



# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #234 — SEPT. 26, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.  
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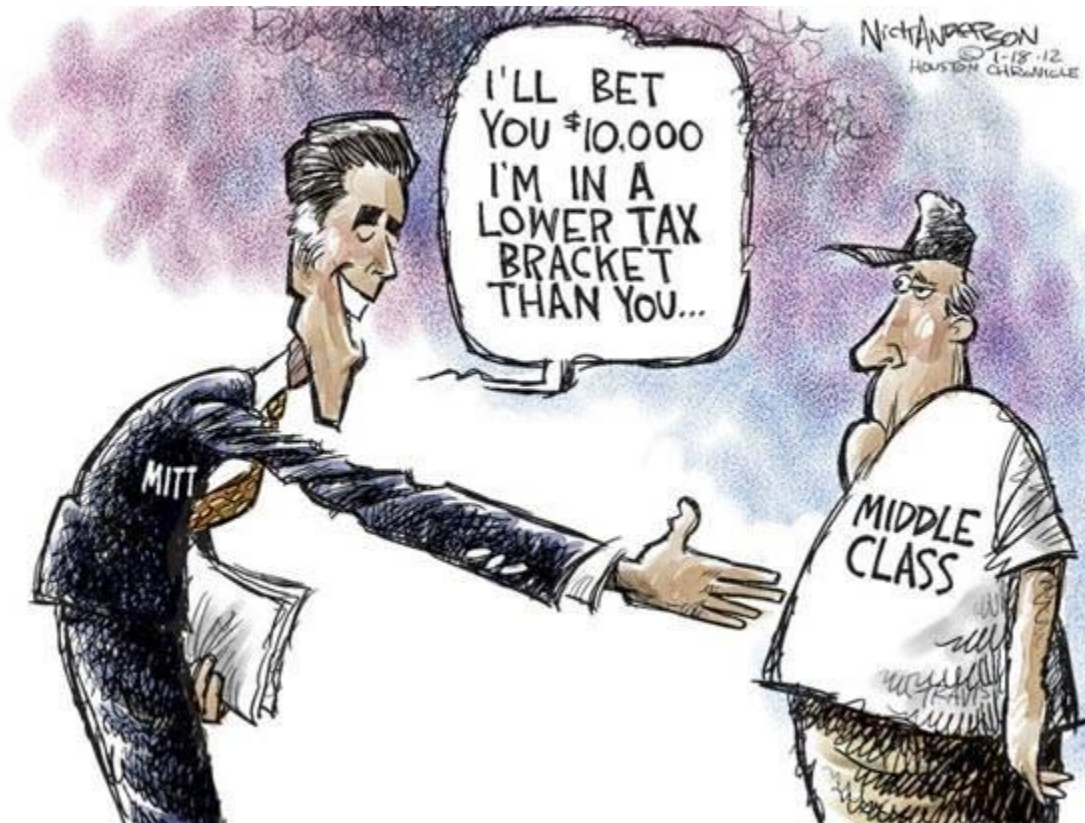
## **Tax Spending, Not Income?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Sept. 26, 2012)

You all know how much I like to talk about taxes...

"Why Do the Romneys Pay So Little in Taxes?" by Edward J. McCaffery, CNN

Sept. 25, 2012, ([http://us.cnn.com/2012/09/24/opinion/mccaffery-romney-tax/index.html?hpt=hp\\_c1](http://us.cnn.com/2012/09/24/opinion/mccaffery-romney-tax/index.html?hpt=hp_c1))



By now, most of us have probably heard that Mitt and Ann Romney paid just under \$2 million in taxes on income -- virtually all from investments -- of just under \$14 million for 2011, an effective tax rate of 14.1%. This is a low tax rate, lower than the typical middle-class American worker pays, especially when one considers payroll taxes, the

largest burden for most Americans. It should concern us that individuals of Romney's wealth -- analysis has put his personal fortune as high as \$250 million, not counting some \$100 million in trusts set up for his five children -- pay so little as a percent in taxes.

It is also correct to note that there appears to be nothing wrong or illegal in the tax returns that Romney released. Sure, there are still many unanswered questions, and speculation and innuendo will no doubt continue. But all of that is beside the point, or ought to be.

Romney is really rich. It is what it is. The real attention should be on a tax system that allows the really rich to pay so little in percentage terms and on the best solution to making that tax system better and fairer.

