



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #203 — AUG. 14, 2012

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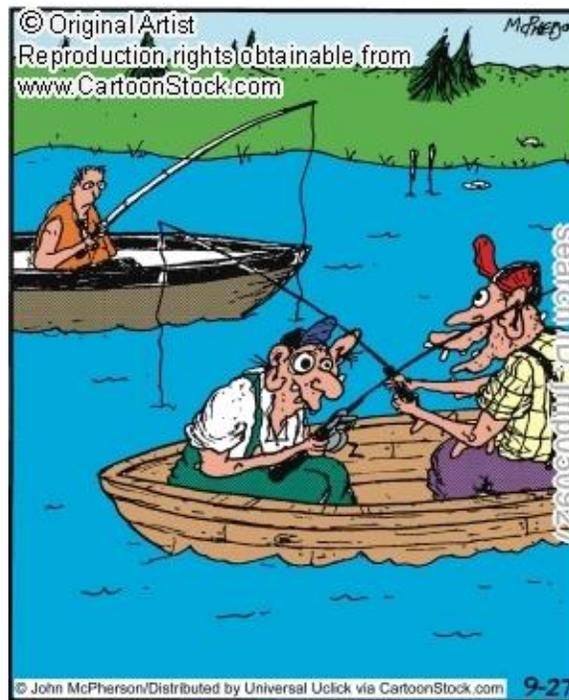
Let the South Go?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 14, 2012)

Maybe the solution to our problems is a divorce, then a grand experiment to see which political philosophy works best—the North's or the South's. My guess is, they'd be clamoring to get back into the Union within ten years.

"Should the South Secede?" by Joshua Holland, AlterNet/Salon

Aug. 12, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/08/12/should_the_south_secede/)



**"Are the fish safe to EAT?! Heck, yeah!
Me and Leon been eatin' 'em for 30 years!"**

(The author of a new book challenges Northerners and Southerners to consider the possibility of a friendly divorce.)

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that cultural friction between the North and South persists to this day. After all, we fought an incredibly brutal, ugly Civil War. The battlelines that were drawn then continued to divide us through

the Reconstruction period and well into the middle of the 20th century, as federal troops were once again deployed to enforce the civil rights acts.

According to Chuck Thompson, a veteran travel writer who toured the American South, a degree of mutual enmity between Northerners and Southerners continues to be a source of cultural tension and political gridlock. We remain divided even as we have grown to become the world's superpower. In his new book, *Better Off Without 'Em: A Northern Manifesto for Southern Secession*, Thompson argues that it may be time for a divorce – to shake hands and go our separate ways.

Thompson appeared on last week's AlterNet Radio Hour to discuss his book. A lightly edited transcript of our discussion is below (you can listen to the whole show [here](#)).

Joshua Holland: Chuck, you seem to be channeling the frustration of a lot of Northern liberals. I may have even said myself that we should have let the Confederacy walk in 1860. But I haven't heard a lot of people calling to break up the Union today. You're known as a comedic travel writer. So my first question is to what degree are you being tongue-in-cheek here? To what degree are you being serious?

Chuck Thompson: I am being serious. I understand that the meta arguments here that call for secession can be received as somewhat absurd in some corners. I acknowledge that it is probably a remote possibility. Within the framework of that argument I think there is a lot of room to highlight a lot of these problems and a lot of these frustrations that you refer to. One of the goals of this book really was to more or less articulate — to put some facts, figures and research behind — a lot of this frustration of Northern and Southern liberals, of which there are many. I encountered many Southern liberals while conducting my research.

There's this seething frustration people have. There's this kneejerk reaction to blame the South. The sort of Northern media strafing of the South for a lot of the nation's ills is a longstanding tradition. What I wanted to do was to get away from the traditional stereotypes of the dim-witted, mouth-breathing, Southern racist redneck and really look at what's going on today. Find out why people are still having these issues with the South, and put some hard research and some facts and figures behind this general unease with the influence that the South has on the rest of the country.

JH: So we know we have an overtly religious political culture down South, and a culture today that is pretty hostile toward organized labor. What is it in your travels or in your research that prompted you to call for Southern secession?

CT: I get tired of everybody bitching about the problem. It's like what Mark Twain said about the weather. Everybody complains about it, but nobody does anything about it. People have been having this problem with the South for my entire lifetime, and as my research pointed out to me, since even before there was a United States of America. Even in the Continental Congress, before the Declaration of Independence was signed, there were a lot of Southerners from South Carolina – particularly a family called the Rutledge family – sort of running the show back then and didn't want any part of the United States. So a lot of the problems that have arisen between North and South have been around for a long time.

So, as I've said, I've spent a lot of my life hearing from everybody from Seattle to Savannah. Almost every American, at one time or another, has said that it's too bad the country didn't just split when we had the chance. We didn't let the South go when we had the chance. We would have avoided a lot of problems. We – meaning this group in the north as we might identify ourselves – could take the country we want into a direction that we think is befitting of America without this push and pull that comes from the Southern states. At the same time the South could do the same thing.

What really led to this call for secession was understanding that a lot of people from the South are just as sick and tired of people like Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid having an impact on their country as I am sick of people like Newt Gingrich and Jeff Sessions, Eric Cantor, and Haley Barbour having an impact on my country.

So why shouldn't each of these societies that are really very different from each other in the way they approach the fundamental building blocks of society – education, religion, commerce, politics ... both sides of the country really

approach their problems in the way they want to put their societies together in very diametrically opposed ways. Why shouldn't people be allowed to live in a pseudo-theocracy if they want to? If the majority of the people in a very large part of the country wants to have the Ten Commandments emblazoned in front of their legislative houses, why shouldn't they be allowed to do so?

My call here for secession isn't really a punitive thing towards the South, though I admit to a lot of these Northern frustrations. It's an effort to identify these differences; to acknowledge that they're very striking and very strong, and to say each one of these sides might be better off without the other.

JH: So we could have a divorce without an excessive amount of acrimony.

CT: I would hope so. Why not?

JH: How are you defining the South? Are we losing the Research Triangle in North Carolina? Are we losing Texas in this deal? And is there any chance we could give them some of the duller states. We're not using South Dakota, are we?

CT: There are some noncontiguous pockets of what would be left of the North that I think would be culturally more comfortable in the South. It's the first question I started off with in doing the research. It's a lot trickier than we might imagine. As for the Research Triangle in North Carolina? Yes, we're going to lose it. Texas is really interesting to me. The best line I heard about Texas during the research was from a student at the University of Georgia who said the Texas state flag is a perfect representation of Texas, in that it looks just like the American flag without all the other states.

Even though Texas was part of the original Confederacy, it's always been an all-around pain in the neck to categorize. They've never really been much of a team player, let's face it. In my breakdown of the South I did not include Texas as a Southern state. I completely acknowledge there's a lot of room for argument there, and that's probably the easiest point in my book to argue against. I could argue both sides of it myself. In the end I decided that Texas would stay with the North in large part for economic reason. Texas is really one of the economic anchors of this country.

JH: So it wasn't just for the barbecue?

CT: Barbecue, cheerleaders and Dr. Pepper.

JH: What about the people who live in those states? It's easy to say they vote for the crappy government they deserve, but consider that in Utah – the reddest state in the country – 30 percent of the population votes Democratic. I'm not saying that voting Democratic is a perfect proxy for one's ideology, but there's a good chunk of people down there who we would be consigning to basically English-speaking Mexico. In Alabama, it's 40 percent. Do you just say, "Here you go, you have to live in a third-world country with crappy education systems, no health care, and a government of snake handlers?"

CT: [Laughing] You're tougher on the South than I am! Let me give you two answers to that. One is that in my imaginary secession legislative framework, I'm building in a period of 10-20 years where there's free and open citizenship for anybody who feels caught on the wrong side of the divide. A tofu-scarfing liberal in Mississippi would be free to come on back over to the North, as well as maybe some survivalist NRA fanatic in the hills of Washington state would be legally entitled to take up residency in the new Confederate homeland. So I've built something into the imaginary structure for that.

The larger point goes back to what I said about even if you consider the argument for secession absurd, it really does give us a lot of room to address other issues. One of those that you allude to in your question is one of Southerners who are not the mouth-breathing, white-supremacist, gun-toting rednecks. That is the stereotype, but the fact of the matter is, that's a minority in the South.

JH: Fifty-seven percent of African Americans live in the American South.

CT: That's right. That's exactly right. One of the big mistakes that people who make these sort of polemics and screeds against the South is that they assume "Southerner" equals conservative white male. Now if you want to be really mean you include "racist" with Southern white male, that's the stereotype.

