



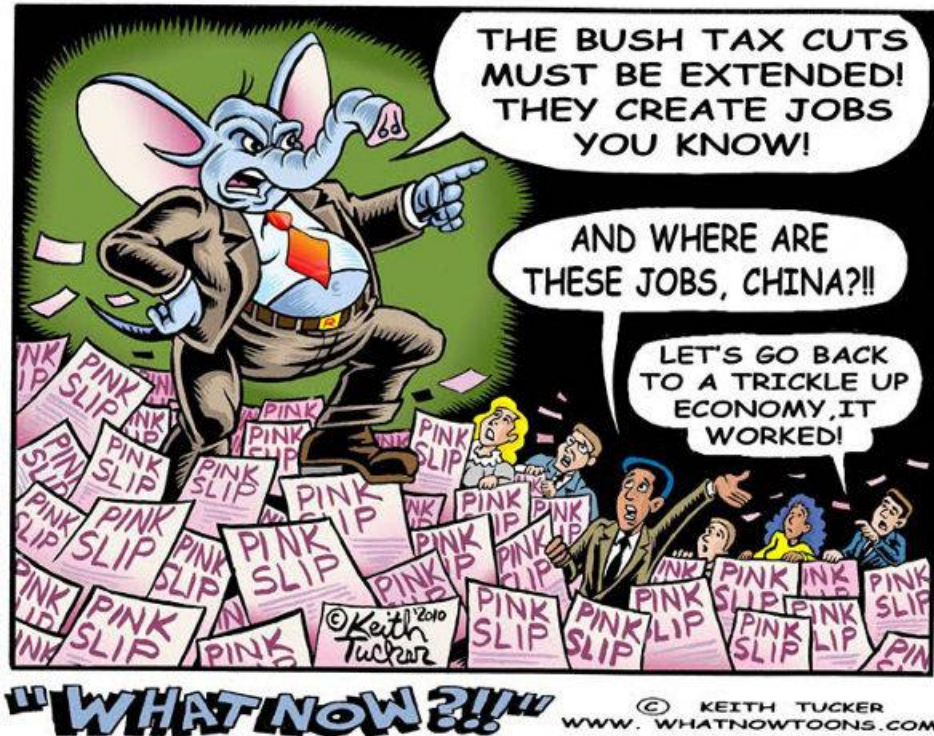
FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #217 — SEPT. 3, 2012**

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

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But Where Does the Money Go?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Sept. 3, 2012)



I was busy editing the first collection of FotM Newsletters (<http://www.FriendOfTheMiddle.org>), from late 2011, when I ran across this from Dale:

Dale: Big government requires money to run. It takes money from people who are working to earn it. Then, it inefficiently messes with that money and gives back less of it in the way of benefits. The more government programs, the more government employees, the more waste and who pays for it? Taxpayers.

You know...I'm always thinking about this stuff...trying to figure out why we can't all agree, why things often aren't as they appear on the surface, and how things work.

I have to admit, Dale's thought above sounds good on the surface. It has become one of the core principles of the Republican Party. But I would like to focus on that one concept of "inefficiency" or "waste"—two ways of looking at

the same thing, don't you think? The Republicans would have us accept this notion as, perhaps, Rule #1: Government is "bad" because it takes money from people who have worked hard to earn it, giving less back in return, and "wasting" the difference.

But let me try to look at this idea with a fresh perspective, then, please tell me what you think.

First, I believe everyone in the world except anarchists (Is that what law-and-order Republicans have become?) believes that taxes must be collected or society breaks down to the point of uselessness. That's not what I, for one, want. If you do, then I guess that's the end of this conversation. Period.

This Republican theory of taxation seems to me like what I would call "pile of money" thinking, not sound economic theory. It's really based on an emotional image, not logic, and I intend to prove it. The image Republicans wish to conjure in our brains is one of a sweating man who has worked hard all his life, selflessly devoted to creating jobs for his fellow citizens. He has made a lot of money, other people's money, i.e. money that used to belong to other people before they spent it or gave it up as taxes. This money has been "redistributed" to the rich man...his earned, ample reward for his genius, creativity, and hard work.

And there he is sitting on that pile of hard-earned money. Being conservative, Republicans and, perhaps, almost all the rich, want to "conserve" that pile of hard-earned money. They don't want to throw it down a hole with a bunch of lazy people at the bottom, picking it up for free. They don't want an "inefficient" government "wasting" their money. That's how they see taxation. This assumes, of course, that the rich geniuses are very efficient themselves and never waste money. (Otherwise, on what basis could they criticize government?) If I'm wrong about any of this, please let me know.

But the government can't give back less than it takes in...it spends the money—all of it! (and more, lately). The middle class and the poor spend the money they get. Unfortunately, very little gets saved, maybe because we're bombarded all our lives with commercials telling us we have to consume to be happy. Except for military adventures, very little of this money spent by government leaves the country, therefore, it creates jobs in America.

Think about it. Almost all money, including tax dollars, received by the poor, the middle class, and the government keeps getting recycled and multiplied. It works just like goods-for-sale turnover in a store. It's as important how long the stuff sits on the shelf as how much mark-up is made on each unit. If I sell clothing, for example, I might choose to charge high prices and sell everything in the store in one year's time, or I might charge low prices and sell everything once per week. That's turnover. It applies to everything in total and to each individual item for sale. On each item sold, a certain profit must be made to remain in business. If I have a high rate of turnover, I can charge a lower price, make less profit per unit, yet, paradoxically perhaps, make more money. Get it?

Money in the American economy works the same way. The more turnover, the more benefit. GDP rises as money is recirculated.

The rich do not spend the money they make. They can't. It's too much. So it piles up. Some of that gets reinvested in business and jobs, but remember, these are very conservative people, so they want to minimize their risk, in general, not accentuate it, not any more than they want to pay taxes.

And the rich do not pay their fair share of taxes. The rich, like Mitt R0mney, figure they owe no one anything for their success but themselves. They don't have to pay no stinking taxes. In fact, they avoid taxes by shipping the bulk of their money out of the country, where little of it is reinvested in America to create jobs, or demand, or supply, for that matter. We now know this adds up to \$trillions.

I have a theory about this money: it is exactly equal to the amount that the rich were undertaxed. This money is removed from American circulation by the rich. It benefits nothing but greed. It is removed from creating American investment, jobs, or consumption. You will never catch our government sitting on a pile of money, even when it's supposed to, like in the case of Social Security.

This is a very big deal, and one of the reasons we aren't prospering as a nation. When taxes on the rich were high, that money stayed in the US and was recirculated. When the rich pay more taxes, it creates jobs!!!

When taxes on the rich are too low, much of that money (\$trillions) gets removed from the general economy and the country as a whole suffers. To me, that is the secret reason why we used to be prosperous, but now not so much. It's amazing we do as well as we do as a country, minus \$trillions of missing dollars that have been essentially stolen from the people and from the economy.

And notice that this subject, just like Afghanistan, abortion, immigration, conservation, global warming, health care, banking/finance, and energy are topics R0mney-Ryan are deathly afraid to discuss. Gee, no wonder Mitt is so sensitive about his precious little tax returns and his precious pile of money!

In terms of money and taxes, there is really no such thing as "inefficiency" and "waste" as long as that money remains in the country, being recirculated like turnover in a store, creating a little wealth each time it changes hands, over and over again.

The only economically wasteful and inefficient thing I see is the rich removing our money from our society. I call that stealing! Taxes on the rich must be increased to the point of prosperity, at something near the rate that history shows was beneficial to America as a whole.

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20120902-06	12:47	Clark	Re: But Where Does the Money Go? (reply to SteveB, above)
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Very well said, Steve. A good economics lesson, and right on.

Might add that the benefits government provides are often pretty damn vital.

20120902-09	13:53	Pam	Re: But Where Does the Money Go? (reply to SteveB, above)
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Very good!

And another place the money goes is to pet projects from Congressmen's states, which I actually don't think is a bad thing, unless it's for something frivolous, like unneeded farm subsidies--or oil subsidies. All those people working in public sector jobs actually have--wait for it--JOBS. There's nothing sacred about a private sector job, as opposed to a public sector one. If the Republicans want jobs to come from private sources, why don't they use all their wealth to create them? They blame government for unemployment, then refuse jobs bills that would create

them. They make record profits, then sit on their money rather than re-investing it in the small businesses they claim to have such faith in. If they prefer to hide their money away in foreign accounts rather than paying it out in taxes, then they should admit that they believe it's more important for them to hold onto their wealth than to contribute to solving the nation's problems. Where do they think the revenue to pay for social services, food stamps, education, infrastructure, etc. etc. is going to come from if not from them, the ones who actually have some money to spare? Republicans have set up a Catch 22, and I'm amazed no one seems to have noticed it. Creating public sector jobs is "waste." (If I hear about Solyndra again, I'm going to scream.) They never argue that their prescriptions for the economy would "help" people; they argue that it's unfair to expect the successful to offer a helping hand. Nowhere in their platform do they spell out how folks in need will benefit from their ideas, because the old, sick, disabled, ghettoized, long-term unemployed, and minorities wouldn't. It's more important to Republicans to carry on about personal responsibility and the joys of success and wealth than to give a nod to having some compassion for those who cannot help themselves. Are small businesses going to take care of juvenile delinquents, single mothers with limited income, sick people with no health insurance? My daughter works for the ARC, a non-profit organization that has a great reputation in Greensboro for its services to families with disabled children. Their government funding has been slashed to the point where they can no longer operate and are going to have to close their doors at the end of the year. This is going to cause real pain to real people who have nowhere else to go for help. I haven't heard of any businesses closing because their taxes were too high. Less business equals lower taxes; it's not like a business has to pay a certain amount no matter what. It's based on earnings and profits. I'm sure small businessmen don't like paying taxes. Who does? But I've never heard of a business being taxed out of existence.

It's the old "Greed is Good" syndrome all over again. And this in the face of the worst economy we've had since the Great Depression. Talk about cognitive dissonance! But the Republicans aren't really interested in the "greatest good for the greatest number," to quote Jeremy Bentham of the "dismal science." They really believe that those who want success badly enough will achieve it, and if they don't, it's their fault. Sometimes hard work and good intentions aren't enough. I used to have students ask me what they could do to bring their C or D up to an A. I didn't tell them the real answer: be smarter. America is the land of the C and D students just as much as it is the land of the Harvard graduates. A society should be so fair that anyone, rich or poor, healthy or sick, smart or dumb as a box of nails, male or female, young or old, would choose to live in it. It sure ain't the good ol' US of A. Don't get me wrong; I love this country. That doesn't mean I can't criticize it.

20120902-11	15:10	Art	Re: But Where Does the Money Go? (reply to SteveB, above)
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Hi Steve, Very well stated although this is the also generally the Presidents' position when you think about it. "A healthy middle class spending money is what makes the economy hum." Your point that "the money stays here" is also excellent, but this approach assumes you put the country first in your thought process over your own personal interests. Not a strong point for Republicans lately. Also because a good portion of our debt is to China and others, paying that off does push funds outside the country. That may have more of an effect than one would think at first notice. Defense spending for two wars has also resulted in huge cash flows out of the country. (I think everyone knows this, but a huge amount of money was/is being spent inside of Iraq and Afghanistan on local projects.) I wish I understood economics better to know how much affect that has. I remember reading a few books about the wealth of nations (one by Barbara Tuchman I believe) and it showed how during the last century just a 1% per year difference in economic growth could have a huge impact in just a few decades. (I was always going to do my PhD dissertation on the effect of annual US economic assistance on the growth and success of the Israeli economy.

One other little piece to add to our thoughts, I don't think I mentioned this previously but, if so, I apologize.

I think both parties, the CBO and practically everyone else agrees the uncertainty around the extension of the Bush tax cuts is causing much angst and concern in the business world. With no action they will expire for everyone on 1 Jan 2012. The Democrats want the tax cuts to be extended for all taxable annual income under \$250,000 and the Republicans want them to be extended for all income. Obviously the loss in revenue will affect the deficit problem, great or small. Because of the uncertainty businesses are delaying decisions and deferring investments to see how it goes. To this point I think all parties agree.

For the good of the country, why not extend the cuts for the first \$250,000 of income now? That would remove the uncertainty for the vast majority of Americans, reassure businesses and maybe keep us from sliding into a full blown recession. If the Democrats win, that's the end of it. If the Republicans will, they can continue their crusade for tax cuts and extend the cuts for the rich. Who loses? Well, everybody and maybe the country as a whole, if we continue to delay this decision.

The only advantage I can see from delaying the extension of the tax cuts for the vast bulk of Americans is political. Only if you want things to stay bad and in economic turmoil does it make sense not to make this decision now. Seems to me the Democrats ought to pose this question during the convention and at every debate opportunity. Would be interesting to hear the responses.

20120902-12	15:22	Pam	Re: But Where Does the Money Go? (reply to Art, above)
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Art, you should send this suggestion of a debate topic to the White House. The ONLY reason the Republicans are being stubborn is to make Obama look bad, and the best way to do that is to keep the economy in trouble. They care NOTHING for the country as a whole, only those who belong to their club. I wonder how many families in the US actually make more than \$250,000 per year? I know our Chancellor at UNGC makes in the neighborhood of \$400,000, and there are a lot of big houses in my city that would seem to me to require a substantial income to maintain. Am I way off base in thinking that lots of people make more than \$250,000? What is the cutoff for the 1%?

I read an article recently on Israel and Netanyahu. They make me very nervous. Most of the top leadership, including MOSSAD and the military are opposed to attacking Iran, but Bibi wants to do it so bad he can taste it. Like everywhere else, Israel is becoming more and more right-wing. Scary.

20120902-13	15:29	Art	Re: But Where Does the Money Go? (reply to Pam, above)
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Interesting points Pam but did you look at the Republican convention crowd? White on white. There were more token minority speakers than in the whole rest of the crowd. They simply don't care about much of America outside their own myopic little world, and they have co-opted the poor white trash with racism and religious fundamentalism to go along with them. I don't think the Romneys of the world actually care much about the average folk either except as cannon fodder. You can hear it in Ann Romney's voice.

One of the more interesting facts of the American Civil War (just as an aside I think everyone knows there were other civil wars in history. During the Taiping Rebellion in China, fought almost the same time as the American Civil War, some 20 Million people are estimates to have died, That was almost the population of the USA at the time.) But back to my point - this is the problem with historians. During our little civil war, really fought over the issue of slavery, despite all the attempts to make it something else, the vast majority of the Southern Army was composed of whites who never possessed a slave. They were suckered into to serving and dying in great numbers by the rich slave owners who used many of the same hate filled reasons we see today. People really are pretty stupid.

20120902-14	15:47	Pam	Re: But Where Does the Money Go? (reply to Art, above)
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Good points. It's sad. No, it's tragic.

20120831-01	08:04	Art	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Bill, FotM Newsletter #216)
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Nicely put, Bill. Like Pam, I have problems with the directions most religions seem to be taking these days, but I know there must be good in there somewhere.

20120831-02	08:19	Art	Re: Greed! (reply to Bill, FotM Newsletter #216)
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Bill, again, very well put. My issue with Romney on this is not so much what Bain did, as you point out, it was legal much like drowning unwanted puppies, if distasteful, and not something many of us would be proud of as participants.

The issue is the Republican position that as CEO of Bain he was a job creator. He made money, lots of it, for the Bain investors, but any job creation was incidental to the operation. He and his investors could have cared less about that aspect, unless it made them more money.

20120831-04	09:34	Pam	Re: Greed! (reply to Art, above)
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You could say, Romney and Ryan are "playing" the American public, hoping we'll buy their apparent sincerity (in Ryan's case anyway) and see it as policy. A number of years ago I was teaching a course to future teachers (Teaching Fellows, who got a big scholarship in exchange for teaching for four years in NC), and I showed them a documentary on Groton. None of my students knew anything about elite prep schools; most went either to public schools or private Christian schools. They knew all about kids from the lower socio-economic levels, but they knew nothing about northern elites with generations of family money behind them. The documentary followed a Hispanic girl from a poor neighborhood in Brooklyn, who had won a scholarship to Groton. When she arrived at the school, she thought it was a "kid paradise." By the time she graduated, she was in tears as she told the guidance counselor that she felt she had lost her culture and her family. I don't know where she is today, but I imagine she is doing very well. She was smart and talented. Getting an elite education meant moving into a different social class (as Obama did), and that comes with a price. Just as my students, many from small NC towns in tobacco country, had no clue about "lifestyles of the rich" and privileged, Romney has no clue about the way most Americans, especially this poor kid from Brooklyn whose parents didn't speak English, live and think.