Opinion: Republicans risk being the party of mean

The knee-jerk reaction is to raise tax rates, as in the so-called Buffett Rule: Anyone earning more than \$1 million should pay an effective rate of at least 30%. If this rule were in place today, it would more than double the Romneys' income taxes.

Only, it wouldn't. The Buffett Rule wouldn't work, because really rich Americans do not have to show any "income" on their tax returns.

The Romneys paid tax because they hold stocks and securities yielding dividends and interest, and because they sold assets generating capital gains. They didn't have to do so. The simple strategy of the super-rich is to buy and hold, and to borrow when needed to finance their lifestyles.

Some basic facts: Any tax consists of a base, or what is being taxed, times a rate. The income tax's base is "income," which comes from labor or wealth. Income from labor is hard to hide and easy to tax, as the middle class knows full well. Income from wealth is easy to hide and hard to tax -- and perfectly legally.

A non-dividend-paying stock, like Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway (or land, artwork, sports franchises), does not have to show any taxable income. People who own such things can be very rich and live very well. If we simply raised tax rates, the super-rich would just as simply stop showing income or selling assets. That's why, under an income tax, we pretty much have to have low rates on investment.

Does this strike you as unfair? If you're like most Americans -- i.e., if you're middle class -- then your blood may be boiling at the fact that the super rich seem to be able to hold us all hostage to low tax rates under an income tax. The important question is -- how do we fix this?

The answer lies in switching the tax base before we raise the tax rates. Tax spending, rather than work or savings. Then, we could apply a 30% or higher rate to spending at Romney's level.

The real inequity shown by the Romneys' tax situation, after all, is measured by the taxes they pay as a percent of their spending or lifestyle. For most Americans, living paycheck to paycheck, spending (after taxes) pretty much equals income (after taxes). It's a good guess that the Romneys are spending a great deal more than the income they are showing on their tax returns.

They should be, if they are well-advised (and if they are not well-advised, we have other concerns). What would Romney be spending money on? How about running for president, for one thing. Romney spent \$45 million of "his own" money running for president in 2008 (less than the \$60 million Ross Perot allegedly spent in 1992). I suspect that Romney has spent more of his own money this time around, if only because he has gone further and been more successful in his quest.

Here is another turn of the screw. Running for president is legally considered a personal expense, nondeductible under the income tax. Such expenses, however, are in essence deductible from another American tax, and the largest single one facing the Romneys: the gift and estate tax. That so-called death tax applies to what is left over on one's deathbed.

The simplest way to avoid it is to spend all that you have and die broke. Under current law, Romney's family would have to pay about \$80 million in estate taxes after his and Ann's death. If Romney spent \$45 million in 2008, at that year's estate tax rate, his family would have saved more than \$20 million in taxes because of his presidential run (no need to discount for present value, as the unspent wealth would have appreciated in value). In sum, the government is pitching in, in the form of foregone estate tax revenue, for Romney's and other rich people's presidential runs.

It is ironic that the real problem with Romney's personal financial situation is his spending, not his work or savings, and that no one is paying attention to that. Excessive spending at all levels is our national problem, and it is what soon might make us another Greece. No one is paying much attention to that, either.

Meantime, we have a tax system set up to encourage spending and borrowing, especially by the rich. The only way to raise taxes under today's income tax is to increase the burdens on working and saving -- just about the last things we should be doing.

If we taxed spending, in contrast, the Romneys and other really rich families would see their taxes increase in absolute and percent terms. Yet we oppose consumption or spending taxes because we perceive them as regressive. It's all nearly perfectly perverse, and not a peep on point. Welcome to politics.

"Mitt Romney 2011 Tax Return Includes Massive Gain from Controversial Bain Deal" by Zach Carter, Huffington Post

Sept. 25, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/25/mitt-romney-2011-tax-return-bain\\_n\\_1914587.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/25/mitt-romney-2011-tax-return-bain_n_1914587.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

(WASHINGTON) Mitt Romney saved about \$850,000 on his 2011 taxes, thanks to the Republican presidential candidate's controversial retirement package with Bain Capital that decreased his overall tax bill by a third.

According to the tax return released on Friday, Romney paid about \$1.9 million in taxes on income of \$13.7 million in 2011. Romney's income includes \$6.8 million in capital gains, \$3.6 million in dividends, \$260,390 in director's fees, and \$190,350 in speaking fees. He listed no income from wages, salaries or tips.