But let's even say that it's conservative, evangelical Southerners. The fact of the matter is that's not what the whole South is. There are a lot of African Americans in the South. There are increasingly a lot of Hispanics in the South. There are a lot of liberals in the South. There are atheists in the South. One of the things I really try to do with this book was not solely traffic in those easy stereotypes that I think a lot of people trap themselves with. That's not to say I didn't find a lot of those Southern, evangelical, white conservatives. I did and they're in the book, but I also made a huge effort not to define the South solely on the classic Northern stereotypes.

JH: Ultimately, while I share your befuddlement with Southern politics, I have to say that I've traveled extensively in the South. I lived in Arkansas briefly. I love the South, and I've met good, progressive people everywhere I've gone.

CT: What did you love about it?

JH: I love the culture of the South. I love the people of the South. I really had some great experiences dealing with Southerners. Even those Southerners I couldn't necessarily discuss politics with.

I guess a related question is this: We have a really screwy political system with lots of deeply entrenched problems. Do you see anything that could be gained by the South's secession that couldn't be achieved by, say, getting money out of our political system? Or bringing back the fairness doctrine? Maybe reforming the filibuster in the Senate? Do you know what I'm saying? Those things aren't likely to happen in today's environment, but the South splitting away isn't too likely either.

CT: That's right, but a lot of these problems have been deeply entrenched in American society long before this dysfunction befell our political system. Politics is really only one way in which the South is quite a bit different it approaches its society. I think religion is the really big factor here, and I think that's what's really not going to change in the South. Yes, there are evangelicals and religious lunatics in all 50 states in the country. Only in the South, though, do they represent a voting quorum. Only in the South can you appeal to voters in very overtly religious terms and expect success on a consistent basis. Again, that's not to deny that this exists in the rest of the country. It does, but in the South is where its power base is.

I think that is the piece of the puzzle here that informs the politics of the South, in the same way that evangelical Christianity is the least tolerant of any sort of diversity or diversity of opinion. It's Bible literalism. Everything is true and you adhere to everything; it's black and white. When that is the foundation of the majority of the people in your society, when that becomes your whole social framework, then that's the politics that grows out of that society. So we get that same sort of blinkered view of humanity of politicians in the South who come up to the North – we get this absolute, no compromise stance between these hardcore conservatives and other politicians.

When there were Republicans and Democrats fighting it out in the '80s during the Reagan years, there was the famed Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan give-and-take. This is how politics works; it's the art of compromise. The ruling power says to the opposition, "We won the election, so we're going to get these big things. Don't give us too much trouble and we'll work with you. We realize you have a constituency. Let us get our big things through without a lot of hassle, and we'll make sure you're taken care of on some level." That's sort of how it has worked for the most part. In the South, it's different, because there is no such thing as compromise. If it's God's law that is driving you — if God says gay marriage is an abomination, if God says abortion is an abomination — then you simply can't compromise. That's not in your DNA if you really believe that. That's where I think a lot of the dysfunction of our political process comes into play.

And I don't think that's going to change, regardless of whether you pull the money out of it or not. This ties into how the South deals with education. Southern states don't typically fund their public schools the way other states do – they're typically at a much lower level. There's less commitment to the ideal of public education in the Southern states than there is in the rest of the country. That's why we see over and over when the statistics come out, the South has the lowest SAT scores, lowest graduation rates, the most illiteracy. Whatever measures you want

to put on academic performance, it's those core Southern states that are always leading the bottom of the back. In the bottom 10, eight or nine of them are always going to be Southern states.

I wanted to look into this. Why is that? Is it just that Southerners are stupider than the rest of us? Clearly that's not the case. It's the same gene pool. The more you look at it the more you realize there's just a lower commitment to public education in the South than there is in the rest of the country. That's been going on for hundreds of years. It's not changing.

I was in Arkansas. I spent a week in Little Rock while they were searching for a new superintendent of schools last year. The dysfunction that I saw just in attending these public meetings where they were talking about what they needed was astonishing.

JH: We see a lot of liberal animosity towards the South. Were you at all concerned in writing this book about whether you would reinforce the stereotype of the coastal, elite liberals looking down their noses at the middle and the South? Was this a concern?

CT: Sure, people are going to jump to that conclusion. As you know — and as I found out in writing web articles and books — most of the really heated criticism you get from people are always from people who don't even bother to read your article or your book in the first place. That's going to happen. There's nothing I can do about it. I really did make an effort not to be strident — though I'm certainly judgmental — and to find good things in the South, which there are. You deal with Southerners on an individual basis and they're great. They're friendly, hospitable, gregarious, and they like to party. They like to drink, to give you their food, they like to play music. It's a lot of fun.

I didn't try to be this super-strident jerk who was just sitting there bashing. I really am trying to put some numbers and some facts to this argument. These are two very different societies that have been economic and social frenemies from the day they were founded. The dysfunction has got to stop at some point.



<http://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2011/03/figures-government-to-hold-terror-drill-with-illegal-aliens-as-victims-to-white-anti-immigrant-terrorists/>

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20120813-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Gnaw Bone, Indiana

20120813-01	06:32	SteveB & Art	HB!
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SteveB: Happy Birthday, Art! Hope you have a great one!

Art: Thanks Steve. Fire Dept was busy so we had to call off the cake.

SteveB: :-)

20120813-02	10:13	SteveM	Fw: Coil of Rage
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[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Coil of Rage

When you've read the end, come back and read this first paragraph again. The character of any man is defined by how he treats his mother as the years pass. Need I say more about this person below other than there is no character, no integrity, but there is a ton of attitude and arrogance that defines his shallow past and hollow future.

I rest my case.

I bought and read Obama's book, *Audacity of Hope*. It was difficult to read considering his attitude toward us and everything American. Let me add a phrase he uses to describe his attitude toward whites. He harbors a "COIL OF RAGE". His words not mine.

THIS IS OUR PRESIDENT -- HE'S RUNNING AGAIN, YOU KNOW!

Is anyone out there awake?

Everyone of voting age should read these two books by him: Don't buy them, just get them from the library.

From *Dreams from My Father*: "I ceased to advertise my mother's race at the age of 12 or 13, when I began to suspect that by doing so I was ingratiating myself to whites."

From *Dreams from My Father*: "I found a solace in nursing a pervasive sense of grievance and animosity against my mother's race."

From *Dreams from My Father*: "There was something about her that made me wary, a little too sure of herself, maybe and white."

From *Dreams from My Father*: "It remained necessary to prove which side you were on, to show your loyalty to the black masses, to strike out and name names."

From *Dreams from My Father*: "I never emulate white men and brown men whose fates didn't speak to my own. It was into my father's image, the black man, son of Africa, that I'd packed all the attributes I sought in myself: the attributes of Martin and Malcolm, DuBois and Mandela."

And FINALLY and most scary:

From *Audacity of Hope*: "I will stand with the Muslims should the political winds shift in an ugly direction."

If you have never forwarded an e-mail, now is the time to do so!!! We have someone with this mentality running our GREAT nation! Keep your eye on him and don't blink.

I don't care whether you are a Democrat, a Republican, a Conservative or a liberal, be aware of the attitude and character of this sitting President.

Your email is simply more old LIES for the gullible. For the truth, see:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/coilofrage.asp>.

Have a nice day.



"For Billionaires, a Heaven on Earth Beckons" by Sam Pizzigati, NationofChange/Campaign for America's Future

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/billionaires-heaven-earth-beckons-1344865458>)

(A few frenzied super-rich political donors have apparently gulped the Kool-Aid of America's delusional right wing.)

Why do the mega rich in the United States feel so put upon? Their incomes are rising, after all, and the taxes they pay have never been lower since the 1920s.

In fact, even if lawmakers in Congress passed 100 percent of President Obama's tax plan, America's rich would still be paying taxes at less than half the top rate that America's richest faced back in the 1950s.

America's wealthiest, given this ever so friendly political lay of the land, ought to be kicking back and living care-free. But that's not happening. This election cycle appears to have America's super rich in a feverish frenzy. They're pouring money into the 2012 elections at all-time record rates.

What's behind this deluge of campaign cash? A few frenzied super-rich political donors have apparently gulped the Kool-Aid of America's delusional right wing. President Obama, these crazed deep pockets almost seem to believe, has tumbrils waiting to cart them off to the guillotines once he wins a second term.

But most of our super rich remain eminently reality-based. They know full well that the rich in other major developed nations face political challenges far more unnerving than anything that confronts deep pockets in the United States.

In France, for instance, the lawmakers elected this past spring will be taking action this September to raise the tax rate on income over 1 million euros, the equivalent of \$1.24 million, from 44 to 75 percent.

The tax plan President Obama has announced, by contrast, will only hike the top-bracket U.S. rate from 35 to 39.6 percent — and no one in Congress has anything remotely close to a majority for going beyond what the President is proposing.