I was impressed by the education the kids at Groton were getting: small classes; involved, passionate teachers; a headmaster who actually taught and didn't hide behind a secretary and a closed door; and the kids were obviously very bright. What struck me, though, was one student in particular, who seemed typical and who was popular with his fellows. He was a good-looking kid, he was rich, and he was smart. When he was interviewed he was asked about his future plans, and he said straight out, he wanted to make money. Why (when he obviously had plenty already)? Because, he said, I want power. I wonder where he is today. I would love to know if he's running a hedge fund or living off his investments while he sails around the world on his yacht.

We talk a lot about race in this country, but that issue is a red herring. The real problem we have is class, and because we're Americans we dare not talk about it. The tragedy for all of us, rich or "normal," is that our system is making the class divide wider and, with our draconian drug laws, making sure the bottom stays down. Remember the War on Poverty? Remember when huge numbers of Americans went to bed hungry and lived in shacks? Today, in my city, there are "bad" neighborhoods, but drive through in the daytime and they look like any middle-class part of town--with fewer trees. Even the projects are neat and tidy, with no high rises and plenty of playgrounds. The Republicans want to take America back. They want to take it back all right, back to the days when children were left to go hungry, elders were at the mercy of their struggling children, and workers had to just suck it up.

I really can't imagine that Romney will win, and I doubt if many Republicans do either. I've just listened to Michael Steele and John Huntsman, and it's clear they are disenchanted with their party as it is now constituted. Reasonable Americans, Democrat or Republican, face a great danger, and we know what it is. Big Money. Unless we can pull back from the brink, I very much fear that Ayn Rand will be smiling down from the heaven she didn't believe in. The rich have always proclaimed that they deserve what they have, and the poor must be defective in some way. They should get together with the Hindus.

We're not going to make it unless we all are on the same train. Having a first class is fine, so long as we can all reach our destination at the same time.

20120831-05	11:46	Bill	Re: Greed! (reply to Art, above)
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Loved your “puppies” metaphor. As to Romney’s deeds with respect to job creation, what I tried to convey was that Bain could give a damn about jobs; Bain simply saw opportunity for a return, and Bain went for it. Just that simple—and legal.

20120831-11	15:48	Art	Re: Greed! (reply to Bill, above)
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Thanks Bill, agree.

20120831-03	09:19	Art	Re: “More Arizona Guns with the Mexican Cartels?” (to SteveB & reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #216)
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Thanks, SteveB, Good one. Has it struck anyone yet that the right has to make up all these ridiculous stories about President Obama to try to make their points, while Romney, Ryan, and crew just keep handing them to us.

Want to thank SteveM for the article on guns and Mexico, but did he notice that the writer carefully handed off all those statistics:

John Velleco, Director of Federal Affairs for Gun Owners of America, a non-profit group that advocates for the Second Amendment, shares these points with some unknown individual representing an organization with an agenda, which quotes no source data. Doesn't quite pass any accuracy of data litmus test to me.

20120831-09	15:37	SteveM	Re: “More Arizona Guns with the Mexican Cartels?” (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #216)
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SteveB: Interesting that this article leads with a counterpoint: “Weapons that trace back to dealers and sellers in Arizona are being found at various Mexican crime scenes, according to William Newell, Special Agent in Charge of ATF’s Phoenix Division.”

That's it? That's what you take away from the article? Guns that are encouraged to walk across the Arizona/Mexican border by the ATF, AG Holder, and his boss BHO were found at a Mexican crime scene. One of MANY, MANY other Mexican crime scenes where 60K have been killed in the past 4 years. That's the fly sh*t you picked out of the pepper?

20120831-13	18:17	SteveB	Re: “More Arizona Guns with the Mexican Cartels?” (reply to SteveM, above)
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Look, here’s the truth. I don’t care where the hell the guns come from.

The problem is that the border is too porous. Hell, there’s hardly an actual “border”.

And I’m a little tired of you blaming President Obama for every little thing the government does or ever did, so, ya, I put the part back in that you so conveniently censored.

I certainly didn’t see Bush solving any border or immigration problems in eight long years, even with 9/11, the Patriot Act, and gross spending. So let’s be honest about all that.

Here’s the only conclusion that can be reached. The big money wants cheap labor, so unions must be busted, and we need a lot of illegals. Wages have already declined, so their plan is working. The big money buys the politicians of both parties. The big money gets what it wants—mucho illegal immigration, a drug war that’s a total waste and distraction/diversion, mucho guns.

THE BIG MONEY GETS WHAT IT WANTS. THE EASIEST PARTY TO BUY IS THE PARTY MOST FOR SALE—THE GOP!

20120831-06	12:42	SteveB	"How Republicans Live with Themselves: The Entitlement of Hypocrisy"
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"How Republicans Live with Themselves: The Entitlement of Hypocrisy" by C. S. Herrman, OpEdNews

Aug. 31, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/How-Republicans-Live-with-by-C-S-Herrman-120830-619.html>)

(This is the second of three articles in the series on Republican social psychology. The topic here is how Republicans come to see themselves as so entitled to do what they do in light of their political position on the concept of 'entitlement' in general, especially as it applies to the vast humanity whom they hold in contempt.)

All human institutions have a way of growing into perversions of their original purpose that block its attainment. Those who run the institutions are allowed to acquire interests that conflict with the professed purpose of the institution they serve. -- F. C. S. Schiller

When people land a job they had once only dreamt of, and then get raises and bonuses on top of that, you can be reasonably certain that sooner or later two things will happen. First, they will come to understand that they *deserve* all that they get; second, they will begin to realize that it is only honorable to bargain for whatever can be got. Once entitlement has become a veritable disease occurring across the gamut of offices -- professionals, top corporate brass and elective posts -- we get endemic corruption, the general topic of this, the second of three in the series about Republicans and what they do for and with their concept of honor.

If entitlement attaches to naturally occurring or accruing dignity, Republicans are flat out of luck with the exception of those who can point to business creation and development, for which decency requires a deep reservoir of thanks and the respect that goes with such indebtedness. No Republican has ever been satisfied by this, however, and many refuse to believe that any liberal is capable of such regard. Never mind. Republicans believe they are entitled to rather a lot. Out of respect for their opinions we accordingly offer some examination of their Dickensian expectations (you will note the irony).

Some of their suspect entitlements hang in there unnoticed until opened zippers betray accidents or emergencies -- or criminal activity. Richard Francis Burton may or may not have been bisexual, but he was unquestionably interested in sexuality, and in particular, homosexuality; specifically, homosexuality where least expected or understood -- throughout the Sotadic Zone, that swath of honor-based cultures where homosexuality had always been, and has since been, off limits. Talk about being brave or stupid. Oh, and according to Wikipedia, he was in addition probably Muslim, not just playacting to gain access to the knowledge he would later write about. Worse, his explorations into homosexuality were explicitly titled 'pederasty' (here is the link to the unexpurgated 14,000 word essay originally appearing in the tenth volume of *The Arabian Nights*) which might for some recall the saw of a mind's concentration walking to one's hanging, for such was the influence of a word denoting that part of the gay lifestyle most assured of fetching the death penalty.

To hear it from sanctimonious Republicans, liberals are supposed to be the lushes of the world. While I am not claiming that Republicans are pederasts, fun though that might be, I am interested in pointing out how homosexuality could be rife precisely where it was also viciously persecuted.

The highest status groups in honor-based societies tend, with remarkably few exceptions, to become *laws unto themselves*. "More often than not," wrote Simon Tisdall in the *Guardian*, "instinctively undemocratic, oligarchic and corrupt national elites find that an appearance of democracy, with parliamentary trappings and a pretense of pluralism, is much more attractive, and manageable, than the real thing." Nothing more perfectly describes the two most advanced cults of dignity in nominal democracies: the apparatchiks of the American Republican Party and Putin's Russia. Against the latter the European Parliament is calling for travel bans and asset freezes.

Why not welcome these good Europeans to investigate our own brand of Putinism? I for one am all for it. Look: polls indicate that some 50 percent of Russians would prefer that Putin retain the presidency *for life*. The conservative movement in this country, but for slightly different circumstances, would be similarly inclined. In the "freest country in the world" I am now able to say with a straight face that when Republicans rule (as also

Democrats who govern like Republicans) some or another equivalent of Siberia is no longer an assumed absurdity. America is many things, but because of Republicans, 'the freest' is no longer one of them. Of course the 'Patriot' laws are not intended to hurt law-abiding folk, but I for one cannot trust such powers in the hands of those whose mission is a conservative agenda with a vengeance.

Shame is the great honor-based cleanser, and a thoroughgoing visitation from European authorities would be more than merely refreshing; it would shock a goodly number of the Republican underclass into rethinking their mind-numbing cupidity. We fought a revolutionary war to rid ourselves of the very aristocratic pretensions now firmly entrenched throughout corporate America and Wall Street. We waged a long Cold War with the U.S.S.R. only to discover that our own home-bred honor-based thugs are willing to foist the same dirty flag over the most recent of history's three storied democratic experiments. Speaking of which, we should revisit the first of them.

Plato was the spokesperson for ancient conservatism. A card-holding member of the Athenian aristocracy, he looked favorably on pederasty as a symbolic representation of normative superior-inferior relationships in nature's and society's order, including that of student and teacher (the ostensible rationale). For our heuristic pleasure: when the Sophists used pederasty to force their presence in competition with the aristocracy, Plato suddenly disavowed pederasty entirely. The honor-based and the patriarchal do not approve inferiors dissing their superiority, most especially by aping its own symbols. 'My way or the highway' is only partially what he was saying; *'The highway is one lane, one direction'* better states the matter. This also better parallels Republican fanaticism. They want to have and retain for themselves what they also prefer be denied to others, whence they take umbrage at government giveaways that actually or symbolically dilute their felt entitlement.

All of our elected officials are in on the act, of course, but not necessarily for the reasons you think. Because we have perfected all the worst attributes of the electioneering process inspired by Rome, a serious candidate pretty much requires a goodly dose of bipolar traits, the same that, with even a little excess expression, lay aback those feelings of uber-entitlement, just as they sponsor the drive, grit and determination to see through an amazingly ridiculous gauntlet. We should never be surprised if the result is a cynical cesspool of self-praising, self-serving dilettantes. The only discernible difference between the political parties is that Republicans are outraged at efforts to curb abuse and nonsense, whereas Democrats are sad at having to work harder to obtain and retain the perks. Republicans will call all such efforts a liberal conspiracy, since facts never matter to Republicans until they decide otherwise. Nothing unfair can be their fault, and everything unfair is necessarily the fault of liberals. It's the honorable thing to claim, for to them their honor is a birthright, their unique birthright.

According to John Stuart Mill, something else has always been a birthright of conservatives, namely, *"most stupid people are conservatives."* My personal impression of Mill's meaning comes from another of his expressions: *A man who has nothing "which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."*

Intellectually, Republicans have essentially nothing more than their ideology, which, in their willingness to fight for, brings out every manner of stupidity, in every metaphorical category ever invented or invoked of lower nature. It's all just part of Republican honor. And the very liberals who, being by and large those 'better people', the same who are attacked as the cause of all that is bad, *are the only ones who will wage Voltaire's fight to ensure that Republicans retain the right to be stupid.* No liberal ever ordered under pain of law that any American have an abortion, make love to gays, or educate kids in the midst of mean and dirty heathens. But the Republicans are pleased to try passing laws against all others merely to sleep better at night. And this sounds like democracy? How? It truly takes a breathtaking kind of entitlement to carry on in this fashion. Only spoiled children and dictatorial adults can shamelessly ape such behavior.

The implicit arrogance of the 'live by my own laws' Weltanschauung is occasionally caught sneaking a midnight dip. Republicans, while so outwardly proud of tradition and religion, are notoriously oblivious of anybody else's sacrality. If the more unscrupulous of the honor-based can mine the land, they will have no scruples dispatching, literally or figuratively, the natives (the latest land grab from the Sioux). Absent cameras, a nice evening might find Republicans of superior morals skinny dipping in someone else's sacred lake without so much as a wink or a nod (lately the Sea of Galilee). Republicans are, by countless kinds of evidence, outrageously self-centered and shameless. The vast majority never deserved to hold any office, let alone powerful ones. One day liberals will learn,

doubtless the hard way, that the shameless self-centered behavior of honor-based cliques ultimately brings down everyone else in their orbit.

These self-same moral arbiters tarnish themselves as well as others. Chasing skirts and male pudenda is fine when under the rules or auspices of an open and just society. Republicans are above that, however, feeling entitled to make their own laws even as they use law to deter others from precisely the same conduct. The hypocrisy is, like the felt entitlement, breathtaking. Though these behaviors appear limited in scope, the believability test for a political party holding itself sacrosanct is the tacit approval of the rank and file. The Republican underclass makes war on gays but yet wants the assurance that they, too, can share in the radical independence demonstrated by their elders who make their own laws. It is the psychology aback the honor of thieves.

While the older set go to the younger gays for clandestine fun, the younger Republicans have their own antics, and those who happen to be the most repressed by the Republican ideology of their parents, have been known to go over the top. The object here is not, however, fun. The object is revenge and vengeance. It has happened a hundred times if it has happened once. One or more smart-ass Republican turks make like gays, corral a willing victim, take him yonder and dispatch him. Until very recently these urchins were nearly always acquitted.

It is this strain of obdurate ugliness that the Tea Party is bringing to Washington along with other erstwhile innocent ideas. Let me clue you into something here. One method and one method only works against this. Shame, and loads of it. Such is the lesson of history, whether liberals like it or not. At war you do what works, you fight fire with fire until the war is over. You apply shame. When everywhere they look there is a scowl, a stare, an upbraid, they will begin to actually use what their god gave them between the ears. They will come to know how they in particular enjoyed treating slaves and servants not so very long ago. Just because it's a different time and place doesn't mean the motivations are no longer in their breasts. The evidence clearly says that it is. The only folks not taking it sufficiently seriously are the liberals. *Take the gloves off.*

Who needs a harem when all of life is easily enriched by fabricating what is not already stretched or bent into personal service? It isn't that Republicans don't 'get it'; the real issue is simply that they don't even care that they don't get it. Republican office-holders can return to their districts where they spend every other minute of the day telling everyone who will listen how very much they truly do -- get it -- and in so doing discover still more reasons why they can expect to get elected and re-elected. They use and abuse. And then, as the chips turn, they have the balls to vocalize in dry tones that it really is we the public who don't 'get it' (e.g., Mayor Bloomberg vis-a-vis OWS).

This is less about what looks back when Republicans look into the mirror, than about what they see. Life in front of the mirror seems an apt metaphor, what with the ever-present recourse of Republicans to pruning ruffled feathers, applying the wife's foundation over the easily bruised ego, caking the shadows behind lying eyes and, of course, the justly famed forked tongue of hypocrisy. That's a lot to do, so it takes a lot of their time. Republicans are nothing if not vain in the sense that they allow self-entitlement to project both fanciful needs and fanciful enemies. It's just another way that felt entitlement manifests.

This leads to unexpected and far-flung consequences ranging from disparagement of fellow lawmakers to out-and-out war, whether with gays, minorities, women or, in spite of themselves, God. Republicans expect to ride in self-delusional ticker-tape parades that are forever threatened by enemies wanting nothing more than that their lives' lasting contributions to humanity be to rain on the Republican parades. The fear so many had of Jewish networks secretly manipulating the world is reflected in Republican paranoia that liberals are itching to lay a turd that would swallow the earth. The anxiety over these fears is palpable, magnified by the amorphous quality of the expected attacks, which might arrive in ten minutes or ten years. Fears based in congenital insecurity are fears that reign forever. Why would anyone elect such people to high office?

Insecurities based on the fear of lost entitlement yield other consequences. Since the world is against them, there is no even playing field, thus no reason to play fair. Ergo, no reason to compromise and every reason to hold back and play chicken, knowing that in this game the odds are in your favor. Decent people back down, a time-honored precept of honor-based war tactics. Further, only winning is important, and only on their terms, regardless the cost. This is honor, after all.