But much of Romney's capital gains income flowed from his retirement package at Bain Capital, the private equity giant he founded, which granted him an extremely lucrative and unconventional deal upon his departure. Although most former financiers must pay ordinary income taxes on retirement income, Bain allowed Romney to receive his payments as "carried interest" -- a special tax category reserved for those who actively manage investment funds.

Romney's 2011 return does not detail the amount of income he received in carried interest, but his campaign told HuffPost the amount is \$5.5 million. When Romney released his 2010 tax return in January of this year, his campaign noted that the candidate reaped \$7.4 million in carried interest income during 2010.

Carried interest income qualifies as a capital gain, making it eligible for a 15 percent tax rate -- far more favorable than the 35 percent rate that the wealthiest American taxpayers must pony up on ordinary income. Capital gains are one of the most lucrative tax breaks in the tax code for the rich -- 50 percent of all capital gains go to the wealthiest 0.1 percent of taxpayers, according to *The Washington Post*.

Recording this \$5.5 million as carried interest rather than ordinary income saved Romney \$147,000 in self-employment taxes including Medicare and Social Security, plus additional savings of more than \$700,000 in income taxes.

"He followed the law, and paid 100 percent of what he owes under the law," a Romney spokesman said.

While the special treatment the tax code affords to capital gains is a subject of heated debate among economists, carried interest is even more aggressively disputed. Under the carried interest scheme, fund managers receive a cut of an investment portfolio's gains as their compensation, rather than a simple cash fee for overseeing trades. Although advocates for this lucrative tax arrangement insist that it rewards investment companies for taking risks,

managers may put little capital -- if any -- into the investment fund, making many experts question why managers should receive the same tax benefits as those who have actually put their own money at risk.

None of the arguments that apply to fund managers are relevant to Romney's retirement package, however. Romney has repeatedly stated that he is not playing any active role in Bain's current investment strategies.

"One of the justifications for the lower capital gains rate is that they encourage people to take risks," noted Rebecca Wilkins, senior counsel for federal tax policy at Citizens for Tax Justice. "But he only has the upside on these deals. If he walks away, he hasn't lost any money. Even if you buy the arguments about why there should be a lower capital gains rate, there's really no justification for this compensation being taxed as capital gains. This is just payment for their services. They haven't taken any risk, they haven't put up any capital."



**"Of course you have a purpose in life. You pay taxes, don't you?"**



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<a href="#">20120925-02</a>	11:25	SteveB	"Latest 2012 Polls Show Biggest Barack Obama Lead Yet"
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Here we go!

"Latest 2012 Polls Show Biggest Barack Obama Lead Yet" by Mark Blumenthal, Huffington Post

Sept. 25, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/25/2012-polls-barack-obama-lead\\_n\\_1912113.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/25/2012-polls-barack-obama-lead_n_1912113.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

(WASHINGTON) Monday's new polls produced no signs that President Barack Obama's recent polling "bounce" is fading. If anything, the latest surveys indicate that his lead over Republican nominee Mitt Romney may be expanding.

A sign of the depth of Obama's current advantage comes from the fact that he led at least nominally on 19 of 20 new polls HuffPost Pollster logged into its database on Monday, including six national releases and a dozen new statewide polls. The exception was a new poll in Montana, a state not carried by the Democrats since 1992.

The HuffPost Pollster tracking model combines national and state-level polling to produce estimates of the current polling snapshot nationally and in the battleground states. The new polls nudged Obama's estimated current lead in the national popular vote to exactly four percentage points (48.6 to 44.6 as of this writing; the model's estimates update several times each day as new polls are published).

At the state level, one of the most striking results came from North Carolina, where a new survey by the Civitas Institute gives Obama a four percentage-point advantage (49 to 45 percent). Civitas is a conservative think tank, and its previous surveys in the state had all shown Romney in the lead.

North Carolina remains the closest state in the current polling snapshot. The new Civitas poll helped nudge Obama to a nearly 2-point lead on the poll tracking model's estimate (47.7 to 46.0 percent), just within the range classified as a "toss-up."