So why do America's super rich feel compelled to plow so many billions into politics? They already live in the most rich people-friendly developed nation in the world. What else could they possibly want? Well, they could want Singapore.

To be more precise: Many of America's richest see no reason why they shouldn't be able to live in a nation that treats the "successful" and their fortunes with as much respectful deference that locales like Singapore so openly display.

And just how much deference does Singapore extend to its resident rich? Last week, in a vividly detailed new paper on Singapore's tax system, three analysts from the Deloitte global financial consulting network described how extraordinarily rich people-friendly a modern economy can be.

In Singapore, the Deloitte analysts relate, residents pay no more than 20 percent of any income dollar over \$250,000 in taxes. And many income dollars over \$250,000 face no tax carve-out at all — since Singapore levies no tax on capital gains, the profits from buying and selling stocks and other assets.

Singapore also doesn't bother taxing any income that its richest residents grab from abroad, even if these residents have that income remitted into Singapore. Residents instead only face taxes on their "Singapore-source income."

The rich who reside in Singapore don't even have "to report their foreign bank accounts or other foreign financial assets" to Singapore's version of the IRS.

Nor do Singapore's wealthy have to worry about their grand fortunes shrinking once they pass on to the hereafter. Singapore hasn't had an estate tax on the books since early in 2008.

Some Americans seem to find this total tax package that Singapore offers absolutely irresistible. In 2009, the U.S. embassy in Singapore reports, 58 Americans renounced their citizenship and set up residence in Singapore. In 2010, that total apparently hit close to 100.

Singapore certainly has its charms, but most tax break-hungry Americans of means don't seem particularly eager to take up residence for at least 183 days a year. Their alternate endgame: bring Singapore stateside. In places like Singapore, these Americans see a vision of what the United States could become.

A vision too far-fetched? Not at all. GOP White House hopeful Mitt Romney has already pronounced his support for dropping the federal tax rate on top-bracket income down to 28 percent, a point nearly halfway from the current 35 percent top rate in the United States to Singapore's 20 percent.

And Romney's newly announced running mate, House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan, has already proposed eliminating taxes on capital gains.

America's rich have come a long way over the past half-century. Why couldn't they go further, to full-fledged Singapore-style status? The more important question: Will we let them?

An article worth reading...

"Government vs. Prosperity" by Martin D. Weiss, Money and Markets

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://www.moneyandmarkets.com/government-vs-prosperity-50274?FIELD9=1>)

As the once-united Europe comes unglued at the seams...

As the once-powerful Federal Reserve runs out of cures for a sick economy...

And as our once-proud Treasury marches blindly toward a fiscal cliff...

I have conducted a wide search — beyond economic theory or financial numbers — for a deeper understanding of what ails America and its allies.

I have crisscrossed the globe four times this year.

I have personally spoken with hundreds of average citizens in BRIC countries — Brazil, Russia, India, and China ... in the PIIGS countries — Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain ... in former miracle-growth countries like Japan...in Africa and Oceania...and of course, in the U.S.

Nearly everywhere, I find a single, overarching emotion is paramount:

The fear that bungling governments are destroying — or about to destroy — what little is left of our peace and prosperity.

In Western Europe, as the entire continent sinks into a double-dip recession, the fear has spread from the PIIGS countries to France, England and even Germany.

In Japan, similar fears — long ridiculed by officials and ignored by the press — are once again bubbling to the surface.

And in the U.S., the fear of a fiscal cliff — less than five months away — has now pervaded corporate boardrooms, putting new investments on hold and prompting sharp cutbacks in hiring.

What is the common thread in this global fear and where does it come from?

For an answer, I have conducted an even wider search in the realm of ideas, and I have discovered a new book by a *New York Times* bestselling author who stands heads and shoulders above his contemporaries.

The book is *Red and Blue and Broke All Over*.

The author is Charles Goyette, an investment expert and political analyst who has earned raving praise from Congressman Ron Paul, Judge Andrew Napolitano, and Lew Rockwell — chairman of the prestigious Ludwig von Mises Institute.

Mr. Goyette has written more — and has a more fundamental understanding of — the true causes of the impending fiscal cliff than anyone I know.

So I recommend you take a short time off from the drumbeat of financial data to gain a better understanding of the forces behind it.

They are political forces that could doom your investments if you ignore them ... or multiply your money if you harness them.

Below is our abridged version of Charles' Introduction and Chapter One. For the entire story, be sure to read this blockbuster new book from cover to cover.

Government vs. Prosperity

Fly over populated centers along the U.S.-Mexico border.

On the North side, you will typically see broad, paved highways and neat rows of middle-class homes; on the south side, many dirt roads and mostly poorer homes.

What accounts for the difference?

Or look at a satellite image of the Korean peninsula at night. The brightly lit area is South Korea; the dark area, North Korea.

Both nations share the same people, language, cultural history and resources. And yet the South is dynamic and developed; the North, mired in poverty.

Why?

Or visit the cities and backwoods of Russia, the world's largest nation, with nearly twice the land mass of the U.S. and boasting vast natural resources.

Compare what you see there to tiny Hong Kong, confined to a rocky, mountainous island with no natural resources to speak of — a country one twentieth the size of Russia, with three times better per-capita income ... and 14 years more in average life expectancy.

Why the stark differences between these three sets of countries?

The answer: Freedom works!

[Sorry, there's actually probably more freedom in Mexico than the U.S. —SteveB]

Most of Mexico's primary industries have long been owned or controlled by the central government.

North Korea is a police state, controlling not only the economy, but also the sciences, religion, education, the arts and even the daily thoughts of citizens.

And needless to say, under the Soviet Union, Russia's economy was also centrally planned. For nearly the entire 20th century, the nation had virtually no free markets.

But these are not the only countries severely damaged by government controls.

According to a study conducted by the Heritage Foundation, free — or mostly free — countries enjoy incomes more than ten times the incomes in economies defined as controlled and repressed.

Even if you know about this generally, you will find the numbers shocking.

But what's most shocking of all is that...

The United States Is Traveling Down the Same Dangerous Road.

The Departments of the Treasury, Labor, and Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, SEC, FEMA, OSHA, EPA and other U.S. government agencies are maintaining their grips on the American economy and people ... while expanding their intrusion into our lives with each passing day.

Meanwhile...

- The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that police may kick down your front door without a warrant if they say they smell something in your home.
- The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that you do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in your own driveway.
- The same court has ruled that federal agents can legally plant a secret GPS device on the bottom of your car and track your every movement without a warrant.
- Thousands of American travelers are being virtually strip-searched daily by scanners that produce detailed images of your body through their clothing.
- The federal government dictates which pain medications and cold remedies you can use ... whether you have too much cash ... the mileage your car must get ... which type of shower head, toilet and light bulbs you are allowed to buy ... and much more.

And we're already beginning to pay the price:

Santa Rosa, Colorado Springs, Rockford Illinois, Atlanta and dozens of other cash-strapped cities across the nation are turning off street lights at night to save money.

In many areas, the cost of maintaining paved streets has become so prohibitive, the pavement has been ground up and returned to gravel ... or roads have been left to erode.

The U.S. government mails over 88 million checks a month. Nearly 46 million Americans are on food stamps and 50 million on Medicaid.

And it's no coincidence that activities most firmly under government control are also those that have suffered the worst declines: The U.S. postal service. Public education. And many more.

The few bright spots: Industries in which technological advances are so rapid, Washington can't quite catch up with them to interfere as much as it would like to.

A Bipartisan Threat

Both Democrats and Republicans have sponsored the tremendous growth of government.

And both have voted for the massive government spending of recent years.

But if the "heroics" of government spending — trillions in bailouts, rescue plans, stimulus spending, subsidies, and debt monetization — had resulted in real production, it would be a different story:

The economy would be robust, unemployment would be low, and Americans would be wealthier.

Instead, the money has been used destructively. Good money has been taken from people who made sound economic decisions and given to investment bankers who made reckless decisions.

Productive people have been taxed to buy worthless paper from billionaires who should have known better than to buy it for themselves.

We've seen cash for clunkers, cash for caulkers, cash for appliances, cash for unions, cash for government buildings, and even cash for the wives of fabulously wealthy Wall Street tycoons.

Result...

It has been generations since Americans' faith in the economy has been this badly rattled.

The American dream, based on home ownership, the certainty that things will continually improve, the assurance of a comfortable retirement, and the assumption that our children will have a better life than we had, is being shaken by deep-seated concerns that our prosperity may be taking a giant step backward.

This is not so difficult. We can easily identify the dynamic growth of prosperity throughout history.

In fact, the story of mankind has been one of ever more freedom accompanied by growing — indeed, by an explosion of — human prosperity.

Unfortunately, however, just about all we can see in Washington is...

Politics as Usual

Our freedom has been double-teamed by Republicans and Democrats alike; it has been sucker-punched by the red gloves of one and has taken a hit on the blind side by the blue gloves of the other.