Such attitudes occasionally result in showy boastfulness. We all know what Senator McConnell announced as the number one goal of the minority party for the Obama administration. That was pretty sick, and the only thing sicker is that the base shouted their hurrahs in unison, just like they booed (during the Republican debates) a gay vet and then the notion that sick people might be entitled to healthcare. What barn are Republicans born in, anyway?

Answer: The barn of entitlement -- to be crass, ugly and stupid all at once. *And we shall fight to let them keep that entitlement.* But to get them to rethink entitlements altogether, we need to think how best to shame them. Honor-based peoples maintain order with the threat of shame. We are dealing with honor-based mentality, ergo...

However wrong it may be as a fact, still one can be forgiven the presumption that Republicans deem themselves special in god's eyes. Rightly or wrongly, perception counts for something. Someone should casually inform them that the mere perception of such attitudes used to land Jews in serious difficulties over long stretches of time. Whereas Jews lacked the power to prevent backlash, Republicans oftentimes find it and abuse it. It's the honorable thing to do; when you're behind, honor requires every effort and tactic; when ahead, well ... the same, since the way they enjoy the perks of power will likely require all the explaining that honor can muster. Just look at the wealth of suspicion left behind by the last occupants of the White House.

Being tone deaf carries many of the same problems. Mitt Romney's vision for kids looking to pay for a college degree is simply to borrow funds from the parents. Take a moment over this. Who is the presumptive audience, and who is the audience omitted, deliberately or not? This guy does not have the lower sixty percent of the population within five inches of the frontal lobe. In this example, one that is readily generalized, Mitt represents the part of the Republican base that flows with milk and honey, the part that, more than any other, thinks only of and for themselves. I will suggest that it is just this group that supplies endless groupies for Ayn Rand's pursuit of selfishness. Between their ideology, what they hide, and an upbringing that helps ensure tone-deafness, they are typified by words and deeds so disconnected and disorganized that connecting them has come to require a storm of static latterly dubbed "the Republican noise machine".

Living life with heavy baggage exposes one to a couple of added issues. On the fear that others can see through to one's inner fanaticism, it helps greatly to construct a façade to satisfy the mind's eye if not also those of the onlookers. Creative Republicans can also generate blinds that keep out preying eyes, but in glass houses they go up at the expense of hiding reality from their own superego. In either case we observe the tell-tale signs that Republicans are a Freudian dreamscape of sublimations and compensations when, that is, reality isn't completely condensed into fantasy (to be fair, Republicans demonstrate the ability to attend to reality in many cases where liberals are flakey to say the least; in good honor-based form, contra political correctness and fighting fire with fire are two biggies).

Honor-based societies believe strongly in their values as if they possessed today's equivalent of ideology. Herein they resemble Republicans, who are nothing if not ideologues, believing that anything they aggrandize, and anything they demolish, can be justified by the self-same ideological reasoning. Empty entitlement breeds an excuse factory. The principal difference between the honor-based culture and the Republican is in their views of reality, but only in parts thereof. When values are at issue, both will ignore facts in favor of faith, convenience or ideology. Attending responsibly to the reality without which one cannot become successful again finds them on the same page. The difference we're looking for is found in the logic and process of reality as it unfolds. When modern medicine cures what the witch-doctor makes excuses for, the honor-based usually have the good sense to accept the newfangled. Republicans just dig in their heels, believing that any giving into the wrong reality is tantamount to skimping on devotion to ideology.

Of course, it all depends on how you define reality. These days Republicans define good reality as whatever makes their lives more enriched, in every sense of that word save for the rational or the spiritual. Whereas a Roman leader might forgo a labor-saving device because of the families who would go wanting (not everyone was worried that a monopolist would go wanting if the latest deal fell through), Republicans have handy mottoes and cliches to justify money above all else.

In any culturally-dependant discussion of reality, including that of money, it is helpful to realize that the honor-based are more spiritual and moralistic, the dignity-based taking up the ethical and ecumenical side of things. In addition, we need always to recall that economics and markets are everywhere predominantly honor-based, meaning that businesspeople must per force be trusted to obey regulations, their honor in the deal carrying forth as

a component of their repute. As God's very special creatures, however, Republicans would rather be trusted absent the regulations that to them are just one more variation on the theme of enemies ready to rain on a money parade. All of which goes back to entitlement and hypocrisy, since cherry-picking reality is practically the same as making the laws as you go when you can't otherwise use law to Gerry rig.

The Republican disposition to identify with faith thus makes a great fit for the honor-based fondness for moralizing. At the practical end of the stick this means that Republicans find it possible, indeed preeminently rational, to declare to themselves and to the world that making money and being successful are *the moral prerequisites to a healthy democracy*. Don't laugh; there is a brand of Protestant theology gaining wide traction that stresses exactly that message. Apropos God's will that we go out and propagate dollar bills is the commonplace that Republicans fill the ballast of those entrepreneurial pyramid programs like Amway. Republicans are nothing if not thorough about their self-interest, even if that requires putting words in God's mouth.

When those from honor-based societies emigrate to our country they find a receptive home in business and, as evidence illustrates, do quite well, thank you very much. The critical and hugely important difference between imports and native-grown moralists, however, is the former's commitment to ensuring basic needs to all alike. In point of theory and principle, it is likewise dignity-based, though the honor-based motivation isn't quite the same as ours. They have never been able to approve of dependence on others, which is viewed as an unnatural burden reflecting a character defect. In their societies efforts are undertaken to avoid conditions that make dependence the sore spot for society that it typically turns out to be. The ghettos in South American urban areas are caused by the same conservative mentality that produces the American equivalent, and not because the peoples' philosophy of life approves it. When pundits suggest we are already a banana republic, that's what they imply, less the caring part. Elites everywhere create disastrous cults of dignity. We are at risk of passively abetting the very worst.

Republicans, while fully agreeing that dependence is a defect -- the work of the indwelling Devil -- have absolutely no desire to work matters so as to avoid the problem. They prefer to permit the problem and avoid its consequences by devoting serious resources in the effort to insulate and isolate themselves. One reason they could care less about global warming is that they can afford to avoid the consequences. These consequences and justifications amount to creating the finest Venetian blinds for their glass houses. The end result, of course, is a blindness both to humanity and to the rudimentary responsibilities that all honor-based societies have always and everywhere acknowledged.

Opportunity, to hear it from Republicans, is a meow that miraculously transduces across phyla in order to exchange mean barks with the underclass once Republican policies are doing what they do so well. Should opportunity dilute the potential for profit, whether by capitalist competition or government doles, Republicans are not well for it. In between the capitalist and government variations on profit dilution is the concept of stewardship. In theory, corporate entities benefit in many ways from an honest attempt at stewardship. It exists to prevent collateral damage from concentrated power; it helps the corporate brand by enhancing respectability, and augments sustainability through conduct the integrity of which solidifies trust in the corporate management.

Republicans welcome branding that increases market share, and predictably detest all else, whence the corporate charter, which implies all of this, has been gutted by the courts in deference to arguments from high dollar industry lawyers arguing that stepping on the brakes equates to slippery slopes and falling skies. Judges routinely buy into this in part because they are not taught the reality of law's dependence on stewardship and the offices protected thereby. Were stewardship the term of legal art applied to offices in general rather than the narrowly prescribed application to union bargaining, Republicans would not get away with the worst of what they do by nature.

All of which speaks poorly of lawyers, of courts, of corporate business (and we're really just warming up). J. P. Morgan famously decried stewardship (providing employment was stewardship), and according to some helped to fashion conservatism into the mantra that it remains today for Republicans: financial prowess coupled with commitment to religion and the facilitation [entitlements] of high culture. Thus there is widespread apoplexy when liberals, who merely ask on the basis of inherent dignity for equal opportunity, call for spending that would ensure an even playing field. Republicans have never been interested in an even playing field excepting when it benefits them and them alone. It's high time we all understood this for the reality that it is. You cannot explain reality apart from this unpleasant fact.

A further honor-based feature shared by Republicans is the supreme joy in identifying with greatness. Russians exemplify the style, with their hero worship of chess masters and allowance for the acknowledged wayward behavior of prima donnas. Regardless who it is that Republicans want to identify with and emulate, I am going to exercise a novelist's prerogative and name the most appropriate, the same J. P. Morgan already mentioned. Even the glorifying biographer John K. Winkler had to declare at least a few solid facts that will brand the Republican ideal. "He took what he wanted. His code was his own. He did things that today could not be defended in law or morals. But, for his time and generation, he played the game and played it fairly." When Wall Street claims that the public just doesn't "get it", they are referring to the game they all play. Doesn't really go very far, does it? Fair for a den of thieves seems closer to the truth.

Winkler also offered an apt metaphor capturing the temper of our own time, when remarking on the Roosevelt-Morgan feud: "Friends of both sought to bring them together. There were many meetings, but no fusion of friendship. To Roosevelt, Morgan was a man whose talents were devoted entirely to entrenching the power of organized capital. To Morgan, Roosevelt was a gentleman gone wrong -- a man who sacrificed all the privileges of his class for common applause."

Too many liberals and some independents naively expect warring entities to become purple. "We're all purple," announced President Obama years back. Nice words to get elected, not so accurate for truth-telling. No conscious liberal is going to metaphorically bed up with Hitler and then accept the shame that befitted Chamberlain. The friendships between those holding mutual political offices are for show. Professionalism is supposed to do the rest based on the rules of offices that demand the job get done at a high standard. It is only the lack of accountability and the ugly composition of the Republican presence that foils efforts at rational compromise.

Morgan's impression of Roosevelt was not based in fact but in moralistic terms. In classic honor-based theory, outsiders are as good as inhuman, at a minimum barbarian. His words were high moralism meant to enshrine felt entitlement. In sum, the 'opportunity' of America is for the powerful to be an acolyte of 'high culture'. To a Republican it also smacks of entitlement on steroids. Opportunity for the underclass is a useful locution -- for getting votes. The economic arguments suggesting that the underclass is helped by jobs created by Republican policy are a sham. The underclass is being used and abused.

Fifty years ago Republicans didn't used to be quite this extreme. Even Richard Nixon favored a guaranteed national income. Never mind the fact that it is a built-in stimulus package that can only put money in Republican pockets and seriously reduce the downside of down-turns in the business cycles. None of that fluffy stuff for today's Republicans. Their objection is moral, not economic or political. They, like their honor-based counterparts, are disposed to be moralistic. They get away with this nonsense because their underclass rigidly adheres to self-help credos along with much else in the honor-based litany.

What remains unexplained is that equal opportunity presupposes reliance on self-help. Why on earth wouldn't Republicans support opportunities that lead to self-help? I can't imagine any economist denying that competition at the level of opportunity wouldn't result in greater productivity across the board. The liberal position is that, given the nature of reality and of Republicans, such opportunity comes at a cost a portion of which society may have to pay for through taxation. *Brown v. Board of Education* was addressing this very issue. Separate schools were not offering equal opportunity and it was a cruel joke to suppose otherwise. The idea that property taxes would support schools was an attempt to equalize opportunity, but the desire to throw any amount of money at an education that granted status and a better college (etc & etc.) meant that those who could, moved into neighborhoods where high culture, high taxes and great schools were the perfect troika, effectively replicating 'separate but equal' and denying the spirit of Brown. Republicans simply took advantage, and can't honestly be blamed for that. It was 'the system' that screwed up educational opportunity. But it was sheer manna for their ideological Weltanschauung. Except, that is, for Republicans who would not tolerate their angelic children mingling with the heathens.

Of course if you have enough money you can send kids to private schools that are effectively college prep academies, and there's no arguing against that, nor should there be. That's how the system was designed. That's not exactly how Republicans want it to work, however. Republicans who fall in between ridding themselves of the heathen and the ability to afford the prep academy are still faced with paying the freight of a separate, private, education. They have never been well for that. Then they dreamt up Charter schools. Clever. Liberals saw what was going on and took them to court in Republican Arizona, no less, in a case that wound up in the lap of the five

Catholic conservative justices who not unexpectedly handed the Republicans what they wanted. This business of Republican ideology isn't just a disease, it is a virus that spreads. After decades of this High Court politicking, lawyers are still able to ignore reality in favor of the happy mythic mantra that the Court does not abide mixing politics with law. Someone hasn't been to the clue store.

Writing in the *Atlantic*, Garrett Epps saw the majority [for the Court] defending the proposition that harnessing religion for "public and civil duty" is a great idea. He then wrote about James Madison's veto message of 1811, noting the clear parallel: "he sent back to Congress a bill that would have funneled tax money to a church in the District of Columbia to operate a school." (Justice Scalia's version of originalism doesn't much abide legislative intent or the fact of vetoes on behalf of the people.) Back in reality, instances illustrate the creative ways in which Republicans have used the recent ruling to have their cake and eat it too. In some cases funds dedicated as scholarships for the poor landed in the laps of those *already* in the private school. Clever, these Republicans! They are out for number one. There is no such thing as doing what is right for the community or state or nation. They truly are apostles for J. P. Morgan. And they truly are proud of it. They are the entitled hypocrites of our era.

And why exactly are Republicans so attached to this curious topic? It manifestly is not helping the underclass, with the pitifully tiny exceptions of exceptional students. They want what they want and they want it for as low a cost as possible. Like everything else in the marketplace, morality is what they and the market says it is. Which is precisely the problem. They care for nothing but themselves, meaning that they use and abuse all else, justifying whatever they can on the morality of the marketplace. Clever, convenient, cruel and unconscionable.

We don't need Republicans to run markets. The way things are at present, we hardly need them for anything. They have outlived their usefulness and should be retired -- early, and with no pension (too expensive) or five finger access to health insurance. All of a sudden the gears start turning, when the misery done by Republicans to all others (on the highest principles known to morals and economics, mind you) comes home to roost, it is amazing how an arrogant tone-deaf brat can become nearly human, almost caring, very nearly sincere. I can easily understand how some of these personal experiences could lead to an even larger change, that of leaving their forlorn and threadbare Party behind. There is something called shame; sometimes it takes a catastrophe for the bent mind to experience its pangs and begin to respond to the warmth of another human being.

(Mr. Herrman is a liberal philosopher specializing in structural metaphysics, where he develops methodologies enabling him to derive valid and verifiable answers not only in matters of the ontology of reality, but also in real-world concerns for everyday people. Herrman has made contributions in legal, behavioral, sociological and logical theory and is challenging assumptions about the universe in recent work on the metaphysics of number. His publications include *The Office and Its Stewardship* (VDM 2009) and articles at openDemocracy, *The San Francisco Sentinel*, and the scholarly directory SSRN (Social Sciences Research Network).

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"Are Republicans 'Crazy'? Not if You Follow the Money" by Richard (RJ) Eskow, NationofChange

Aug. 31, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/are-republicans-crazy-not-if-you-follow-money-1346422455>)

Their opponents shouldn't be too quick to call Republicans "crazy." It makes more sense to employ that time-honored investigative principle: Follow the money. Sure, they've said crazy things -- in their speeches and in their official platform. But crazy?

Like a fox.

Take that "we built it" theme. Sure, they're lying about a selectively-edited phrase for political advantage. But why *this* particular phrase? Because the President was defending government's role in building America's infrastructure, educating its children, and improving its technology.

They don't want those things anymore. The argument fell on deaf ears because **the GOP isn't really the "party of business." It's the party of mega-business, of globalized multinational corporations. Those**

corporations don't need America any more. They don't need its roads, they don't need its technology, and they certainly don't need its educated middle-class workforce.

It's time to follow the money.