Recent surveys indicate that Obama has larger leads in all of the other battleground states. In Florida, two new polls conducted over the week showed Obama leading by nearly identical margins. A automated survey by the Democratic party-affiliated firm Public Policy Polling (PPP) and a live interviewer survey by the American Research Group (ARG), show Obama leading Romney by four- and five-point margins respectively. The new polls help boost Obama's Florida advantage to nearly four points (48.9 to 45.1 percent) on the tracking model estimate.

In Iowa, another crucial battleground state, a second ARG poll shows Obama leading by seven percentage points (51 to 44 percent), a bigger margin than estimated by the poll tracking model, which shows Obama with a lead in the state of just over four points (48.2 to 43.9 percent).

Meanwhile, two new automated polls by firms with results that typically tilt in the Republican direction gave Obama double-digit leads in midwestern states. Rasmussen Reports gave Obama a 12-point lead in Michigan and We Ask America showed Obama ahead by the same margin in Wisconsin.

The current polling snapshot brings Obama's estimated lead in the electoral college to 332 to 191, with only North Carolina's 15 electoral votes in the "toss-up" category. A candidate needs 270 electoral votes to win.

Statistical noise is inherent in all polling, and Monday's upturn for Obama may turn out to be a random occurrence. But if Republicans were looking for good news from Monday's polls, they got none.

20120925-04	14:06	SteveB	"Mitt Romney Is Not the Face of Mormonism"
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I guess Harry Reid (also a Mormon, as is the author of the article below) agrees:

<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0912/81632.html>.

"Mitt Romney Is Not the Face of Mormonism" by Gregory A. Prince, Huffington Post

Sept. 19, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gregory-a-prince-phd/mitt-romney-is-not-the-face-of-mormonism\\_b\\_1897404.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gregory-a-prince-phd/mitt-romney-is-not-the-face-of-mormonism_b_1897404.html))

When the news of Mitt Romney's Florida video broke on Monday evening, I was incensed -- but not for its political implications. His arrogant and out-of-hand dismissal of half the population of this country struck me at a visceral level, for it sullied the religion that he and I share -- the religion for which five generations of my ancestry have lived and sacrificed, the religion whose official mantra is "to take care of the poor and needy throughout the world." My first impulse was to rent an airplane towing a banner: "Mitt Romney is Not the Face of Mormonism!"

I was a supporter of Romney 1.0. That was in late 2007, when we had far more in common. We are both Mormons and we both served foreign missions for our church at the same time, he in France and I in Brazil. Some of my best friends had been some of his best friends for decades. Although I am a registered Democrat, his accomplishments as Governor of Massachusetts appealed to me. I contributed the maximum amount to his early presidential primary bid.

I also became an emissary to him, presenting what I felt was an attractive proposition. Helen Whitney, who had recently completed a four-hour PBS documentary, "The Mormons," was also intrigued with Romney, enough that she asked that I propose to him one hour of national coverage on PBS if he would allow her to interview him only about his religion.

"It's a good religion," she said to me, "but he is hiding from it. He needs to own it."

I delivered the proposal in person. He declined, stating that he and his advisors had concluded that the issue of his religion would simply go away. It didn't, but his candidacy did.

Early in 2008, to my dismay, Romney 1.0 became Romney 2.0 by moving far enough to the right to lose my support. He has kept moving ever farther to the right. He has made this move in a successful attempt to gain the nomination, and in an ongoing attempt to persuade no more than 53 percent of the country that he should be the next President.

The issue of Romney's Mormon faith has never gone away, although its presence has waxed and waned as other issues have come and gone. How -- or if -- he chooses to use his religion as part of his public biography is up to him, but the fact that he is the only Mormon ever to be the nominee for the Presidency of a major political party makes it inevitable that even if people do not judge him because of his religion, they will judge his religion because of him. Given the unfolding news of this week, I regret to say that Mitt Romney is not the face of Mormonism.

Romney 1.0 was that face. Having been a missionary myself, I know the formative power of two years of missionary service. Having served as an assistant to one bishop and four stake presidents -- and Romney served as bishop and stake president -- I know the even greater formative power of those offices. I understand completely what his father George meant when he said, "I am completely the product of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." That face of Mormonism is the one that calls on some of its members, particularly bishops and stake presidents, to devote as many hours gratis to their church jobs as they do to their professional jobs. It is the one that summons up extraordinary acts of love, compassion and generosity, often in response to the deepest tragedies of life -- and death.