Both parties are to blame for the fading of the American dream. Einstein's oft-cited observation that no problem can be fixed from the same consciousness that created it applies to the deflating promise of America.

So the restoration of the American dream will not occur as long as the political discussion remains constrained by the old voices of the Republicans and Democrats who marched us into our present economic morass.

A recent ABC News/*Washington Post* poll found a mere twenty-six percent of Americans are optimistic about "our system of government and how well it works." That's a record low.

Among the disenfranchised are people who have seen their jobs disappear, their savings exhausted, and their homes foreclosed.

They are people whose hopes for retirement have gone dry; whose expectations for their children's future have withered.

Some are angry that their own responsibility is being rewarded with the bill for bailing out the irresponsible.

Others are distraught that their faith in the empty assurances by government — such as Social Security and Medicare — now threatens to prove their undoing.

Some feel remorse for the past; others fear the future.

What has happened to our prosperity? What has become of the American dream?

There can be no doubt that the scale of government debt means a lower standard of living for the American people.

But that is only part of the story. As foreboding as the debt may be, the obstacles to renewed opportunity and well-being go beyond what the numbers reveal.

Under the cloak of the Republican and Democrat orthodoxy that approved the debt as it compounded, other ideas were smuggled into America's economic life.

They were ideas that seek to subordinate the individual — generally by economic and authoritarian measures — to the will of the state.

These ideas and practices were especially prominent in the mortgage meltdown and its ongoing aftermath — when Republican and Democratic majorities alike insisted on socializing the losses of private banks and corporations, while guaranteeing their profits were theirs to keep.

The country is financially insolvent because the Washington parties, red and blue alike, are philosophically bankrupt. Their shared statist philosophy needs to be exposed before it does us any more harm.

Prosperity

Prosperity is something much greater than wealth. Prosperity refers to the wellsprings of human ingenuity and enterprise from which long-term wealth and human improvement bubble forth.

The ancient Romans made important contributions to the implementation and refinement of property rights.

They established trading colonies as far away as the east coast of the Indian subcontinent before the time of Christ.

They developed civil engineering skills that enabled them to build roads, aqueducts, and other marvels that supported populations that could barely have been conceived elsewhere in antiquity.

They created long-term prosperity for themselves. The later plunderers of Rome got wealth, emptying the treasury of the empire, but they did not get prosperity.

Similarly despite billions in cash that has flowed into the Persian Gulf oil states for generations, that money has not been turned into long-term prosperity for its peoples, as the seething discontent that spawned 2011's Arab Spring revolutions in the Middle East has shown.

The Saudi royal family, the Al Sabahs of Kuwait, and Libya's Kaddafis have had their palaces with gold bathroom fixtures, but the capital is spent abroad in places where opportunities abound. When the wells of the desert kingdoms run dry, so, too, will the wealth.

Freedom and Wealth

To say that freedom creates prosperity is convenient shorthand.

To be more precise, freedom provides a conducive environment in which prosperity, the dynamic of wealth creation, can function.

What is this dynamic? Where does wealth come from? We ourselves are its creators. It is the nature of man to provide himself food and shelter, to improve his circumstances, to discover, to invent, to refine, and to expand.

When free to do so, he creates wealth, creates it again, and creates it anew.

The presence of petroleum was a nuisance to Pennsylvania farmers until in 1849 someone discovered how to refine kerosene. John D. Rockefeller's fortune was begun in refining kerosene, although before long a man named Thomas Edison had invented a way to light homes that was superior, and Rockefeller's business had to adjust.

The distribution of alternating current discovered by Nikola Tesla was commercially superior to the direct current Edison built his company on and Edison Electric was forced to adapt to the new improvement.

Wealth is created by the greatest resource of all: human beings. It is people who continually discover lesser resources and put them to use in new ways.

Look about at all the wealth people have created. Buildings and homes, schools and churches, stores and places of entertainment; leisure and literacy and libraries; heating and cooling systems; bright lives of bright lights, bright colors, and stunning clothing; marvels of electronics, digital magic, and the miracle of global communications; new medical techniques, devices, and medicines; high-speed travel and stores stocked full of food, much of it fresh from around the world.

A return to the path of prosperity does not lie in legislative prescriptions, new programs or new plans for what the state must do.

Our prosperity will not be restored by some new tax-cut proposal or new spending initiative; no laws will do it; no charming candidate.

Our problem transcends any mechanical solutions or reform package. We are beyond the ability to fix our problems with process tinkering.

As congressman Ron Paul has noted, "It's not a budgetary problem. The budget is a symptom of this disease. Americans have to inquire into the nature of government itself."

The State's Impunity

The state has no money that it has not first taken from someone.

And this era of rising gas prices should help concentrate attention on the point: As you reach into your front pocket to fill your gas tank at prices that would have been thought obscene just a few years ago, the Department of Energy is taking \$30 billion a year from your back pocket.

What does it do with your billions? Does it explore the remote and dangerous corners of the earth and discover any oil? Does it take enormous risks in hazardous oceans and arctic conditions and suffer substantial losses to locate energy? Recover it, refine it, and transport it to your neighborhood? Just how much gas does it put in your tank for its \$30 billion?

Not a drop. Just as the government pumps no gas, it builds no house and it grows no corn.

And when it does appear to grow corn, for example, in the provision of food subsidies, it only does so by taking seeds from a man who then cannot grow his own.

Because even what it appears to create is only accomplished with the labor of someone else who would have used his labor for his own preferences or from money taken by people who are now precluded from acquiring what they prefer.

The state could have provided an environment of freedom so that prosperity could flourish, as intended. It could have stood against coercion, on watch for force and fraud. Instead, it has become a fearsome cause of coercion, and an agent of force and fraud itself.

Without instruction by the state, the American people know perfectly well how to create wealth. They do it by doing what they've always done.

They do it by going to work every day, by saving when they can, by taking pride in their work, by buying and selling, by coming up with new ideas around their kitchen tables, by developing good habits such as thrift and punctuality, by looking for better jobs, by looking for better products, by selling better products and by honoring the fundamental principles of right and wrong.

The gifts of the free economy add up, multiply, and compound.

But in our contemporary experience, the state has become ravenous in directing and commandeering our productivity. Innovation is stunted. Dependency spreads. Capital spots safer havens elsewhere.

Because political connections become a more effective means of getting things done than industriousness, public policy becomes capricious.

A free economy means people are free to trade. Throughout history trade has been a means of illuminating mankind, spreading algebra and alphabets, steering discoveries in navigation, geography, and time measurement, driving transportation improvements and road construction.

Trade pollinates human culture, nourishes our humanity and inseminates our intellectual life with new foods and medicine, new ideas and arts, new inventions' technologies, and products.

Why then does the state serve as a frequent impediment to trade? Why is the trade language of the state dressed in bellicosity? It speaks of unfair trade and trade from which we need protection. If there are trade "hostilities," then trade "confrontations" are triggered. It blocks trade, erects trade barriers, and seeks to overcome them or to "retaliate."

By prohibiting exchanges that enrich us, the state makes us poorer. Where does the state derive the coercive power to stop free trade among free people? People cannot be both free and prohibited from buying and selling; coercion and liberty cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

But there is nothing the state does quite as incessantly as meddle in prices.

When state price meddlers fix prices artificially low, it distorts the equilibrium of supply and demand and creates scarcity. It may drive important producers out of business. When the state artificially raises prices, the resulting distortion is surpluses.

People who now must pay those higher prices do so at the expense of other goods and services in the economy that go un-purchased. Not only is some other need unmet, but every price received is also a price paid.

In artificial price-fixing, just as in the case of trade interference, the state is favoring one citizen (or party to a transaction) over another.

It is state lunacy that forces us to pay for huge agricultural price supports in the morning, making food more expensive, while in the afternoon we pay for food stamps to lower the cost of food for some.

Price supports for tobacco growing come out of the taxpayers' left pocket; federal antismoking programs out of the right.

Seniors looking outside the country for affordable prescription drugs risked federal prosecution for it, even as the government enacted a prescription drug benefit plan to lower costs, a plan that now faces a liability of \$19 trillion.

We go to war to protect oil supplies overseas even as we slap on import tariffs to keep cheap Brazilian ethanol from coming into the country.

In one year, government creates tax advantages that encourage the purchase of Hummers and huge SUVs; in another year, your income taxes go to pay people to junk their gas-guzzlers and buy smaller cars.

The state takes money from you to give to sugar producers, and then it takes more to nag you not to use so much sugar.

The Kafkaesque absurdity of funding these mutually conflicting activities is made worse because we are impoverished by the madness along the way.

If Americans wish to reclaim their prosperity they must embrace freedom.