Money Source: Bankers

The rapid rise in the abuse of (c)(4) organization has allowed corporations and the mega-wealthy to inject hundreds of millions of dollars into election campaigns without revealing their identity. The Romney campaign has refused to follow Obama's lead by revealing the names of its "bundlers." But thanks to the efforts of the Sunlight Foundation, USA *Today* and others, we know that 25 percent of them are Wall Street types who include:

- *Steve Schwarzman*, who notoriously compared taxing billionaire hedge funders like himself the same way we tax teachers or firefighters to Hitler's invasion of Poland -- an invasion which resulted in the deaths of men, women and children in concentration camps.
- *Daniel Loeb*, the self-entitled whiner we called the "Robespierre of the hedge fund revolution" after he issued an "investor letter" in which he described hedge fund billionaires as exploited "labor," a persecuted minority, and the victims of socialist-style wealth distribution -- which, as he fails to mention, somehow resulted in *increased* wealth inequity.
- *Bill Harrison*, who engineered the creation of too-big-to-fail JPMorgan Chase and recently made an inept attempt to defend megabanks like his own Frankensteinian creation.
- Executives from repeat corporate lawbreakers like *JPMorgan Chase* and *Goldman Sachs*, along with representatives from morally compromised and scandal-ridden accounting firms. (See *When Accountants Go Bad: Scandal-Plagued Firms Turn Out For Romney*).
- An executive from Barclays, the bank which has now admitted to illegal rate-fixing in the LIBOR scandal.

Their Money's Worth: The Bankers

Are these bankers and their fellow-travelers getting their money's worth?

A Republican President appointed Republican economist Ben Bernanke to run the Federal Reserve, only to have the Fed double down on policy that makes the rich richer at everyone else's expense. (Yes, Obama reappointed Bernanke. We'll get to that during their convention.)

The "financial sector" -- that is, Wall Street -- had a great recovery from the Great Recession, thanks to the American people, while the rest of the country remains mired in an ongoing depression which Wall Street created. And it's once again capturing a greater share of this nation's profits, squeezing out productive businesses that create jobs:

FINANCIAL-INDUSTRY PROFITS AS A SHARE OF U.S. BUSINESS PROFITS



(via Business Insider)

Looks like something's working. Bankers contribute to both parties, but lately most of their love is going one way: to the GOP.

Money Source: Billionaires

Non-banking billionaires contributed to the war-chest too. New GOP-backed bills -- and more importantly, GOP-appointed judges - have allowed billionaires to keep on giving enormous sums of money to their cause once they've reached the official limit for campaign contributions. So far Super-PACs have raised nearly a quarter of a billion dollars from wealthy individuals for this year's election. And nearly 60 percent of that money came from just 47 people.

It's the finest election money can buy.

Big billionaire donors include Sheldon Adelson, Bob Perry, the Crow brothers, and assorted members of the Marriott family.

And for those of you who were worried that the bankers and billionaires might have been inconvenienced by God's wrath toward the GOP convention, you'll be relieved to know that the bundlers all got together for a nice yacht party.

Like they say down South: They're just folks.

Their Money's Worth: Billionaires

Are they getting their money's worth? Take a look at this table from William Domhoff:

Table 2: Wealth distribution by type of asset, 2007

	Investment Assets		
	Top 1 percent	Next 9 percent	Bottom 90 percent
Business equity	62.4%	30.9%	6.7%
Financial securities	60.6%	37.9%	1.5%
Trusts	38.9%	40.5%	20.6%
Stocks and mutual funds	38.3%	42.9%	18.8%
Non-home real estate	28.3%	48.6%	23.1%
TOTAL investment assets	49.7%	38.1%	12.2%

	Housing, Liquid Assets, Pension Assets, and Debt		
	Top 1 percent	Next 9 percent	Bottom 90 percent
Deposits	20.2%	37.5%	42.3%
Pension accounts	14.4%	44.8%	40.8%
Life insurance	22.0%	32.9%	45.1%
Principal residence	9.4%	29.2%	61.5%
TOTAL other assets	12.0%	33.8%	54.2%
Debt	5.4%	21.3%	73.4%

From Wolff (2010)

The richest Americans have most of their wealth in business assets, financial securities, trusts, stocks and mutual funds, and non-home real estate. The vast majority of the population has its assets in bank accounts, home value, and pension accounts.

This table shows clearly that the Republican Party (along with a number of Democrats) is pushing policies that increase the assets of the wealthy, while at the same time fighting laws or regulations that protect everyone else's. They're fighting to keep capital gains taxes low and reduce even them further when it's now been proven that these cuts don't create jobs.

In any given year the country's 400 highest-income households earn between four and nine times as much of their income from capital gains as they do from salaries. They, along with other wealthy GOP backers, are benefiting from tax policies on everything from inherited wealth to unearned income.

And all those "hawkish" cuts avoid harming the business interests that make the wealthy even wealthier. They're targeted toward Medicare, assistance for low-income households, and anything else that can lighten the 1 percent's tax load without cutting into its profits.

Money Source: Big Corporations

In addition, every big corporation in the country has one, as do most corporate special interests, and Super-PACs collect from a variety of high-income sources.

High-dollar bankrollers for the GOP include the defense industry (surprisingly exempt from its supposed "hawkish" anti-spending stance), drug companies, and outsourcing corporations.

Then there's the US Chamber of Commerce, which receives preferential (c)(6) tax treatment while boasting that it provides political cover to unpopular corporate causes. The ugly causes it supports include bribery (through its attacks on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act), child labor (through its promotion of Uzbek cotton sales and other goods), totalitarian Communist workforces (through its Shanghai and other chapters), and environmental destruction (through its defense against the authority of Ecuadorian courts).

If Evil ever forms its own corporation, it will know where to go for lobbying.

The Chamber overwhelmingly supports Republicans. (It endorsed only one Democrat in 2010, and didn't give him any money.) The New York Times reports that it spent nearly \$90 million on lobbying, employing 98 internal lobbyists and 90 others through outside firms. It's also closely allied with the anti-democratic, anti-union organization known as "ALEC." The Chamber gets most of its funding from a few sources, and overwhelmingly from

large corporations. Its positions on a variety of issues are routinely described as "extremist" -- and it has enormous influence on the GOP.

This year outside sources have already been responsible for \$167.5 million in campaign spending, as of last report, of which \$12.7 million was "secret" or "dark" money that can't be traced to its source.

(No wonder Republicans killed a law that would have required more transparency in campaign finance.)

Their Money's Worth: Corporations

The GOP is the ultra-large-business party. It uses rhetoric about "small entrepreneurs" and "individual initiative" to disguise the fact that its policies support the giant corporations which are crushing individual entrepreneurs, Mom and Pop operations, and start-up companies.

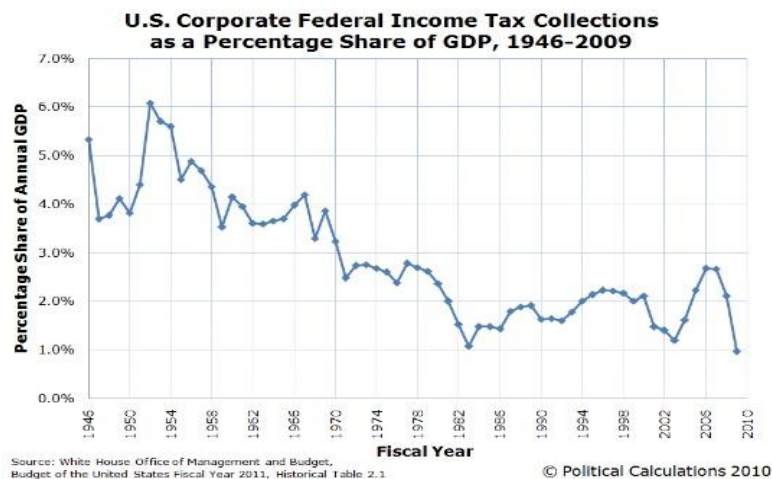
In fact, when President Obama offered to cut \$28 million from the Small Business Administration (wrongly, in our opinion) that wasn't enough for the GOP. House Speaker John Boehner immediately demanded another \$100 billion in cuts.

The big-corporation bias explains language which says that "regulation should be a helpful guide, not a punitive threat." *That'll stop the outlaws!* There's even stranger language which speaks of "lawmaking agencies," the "over-criminalization of behavior," and the "Federalization of offenses."

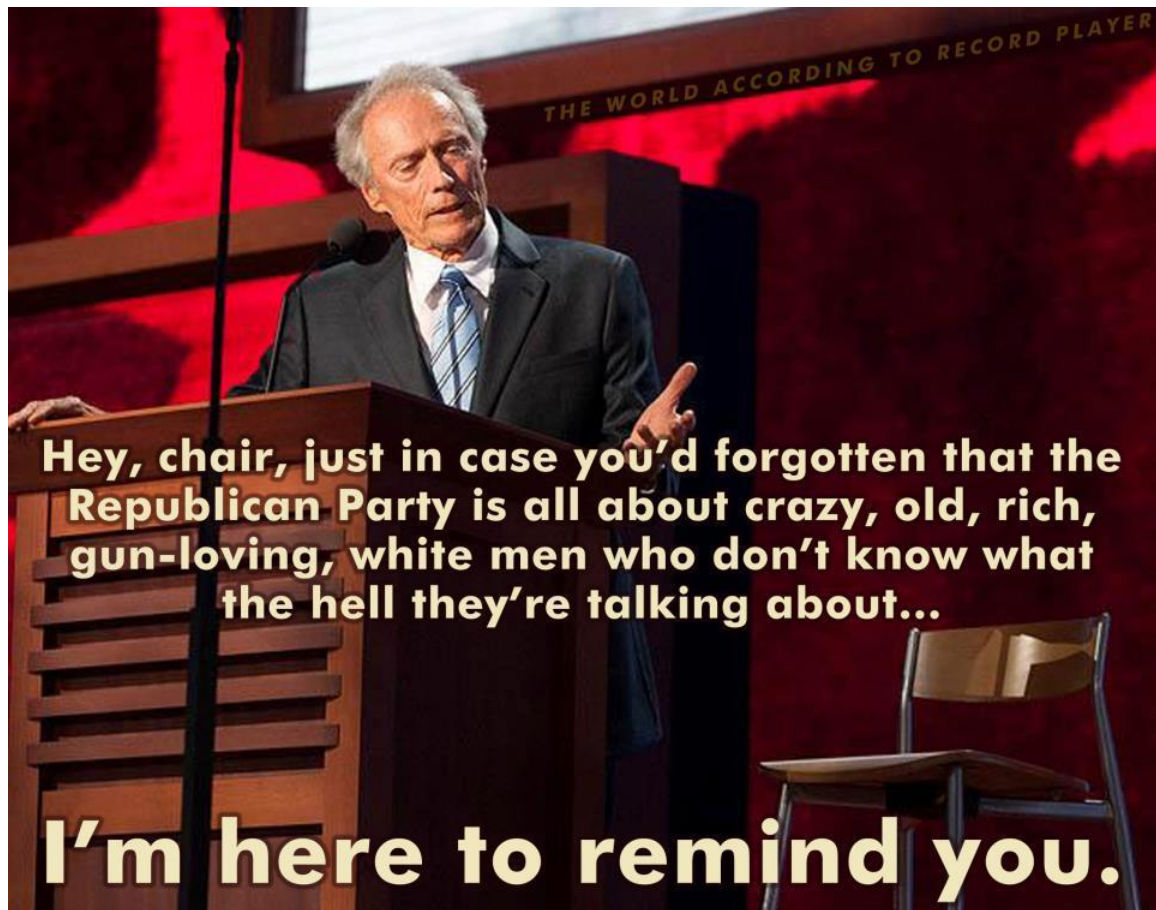
Translation: They want the Federal government stripped of its ability to regulate business or punish rogue corporations. They want to roll back the Administrative Procedure Act of 1946 which gave modern agencies their powers, leaving the Federal government powerless to protect us from the depredations of the GOP's corporate sponsors.

Romney's proposed oil and gas policies are following the money from that industry, too.

Meanwhile, new loopholes and tax breaks are leaving corporations paying less of their fair share than at any time in modern memory:



You can call all of this disgusting, or venal, or corrupt. But crazy? Not on your life. Critics should stop describing it that way and start calling it what it really is: the prostitution of democracy to the highest bidder.



This seems to me to be true on a higher plane than truth is normally encountered on. This is an elevated truth. Perhaps a celestial truth...

The party of senility, imposed morality, and unabashed lies must go down!

We get such a kick out of Republican genius...

"'Eastwooding' Makes the Rounds on the Web" (w/ video) by Claudine Zap, Yahoo! News/The Sideshow

Aug. 31, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/sideshow/eastwooding-makes-rounds-173242531.html>)

Clint Eastwood was the surprise speaker at the Republican convention. And the *Dirty Harry* actor's rambling speech didn't make everybody's day. The 82-year-old gave an ad-libbed talk to an empty chair on stage that was supposed to be President Obama—or where he was sitting—or something.

It didn't take long for Obama's furniture stand-in to take on a life of its own. Cue the "Eastwooding" Web meme.



Game of Thrones "Eastwooding" from @Column55 on twitter.

Immediately, Clint Eastwood became a trending topic on Twitter as commenters poured out their thoughts—and let their imaginations run wild.

From Brent Spiner @BrentSpiner, "After watching Clint Eastwood's speech last night at the RNC, I'm voting for the chair. "

Chris Rock (yes, that Chris Rock) @chrisrockoz posted, "Clint Eastwood on the phone with Obama now: 'It all went according to plan,sir.'"

@BorowitzReport wrote, "A new poll reveals that Romney trails Clint Eastwood's empty chair after convention."



Mr. Eastwood addresses chair, at the Republican National Convention in Tampa, August 30, 2012. (Photo by Mark Wilson/Getty...

Ken Jennings @KenJennings added, "An LA cop friend tells me Clint Eastwood has been driving alone in the HOV lane 'with the President' for YEARS. "

Funny Or Die jumped in with a gallery of some of the best images, noting that Eastwood gave "a stern lecture to a chair," and picking up on some of the best chair memes, many of which involved the Eastwood/Chair ticket for 2012.

A fake Simpsons cartoon image shows Grandpa Simpson in a newspaper clipping with the headline, "Old man yells at chair."

And a Shepard Fairey version of the 2008 "Hope" poster was circulating with an image of a chair instead of Obama.

Suzanne Munshower @expatina asked, "I have one question: Was the mystery guest Clint Eastwood or the Invisible Obama?"

Simon Pegg @simonpegg posted, "Woken up to excited chatter in the US. Apparently Clint Eastwood had an argument with an empty chair regarding its political standpoint."

FastLaugh @FastLaugh tweeted, "Give Clint Eastwood a break... The RNC asked him to speak about ObamaCare and he thought they said ObamaChair..."

Obama's Twitter feed, @BarackObama responded with the post: "This seat's taken " and a photo of the commander-in-chief in a chair with the plaque "The President." It's been retweeted more than 40,000 times:



This seat's taken.

20120901-12	19:22	SteveB	Video: Eastwood's Surprise
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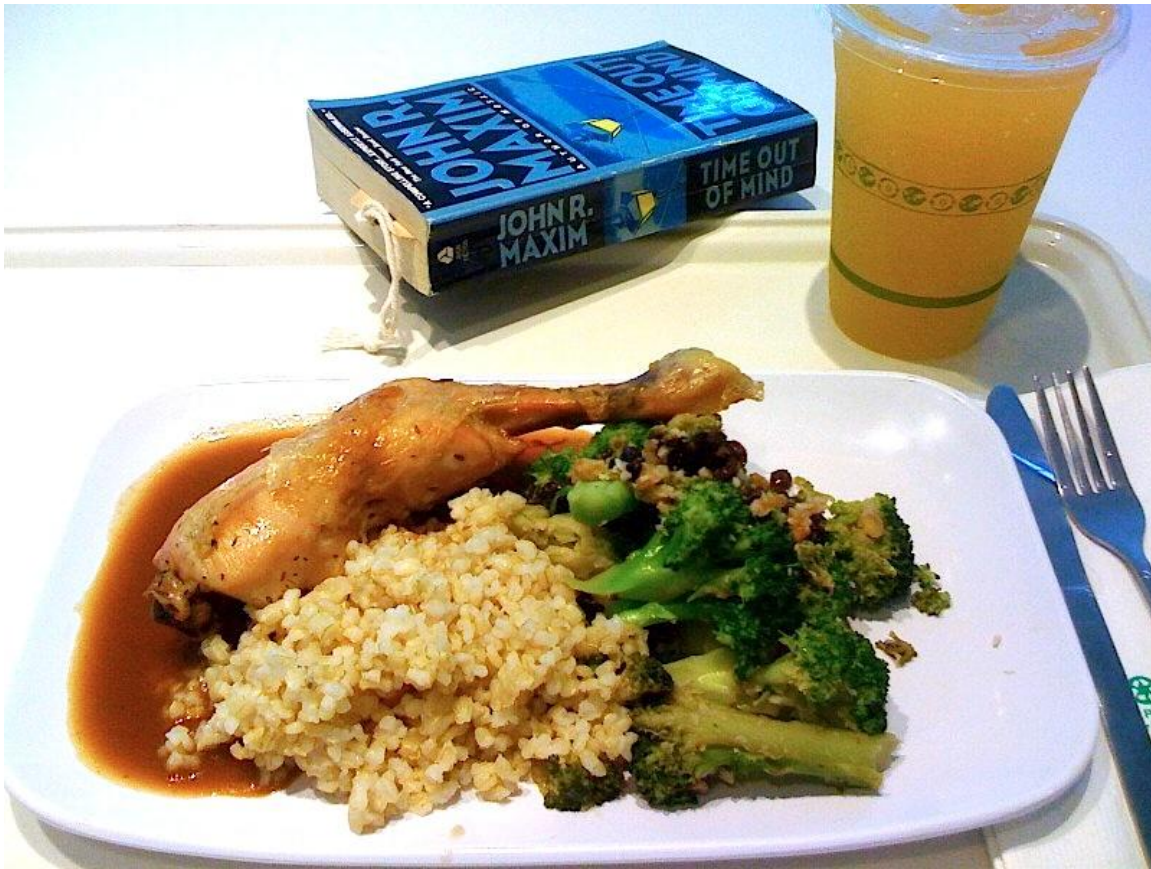
<http://www.politico.com/multimedia/video/2012/08/clint-eastwoods-surprise-speech-to-rnc.html>

20120831-10	15:39	Ben	Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple
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Today, the fish offering was probably-delicious Korean Catfish Tacos. As catfish isn't on my fish lust list, I looked further afield, and was rewarded with a Bistro reprise of a pleasant surprise earlier in the week: I chickened up.

