israel? 8 percent. You spend 8 percent of GDP on health care. And you're a pretty healthy nation. We spend 18 percent of our GDP on health care. 10 percentage points more. That gap, that 10 percent cost, let me compare that with the size of our military. Our military budget is 4 percent. Our gap

with Israel is 10 points of GDP. We have to find ways, not just to provide health care to more people, but to find ways to finally manage our health care costs.

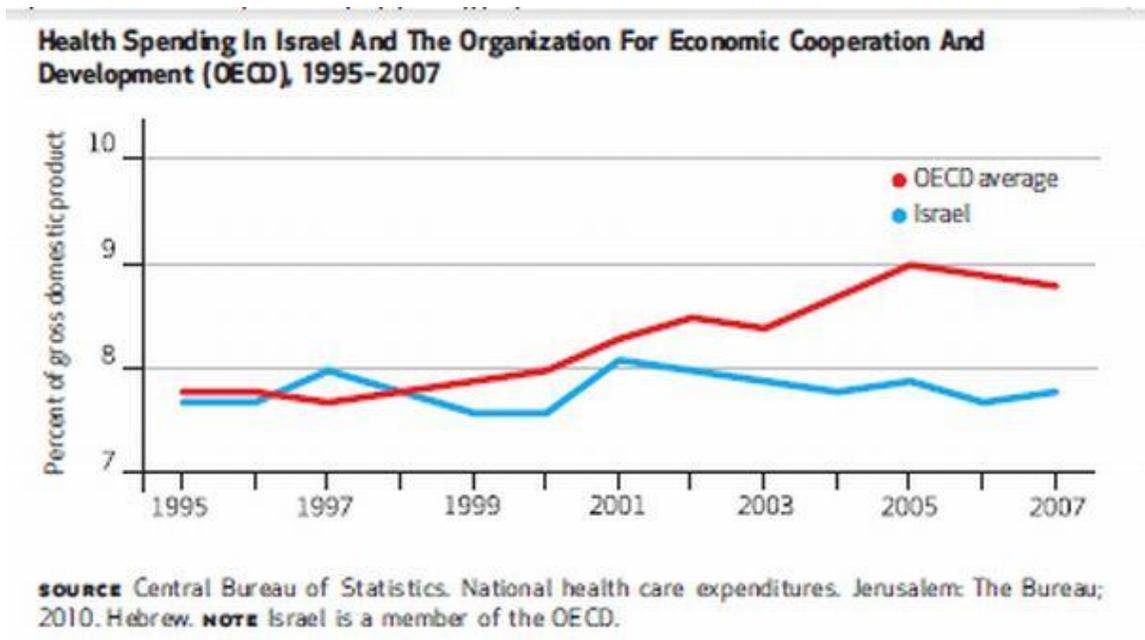
Romney’s point about Israel’s success in controlling health care costs is spot on: Its health care system has seen health care costs grow much slower than other industrialized nations.

How it has gotten there, however, may not be to the Republican candidate’s liking: Israel regulates its health care system aggressively, requiring all residents to carry insurance and capping revenue for various parts of the country’s health care system.