That's it. Just freedom. Because by now the extent of our economic calamity should be apparent to everyone.

And that means the state . . . must . . . JUST . . . STOP!

It must stop the big things it does that collapse our freedom. Things like price-fixing and the Patriot Act, endless wars of invasion or occupation.

It must stop favoring the influential and politically connected by interfering with trade.

It must stop the bailouts and stimulus programs of both the Republicans and Democrats. It must just stop.

It must stop the destruction of the monetary system by the Federal Reserve.

It must stop the endless spending of Keynesian economics, an academic pretext that has encouraged trillions in deficit spending and left America staggering down a desolate road of long-term indebtedness.

The advice of British mathematician John Maynard Keynes that unemployment and recessions can be cured by creating artificial demand in the economy — that government can kick-start the economy by spending money it doesn't have or by driving down interest rates by printing money — has been the prevailing creed of Republicans and Democrats since the Great Depression.

Keynes' advice failed to end the Great Depression, which didn't end until state spending collapsed after the war.

[This is as false a statement as I have ever read! –SteveB]

It failed again in the stagflation of the 1970s when, according to the Keynesian theory, the impossible happened: the high inflation it recommended coincided with the sharp recession and rising unemployment it promised to fix.

And it continues to fail today, draining our prosperity and bleeding the purchasing power of the dollar, even as it has jacked up the visible portions of the national debt from \$9 trillion when the recession began in December 2007 to today's \$16 trillion.

Because the madness of this Keynesian meddling can only make our crisis worse, it cannot be allowed to continue.

The state must stop.

That's the formula for restoring the prosperity of the American people, for making the men and women and children of America and their families better off.

20120813-06	14:20	SteveB	Re: "Government vs. Prosperity" (reply to SteveM, above)
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Sorry, Steve, I find this article to be total bullsh*t.

This guy is doing nothing but trying to sell fear for a profit (by selling books). Just like Beck and Limbaugh, etc. Fear for a profit! And Republican politicians: fear for power!

There's not one single meaningful fact in this entire article.

America rejected this cr*p many years ago, for very good reason.

Here are the facts: right now, in America the rich have had their way for a long time now. They pay almost no taxes. They've been deregulated to nearly total freedom, even freedom to eliminate all American jobs and move their companies to Singapore or wherever, freedom to offshore their wealth, financial freedom to create bubbles, etc., etc.

For this, they promised growth, prosperity, jobs. Where are they? China? Not in the U.S. Where is the promised prosperity? We've been raped by your team! If America is in decline it's because of Republicans! Their dogma does not work and the last 40 years of American economics proves it.

Oh, no! It's all the black guy's fault! LOL! What an easy, simple, yet dangerously stupid conclusion! Our problems lie elsewhere. America is corrupted, not by a black man or the poor, but by the rich! It's as simple as that.

Have a nice day.

20120813-07	14:47	SteveB	Fw: Dennis Kucinich Action: Watch Our Video & Contribute!
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from Dennis Kucinich:

What a summer it has been. We launched Kucinich Action last month, and we have certainly been active.

Over the past few weeks, we have extended ourselves to help candidates across the country. In Washington, Florida, Hawai'i, Massachusetts, California, New Mexico, Michigan, and other states, we have advocated on behalf of candidates in tough primaries.

But this is just the beginning. Kucinich Action is about making sure that the next Congress is one that is going to reflect the concerns you have. We need allies in the fight to restore honesty and integrity in our government, stand for peace, and further the causes of social and economic justice and human rights.

We have big plans for the next few months, and we need your help to get there. Please click here to watch our video update and make a contribution. Any amount - \$5, \$10 or \$15 - will help us to continue our efforts and keep our new organization growing.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=WdDizXhjEb4.

We have even bigger plans for the next few months. We are going to step up our work on behalf of candidates and help change the outcome in multiple races this fall. Most importantly, we are going to open our process up to you and have you help decide how to direct our efforts.

Please help us step up our efforts and make a contribution today:

<https://donate.kucinich.us/page/contribute/120813>.

Let us continue to lead the way forward. Please join me. 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

20120813-08	16:41	SteveM	Video: Michelle Obama's 'All This for a Damn Flag' Shown at Three Different Speeds
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=OJgWMI0hch8&NR=1>

20120813-09	17:37	SteveB	Re Video: Michelle Obama's 'All This for a Damn Flag'... (reply to SteveM, above)
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This is just more lies from the far-right lie-machine. Here's the truth:

<http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/barackobama/ss/Michelle-Obama-Vs-The-U-S-Flag.htm>.

Have a nice day.

[20120813-10](#) 18:12 SteveB Exxon for President!

The 14th Amendment defines citizenship this way: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

If a corporation is a person, and that "person" was born in the U.S., then, I guess, under the 14th Amendment, that "person" could be considered (by "some" Supreme Court) to be a "citizen". It only depends upon the changing legal definition of "born" or "naturalized". Clarence could do that in a snap!

Why, in the future, couldn't a corporate "citizen" run for President?

Is there anything in the Constitution which would forbid such a thing? NOT ONCE CORPORATIONS ARE DEFINED AS "PERSONS"!!!! (Unless maybe a court could decide that they are persons who are neither "born or naturalized," but, then, how could they be persons.)

GACK!

[20120813-12](#) 18:17 Ben Re: Exxon for President! (reply to SteveB, above)

Yeah, that corporations as persons BS is so bogus it makes me want to wretch, too, and has since the first time I heard it.

One man/woman, one vote. That's it. That's all it should be. If these corporations feel they are so wonderful that their views should influence government, let them treat their employees and customers so well that said actual voters honor the sacred company's doctrines by supporting them at the polls.

[20120813-11](#) 18:14 Josie Fw: Social Security = Entitlement?

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

SOCIAL SECURITY NOW CALLED 'FEDERAL BENEFIT PAYMENT' / ENTITLEMENT!

Have you noticed, your Social Security check is now referred to as a "federal benefit payment"?

I'll be part of the one percent, to forward this, our government gets away with way too much in all areas of our lives, while they live lavishly on their grossly overpaid incomes!

KEEP passing THIS AROUND UNTIL EVERY ONE HAS READ IT...

This was sent to me, I am forwarding it because it does touch a nerve in me.

Remember, not only did you contribute to Social Security but your employer did too. It totaled 15% of your income before taxes. If you averaged only \$30K over your working life, that's close to \$220,500.

If you calculate the future value of \$4,500 per year (yours & your employer's contribution) at a simple 5% (less than what the government pays on the money that it borrows), after 49 years of working you'd have \$892,919.98.

If you took out only 3% per year, you'd receive \$26,787.60 per year and it would last better than 30 years (until you're 95 if you retire at age 65) and that's with no interest paid on that final amount on deposit! If you bought an annuity and it paid 4% per year, you'd have a lifetime income of \$2,976.40 per month.

Entitlement my butt, I paid cash for my social security insurance!!!! Just because they borrowed the money, doesn't make my benefits some kind of charity or handout!!

Congressional benefits -- free healthcare, outrageous retirement packages, 67 paid holidays, three weeks paid vacation, unlimited paid sick days, now that's welfare, and they have the nerve to call my social security retirement entitlements?

We're "broke" and can't help our own Seniors, Veterans, Orphans, Homeless.

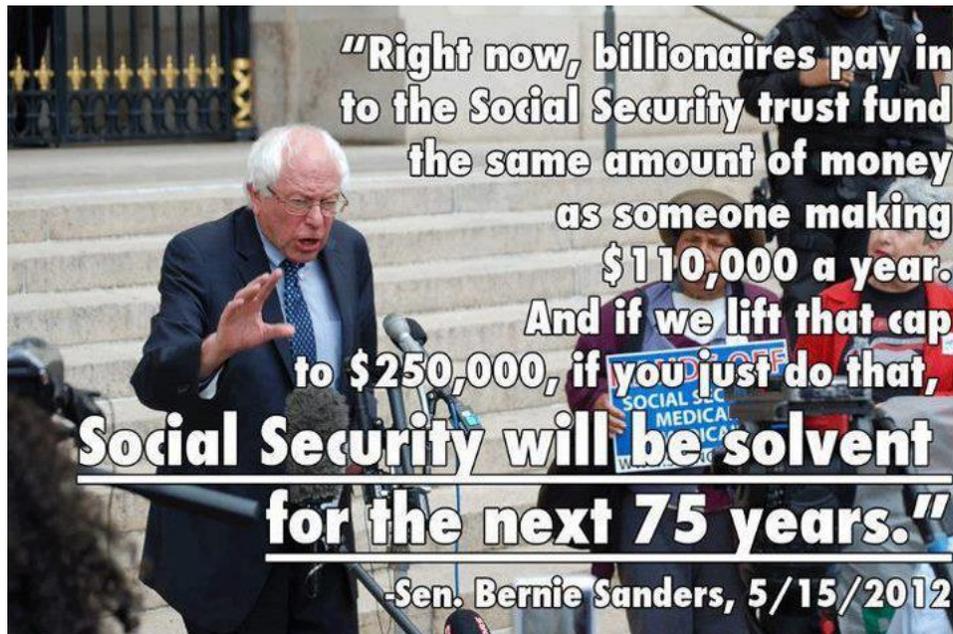
In the last months we have provided aid to Haiti , Chile , and Turkey. And now Pakistan...hideout of bin Laden. Literally, BILLIONS of DOLLARS!!!