My leg quarter, with skin, was so tender that I was able easily to slide every morsel of meat off the bone with the edge of my fork. Even that crown of gristle that joins the two bones separated completely from the surrounding flesh with a flick of my fork. Thus, it was as easy as it was rewarding to consume every last morsel of this flavorful

bird. Roasted broccoli is always a Good Thing, and with a currant garnish, it was particularly yummy. The chicken portion and plate were decorated with a delicious chicken demiglace that added a note of elegance. The check-out special beverage today was watermelon orange lemonade.



Brined Chicken Confit with Brown Rice and Roasted Broccoli

[20120831-12](#)

15:56

SteveG

"President Grants Limited Disaster Declaration, Governor Jindal Requests Full Declaration to Protect Life, Property"

"President Grants Limited Disaster Declaration, Governor Jindal Requests Full Declaration to Protect Life, Property" by Governor's Office, State of Louisiana

Aug. 27, 2012, (<http://gov.louisiana.gov/index.cfm?md=newsroom&tmp=detail&articleID=3593>)

(BATON ROUGE, La.) Following a very limited federal disaster declaration by the President of the United States that only granted a portion of the state's request, Governor Bobby Jindal sent a letter to the federal government requesting a full disaster declaration for the state.

The White House issued a release today which states that "the declaration builds on resources already deployed by FEMA and makes Federal funding available for certain emergency activities undertaken by the state to prepare for and respond to the storm." However, the limited declaration does not provide for reimbursement of expenses that the state is taking to prepare for the storm.

Below is the Governor's letter to the federal government:

August 27, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States, The White House, Washington, D. C.

Through: Mr. Tony Robinson, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region VI, 800 North Loop 288, Denton, TX 76209-3698

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your approval of a limited federal declaration of emergency for Tropical Storm Isaac for the State of Louisiana. We appreciate your response to our request and your approval. However, the State's original request for federal assistance dated August 26, 2012 included a request for reimbursement for all emergency protective measures. The federal declaration of emergency only provides for direct federal assistance.

In a release issued by the White House today, it said "the declaration builds on resources already deployed by FEMA and makes Federal funding available for certain emergency activities undertaken by the state to prepare for and respond to the storm." Unfortunately, your limited declaration does not provide for reimbursement of expenses that the state is taking to prepare for the storm.

As of 5 p.m. Central time today, the National Weather Service forecasts this storm to strengthen to a Category 2 hurricane and squarely impact the State of Louisiana. The increased urgency of the situation necessitates that we re-emphasize the request for full federal assistance for the State.

The projected path of the storm has continued to shift westward and now threatens the entire State of Louisiana. The rapidity of the path's westward movement has increased the potential impact of this storm from a slight chance of affecting southeastern Louisiana to now threatening the entire state. The speed with which this threat developed has necessitated extraordinary emergency protective measures at the State and local government level.

Since the State of Louisiana is faced with a rapidly developing situation that threatens a large percentage of our population, please consider the following developments as a supplement to the request submitted yesterday.

At this time 34 parishes have declared a state of emergency:

Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Cameron, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Franklin, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafourche, Livingston, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, St Bernard, St Charles, St Helena, St James, St John, St Martin, St Mary, St Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Washington, West Baton Rouge.

We request that you expand the designations to include all of these parishes. We expect more parishes to declare a state of emergency.

There are currently 9 areas covered by mandatory evacuation orders:

- Jefferson – Grand Isle
- Jefferson – Town of Jean Lafitte
- Jefferson – Crown Pointe
- Jefferson – Barataria
- Lafourche – Low lying parishes
- Plaquemines – From Braithwaite to White Ditch on the East Bank
- Plaquemines – From Ironton South to Venice
- St Charles – Parish Wide Evacuation
- Tangipahoa – Town of Winnsboro, Lee's Landing, and low-lying areas

As of this morning, I have activated 4,126 Louisiana National Guardsmen, an emergency contract for over 300 commercial buses, and over 5,000 shelter spaces to respond to the wide ranging projected path of this storm, move our citizens out of harm's way and provide them with shelter. The school districts in the path of the storm have cancelled school until this dangerous storm passes.

All of these actions are appropriate and necessary responses to the threat of this storm. While Tropical Storm Isaac has yet to strike the state, it has necessitated significant amounts of State and local government expenditures. The

State's expenditures for emergency protective measures are already approximately \$8,000,000 and exceed the State of Louisiana's threshold when making a request for a major disaster declaration.

Given the extraordinary developments of this storm and its approaching impact on the State of Louisiana, I ask that you exercise your discretion to approve the State's pending request for all emergency protective measures. Further, I ask that you consider a cost-share adjustment to eliminate the State's non-federal share of the costs for this event. When threatened with extraordinary disasters, states depend upon the availability of the full spectrum of assistance available under the Stafford Act.

Finally, a core responsibility of the federal government is to protect the lives and property of its citizens when threatened. This disaster declaration will help ensure that we best protect life and property in our state.

Sincerely, Bobby Jindal, Governor

20120831-14 18:18 Dennis Presidential Candidate Test

Take this test to see which presidential candidate most agrees with you:

<http://www.isidewith.com/presidential-election-quiz?from=76990530>.

Obama was third on my list, and Mittens got only 2%.

20120831-16 18:39 SteveG Re: Presidential Candidate Test (reply to Dennis, above)

I expanded all areas and obtained the following:

Jill Stein	93%
Barack Obama	85%
Rocky Anderson	81%
Rmoney	8%

20120901-02 08:30 Pam Re: Presidential Candidate Test (reply to Dennis, above)

91% with Jill Stein (whoever she is)
90% with Obama
4% with Romney (I think that's high :-))

OK, Jill Stein is the Green Party candidate. I like what I read about her and wish she had a louder voice.

20120901-03 08:39 SteveG Re: Presidential Candidate Test (reply to Pam, above)

I like what I read about Dr. Stein also and I even like what I read about Rocky Anderson, but have heard nothing of either until this test. A true even tabled election that truly has a level playing field for more ideas than what 2 parties produce would be a welcome change. In our lifetime, I think not.

20120901-04 11:05 Art Re: Presidential Candidate Test (reply to Dennis, above)

Very good. Perhaps not surprisingly, I agreed with the President on most issues.

20120901-11 15:20 Clark Re: Presidential Candidate Test (reply to Dennis, above)

I'm proud to say I'm 96 percent with Jill Stein, 85 percent with Barack Obama, and 1 percent with Mitt Romney.

Well, not sure how that 1 percent crept in...

20120902-22 21:22 SteveB Re: Presidential Candidate Test (reply to Dennis, above)

OK, finally got there...last, it looks like. Everyone should take this. It's very well done, I think.

I got:

87% — Jill Stein
81% — Barry
72% — Rocky Anderson
7% — Mittens
56% — American Voters

I guess I'm not as radical as Pam or Clark! :-)

I don't think I'd heard of Jill or Rocky before this survey. And they say we live in a country with free elections?

20120831-17 20:57 SandyI "The Guide to Medicare Attack Lines"

Fun facts and discrediting...

Also can browse the "pants on fire" Truth-O-Meter for some quickie facts -- 11 pages worth if you are that interested.

"The Guide to Medicare Attack Lines" by Becky Bowers, PolitiFact

Aug. 27, 2012, (<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2012/aug/24/guide-medicare-attack-lines>)

A vote for Republicans or Democrats in November is a vote for politicians who plan to limit growth in Medicare spending.

Both sides agree Medicare's soaring expense must be slowed down as medical costs rise and Baby Boomers retire. Each side abuses the truth when they say the other side's method abandons seniors.

The reality is that both sides risk eroding seniors' benefits as they seek savings. But the risks aren't equivalent. If efforts to trim spending fail, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to let beneficiaries, rather than taxpayers and care providers, take the hit.

President Barack Obama's health care law reins in traditional Medicare through regulations, incentives and stronger oversight of payments to doctors and hospitals. That could limit some seniors' access to care if their doctors or hospitals can't stay afloat on reduced payments.

The Republican approach, authored by U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and embraced by presidential candidate Mitt Romney, seeks to bring more private insurance companies into Medicare. They believe market pressures will push down costs.

If that doesn't work, Ryan's plan doesn't say what it would do to meet its spending cap. That leaves it open to criticism that beneficiaries would end up paying more for their Medicare -- and maybe not be able to afford it at all.

But campaign rhetoric rarely acknowledges these complex realities. Instead, it's, "The other guy wants to end your Medicare!"

Here's a roundup to help you stay on top of the most common campaign lines.

Does either side 'end' Medicare?

Democrats have been chanting "Republicans voted to end Medicare" since an April 2011 vote on a proposed budget from Ryan, now the GOP vice presidential nominee. The claim -- often made bluntly and with no qualifiers -- was so pervasive, PolitiFact chose it as our 2011 Lie of the Year.

Ryan's most recent plan keeps Medicare intact for people 55 or older, but changes the program by providing government subsidies for people to buy either private insurance or a traditional Medicare option.

We've left it up to you to decide whether Ryan's most recent plan ends Medicare "as we know it" — a qualifier that's more opinion than checkable fact in the case of the plan's significant changes. (Read our extended analysis.)

It wasn't tough to make the call, however, when Romney declared that Obama is "ending Medicare as we know it." Under Obama's approach, Medicare would still be a large, single-payer, federally run health care program for seniors. We rated Romney's claim Pants on Fire.

Is Ryan's plan a "voucher" plan?

Democrats have repeatedly criticized Republican privatization proposals as "vouchers." Republicans don't like the word and try to avoid it. They prefer to call Ryan's Medicare plan "premium support," which evokes a history of proposals that offer a set payment for seniors to buy insurance policies with a defined set of services. Payments were designed to grow along with health care costs.

We found that Ryan's plan hovers somewhere between the two concepts — while pretty much fitting the dictionary definition of "voucher." Obama said that Romney and Ryan "want to turn Medicare into a voucher system." We rated that Mostly True.

Then there was the Obama radio ad that said Romney and Ryan would "end Medicare and replace it with a voucher." We called it Mostly False, because Ryan's plan doesn't end Medicare, and it still puts a lot of requirements on insurance companies that offer plans.

Was \$700 billion "robbed" from Medicare?

Democratic and Republican plans for Medicare seek to slow Medicare's growth over a decade by more than \$700 billion. An Obama staffer claimed that Ryan's plan, put forward in Congress earlier this year, included such savings. We rated that True.

But Romney went too far when he claimed that the president's plan "takes that money out of the Medicare trust fund and uses it to pay for Obamacare." That gives the impression that the law takes money that was already allocated to Medicare and funds the new health care law with it. In fact, the law uses a number of measures to try to reduce the rapid growth of future Medicare spending. Those savings are then used to offset costs created by the law -- especially coverage for the uninsured -- so that the overall law doesn't add to the deficit. We rated Romney's statement Half True.

We were even less impressed when Romney said Obama "robs" Medicare of the same amount, and gave that claim a Mostly False.

In a campaign ad, Romney pointed out that Obama attacked his 2008 opponent John McCain along similar lines. The ad accurately shows Obama saying, "Sen. McCain would pay for part of his plan by making drastic cuts in Medicare, \$882 billion worth." (Back then, we rated Obama's attack False.)

Will Republican or Democratic plans hurt seniors?

Obama has said that Republicans will stick seniors with higher Medicare costs, while the Romney team says Obama's board of bureaucrats will deny them care. Ryan likes to say his plan won't affect current seniors. All of these claims stretch the truth.

Obama's been guilty of referring to an older, harsher version of Ryan's plan when he claims that it "could raise future retirees' costs more than \$6,000." We simply don't have enough details to know how much extra money seniors might have to pay for traditional Medicare under the current Ryan plan, the one Romney supports. We rated the president's claim Half True.

Meanwhile, Ryan claimed that "unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats" will make decisions that will "lead to denied care for current seniors." Members of Medicare's new Independent Payment Advisory Board are appointed by the president and approved by the Senate. But the president can fire them for neglect of duty or malfeasance, and Congress can overrule their recommendations.

And "denied care" is a strong way to phrase the board's possible effect. The board oversees only a small percentage of the Medicare savings in the health care law. It's expected to recommend cutting provider payments, with an eye on getting rid of waste and inefficiency. That could restrict some seniors' access to care if some providers find they can't cope with lower reimbursements.

But the board is required by law to pay attention to issues like access to care in rural areas, and explicitly isn't allowed to engage in rationing or changing benefits. Ryan creates the specter of an unaccountable board making all of Medicare's spending decisions. That's scarcely the case. We rated his claim Mostly False.

Ryan's on somewhat stronger ground when he says that his plan for Medicare "does not affect your benefits." That's the case for his Medicare reform ideas, which would not affect people currently 55 and older.

But it ignores Republicans' promises to "repeal and replace" the federal health care law. Repealing the law would take away benefits for current enrollees — such as reducing the cost of prescription drugs, which saved Medicare beneficiaries \$2.1 billion last year. Until it's clear just what benefits Republicans would "replace," we have to assume enrollees' benefits could be affected by the law's repeal. We rated Ryan's claim Half True.

See other Medicare claims you'd like us to check? Send them to truthometer@politifact.com.

Related rulings:

"In 2008, candidate Barack Obama attacked John McCain for proposing cuts to Medicare." (Mitt Romney, Aug. 26, 2012), Ruling: True.

The Romney-Ryan plan for Medicare "does not affect" benefits for anyone 55 or older. (Paul Ryan, Aug. 18, 2012), Ruling: Half-True.

Paul Ryan's Medicare plan "could raise future retirees' costs more than \$6,000." (Barack Obama, Aug. 17, 2012), Ruling: Half-True.

Says Obama puts "15 unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats in charge of Medicare, who are required to cut Medicare ... that will lead to denied care for current seniors." (Paul Ryan, Aug. 18, 2012), Ruling: Mostly False.

"In Florida, they're already talking about how the Ryan-Romney plan will end Medicare and replace it with a voucher." (Barack Obama, Aug. 20, 2012), Ruling: Mostly False.

"Under the president's plan, he cuts Medicare by \$716 billion, takes that money out of the Medicare trust fund and uses it to pay for Obamacare." Mitt Romney, Aug. 15, 2012), Ruling: Half-True.

Says Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan "want to turn Medicare into a voucher system." (Barack Obama, Aug. 15, 2012), Ruling: Mostly True.