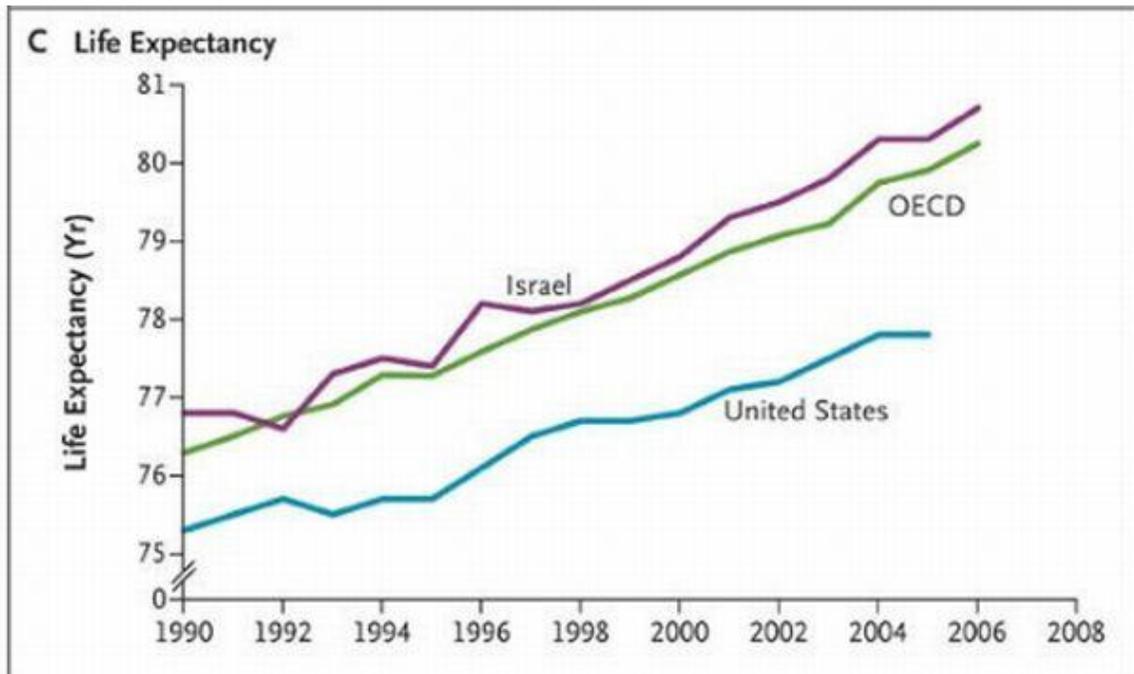
Israel created a national health care system in 1995, largely funded through payroll and general tax revenue. The government provides all citizens with health insurance: They get to pick from one of four competing, nonprofit plans. Those insurance plans have to accept all customers—including people with pre-existing conditions—and provide residents with a broad set of government-mandated benefits.

Health insurance does not, however, cover every medical service. Dental and vision care, for example, fall outside of the standard government set of benefits. The majority of Israelis—81 percent —purchase a supplemental health insurance plan to “use the private health care system for services that may not be available in through the public system,” according to a paper by Health Affairs.

Now, let’s get to the costs. As you can see in the chart below, Israel’s health care costs have hovered around 8 percent of its gross domestic product for over two decades, while other countries’ have seen theirs rise:



Israel’s lower health care spending does not look to sacrifice the quality of care. It has made more improvements than the United States on numerous quality metrics, and the country continues to have a higher life expectancy:



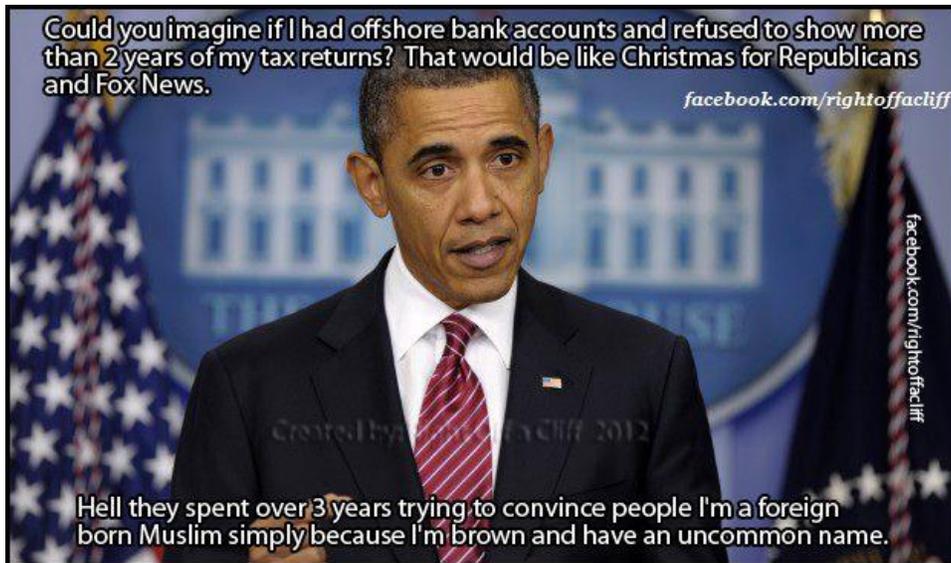
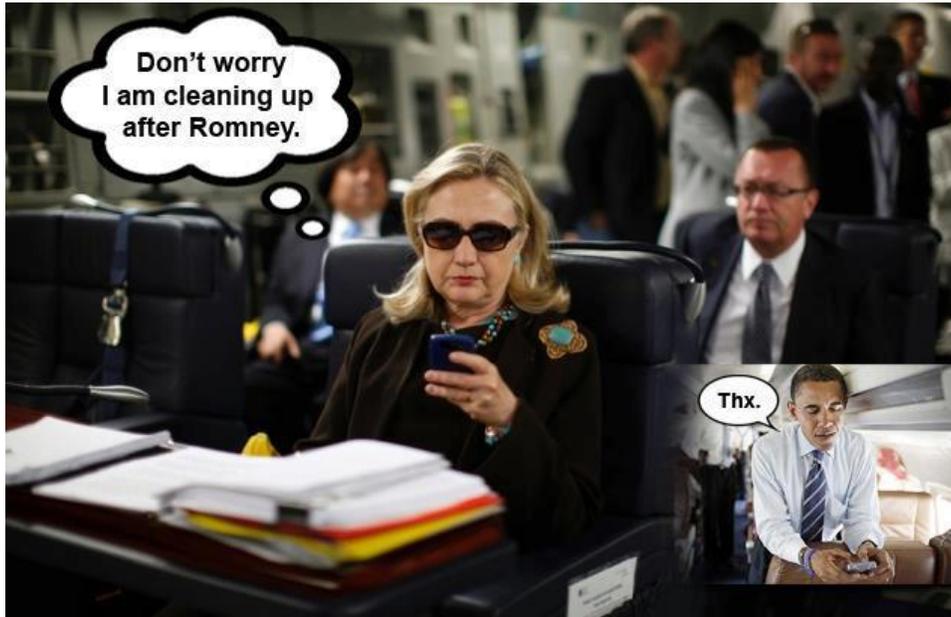
Source: New England Journal of Medicine