Our retired seniors living on a 'fixed income' receive no aid nor do they get any breaks while our government and religious organizations pour Hundreds of Billions of \$\$\$\$\$'s and Tons of Food to Foreign Countries!

They call Social Security and Medicare an entitlement even though most of us have been paying for it all our working lives and now when it's time for us to collect, the government is running out of money. Why did the government borrow from it in the first place? Imagine if the GOVERNMENT gave 'US' the same support they give to other countries.

Sad isn't it? 99% of people won't have the guts to forward this. I'm one of the 1% -- I Just Did.

[20120813-13](#) 21:11 SteveG Quote: Sen. Bernie Sanders on Saving Social Security



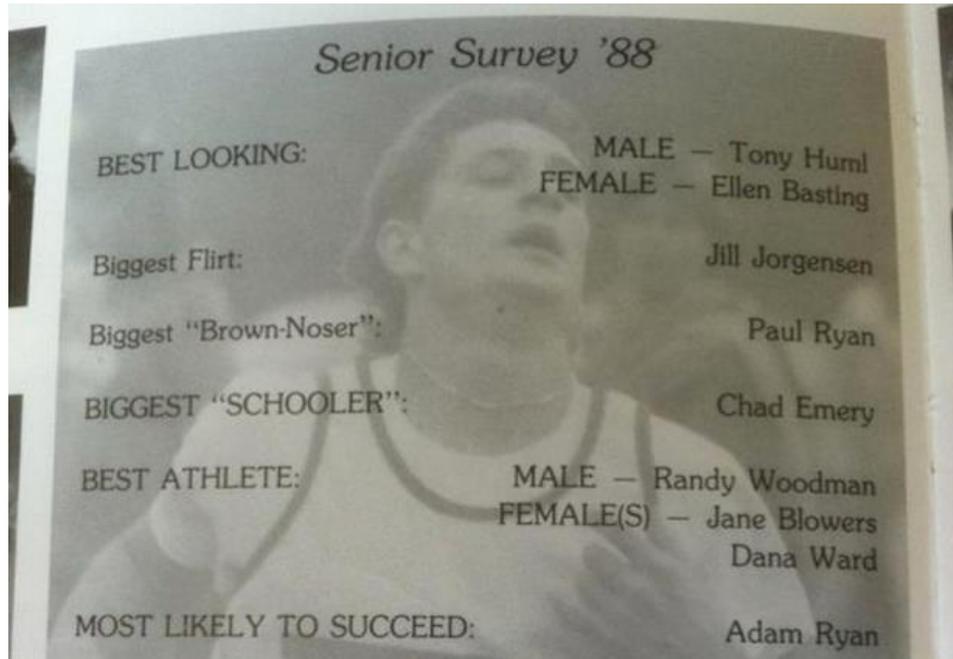
20120813-15

21:15

SteveG

Graphic: **Paul Ryan** — Voted '**Biggest Brown-Noser**' in His HS Class
[I guess some things never change! -SteveB]

Recognize any name...



20120813-16

21:26

SteveG

"Romney Declines to Say Where He Disagrees with Ryan on the Budget"

"Romney Declines to Say Where He Disagrees with Ryan on the Budget" by Holly Bailey, Yahoo! News

Aug. 13, 2012, (http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/romney-says-disagrees-ryan-budget-won-t-221403069.html?_esi=1)

(MIAMI) Mitt Romney rejected Democratic claims that Paul Ryan's congressional budget proposal is "radical and extreme," but declined to say exactly where he disagrees with his vice presidential running mate's fiscal policies, even as he suggested policy differences do exist.

Speaking to reporters on the tarmac outside his campaign plane at the airport here, Romney repeatedly declined to get into the specifics of where he and Ryan differ on federal budget proposals. Asked specifically to say where he disagrees with Ryan, Romney twice dodged the question.

"I'm sure there are places that my budget is different than his, but we're on the same page... We want to get America on track to a balanced budget," Romney said.

The presumptive Republican nominee said he and his potential VP agree that President Barack Obama's health care reform plan should be repealed as well as about efforts to cut federal spending. He also said he and Ryan both oppose efforts to cut Medicare for current recipients. But asked again to outline the differences he hinted at in their budget proposals, Romney didn't say.

"There may be," Romney said. "We'll take a look at the differences."

"The items that we agree on, I think, outweigh any differences there may be," Romney added. "We haven't gone through piece by piece, and said, 'Oh, here's a place where there's a difference. I can't imagine any two people even in the same party who have exactly all the same positions on all issues.'"

Speaking specifically about Medicare—an issue that could put Romney's efforts to win voters here at risk—Romney said his plan is similar to Ryan's—and insisted current and near retirees wouldn't be impacted. But he said it was crucial to undertake entitlement reform so the country could deliver on "promises" it has made to future generations.

"The truth is we simply cannot simply continue to pretend like a Medicare on track to go bankrupt at some point is acceptable. We must take action to make sure that we can save Medicare for coming generations," Romney said. "And this president's been in office for three-and-a-half years and hasn't been willing to make any proposals to make sure and save Medicare other than to put in place an unelected board which will tell people what kind of treatments they can have."

Romney insisted that when Americans hear what he's proposing, they would come around.

"The people of America will get a chance to hear those things, and I believe that when they understand the truth, they are going to take action that is in the best interest of the American people."

At the top of his remarks, Romney offered his "thoughts and prayers" to those affected by the shooting at Texas A&M University and said there has be "consideration" of how to prevent tragedies like it and the other recent shootings across the country. But Romney again insisted new gun control laws are not the answer.

"We've now had apparently from the early reports three of these tragedies in a row, and I happen to believe that this is not a matter of the weapon that is used, it's a matter of the individuals and the choices these people make," Romney said. "We have to understand how to prevent those kinds of choices from being made. I don't think gun laws are the answer, but I do believe that this is a topic that needs to be considered."

20120813-19 23:20 SteveG Cartoon: Paul Ryan: Devil or Boy Scout?

"Boy Scout Paul Ryan" by Gary Varvel, *Indianapolis Star*

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://blogs.indystar.com/varvelblog/2012/08/13/boy-scout-paul-ryan/>)

Romney's Veep is being portrayed as a devil and a boy scout.



VERY INTERESTING ARTICLE SHINING A BIG SPOTLIGHT ON THE FAMOUS REPUBLICAN HYPOCRISY!

"Paul Ryan's Voting Record: Big-Spending Conservatism" by Andrew Restuccia and Seung Min Kim, Politico

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0812/79688.html?hp=f2>)

Paul Ryan rose to the top of the political ranks on his reputation as a conservative budget hawk. But his voting record shows him to be far from a pure fiscal conservative.

Ryan voted for the \$700 billion bank bailout, the biggest Medicare expansion in U.S. history, a massive highway bill that included the "Bridge to Nowhere" and other big-ticket priorities when George W. Bush was president — going to bat for a high-spending GOP agenda that the tea party base now looks on with regret.

"Obviously, those votes certainly don't make me happy," said Amy Kremer, chairwoman of the Tea Party Express, one of the country's most influential tea party organizations — though she was quick to say she was pleased with Ryan's selection as Mitt Romney's running mate.

"I think that he's somebody who'll stand up and accept responsibility for previous actions," she said. "More importantly than that, he knows that we're in serious financial trouble, and he has a grasp on the big picture all the way down to the little details.

"There is no perfect politician," Kremer added. "There are many of them that have had votes that we aren't happy about. But we were in a different time period then, and those votes are actually what led to this movement being formed."

A campaign spokesman for Ryan did not respond to a request for comment Monday.

Still, Ryan's voting record shows that he was willing to vote for expensive government programs when some other fiscal conservative said no.

In the fall of 2008, Ryan voted for TARP. Later that year, he voted for loans to help rescue the auto industry, making him one of just 32 Republicans to do so — and his vote came after Romney wrote The New York Times op-ed titled "Let Detroit go bankrupt."

Even so, critics of that kind of spending joined other conservatives in applauding Romney's announcement Saturday that Ryan would be on the ticket.

"His record speaks for itself, and he's going to have to defend those votes," said Club for Growth President Chris Chocola. "But when it comes to entitlement reform and unfunded liabilities, he probably understands and articulates it better than anyone else in the country."