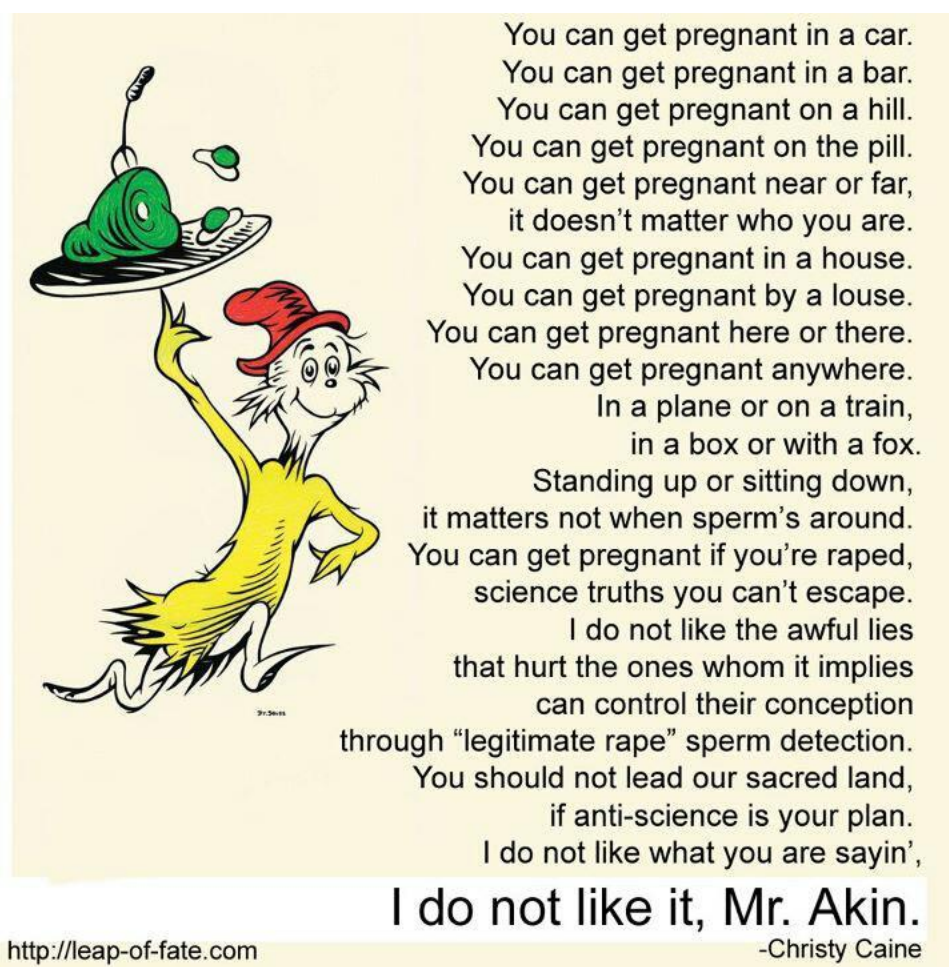
Says Barack Obama "robbed Medicare (of) \$716 billion to pay for ... Obamacare." Mitt Romney, Aug. 12, 2012), Ruling: Mostly False.

Says Paul Ryan's budget relies on the same \$700 billion in savings from Medicare that Mitt Romney and other Republicans have been attacking Democrats about. (Stephanie Cutter, Aug. 12, 2012), Ruling: True.

President Barack Obama is "ending Medicare as we know it." (Mitt Romney, March 12, 2012), Ruling: Pants on Fire!

20120901-01	07:27	SandiI	Dr. Seuss & Mr. Aikin
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Response to Todd Akin by way of Dr. Seuss.



20120901-05	11:19	Art	Re: Dr. Seuss & Mr. Aikin (reply to SandyI, above)
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Good one!! Thanks.

20120901-06	11:51	SteveB	"Money in Politics: Where is the Outrage?"
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This seems to me like a very important article!

"Money in Politics: Where is the Outrage?" by Bill Moyers, NationofChange

Sept. 1, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/money-politics-where-outrage-1346505495>)

We might wish the uproar from the convention halls of both parties these busy weeks were the wholesome clamor of delegates deliberating serious visions of how we should be governed for the next four years. It rises instead from scripted TV spectacles — grown-ups doing somersaults of make-believe — that will once again distract the public's attention from the death rattle of American democracy brought on by an overdose of campaign cash.

No serious proposal to take the money out of politics, or even reduce its tightening grip on the body politic, will emerge from Tampa or Charlotte, so the sounds of celebration and merriment are merely prelude to a funeral cortege for America as a shared experience. A radical minority of the super-rich has gained ascendancy over politics, buying the policies, laws, tax breaks, subsidies, and rules that consolidate a permanent state of vast inequality by which they can further help themselves to America's wealth and resources.

Their appetite for more is insatiable. As we write, Mitt Romney, after two fundraisers in which he raised nearly \$10 million from the oil and gas industry, and having duly consulted with the Oklahoma billionaire energy executive who chairs the campaign's energy advisory committee, has announced that if elected President, he will end a century of federal control over oil and gas drilling on public lands, leaving such matters to local officials more attuned to industry desires. Theodore Roosevelt, the first great advocate for public lands in the White House, would be rolling in his grave, if Dick Cheney hadn't already dumped his bones in a Wyoming mining shaft during the first hours of the Bush-Halliburton administration.

We are nearing the culmination of a cunning and fanatical drive to dismantle the political institutions, the legal and statutory canons, and the intellectual and cultural frameworks that were slowly and painstakingly built over decades to protect everyday citizens from the excesses of private power. The "city on the hill" has become a fortress of privilege, guarded by a hired political class and safely separated from the economic pressures that are upending the household stability, family dynamics, social mobility, and civic life of everyday Americans.

Socrates said to understand a thing, you must first name it. As in Athens then, so in America now: The name for what's happening to our political system is corruption — a deep, systemic corruption.

How did we get here?

Let's begin with the judicial legerdemain of nine black-robed magicians on the Supreme Court back in the 1880s breathing life into an artificial creation called "the corporation." An entity with no body, soul, sense, or mortality was endowed with all the rights of a living, breathing "person" under the Constitution. Closer to our own time, the Supreme Court of 1976 in *Buckley vs. Valeo* gutted a fair elections law passed by a Congress that could no longer ignore the stench of Watergate. The Court ruled that wealthy individuals could spend unlimited amounts of their own fortunes to get themselves elected to office, and that anyone could pour dollars by the hundreds of thousands into the war chests of political action committees to pay for "issue ads," clearly favoring one side in a political race, so long as a specific candidate or party was not named.

Money, the justices declared in another burst of invention, was simply a form of speech.

Then, just two years ago, the Roberts Court, in *Citizens United vs. Federal Elections Commission*, removed any lingering doubts that the marvelous "persons" that corporations had become could reach into their golden troughs to support their candidates and causes through such supposedly "educational" devices as a movie trashing Hillary Clinton.

Meaningful oversight of campaign expenditure, necessary if representative government is to have a fair chance against rapacious wealth, was swept away. Hail to a new era in which a modestly-financed candidate is at the mercy of nuclear strikes from television ads paid for by a rich or corporate-backed opponent with an "equal right" to "free speech." As one hard pressed Connecticut Republican, lagging behind in a primary race against a billionaire

opponent outspending him twelve to one, put it: "I'm fighting someone with a machine gun and I've got a pistol." When the votes were counted, even the pistol turned out to be a peashooter.

A generation ago, the veteran Washington reporter Elizabeth Drew warned against the rising tide of campaign money that would flood over the gunwales of our ship of state and sink the entire vessel. Noah's Flood was a mere drop in the bucket compared to the tidal wave that has fulfilled Drew's prophecy. The re-election of every member of Congress today is now at the mercy of corporate barons and private princes who can make or destroy a candidacy by giving to those who vote "right," or lavishing funds on opponents of those who don't.

Writing the majority opinion for *Citizens United*, Justice Anthony Kennedy would have us believe corruption only happens if cash passes from one hand to another. But surely as he arrives at his chambers across from Capitol Hill every morning, he must inhale the fetid air rising from the cesspool that stretches from Congress to K Street — and know there's something rotten, beyond the naked eye, in how Washington works.

Senator John McCain knows. Having been implicated in the Keating Five scandal during the savings and loan debacle 30 years ago, he repented and tried to clean up the game. To no avail. And now he describes our elections as nothing less than "an influence-peddling scheme in which both parties compete to stay in office by selling the country to the highest bidder."

For the ultimate absurdity of money's role, we must look to another group of happy billionaires, the corporate owners of the television stations which reap handsome profits for selling the public's airwaves to undisclosed buyers (also known as campaign contributors) who pollute the political atmosphere with millions of dollars spent on toxic ads designed to keep voters angry, dumb, or both. Every proposal is shot down or undermined that would make it a duty for those stations to devote free air time for public purposes in order to earn the licenses that they treat as permits to get rich. In one of the great perversions of the Constitution foisted on its subjects by their overlords, the public airwaves where free speech should reign have become private enclosures to which access must be bought. Free? It's about as free as Tiffany pearls.

Money rules. And in the foul air democracy chokes and gasps, the middle class falls behind, and the poor sink from sight as political donations determine the course and speech of policies that could make the difference in the lives of ordinary people struggling in a dog-eat-dog world.

The Devil must grin at such a sorry state of affairs and at the wicked catch-22 at its core. To fight the power of private money, it is first necessary to get elected. To get elected it is necessary to raise astronomical amounts of private money from people who expect obedience in return. "That's some catch," says Yossarian to Doc Daneeka, and Doc agrees: "It's the best there is."

Where is the outrage at this corruption? Partly smoothed away with the violence, banality, and tawdry fare served up by a corporate media with every regard for the public's thirst for distractions and none for its need to know. Sacrificed to the ethos of entertainment, political news — instead of getting us as close as possible to the verifiable truth — has been reduced to a pabulum of so-called objective analysis which gives equal time to polemicists spouting their party's talking points.

As ProPublica recently reported: "Someone who gives up to \$2,500 to the campaign of President Barack Obama or challenger Mitt Romney will have his or her name, address and profession listed on the FEC website for all to see. But that same person can give \$1 million or more to a social welfare group that buys ads supporting or attacking those same candidates and stay anonymous." But when is the last time you heard one of the millionaire anchors of the Sunday talk shows aggressively pursue a beltway poobah demanding to learn about the perfidious sources of the secret money that is poisoning our politics?

At our combined ages we've seen it all; hope no longer springs eternal. We know the odds against reversing the hardening grip of the monied interests are disheartening. Those interests are playing to win the ferocious class war they launched 40 years ago with a strategy devised by the corporate lawyer Lewis Powell (later a Supreme Court justice) and a call to arms from the Wall Street wheeler-dealer William Simon, who had been Richard Nixon's treasury secretary. Simon argued that "funds generated by business" would have to "rush by multimillions" into conservative causes in order to uproot the institutions and the "heretical" morality of the New Deal. He called for an

“alliance” between right-wing ideologues and “men of action in the capitalist world” to mount a “veritable crusade” against everything brought forth by the long struggle for a progressive America. *Business Week* noted at the time “that some people will obviously have to do with less... It will be a bitter pill for many Americans to swallow the idea of doing with less so that big business can have more.”

This was not meant to be. America was not intended to be a winner-take-all country. Our system of checks and balances — read *The Federalist Papers* — was to keep an equilibrium in how power works and for whom. Because of the vast sums of money buying up our politics, those checks and balances are fast disappearing and time is against us.

We are losing ground, but that’s the time when, more than ever, we need to glance back at the progressive crusades of a century ago to take note of what has been forgotten, or rather what braying blowhards like Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck have been distorting or attempting to flush down the memory hole. Robbing a nation of its historical memory is the most devastating of all larcenies because it opens the door to far worse crimes.

We have been here before. The two of us have collaborated in studying the example of the populists and progressives who over a century ago took on the financial and political corruptors. They faced heavy odds, too — a Supreme Court that exalted wealth as practically a sacred right, the distortion by intellectual and religious leaders of the theory of evolution to “prove” that the richest were the fittest to rule, the crony capitalism of businessmen and politicians.

With government in the grip of such exploiters, child labor was a fact of life, men and women were paid pittance for long hours of work and left unprotected from industrial diseases and accidents, and workers too old to be useful to employers any longer were abandoned to starvation or the poorhouse. No model laws existed to protect them.

But these pioneers of progressivism were tough citizens, their political courage fueled by moral conviction. They sensed, as the Kansas editor William Allen White wrote, that their country had fallen into the hands of self-seekers, their civilization needed recasting, and a new relationship must be forged between haves and have-nots. When the two major parties failed them they gave full throat to their discontent by fighting from outside, and when Theodore Roosevelt’s breakaway Progressive Party held its organizing convention in 1912 — exactly one hundred years ago — they shook the rafters with “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Oh, for such defiance today!

From the fighters of that era came a renewal of the social contract first set forth in the preamble of the Constitution — the moral and political notion of “We, the People.” Equitable access to public resources was its core, so that when the aristocrat De Tocqueville came here from France in the 1830s he marveled at the egalitarian spirit he found in the new country. Public institutions, laws and regulation, as well as the ideas, norms, and beliefs embedded in the American mythos pointed to a future of prosperity open to all. That ideal survived the fires of the civil war and then the hard, cold cruelties of the industrial era and the First Gilded Age because people believed in and fought for it. They neither scorned nor worshipped wealth but were determined it would not rule.

It was on these foundations that the New Deal built the structure now under attack, with the support of a Depression-stricken nation which realized that we were all in it together — as we were in the war against fascism that followed.

But in the succeeding fat years the nation forgot something — the words of the great progressive senator Robert LaFollette from Wisconsin: “Democracy is a life and demands constant struggle.” *Constant* struggle. No victory can be taken for granted, no vigilance relaxed. Like the Bourbon kings of France, the lords of unrestrained, amoral capitalism never forgot anything. They learned from their defeat how to organize new strategies and messages, furnish the money to back them, and recapture control of the nation’s life. And in the absence of genuine, fight-to-the-finish resistance, they are winning big-time.

Think of where we are now. One party is scary and the other is scared. The Tea Party, the religious right, and a host of billionaires dominate the Republican Party. Secret money fills its coffers. And in the primaries this year almost every Republican inclined to compromise to make government work went down before radical and well-funded opponents with a fundamental “anti-government” mindset.

Yet even now President Obama says he is sure the Republicans will be willing to negotiate if he is re-elected. Sure, and the wolves will sit down with the lamb.

Nor is that all. In Wisconsin, salvo after salvo of campaign cash for union-busting Governor Scott Walker defeated the effort to recall him. In Pennsylvania a hardline judge has given his approval to a voter ID law specifically targeted to making it harder for low-income would-be voters to register. And such laws are proliferating like runaway cancer cells in state after state. The Tea Party and right-wing Christians furnish the shock troops of these assaults, but those who could be counted on for sturdy defense are not immune to the grinding pressures of nonstop fundraising. Democratic incumbents and challengers, in national and state canvasses likewise garner corporate contributions — including President Obama, whose fundraising advantage is about to be overtaken by Mitt Romney and the Deep Pockets to whom he is beholden. And at both conventions, the prime time show is merely window-dressing; the real action occurs at countless private invitation-only parties where CEOs, lobbyists, trade associations and donors literally cash in their chips. Writing in the *New York Times*, for example, Nicholas Confessore reports how The American Petroleum Institute will entertain with a concert and panels, all the while promoting an agenda that includes approval of the Keystone XL pipeline, opposition to new transparency rules for American energy companies operating abroad, and the expansion of oil production on those public lands Mitt Romney is preparing to turn over to them.

Does this money really matter? Do owls and bats fly by night? Needed reforms are dead on arrival on the floor of Senate and House. Banking regulations with teeth? Mortgage relief? Non-starters when the banks' lobbyists virtually own Washington and the President of the United States tells Wall Street financiers he is all that stands between them and the pitchforks of an angry mob. Action on global warming? Not while the fossil fuel industries and corporate-back climate deniers have their powerful say in the matter. Cutting bloated military expenditures? Uh-uh, when it means facing a barrage of scare stories about weakening our defenses against terrorism. Spend money on modernizing our rail system or creating more public transportation in our auto-choked city streets? What heavy artillery the auto, gasoline and highway construction lobbies would rain down on any such proposal.