How'd they do it? Jack Zwanziger and Shuli Brammli-Greenberg took a crack at that question in a 2011 Health Affairs paper. The answer, they say, has a lot to do with "strong government influence:

The national government exerts direct operational control over a large proportion of total health care expenditures, through a range of mechanisms, including caps on hospital revenue and national contracts with salaried physicians. The Ministry of Finance has been able to persuade the national government to agree to relatively small increases in the health care budget because the system has performed well, with a very high level of public satisfaction.

The Israeli Ministry of Finance controls about 40 percent of Israel's health care expenditures through those payments to the four insurance plans. The ministry decides how much it will pay the health plans for each Israeli citizen they enroll, making adjustments for how old a person is and how high their health care costs are expected to be.

It's then up to the health insurance plan to figure out how to provide coverage within that set budget. If they spend too much—have a patient who is constantly in the hospital, for example—they will find themselves in the red. It's that set budget—a capitated budget, in health policy terms—that seems to be crucial to the Israeli health care system's success in cost control.



FotM NEWSLETTER #194 (Aug. 1, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

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20120731-01	15:56	SteveG	Video: "What's the Difference Between 'Liberal' and 'Conservative'?"
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"What's the Difference Between 'Liberal' and 'Conservative'?" posted by Alicia, MoveOn.org

May 17, 2011, (<http://front.moveon.org/whats-the-difference-between-liberal-and-conservative/#.UBqvU9z0P5k.facebook>)

Jimmy Smits of "The West Wing" really does have all the answers. Watch this clip, plucked right from the debate episode in season seven. ("Why Is 'Liberal' a Bad Word?")

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zTFp7WG9J-E.