Ryan's votes on spending came on top of his support for the Bush-era tax cuts, which liberals complain blew a titanic hole in the budget.

All in all, Ryan's congressional voting record reveals a standard, loyal Republican. He has voted at least 90 percent of the time with his party since he came to Capitol Hill in 1999, according to The Washington Post's votes database.

Among the biggest items in Ryan's spending record was his vote in the fall of 2008 for the \$700 billion TARP financial bailout, which drew resistance from many House Republicans despite the Bush administration's warnings that failing to act could cause an all-out collapse of the financial system.

During House floor debate on Sept. 29, 2008, Ryan said the TARP legislation "offends my principles." But he added, "I'm going to vote for this bill in order to preserve my principles. In order to preserve this free enterprise system."

Calling the vote a “Herbert Hoover moment,” Ryan added: “Just maybe this will work. And so for me and for my own conscience, so I can look myself in the mirror tonight and so I can go to sleep with a clear conscience, I want to know that I did everything I could to stop it from getting worse.”

Despite such dire warnings, fiscal hard-liners such as Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.) and Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) still voted no on the bailout.

“It was fundamentally wrong for Congress to take \$700 billion in bad decisions on Wall Street and transfer that to Main Street in the form of TARP,” Pence said more than a year later.

In 2003, Ryan also voted to create the Medicare prescription drug benefit, with a cost — initially estimated at \$400 billion over a decade, according to the Los Angeles Times — that so rankled conservatives that House Republican leaders had to take extraordinary efforts to pass the legislation by a razor-thin majority. That included holding the vote open for hours in the wee hours of the morning.

And during a time when pork-laden highway bills were en vogue among the Capitol Hill GOP, Ryan backed the 2005 transportation legislation that included a litany of earmarks, including for the notorious “Bridge to Nowhere” in Alaska. Though the vast majority of the House supported the bill, a handful of anti-earmark hardliners such as Flake and current Speaker John Boehner rejected it.

On Dec. 10, 2008, during the last days of the Bush administration, Ryan was one of just 32 Republicans to vote for legislation that would have provided \$14 billion in loans for the industry, citing the potential for layoffs in his district.

“It is clear that the mounting hardships throughout Southern Wisconsin have been downright gut-wrenching,” Ryan said in a statement issued after the vote. He has also said he voted for the package to ensure that the auto industry wouldn’t receive money from the main bank bailout.

But the House bill went nowhere in the Senate. President Barack Obama ultimately used money from TARP to help bail out the auto industry.

Ryan, like many Republicans, also voted to raise the debt limit at least five times during the Bush administration, when such votes were considered routine and uncontroversial.

Even at the time, much of the GOP-backed spending was unpopular with fiscal conservatives who feared their party was veering big time from its small-government message.

“How do we convince the voters in the midterm elections that two more years of Republican control will produce anything more than bigger government and growing deficits?” Flake lamented in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed in September 2005, little more than a year before voters threw Congress back to the Democrats.

The *Journal’s* John Fund later quoted Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) as calling the prescription drug vote “a watershed event, the moment when Republicans who stood for limited government realized they were the enemy of their own leadership.”

Ryan has become one of the most influential voices — if not the top voice — in the Republican Party on fiscal matters. And his voting history largely reflects that.

Along with most House Republicans, Ryan voted in July 2011 in favor of the so-called Cut, Cap and Balance Act — the method favored by conservatives to raise the debt ceiling while reining in future spending. It included more than \$110 billion in budget cuts in fiscal 2012, would have capped federal spending at 18 percent of the nation’s GDP and would have required that the House and Senate pass a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution that imposed a stricter threshold for raising taxes. Later that year, when the House voted on a stand-alone balanced

budget amendment, Ryan was just one of four House Republicans to vote “no,” telling POLITICO at the time that the measure didn’t go far enough to halt future tax increases.

And of course, his proposal to overhaul Medicare has become the Republican conservative template for addressing the nation’s huge spending on entitlements.

The Club for Growth says Ryan doesn’t rank among the most conservative lawmakers on the Hill — he has earned just an 88 percent conservative lifetime rating on the organization’s congressional scorecard.

And the organization criticized the Ryan budget earlier this year — calling the plan a “disappointment for fiscal conservatives” because it did not balance the budget quickly enough and it waived the sequester, a set of automatic cuts required under the Budget Control Act.

Still, Chocola credits Ryan with shifting the House GOP toward the House Budget Committee chairman’s vision of a significant Medicare overhaul.

“I was in the House with him, and the Republican majority [at the time] would not have voted for his budget,” Chocola said in an interview. “The fact that he’s moved the conference in the direction of voting for meaningful entitlement reform is a big deal.”

And Ryan didn’t necessarily go all-in on TARP: On Jan. 14, 2009 — less than a week before Obama’s inauguration — Ryan voted to prevent the remaining bailout funds from being released, saying he feared that “the second \$350 billion in TARP funding will go far beyond the original mission of preserving overall financial market stability, and instead will be used to fund a heavy-handed, neo-industrial policy.”

“Various industries have already marshaled their lobbyists for a claim on these public dollars,” he said. “And with our federal budget expected to reach historic levels this year, we cannot risk more public funds to be squandered.”

Though much of his policy profile in Congress has been dedicated to fiscal issues, Ryan has also consistently shown his social conservative bona fides in his nearly 14 years on Capitol Hill.

In 2006, Ryan joined nearly all fellow House Republicans to vote for a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as solely between a man and a woman. Ryan also voted to defund Planned Parenthood and has earned a 100 percent vote rating from the anti-abortion group National Right to Life.

Ryan, in 2005, also voted in favor of the so-called Palm Sunday Compromise that allowed federal courts to intervene in the case of Terri Schiavo, a move meant to save the life of the brain-damaged Florida woman whose family had fought to keep her alive.

Still, Ryan in November 2007 joined the vast majority of Democrats to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would outlaw workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Ryan was one of 35 House Republicans to vote in favor of that bill.



President Obama should go on TV and ask people not to eat yellow snow if only for the joy of hearing Fox News explain how good yellow snow really is.

Ever wonder why Dirty Energy gets \$11 Billion in annual subsidies, while clean energy gets jack shit?