All of which would make a Progressive Rip Van Winkle shake his head in disbelief and grind his teeth in fury. "Where is the passion we shared for driving money from politics?" he would ask. Where indeed? Not on the floor of either of these conventions. You are unlikely to hear the name of Theodore Roosevelt praised by Republicans or of Franklin Delano Roosevelt by the Democrats, except in perfunctory terms (It was FDR, after all, who said he feared government by money as much as government by the mob.)

Each party will sing the obligatory hosannas to the middle class, give the silent treatment to the working poor, and bellow forth the platitudes of America's "spirit of enterprise and innovation" that will restore our robust economy and world leadership. If the stagnant recovery and sufferings of the unemployed and underemployed get any mention, it will be to blame them on the other party. As for taking on the predatory rich, forget it.

Our advice: Learn something from the emptiness of what you see and hear — and if it doesn't make you mad as hell and ready to fight back against the Money Power, we are all in real trouble.

20120901-07	11:55	SteveB	"Obama Slams <i>Citizens United</i> "
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FINALLY!

"Obama Slams *Citizens United*" by John Bonifaz, *Yes!!*/NationofChange

Sept. 1, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/obama-slams-citizens-united-1346506286>)

Yesterday, President Obama issued a first-ever statement in support of a constitutional amendment to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling. During an "Ask Me Anything" conversation with the general public on the website Reddit (a session that has garnered a record-breaking 4 million views for the social news website and inspired 25,000 people to register to vote, according to the *Los Angeles Times*), participant Suzanne Merkelson

asked: "What are you going to do to end the corrupting influence of money in politics during your second term?"
The president responded:

Money has always been a factor in politics, but we are seeing something new in the no-holds barred flow of seven and eight figure checks, most undisclosed, into super-PACs; they fundamentally threaten to overwhelm the political process over the long run and drown out the voices of ordinary citizens ... Over the longer term, I think we need to seriously consider mobilizing a constitutional amendment process to overturn *Citizens United* (assuming the Supreme Court doesn't revisit it). Even if the amendment process falls short, it can shine a spotlight on the super-PAC phenomenon and help apply pressure for change.

President Obama's statement marks an important new milestone in the growing movement to reclaim our democracy. In just two and a half years, this movement has defied the skeptics who said Washington would never pay attention to a call for a constitutional amendment to overrule the Supreme Court. Millions of Americans across the political spectrum have demonstrated that their voices will be heard on this critical question of our time.

Our democracy is in crisis. We will either continue down the road toward a plutocracy or we will restore the fundamental promise of government of, for, and by the people. We should all look forward to the president taking further action in support of the call for this constitutional amendment. We should also urge all presidential and congressional candidates in this election to join this call. At this crucial moment in our history, we must use the power we have to preserve our republic.

20120901-08	12:08	Art	Video: "Everything Wrong with the Tea Party in 6 Minutes"
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Sadly, not a real news broadcast, but maybe should be.

"Everything Wrong with the Tea Party in 6 Minutes" Jeff Daniels in "The Newsroom", posted by Mansur Gidfar on Upworthy

Aug. 28 2012, (<http://www.upworthy.com/everything-wrong-with-the-tea-party-in-less-than-two-minutes>)

It's a sad commentary on the state of the media when some of the best journalism of 2012 consistently comes from works of fiction.

Same Video: "'The Newsroom' – Tea Party is the American Taliban"
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=yGAvwSp86hY).

20120901-09	13:51	SteveB	"Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them"
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The sad truths about the Republican candidates become more apparent daily...

And so here is the takeaway from last week's saturation-level political activity, revealed not by the carefully-staged theater we witnessed, but by the moments in which the actors went off-script and the truth was accidentally revealed:

Mitt Romney is not a particularly great decision-maker, and Paul Ryan is a liar.

"Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them" by Sean Carman, Huffington Post

Sept. 1, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sean-carman/lies-and-the-lying-liars-b-1848894.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

All week, Mitt Romney and the Republican Party sought to convince us that Romney is a wise decision-maker and a good manager, and that Paul Ryan is someone we can trust.

But two unlikely events in the past week revealed the truths behind the Romney campaign's carefully constructed narrative.

The first event was, of course, Clint Eastwood's appearance at the Republican National Convention, in which he gave a rambling presentation to the audience, then turned to his left to berate an empty chair.

The performance was remarkable for its dream-like quality, which was only heightened by its off-color tone, and then there was the way it transported the convention to another place -- a lonely place, a place of fear, familiar to us all, where we are exposed for having very little to say and no idea how to say it.

Eastwood may have creatively tapped into the free-floating, unspoken fear driving Republican politics this year, but it's pretty clear that putting him on stage with no idea what he would say was a terrible idea.

Whose idea was it? Today we learn it was the idea of none other than that supposedly great decision-maker and manager himself, Mitt Romney.

According to the *New York Times*, Romney invited Eastwood to speak at the convention after seeing Eastwood's endorsement speech at a Sun Valley fund-raiser earlier this summer. Romney said at the time, "He just made my day. What a guy." After that, Romney privately invited Eastwood to speak at the convention, and Romney's aides set the surprise appearance in motion.

Let's all make a note and try to remember this come November:

Mitt Romney: Not Really That Great of a Decision-Maker, Manager, or Delegator of Important Tasks.

The second incident is less zany, and has received less attention. During a radio interview last week with political blogger Hugh Hewitt, Paul Ryan claimed to have once run a marathon in under three hours. Ryan said he used to run marathons, and when Hewitt asked him what his personal best was, Ryan said, "Under three, high twos. I had a two-hour and fifty something." In response to Hewitt's praise, Ryan added, "I was fast when I was younger, yeah."

But, as Runner's World reported yesterday, Ryan apparently ran only one marathon in his life, when he was 20, and his time was 4 hours, 1 minute, and 25 seconds.

As Nicholas Thompson writes on the New Yorker blog today, Ryan's mistake is not the kind a runner would make. The difference between a three hour marathon time and four hour marathon time is huge, and runners remember their times. It's also not the kind of mistake an honest person would make. Also: who goes around bragging about the marathon times he ran as a college student?

As the bearded genius (and national treasure) Paul Krugman points out, on its own, Ryan's fib wouldn't matter. But Ryan has been lying for years about his budget proposals. The lies in his convention speech were breathtaking. His casual lie about his marathon time fits a pattern, and seems to reveal something characteristic about him, namely that he lies to advance his own interests, whether he is promoting his reputation on Capitol Hill or seeking to impress a blogger in a radio interview.

And so here is the takeaway from last week's saturation-level political activity, revealed not by the carefully-staged theater we witnessed, but by the moments in which the actors went off-script and the truth was accidentally revealed:

Mitt Romney is not a particularly great decision-maker, and Paul Ryan is a liar.

When your nickname becomes Lyin' Ryan, you know you're in trouble.

The sub-three-hour marathon whopper just lost him the runners' vote.

20120901-13	19:37	SteveB	"Ale to the Chief: White House Beer Recipes"
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I wonder how this tastes?

"Ale to the Chief: White House Beer Recipes" by Sam Kass, The White House Blog

Sept. 1, 2012, (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog>) (<http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/09/white-house-releases-beer-recipe-134051.html?hp=f3>)

(Ed. Note: There's been a lot of buzz online recently about the recipe for the White House Honey Ale and White House Honey Porter, including a popular petition on We the People, the White House's online petition platform.)

With public excitement about White House beer fermenting such a buzz, we decided we better hop right to it.

Inspired by home brewers from across the country, last year President Obama bought a home brewing kit for the kitchen. After the few first drafts we landed on some great recipes that came from a local brew shop. We received some tips from a couple of home brewers who work in the White House who helped us amend it and make it our own. To be honest, we were surprised that the beer turned out so well since none of us had brewed beer before.

As far as we know the White House Honey Brown Ale is the first alcohol brewed or distilled on the White House grounds. George Washington brewed beer and distilled whiskey at Mount Vernon and Thomas Jefferson made wine but there's no evidence that any beer has been brewed in the White House. (Although we do know there was some drinking during prohibition...)

Since our first batch of White House Honey Brown Ale, we've added the Honey Porter and have gone even further to add a Honey Blonde this past summer. Like many home brewers who add secret ingredients to make their beer unique, all of our brews have honey that we tapped from the first ever bee-hive on the South Lawn. The honey gives the beer a rich aroma and a nice finish but it doesn't sweeten it.

If you want a behind the scenes look at our home-brewing process, this video offers some proof:

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dygQrX8FI3Q&feature=player_embedded.

THE WHITE HOUSE HONEY ALE

BREWED WITH WHITE HOUSE HONEY

WASHINGTON, DC



SEPTEMBER 1, 2012

INGREDIENTS

- 2 (3.3 lb) cans light malt extract
- 1 lb light dried malt extract
- 12 oz crushed amber crystal malt
- 8 oz Bisquit Malt
- 1 lb White House Honey
- 1 ½ oz Kent Goldings Hop Pellets
- 1 ½ oz Fuggles Hop pellets
- 2 tsp gypsum
- 1 pkg Windsor dry ale yeast
- ¾ cup corn sugar for priming



DIRECTIONS

1. In an 12 qt pot, steep the grains in a hop bag in 1 ½ gallons of sterile water at 155 degrees for half an hour. Remove the grains.
2. Add the 2 cans of the malt extract and the dried extract and bring to a boil.
3. For the first flavoring, add the 1 ½ oz Kent Goldings and 2 tsp of gypsum. Boil for 45 minutes.
4. For the second flavoring, add the ½ oz Fuggles hop pellets at the last minute of the boil.
5. Add the honey and boil for 5 more minutes.
6. Add 2 gallons chilled sterile water into the primary fermenter and add the hot wort into it. Top with more water to total 5 gallons. There is no need to strain.
7. Pitch yeast when wort temperature is between 70-80°. Fill airlock halfway with water.
8. Ferment at 68-72° for about seven days.
9. Rack to a secondary fermenter after five days and ferment for 14 more days.
10. To bottle, dissolve the corn sugar into 2 pints of boiling water for 15 minutes. Pour the mixture into an empty bottling bucket. Siphon the beer from the fermenter over it. Distribute priming sugar evenly. Siphon into bottles and cap. Let sit for 2 to 3 weeks at 75°.

WHITEHOUSE.GOV

THE WHITE HOUSE HONEY PORTER

BREWED WITH WHITE HOUSE HONEY

WASHINGTON, DC



SEPTEMBER 1, 2012

INGREDIENTS

- 2 (3.3 lb) cans light unhopped malt extract
- ¾ lb Munich Malt (cracked)
- 1 lb crystal 20 malt (cracked)
- 6 oz black malt (cracked)
- 3 oz chocolate malt (cracked)
- 1 lb White House Honey
- 10 HBUs bittering hops
- ½ oz Hallertaur Aroma hops
- 1 pkg Nottingham dry yeast
- ¾ cup corn sugar for bottling



DIRECTIONS

1. In a 6 qt pot, add grains to 2.25 qts of 168° water. Mix well to bring temp down to 155°. Steep on stovetop at 155° for 45 minutes. Meanwhile, bring 2 gallons of water to 165° in a 12 qt pot. Place strainer over, then pour and spoon all the grains and liquid in. Rinse with 2 gallons of 165° water. Let liquid drain through. Discard the grains and bring the liquid to a boil. Set aside.
2. Add the 2 cans of malt extract and honey into the pot. Stir well.
3. Boil for an hour. Add half of the bittering hops at the 15 minute mark, the other half at 30 minute mark, then the aroma hops at the 60 minute mark.
4. Set aside and let stand for 15 minutes.
5. Place 2 gallons of chilled water into the primary fermenter and add the hot wort into it. Top with more water to total 5 gallons if necessary. Place into an ice bath to cool down to 70-80°.
6. Activate dry yeast in 1 cup of sterilized water at 75-90° for fifteen minutes. Pitch yeast into the fermenter. Fill airlock halfway with water. Ferment at room temp (64-68°) for 3-4 days.
7. Siphon over to a secondary glass fermenter for another 4-7 days.
8. To bottle, make a priming syrup on the stove with 1 cup sterile water and ¾ cup priming sugar, bring to a boil for five minutes. Pour the mixture into an empty bottling bucket. Siphon the beer from the fermenter over it. Distribute priming sugar evenly. Siphon into bottles and cap. Let sit for 1-2 weeks at 75°.

WHITEHOUSE.GOV

Maybe just not Presidential material?

"Failing the Commander-in-Chief Test" by Richard Klass, Huffington Post

Aug. 1, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-klass/failing-the-commander-in_b_1848804.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

Governor Willard "Mitt" Romney seeks the Commander-in-Chief role. But in accepting the Republican nomination for president, he showed no understanding or concern for the men and women who served this country or interest in the national security issues that face this nation.

This judgment is based on Mr. Romney's words -- or lack thereof -- to the Republican Convention in Tampa. The words "veteran," "Iraq," "alQaeda" and "Afghanistan" appeared nowhere in Mr. Romney's speech or in Congressman Paul Ryan's. And, as near as I can tell in plowing through the turgid tome called the Republican Party Platform, does the word "veteran" appear.

What! The party that used to flay the Democrats for being weak on national defense cannot have their platform deal with veterans while finding room for the gold standard and domestic fertilizer production? You betcha.

Now some of this is perfectly rational. Why mention the war in Iraq when the president who started it is also unmentionable. And, if mentioned, it would have to be acknowledged that President Barack Obama ended that war. And worse, in a torrent of claims of Obama's broken promises, it would not do to highlight that he kept his promise to end that war. But you would think that Mr. Romney might acknowledge that we still have a war going on in Afghanistan and that young Americans are still dying there.

But then he might have to mention President Obama's decisions to increase troop strength and his strategy to wind down that too long conflict, while he has criticism but no alternative. The promise thing also nixes mentioning alQaeda or, quiet now, Bin Laden. People might remember that Mr. Romney said that it did not make sense to spend millions to get "one man" or, worse, that the President kept his promise and did it.

Failure to acknowledge this nation's debt to veterans also raises awkward questions about promises kept. President Obama pledged to fulfill the "sacred trust" between the nation and our veterans. It would not be helpful to mention that promise was kept by the largest increases in the Department of Veterans' Affairs budgets in years, appropriations Congressman Ryan voted against. And someone might notice that Mr. Ryan also voted against the New GI Bill of Rights that is honoring today's veterans with educational opportunities akin to those that sent their grandfathers to college after WWII. It would also not do for someone to mention that the word "veteran" does not appear in Mr. Ryan's budget that is supposed to outline a future for America. I suppose it is possible for Mr. Ryan to imagine an American future without veterans. I cannot. And, though a mumbling Clint Eastwood could be tolerated, mentioning ending "don't ask, don't tell" would get you booed off the stage.

So Mr. Romney and Mr. Ryan, when you are asking whether we are better off today than four years ago, I have some suggestions of some people to ask. Ask military members and their families if they are better off without multiple tours to Iraq and painful family separations. Ask veterans if they are better off with the educational opportunities offered by the New GI bill of Rights. Ask the vets who were excluded from earned veterans' care by the policies of the unmentionable previous president. Ask the spouses who have found it easier to transfer professional credentials to new duty station states due to the work of Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden. Ask the formerly homeless vets who have been the beneficiaries of another Obama promise kept. And, stealthily of course, no sense stirring up the bigots, ask the thousands of gay and lesbian servicemen if they are better off not having to live a lie.

Mr. Romney, you raised the canard of an Obama "apology tour" that never happened and said you were going on a jobs tour. Hold that thought. You need to go on another tour first, a tour to apologize to our troops and our veterans for snubbing them so egregiously.

Mr. Romney, you have not the faintest idea of the struggles that military members and their families face. And you do not understand that their lives are much better than four years ago. You have not experienced anything like the trauma of war and its aftermath. Before you can claim to be qualified as Commander-in-Chief, you need to talk to the troops and the vets and listen to their stories, their hopes and their fears and ask your sidekick to do the same. You owe yourself that privilege and you owe them the opportunity to educate you.

[20120902-02](#) 08:33 Pam Re: "Failing the Commander-in-Chief Test" (reply to SteveB, above)

This is great!

Let's see. Romney doesn't have the support of women, minorities, the LGBT community, immigrants, educators, union members, or students. Knock on wood, there's no way this dude can win.

[20120902-04](#) 09:49 SteveB Re: "Failing the Commander-in-Chief Test" (reply to Pam, above)

Which is why I don't understand the polls being so tight. Maybe that's about to start changing now, though.