20120731-02	16:24	Pam	Together at Last!
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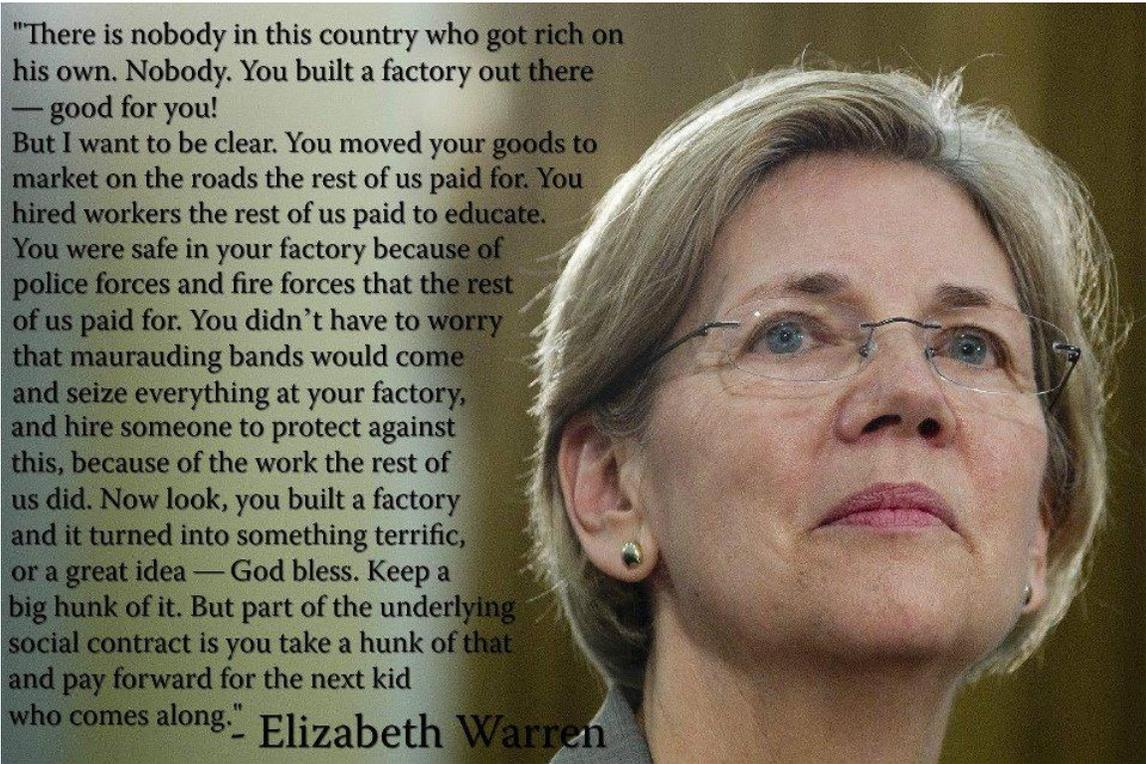
My son David Eastbrook. I wanted to share. :-)

20120731-03	17:14	SteveB	Re: Together at Last! (reply to Pam, above)
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Gaining a "new" son or Mom? More than priceless! Congratulations, Pam. We have been with you during your struggles and will continue to be. All Friends of the Middle love such happy news!

20120731-04	18:14	SteveG	Graphics: 'You Didn't Build That'
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Elizabeth Warren said it better:



"There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody. You built a factory out there — good for you!
But I want to be clear. You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for. You didn't have to worry that maurauding bands would come and seize everything at your factory, and hire someone to protect against this, because of the work the rest of us did. Now look, you built a factory and it turned into something terrific, or a great idea — God bless. Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along."
- Elizabeth Warren

And this is what she was talking about:

A photograph of Jack Gilchrist, owner of Gilchrist Metal Fabricating Company, with a large block of text overlaid on the image. The text lists various government subsidies and programs that he received, along with a quote and a website link.

“We built this business.”

-With \$800,000 in tax exempt revenue bonds

-With \$83,000 in US Navy sub-contracts

-With a \$5,600 Coast Guard contract

-With a U.S. Small Business Administration loan

“somewhere south of” \$500,000, plus matching

funds from the federally-funded New England Trade

Adjustment Assistance Center

JACK GILCHRIST, OWNER
GILCHRIST METAL FABRICATING COMPANY

Not by yourself, you didn't.

jackacidsocietyblackbook.blogspot.com



and then the mean old kitty stole all of the doggy treats and ran down the street



and that is why we chase cats to this day

MOM, THIS IS NOT FUNNY!