But it is not the one that dismisses out-of-hand half the population of the United States by saying, "My job is not to worry about those people. I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives." As a bishop and stake president, Romney worried about those very people. Indeed, he worried far more about them, and spent far more time and means in assisting them, than the others in his flock who were more fortunate.

The very basis of Mormon community, stretching back to the earliest years of Mormonism nearly two centuries ago, is that the more able have a sacred obligation to assist the less able. That sense of physical community was institutionalized in the Church's Welfare Program, which sprang out of the Great Depression as an exemplary and effective means of combining church and government assistance not only to give to those in need, but also to help them to help themselves. Any who have visited Welfare Square in Salt Lake City, as did the producers of a recent "Rock Center" documentary on MSNBC, cannot help but be impressed with what we have attempted, for over seven decades, to accomplish through what is now an international network of church facilities and volunteers.

Judge Mitt Romney as you will, and vote for or against him as you will; but do not judge Mormonism on the basis of the Mitt Romney that was unveiled to the public this week. He is not the face of Mormonism.

<a href="#">20120925-05</a>	14:21	SteveB	"Mitt Romney Wonders Why Ann Romney's Airplane Windows Don't Roll Down"
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R0mney continues to puzzle all of us, doesn't he?

This one doesn't seem like an attempt at humor as much as it just seems weird...the man has a strange mind, Which is fine. If you aren't hoping to run our country.

"Mitt Romney Wonders Why Ann Romney's Airplane Windows Don't Roll Down" by Huffington Post

Sept. 25, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/24/mitt-romney-airplane-windows\\_n\\_1910930.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=mostpopular](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/24/mitt-romney-airplane-windows_n_1910930.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular))

UPDATE: He was for rolling down airplane windows before he was against it.

Mitt Romney gave the Internet -- and Rachel Maddow -- a chuckle Monday after post-fundraiser comments that appeared to show the candidate has a tenuous grasp on the physics of flight.

But after, Mitt Romney was quoted as saying that airplane windows "don't open. I don't know why they don't do that," a campaign pool reporter says the candidate was joking.

Ashley Parker, a *New York Times* reporter who filed on the comments, tells *New York* magazine that "it was clear from the context that he was not being serious."

Never mind Romney's general track record with humor, as Tim Stanley writes in *The Telegraph*: "It's worth noting that Romney has a habit of throw away lines that suggest a barbed sense of humour that no one else quite gets."

PREVIOUSLY: Making post-fundraiser comments this weekend, presidential candidate Mitt Romney revealed a tenuous grip on the science of aviation, despite the fact that he and his wife, Ann, have been flying around the country this summer on the campaign trail.

After his wife's plane was forced to make an emergency landing this weekend, Romney told the *Los Angeles Times*, he was worried for her safety. The candidate then continued on a bizarre tangent that showed just how little the Republican nominee understands about flight.

"I appreciate the fact that she is on the ground, safe and sound. And I don't think she knows just how worried some of us were," Romney told the paper. "When you have a fire in an aircraft, there's no place to go, exactly."

Romney said the biggest problem in a distressed aircraft is that "the windows don't open. I don't know why they don't do that. It's a real problem. So it's very dangerous."

The main reason airplane windows don't open is because there isn't enough oxygen at cruising altitude to keep passengers alive. (The fear of window or cabin failures, which would lead to potentially fatal hypoxia, is why many planes are equipped with emergency oxygen masks.)

"You can't find any oxygen from outside the aircraft to get in the aircraft, because the windows don't open," Romney told the Times, suggesting that additional oxygen in the cabin during the electrical malfunction could've alleviated the problem. In fact, if there were an electrical fire on board, additional oxygen would have fed the flames.

Strangely, Romney seemed to acknowledge the importance of oxygen later in his comments. "Fortunately, there was enough oxygen for the pilot and copilot to make a safe landing in Denver," he said.

Hypoxia aboard aircraft has led to many fatalities over the years, including the 1999 crash that killed golfer Payne Stewart. In 2005, Helios Airways Flight 522 crashed, killing all 121 aboard after the crew was incapacitated.

<a href="#">20120925-07</a> 15:47 Ben "Mitt Romney: No Campaign Cash from Teachers' Unions"
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"Mitt Romney: No Campaign Cash from Teachers' Unions" by Ginger Gibson, Politico

Sept. 25, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0912/81657.html>)

(NEW YORK) Mitt Romney called for the end of political contributions by teachers' unions, arguing that it was a "conflict of interest" for the Democratic-friendly groups to be allowed to influence campaigns.