Hopefully, Democrats will look good compared to the stupidest political convention in the history of America.

I guess R0mney thought Clint Eastwood and not mentioning Afghanistan would get him votes???

The only political party to ever stand for election based on the platform: "F*CK YOU, AMERICA!" (Ain't it the truth?)

[20120902-03](#) 08:58 Art Re: "Failing the Commander-in-Chief Test" (reply to Pam, above)

Don't forget racists and religious fundamentalists.

[20120902-05](#) 09:52 SteveB Re: "Failing the Commander-in-Chief Test" (reply to Art, above)

Surely those a-holes don't outnumber us?

[20120902-08](#) 13:52 MarthaH Re: "Failing the Commander-in-Chief Test" (reply to Pam, above)

Pam: This is great! Let's see. Romney doesn't have the support of women, minorities, the LGBT community, immigrants, educators, union members, or students. Knock on wood, there's no way this dude can win.

maybe... I have ***never*** seen a flip-flopper or panderer to rival him. Until he started all that--aka as governor--I thought he had a "R" brain I could tolerate. Oops, he fooled me! He started with the hunting story in the prior attempt...and he has gone downhill via his handlers since. How about honor and conviction???? Aren't those traits the President of the USA needs? Too bad the Congress doesn't have the same desire to move us forward... Those members pander to the caucus and do what they are told. Sad for the future. What happened to us???? Most slept through the change. And I am having the hot flashes of fear. (Sorry for the pun...well, NOT...)

[20120902-10](#) 14:05 Beth Re: "Failing the Commander-in-Chief Test" (reply to MarthaH, above)

The message has got to get out that Romney is a jellyfish and Ryan is a liar. The prospect of them in the White House is too frightening to contemplate. I thought back in the primaries that I could live with Romney, but no more. The Dems must get out the vote big time!

Received from one of my Republican friends.

[Source of original email unknown, --SteveB]

2012 Democratic National Convention Schedule -- Charlotte, N.C.

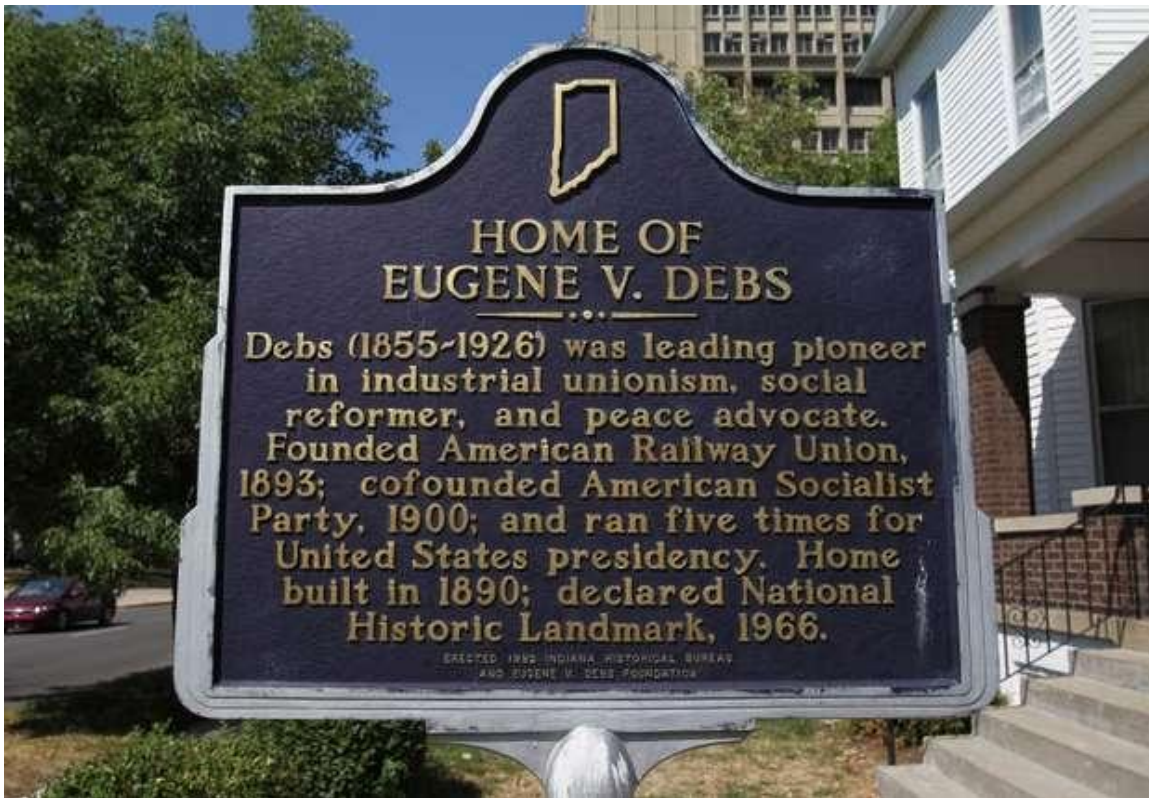
- 4:00 PM – Opening Flag Burning Ceremony – sponsored by CNN
- 4:05 PM – Singing of "God Damn America " led by Rev. Jeremiah Wright
- 4:10 PM – Pledge of Allegiance to Obama
- 4:15 PM – Ceremonial 'I hate America' led by Michelle Obama
- 4:30 PM – Tips on "How to keep your man trustworthy & true to you while you travel the world" – Hillary Clinton
- 4:45 PM – Al Sharpton / Jesse Jackson seminar "How to have a successful career without having a job."
- 5:00 PM – "Great Vacations I've Taken on the Taxpayer's Dime Travel Log" - Michelle Obama
- 5:30 PM – Eliot Spitzer Speaks on "Family Values" via Satellite
- 5:45 PM – Tribute to All 57 States – Nancy Pelosi
- 6:00 PM – Sen. Harry Reid - 90-minute speech expressing the Democrat's appreciation of the Occupy Wall Street movement, and George Soros for sparing no expense, for all that they have accomplished to unify the country, improve employment and to boost the economy.
- 8:30 PM – Airing of Grievances by the Clintons
- 9:00 PM – "Bias in Media – How we can make it work for you" Tutorial – sponsored by CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*
- 9:15 PM – Tribute Film to Brave Freedom Fighters incarcerated at GITMO – Michael Moore
- 9:45 PM – Personal Finance Seminar - Charlie Rangle
- 10:00 PM – Denunciation of Bitter Gun Owners and Bible readers.
- 10:30 PM – Ceremonial Waving of White Flag for IRAQ , & Afghanistan
- 11:00 PM – Obama Energy Plan Symposium / Tire Gauge Demonstration / You too can get rich with Green Investment bankruptcies
- 11:15 PM – Free Gov. Blagovich rally
- 11:30 PM – Obama Accepts Oscar, Tony and Latin Grammy Awards
- 11:45 PM – Feeding of the Delegates with 5 Loaves and 2 Fish – Obama Presiding
- 12:00 AM – Official Nomination of Obama by Bill Maher and Chris "He sends a thrill up my leg" Matthews
- 12:01 AM – Obama Accepts Nomination as Lord and Savior
- 12:05 AM – Celestial Choirs Sing
- 3:00 AM – Biden Delivers Acceptance Speech

20120902-15

17:02

SteveG

Graphic: Eugene V. Debs Home, Terre Haute, Indiana



20120902-16

17:38

Art

A Challenge to Mitt Romney

What do you think? At the Convention the President offers Romney a little challenge to help America.

Something like: 'I invite Governor Romney to join with me in passing now the extension of the Bush tax cuts to 95% of the American people. This will help the American people plan for the future and provide our business community the confidence to get back to investing in America. If you win the election, so be it, you can push the tax break for the remaining 5%. If I win, well you may not get that but we both will have helped out the vast majority of our people. Come join with me, Governor Romney, in this common cause'

I'd love to see this.

20120902-17

19:38

Pam

Re: A Challenge to Mitt Romney (reply to Art, above)

Wow. Me too!

20120902-19

20:25

SteveB

Re: A Challenge to Mitt Romney (reply to Art, above)

I like it!

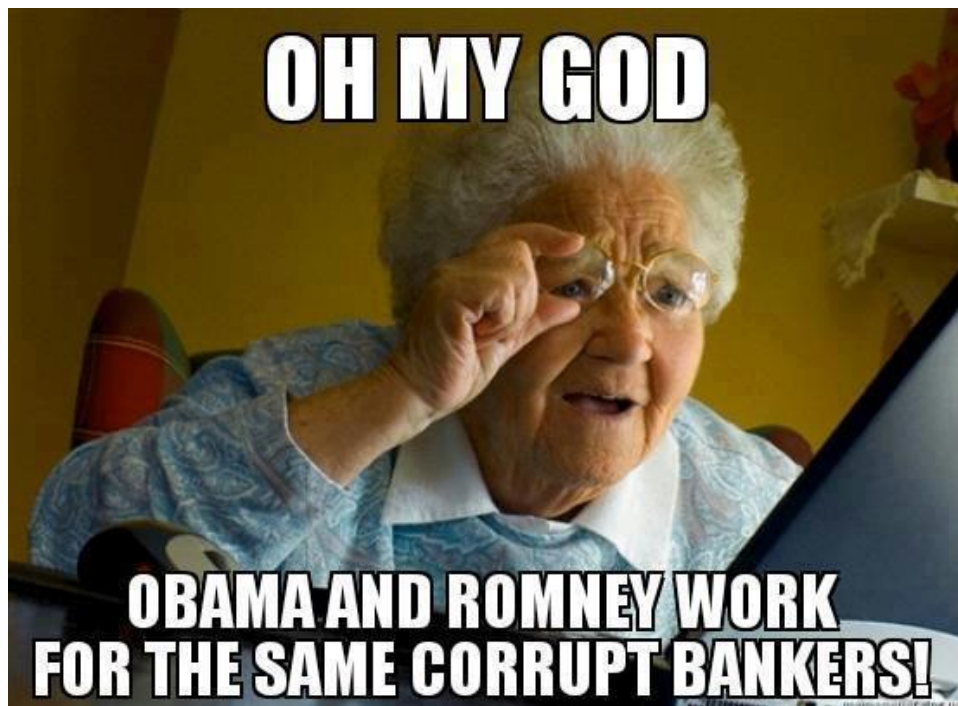
20120902-25

22:11

Bill

Re: A Challenge to Mitt Romney (reply to Art, above)

At one point, and I think it was about the time of the Korean war, the highest rate for those with large taxable income was about 90 per cent. People seem to have forgotten about that



This says it ALL! This is one of the best photos yet.

"Politics: Comparing Media to Vultures is Unfair...to the Vultures" by Kathy Hoekstra, CainTV

Aug. 30, 2012, (<http://www.caintv.com/Comparingmediatovulturesisunfa-321>)

(At least vultures, unlike the media, only pick on prey that are already dead.)

I have spent many years as a member of the media. This means in front of the camera, holding the microphone and in the case of news events, part of a so-called media scrum whereby a person deemed to be worthy of an interview is instantly swarmed by any media within a 50 yard radius.

Now I work on the other side of this publicity phenomenon and it has never been more clear to me than this week at the Republican National Convention in Tampa how akin to vultures the media really appear.

Now let's compare:

One could argue the media and vultures have similar goals: Find an unsuspecting creature, unceremoniously pluck at all the meat from the bones of the creature until it is bare bone then fly away in search of the next big 'get'. Both get some form of nourishment.

There are a couple of big differences, however.

The vultures seek out creatures that are already dead, and they leave behind only a pile of bones.

A frenzied feeding of Herman Cain soundbites leaves the media with an often spicy collection of common sense, inspired insight and thoughtful commentary. Such a "feeding" also ensures there is a greater chance Cain's message will hit the airwaves, print or internet.

Another big difference, the media always comes back for more.

This is a GOOD one.



This is part of my response to all the squeals for "Gun Control!"

Videos: <http://www.caintv.com/GunlessMomentsinHistory-33>.

"Woman Arrested for Continually Blasting AC/DC Anthem 'Highway to Hell'" by Amy Sciarretto, Loudwire

Sept. 2, 2012, (<http://loudwire.com/woman-arrested-for-continually-blasting-acdc-anthem-highway-to-hell/>)



(by Donald Weber, Getty Images)

There's an old saying that if it's too loud, you're too old. However, we're not so sure that adage applies to the New Hampshire town in this particular case, where a woman was arrested after blaring AC/DC's anthem "Highway to Hell" at 1 AM.

Joyce Coffey, 53, was arrested four times in a week for offenses like blaring music at all hours of the day and hitting her nephew with a frying pan. Cops arrested Coffey multiple times when she refused to turn down the music on her radio.

The Union Leader reports that Coffey received a police visit at 3PM on Tuesday (Aug. 28) when neighbors complained about her cranking rock music. She was ordered to turn down the volume, but cops returned to the scene an hour later to deal with the same complaint. It appears that once officers left, she cranked the knobs again. She was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct when she refused to turn down the music again.

Coffey was released on \$500 personal recognizance bail but was warned yet again on 9:20PM on Tuesday night. She refused to turn it down so she was arrested again on a disorderly conduct charge. She was released on \$1,000 personal recognizance bail on the condition that she not play her stereo until after 10AM on Wednesday.

Coffey wanted to speak to the authorities about her music, and to find out what a reasonable volume would be, so they called her to discuss. She promised to not to play the music loudly.

But she quickly broke that vow, as cops received another complaint at 1AM on Wednesday (Aug. 29.) She was blasting "Highway to Hell" at that point. The speakers were pointed out the door, so it would seem Coffey was doing it on purpose. Coffey was arrested for a third time and charged with disorderly conduct and breach of bail conditions.

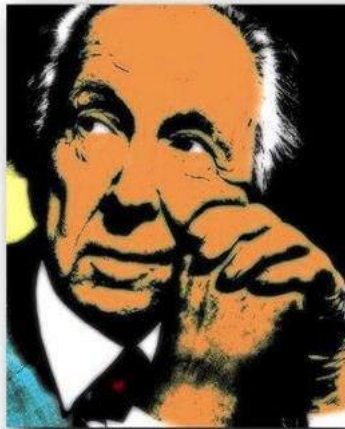
She was eventually released on \$10,000 personal recognizance bail and is barred from playing music before 10AM and after 8PM. It was also suggested that she pick up some headphones.

Wouldn't it have been ironic if Coffey had been cranking AC/DC's "Rock and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution"?

Coffey was then arrested for a fourth time when her nephew complained that she hit him with a frying pan. She was arrested on simple assault and breach of bail conditions. Her bail was set at \$10,000 cash.

[Sometimes they don't let you get away with anything! Party poopers! One of my all-time favorite bands. The guitar intro to "Hells Bells" is like the Sistine Chapel ceiling—otherworldly! –SteveB]

[20120902-27](#) 23:58 SteveG Quote: Frank Lloyd Wright on Capitalism



If capitalism is fair, then unionism must be. If men have a right to capitalize their ideas and the resources of their country, then that implies the right of men to capitalize their labor.

• Frank Lloyd Wright

[20120902-28](#) 23:58 SteveB Update: Bolivian Bakery Biz

Last minute update:

"Houston, we have landed on the moon and baked our first cookies today (Monday)!"

They were delicious, even though not completely perfect yet! Obviously, we have our big exhaust hood installed and have gas for the oven, but we don't have our city gas hook-up yet, and we're mired in red tape, incompetence, and shady people.

So, we bought two big gas "bottles" for \$500 or so. Now we can bake while we wait for YPFB (a government owned company) to come tear-up the street.

Our vendor uniforms with the Snicker-Doodle logo are being made at this moment, we have all our tax stuff finished, the lady making the vendor baskets out of—believe it or not—newspapers is doing a wonderful job, but she can only make about six a week, which is enough, We now have 12 already and coming more every week.

We'll practice more baking this week, doing bigger and bigger batches, working on packaging, working with ingredients suppliers, and, by the weekend, should be ready to start advertising for vendors and bakery workers. I would guess right now that we should be in production in about two weeks. We have now brought our third partner, Patti, fully on board.

We're still having fun and this has been the yucky part. It gets better from here.

20120902-29	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Acadia
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<http://www.everytrail.com/best/hiking-acadia-national-park>



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

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