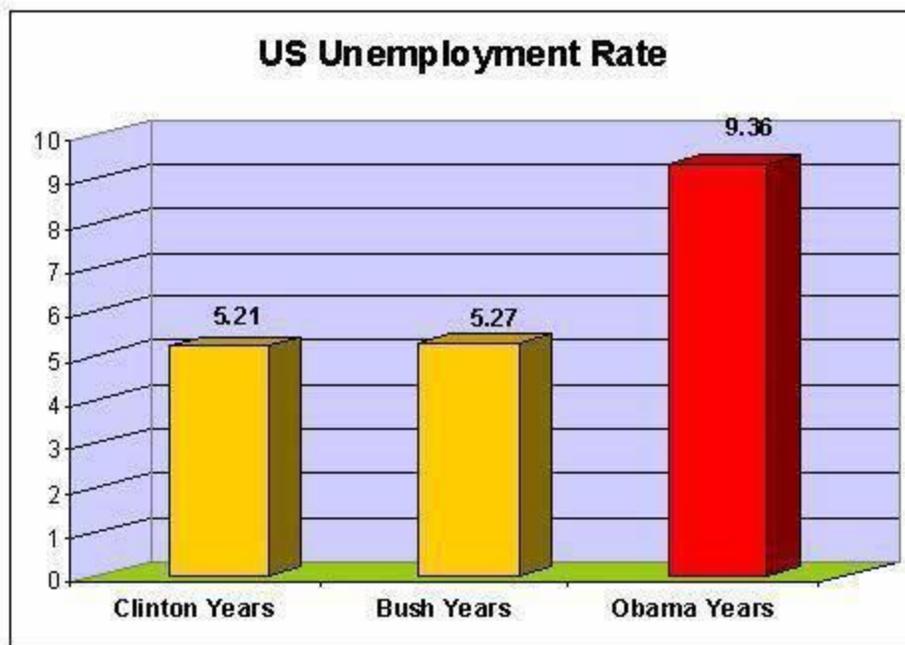


YOU KNOW I WANTED AN IPAD!



20120731-06 20:16 SteveM Charts on the Obama Years — Part 1

This is a real easy view of our current president's accomplishments. Interesting statistics...



20120731-07 20:17 Marci Fw: Paraprosdokians

I had to look up "paraprosdokian". Here is the definition: "Figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently used in a humorous situation."

"Where there's a will, I want to be in it," is a type of paraprosdokian. Ok, so now enjoy!

1. Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.
2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.
3. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
5. We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.
6. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
7. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
8. Evening news is where they begin with 'Good Evening,' and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
9. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
10. A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station.
11. I thought I wanted a career. Turns out I just wanted paychecks.
12. Whenever I fill out an application, in the part that says, 'In case of emergency, notify:' I put 'DOCTOR.'
13. I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.
14. Women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer gut, and still think they are sexy.
15. Behind every successful man is his woman. Behind the fall of a successful man is usually another woman.
16. A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.
17. I asked God for a bike, but I know God doesn't work that way. So I stole a bike and asked for forgiveness.
18. You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.
19. Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.
20. There's a fine line between cuddling and holding someone down so they can't get away.
21. I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.
22. You're never too old to learn something stupid.
23. To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.
24. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
25. Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
26. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
27. A diplomat is someone who tells you to go to hell in such a way that you look forward to the trip.
28. Hospitality is making your guests feel at home even when you wish they were.
29. I always take life with a grain of salt. Plus a slice of lemon, and a shot of tequila.

30. When tempted to fight fire with fire, remember that the Fire Department usually uses water.

"The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese." —Jon Hammond

20120731-08 20:17 SteveM Fw: Barry...

[This is wonderful! I love it! Now I like Barry even more! What a normal guy! One of us! Not like R0mney, who wouldn't be able to talk to any of us without condescension. But I'm sure you never did any of these things that your email alleges, right, SteveM? —SteveB]

THIS IS WORRISOME TO SEE AND WE KNOW THE NEWS MEDIA HAS NOT PUBLICIZED THIS. WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THEY HAD THIS MUCH INFO ON ANY OTHER PRESIDENT OR PUBLIC FIGURE????

Good read.....

Barry the Dope Dealer (One reason Obama's school files are SEALED.)

Barry was quite the accomplished marijuana addicted enthusiast back in high school and college. Excerpts from David Maraniss' Barack Obama: The Story "Barry the Dope dealer" with the elaborate drug culture surrounding the president when he attended Punahou School in Honolulu and Occidental College in Los Angeles . He definitely inhaled, a hell of a lot of smoke.

1. The Choom Gang



A self-selected group of boys at Punahou School who loved basketball and good times called themselves the Choom Gang. Choom is a verb, meaning "to smoke marijuana."

2. Total Absorption



As a member of the Choom Gang, Barry Obama was known for starting a few pot-smoking trends. The first was called "TA," short for "total absorption." To place this in the physical and political context of another young man who would grow up to be president, TA was the antithesis of Bill Clinton's claim that as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford he smoked dope but never inhaled.

3. Roof Hits



Along with TA, Barry popularized the concept of "roof hits": when they were chooming in the car all the windows had to be rolled up so no smoke blew out and went to waste; when the pot was gone, they tilted their heads back and sucked in the last bit of smoke from the ceiling. [Where's Barry? -SteveB]

4. Penalties



When you were with Barry and his pals, if you exhaled precious pakalolo (Hawaiian slang for marijuana, meaning "numbing tobacco") instead of absorbing it fully into your lungs, you were assessed a penalty and your turn was skipped the next time the joint came around. "Wasting good bud smoke was not tolerated," explained one member of the Choom Gang, Tom Topolinski, the Chinese-looking kid with a Polish name who answered to Topo.