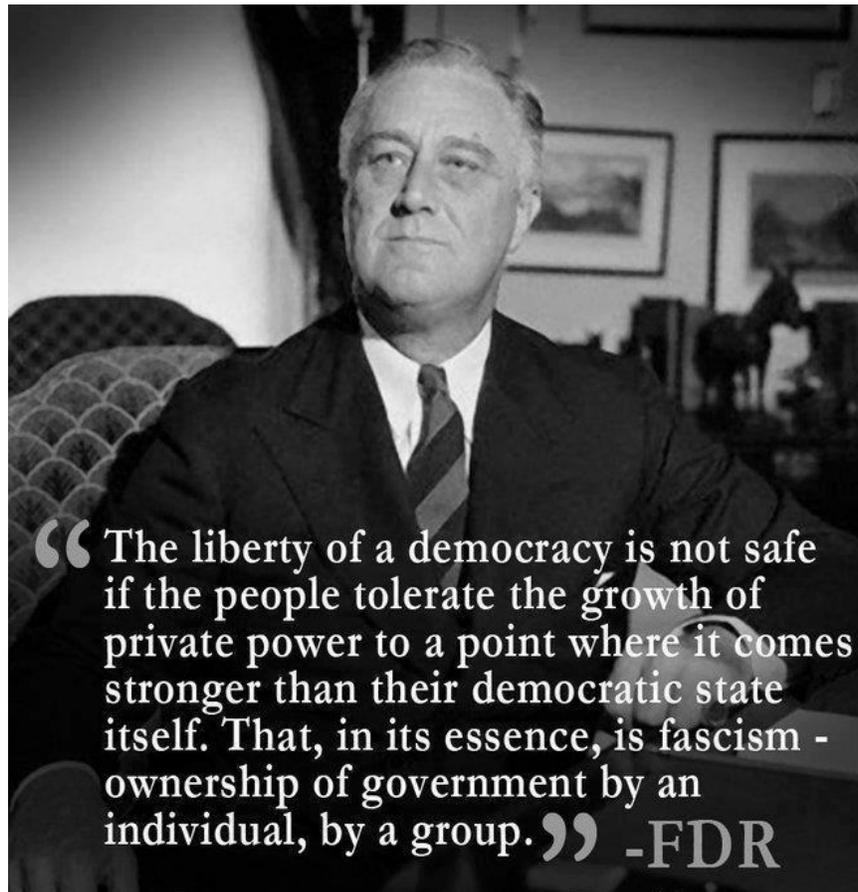


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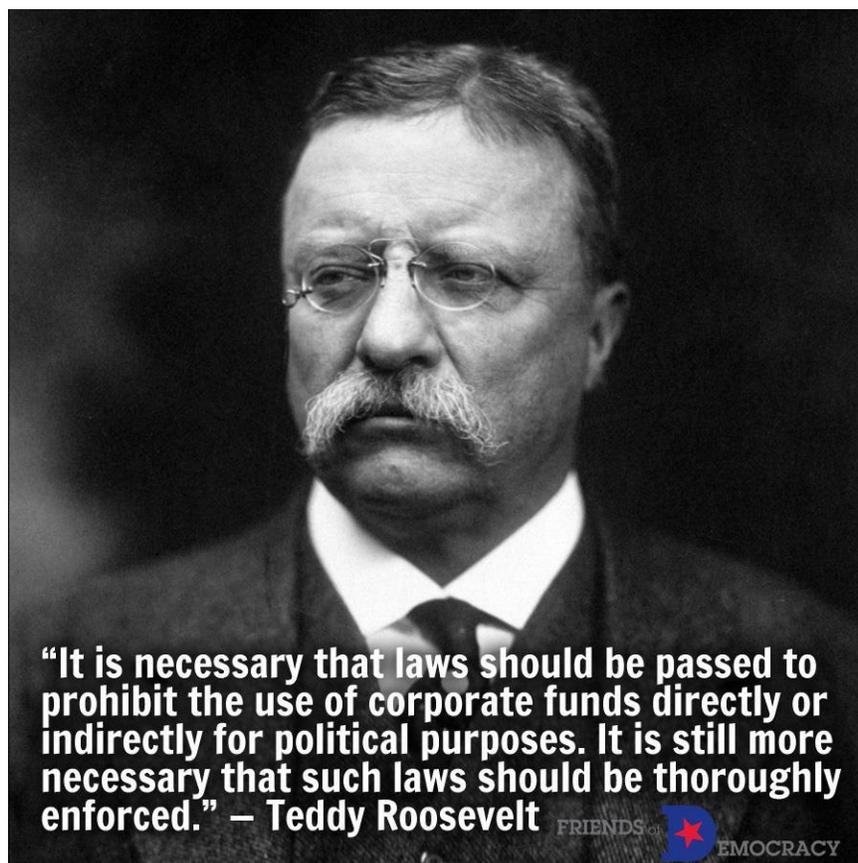
COULD IT BE THAT GREEN ENERGY IS OUTSPENT BY DIRTY MONEY BY 8:1?

Source: United Republic





“ The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it comes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism - ownership of government by an individual, by a group.” -FDR



“It is necessary that laws should be passed to prohibit the use of corporate funds directly or indirectly for political purposes. It is still more necessary that such laws should be thoroughly enforced.” – Teddy Roosevelt

FRIENDS OF  DEMOCRACY

Please pass along. Help defend against the destruction of a once great country.

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

FREEDOM PUSH
(Local, National)



**DEFEND FREEDOM
DEFEAT OBAMA
VOTE NOV. 6TH, 2012**

The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.

Thomas Jefferson

Had enough of our Country being led and destroyed by Chicago politicians, cronyism, liberal "leftists" and a justice department with very questionable standards?

The opportunity to take America back will come this Nov. 6th
BE THERE!

VOTE THEM ALL OUT!

- America 2012, after only 3+ years, under Socialist Barack Hussein Obama.
 - ✓ The division of America at every level, led by Socialist Obama.
 - ✓ Established path by the current administration to add \$1 trillion per year in national debt.
 - ✓ You now work until June 18th every year just to pay federal, state and local taxes.
 - ✓ Every man, woman and child currently are responsible for \$50,800 of national debt.
 - ✓ Every taxpayer is responsible for \$139,900 of national debt.
 - ✓ 223,000 small businesses gone bust.
 - ✓ The addition of 13,000 pages to the tax laws just to support Obamacare.
 - ✓ The addition of 60,000 IRS agents to police Obamacare.
 - ✓ One in seven Americans now on food stamps.
 - ✓ Government intrusion into every facet of American lives.
 - ✓ Accelerated effort by Government to eradicate Christianity.
 - ✓ The fostering of a justice department, who answers to no one.
 - "Fast and Furious" cover up by the justice department.
 - Black Panther voter intimidation ignored by the justice department.
 - ✓ The squandering of billions of tax payer dollars to support "green energy" projects, gone bust.
 - ✓ 1200+ days without a budget from the Democratic (Liberal "left") led U.S. Senate.
 - ✓ 2013 will bring the single largest personal tax increases in the history of our Country.
 - ✓ An administration excelling in deceit, lies, cover-ups, cronyism and corruption.
 - ✓ Suing states on a daily basis in order to support the "Liberal left" Socialist agenda.
 - ✓ Union cronyism at an all time high.
 - NY State's Green Jobs Green New York: \$113 million taxpayer dollars paid to union workers just to stay busy.
 - GM government buy-out: Union workers and retirees receive a pension top-off, while 20,000 salaried employees are ignored. GM stills owes taxpayers \$27 billion.
 - ✓ An economic plan consisting of borrowing, taxing and spending.

Socialist Obama's plan for the next four years?.....MUCH MORE OF THE SAME!

**Can we survive another term in office by Socialist Obama and Liberal "leftist" Washington politicians?
Start now to search for yourself , and prepare to vote November 6th, 2012 and....**

VOTE THEM ALL OUT!

[20120813-20](#) 23:48 SteveB Re: FREEDOM PUSH, Aug. 11. (reply to SteveM, above)

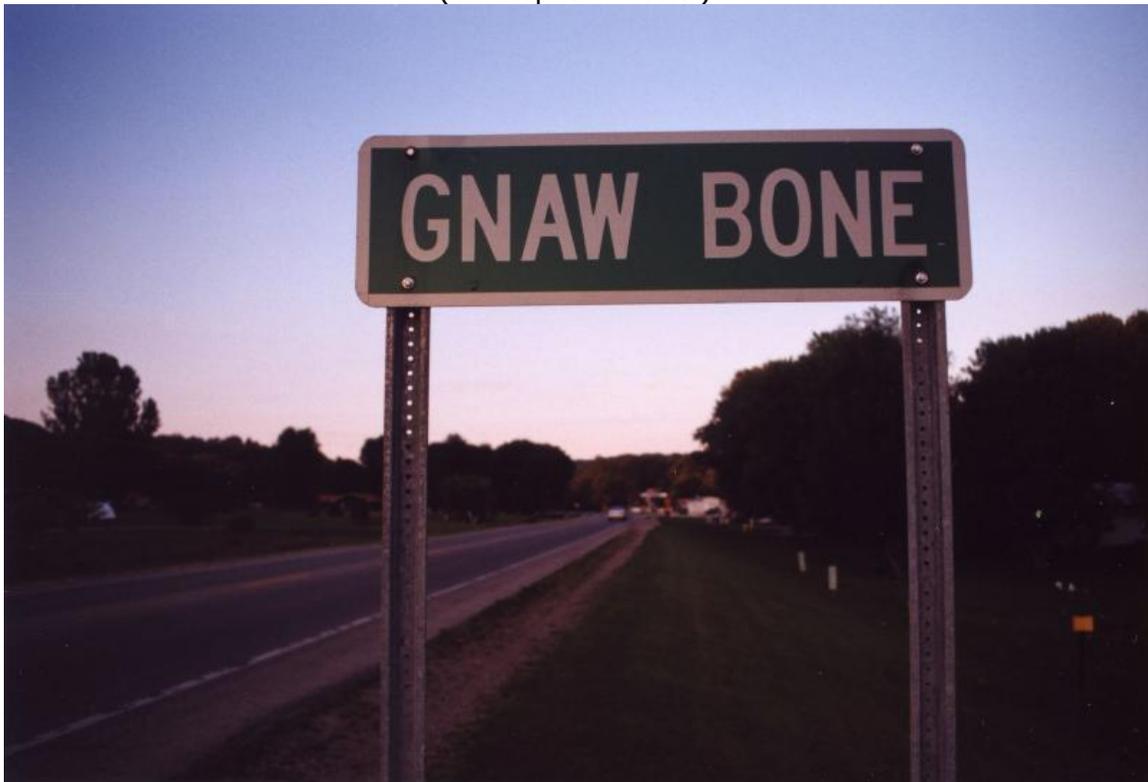
Funny, you didn't mind 8 years of the same thing and worse under W.

Funny, it's all the President's fault, while your Clown House is blameless.

[20120813-22](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Gnaw Bone, Indiana

<http://www.in.gov/visitindiana/blog/index.php/2012/01/26/the-original-gnaw-bone-tenderloin-super46/>

(Christopher Wheeler)



The Original 'Gnaw Bone Tenderloin'



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

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