5. The Choomwagon



[Choom Gang member] Mark Bendix's Volkswagen bus, also known as the Choomwagon. ... The other members considered Mark Bendix the glue, he was funny, creative, and uninhibited, with a penchant for Marvel Comics. He also had that VW bus and a house with a pool, a bong, and a Nerf basketball, all enticements for them to slip off midday for a few unauthorized hours of recreation...

6. Interceptions



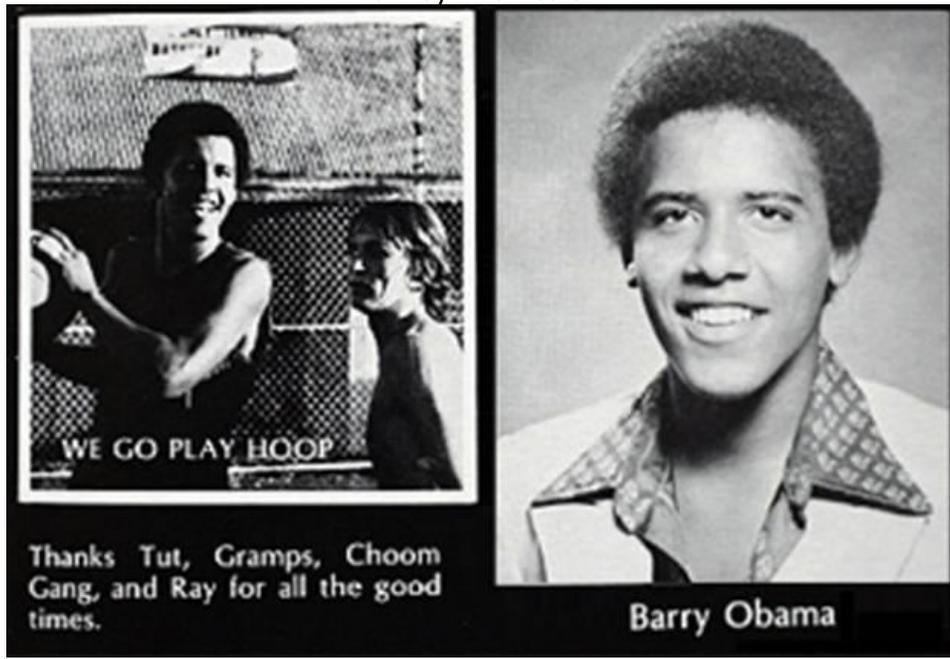
Barry also had a knack for interceptions. When a joint was making the rounds, he often elbowed his way in, out of turn, shouted "Intercepted!," and took an extra hit. No one seemed to mind.

7. Slippers



Choom Gang members often made their way to Aku Ponds at the end of Manoa Stream, where they slipped past the liliko'i vines and the KAPU (keep out) signs, waded into waist-high cool mountain water, stood near the rock where water rushed overhead, and held up a slipper (what flip-flops are called in Hawaii) to create an air pocket canopy. It was a natural high, they said, stoned or not. [I don't see Barry... --SteveB]

8. Ray The Dealer



He was a long-haired haole hippie who worked at the Mama Mia Pizza Parlor not far from Punahou and lived in a dilapidated bus in an abandoned warehouse. ... According to Topolinski, Ray the dealer was "freakin' scary." Many years later they learned that he had been killed with a ball-peen hammer by a scorned gay lover. But at the time he was useful because of his ability to "score quality weed."

In another section of the [senior] yearbook, students were given a block of space to express thanks and define their high school experience. ... Nestled below [Obama's] photographs was one odd line of gratitude: "Thanks Tut, Gramps, Choom Gang, and Ray for all the good times." ... A hippie drug-dealer made his acknowledgments; his own mother did not.

9. Pumping Stations



Their favorite hangout was a place they called Pumping Stations, a lush hideaway off an unmarked, roughly paved road partway up Mount Tantalus. They parked single file on the grassy edge, turned up their stereos playing Aerosmith, Blue Oyster Cult, and Stevie Wonder, lit up some "sweet-sticky Hawaiian buds" and washed it down with "green bottle beer" (the Choom Gang preferred Heineken, Becks, and St. Pauli Girl). [Is that Barry there at

the end of the rainbow? –SteveB]

10. Veto



One of the favorite words in their subculture revealed their democratic nature. The word was veto. Whenever an idea was broached, someone could hold up his hand in the V sign (a backward peace sign of that era) and indicate that the motion was [was?] not approved. They later shortened the process so that you could just shout "V" to get the point across.. In the Choom Gang, all V's were created equal. [So I guess this is proof positive that Barry always knew he would be President someday...even from the moment of birth! –SteveB]

11. Maui Wowie, Kauai Electric, Puna Bud And Kona Gold:



In the Honolulu of Barry's teenage years marijuana was flourishing up in the hills, out in the countryside, in covert

greenhouses everywhere. It was sold and smoked right there in front of your nose; Maui Wowie, Kauai Electric, Puna Bud, Kona Gold, and other local variations of pakololo were readily available. [I guess this must be Barry's personal patch of weed...but I don't see Barry. -SteveB]

12. The Barf Couch



The Barf Couch earned its name early in the first trimester when a freshman across the hall from Obama [in the Haines Hall Annex dorm at Occidental College] drank himself into a stupor and threw up all over himself and the couch. In the manner of pallbearers hoisting a coffin, a line of Annexers lifted the tainted sofa with the freshman aboard and toted it out the back door and down four steps to the first concrete landing on the way to the parking lot. A day later, the couch remained outside in the sun, resting on its side with cushions off (someone had hosed it clean), and soon it was back in the hallway nook.

13. The Annex Olympics



(The main hallway at Haines Hall was called the Annex,) home to the impromptu Annex Olympics: long-jumping onto a pile of mattresses, wrestling in underwear, hacking golf balls down the hallway toward the open back door, boxing while drunk. There were the non-Olympic sports of lighting farts and judging them by color, tipping over the Coke machine, breaking the glass fire extinguisher case, putting out cigarettes on the carpet, falling asleep on the carpet, flinging Frisbees at the ceiling-mounted alarm bell, tasting pizza boxes to the floor, and smoking pot from a three-foot crimson opaque bong, a two-man event involving the smoker and an accomplice standing ready

to respond to the order "Hey, dude, light the bowl! [Boy! He sure looks guilty in this one! LOL! –SteveB]

Resources:

1. http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/election-2012/post/the-choom-gang-president-obamas-pot-smoking-high-school-days-detailed-in-maraniss-book/2012/05/25/gJQAwFqEqU_blog.HTML.
2. <http://www.unitedliberty.org/articles/10218-for-choom-the-bell-tolls>.
3. <http://communities.washingtontimes.com/neighborhood/politics-raising-children/2012/may/29/lessons-choom-gang-dont-air-your-dirty-laundry/>.
4. <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/05/obama-and-his-pot-smoking-choom-gang/>.
5. http://www.realclearpolitics.com/2012/05/27/the_choom_gang_obama039s_pot-smoking_days_280927.html.
6. <http://theweek.com/article/index/228490/the-choom-gang-9-juiciest-details-from-barack-obamas-days-as-a-pothead>.
7. <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/the-top-headlines-about-barack-obamas-pot-smoking-high-school-choom-gang/>.
8. <http://www.buzzfeed.com/gavon/a-users-guide-to-smoking-pot-with-barack-obama>.

WHY WASN'T THIS ALL ON THE NEWS IN 2008 WHEN HE WAS RUNNING FOR OFFICE ?????

and WHY ISN'T THE NEWS TALKING ABOUT IT TODAY ????? [Because he was just so darned cute? – SteveB]

Some people have the vocabulary to sum up things in a way that you can quickly understand them. This quote came from the Czech Republic. Someone over there has it figured out. It was translated into English from an article in the Prague newspaper Prager Zeitung on 04.28.2010.

"The danger to America is not Barack Obama, but a citizenry capable of entrusting a man like him with the Presidency. It will be far easier to limit and undo the follies of an Obama presidency than to restore the necessary common sense and good judgment to a depraved electorate willing to have such a man for their president. The problem is much deeper and far more serious than Mr. Obama, who is a mere symptom of what ails America. Blaming the prince of the fools should not blind anyone to the vast confederacy of fools that made him their prince. The Republic can survive a Barack Obama, who is, after all, 'merely a fool'. It is less likely to survive a multitude of fools, such as those who made him their President."

We are in deep kimchi!

20120731-09	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Does Mitt Get High Like Barry Used To?
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Wow! Romneycare and Obamacare! Both good family men. Both love marijuana (or did). Maybe Mitt and Barry are soul brothers? In which case I'll vote for the black one. He seems more authentic to me.

"Smoke & Mirrors: Is GOP Candidate Mitt Romney Down with Legal Bud?" (incl. video), by Kelly Ann Collins, [Glittarazzi](http://www.glittarazzi.com)

Feb. 17, 2012 (<http://www.glittarazzi.com/election-2012/112382-smoke-a-mirrors-is-gop-presidential-candidate-mitt-romney-down-with-legal-bud-video.html>)

Here's a blast from the political past.

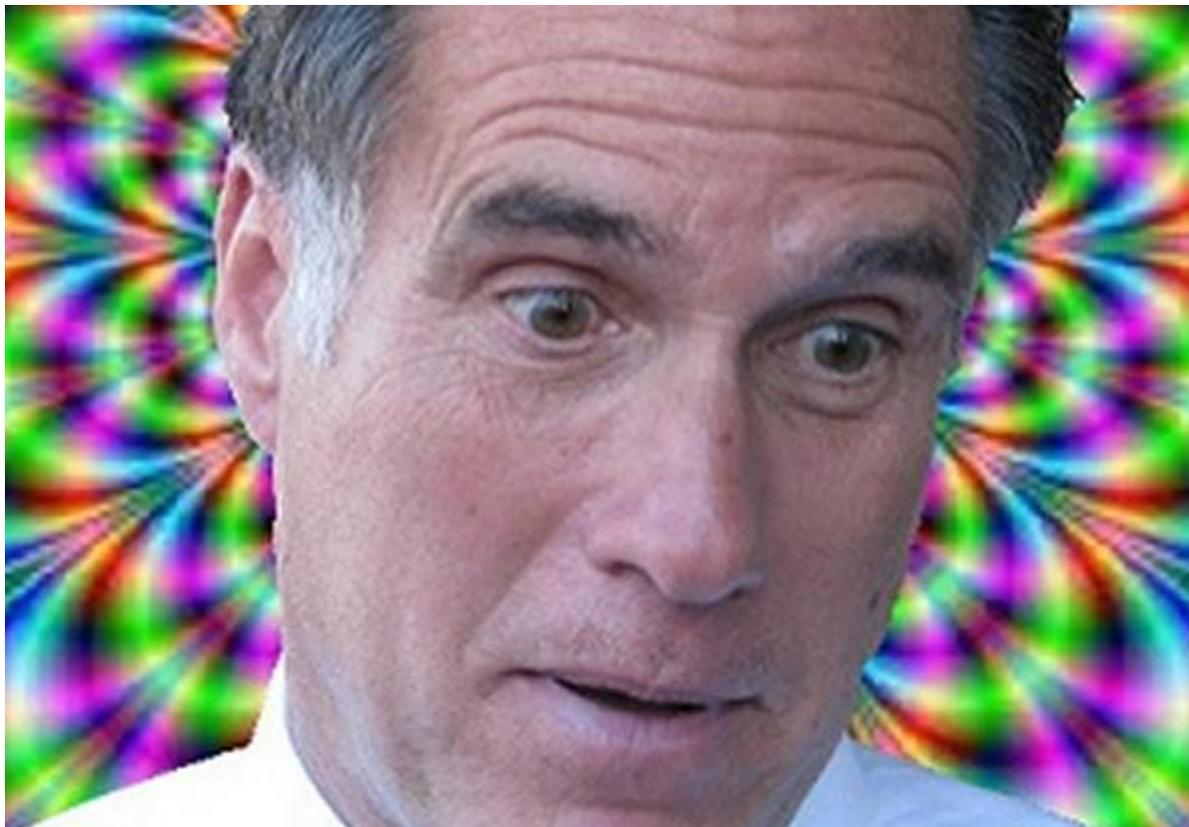
Back in 2007, Clayton Holton of "Granite Staters for Medical Marijuana" asked GOP Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney if he would have seriously ill patients, like himself, arrested for using medical marijuana -- with their doctor's approval.

(See video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NY6UTnS6Z-A&feature=player_embedded)

But, instead of answering him ... Mitt asked him if he'd tried synthetic cannabis.

Duuuuuude, hold up! Does this mean Mitt likes him some legal bud?

We're dazed and confused.



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

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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.

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