At the same time he offered praise for Obama Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

"We have a very unusual system in this country. It's not just related to teachers unions. It relates more broadly. But people are able to give — in the case of the Democratic Party, I don't mean to be terribly partisan, but I kind of am — in case of the Democratic Party, the largest contributors to the Democratic Party are the teachers unions, the federal teachers unions," Romney said at an NBC Education Summit here Tuesday.

"It's an extraordinary conflict of interest. That's something I think is a problem and should be addressed," he said.



The GOP nominee delved into a topic that normally gets little attention while he's out campaigning. Romney offered opening remarks — repeating much of what he said in an education policy speech earlier this year — and fielded questions from moderator Brian Williams and summit attendees.

It's not unusual for Romney to echo Republican talking points that students should come before the teachers' unions when it comes to education reform. His stump speech includes a oft-repeated riff about reforming education.

But on Tuesday, the GOP nominee offered a broader critique of the role campaign contributions play in education reform.

It's not unusual for Republicans to advocate limiting or eliminating campaign contributions from public employees unions. But in an election cycle where both candidates are raking in large fundraising hauls and super PACs backed by unlimited contributions from wealthy donors are surging, Romney offered a more robust criticism of the campaign finance system.

Romney argued that teachers' unions energetic giving to Democratic officials compromises them at the negotiating table.

"That person is supposed to be representing the public, vis-a-vis the teacher's union but actually most of their money came from the teachers' union," Romney said. "This is an extraordinary conflict of interest. That's something I think is a problem and should be addressed."

Teachers unions, led by the National Federation of Teachers and National Education Association, have given about \$11 million so far this election cycle to Democratic candidates, committees and outside groups, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

President Obama has been the top recipient of those donations. He has received nearly \$31,000 specifically from teachers' unions and \$12.6 million overall from the education industry.

Romney, on the other hand, has received about \$2 million from the education industry and none from teachers unions.

Romney has previously advocated for a system that allows unlimited donations to candidates and parties, but requires immediate public disclosure.

"My own view is now we tried a lot of efforts to try and restrict what can be given to campaigns, we'd be a lot wiser to say you can give what you'd like to a campaign. They must report it immediately," Romney said on MSNBC in December.

He would make a distinction for teacher unions, spokesman Kevin Madden said when asked about the discrepancy.

"They are directly negotiating over a contract with a mayor or a governor who is going to be approving that contract, that's the distinction," Madden said.

While not at the top of polls asking voters about their most important issues, education remains a topic voters say they want to hear candidates discuss. It's also an issue that on which women voters — a constituency both candidates have been working hard to court in swing states — frequently focus on.

Breaking from his regular attack lines against Obama, Romney offered praise for Duncan and the Race to the Top program, a centerpiece of the White House's education plan.

"But what I like about him is [Duncan] said, 'Look, I wanna have this Race To The Top program which will give grants to states that encourage innovation and specifically that say we're gonna compensate teachers based upon their performance,' which I think is the right thing," Romney said.

Williams pressed Romney on whether he would consider keeping Duncan as part of his own cabinet.

"I'm not putting anybody on my cabinet right now, Brian," Romney said, prompting laughter. "It's a little presumptuous of me, but just a little."

Williams also asked the GOP nominee about the cost of his own education, asking whether every student should have schooling equivalent to the cost of Romney's private secondary education at Cranbrook Academy.

"I don't know if a dollar number always equates to how effective the teacher is," Romney said. "I was delighted to have a terrific education at what was a private institution. That's not going to be available for the entire nation but I know that there are teachers in the public system who are every bit as good as those in the private system."

Romney made the case that total dollars spent doesn't determine the quality of education.

"I reject the idea that everybody has to have, if you will, a Harvard-expense level degree in order to be successful," Romney said. "I find a lot of people have degrees from a lot of different places public and private that are highly successful. Some of the most successful [people] in our nation didn't even complete high school. It's a remarkable thing."

While explaining the education policy changes he would make, Romney also argued that schools should be run on the state, not federal level.

"If I'm the next president of the United States, as I hope to be, than I don't want to step in and try to run schools for local school districts or for states," Romney said. "Education is largely run at the state level. But I do believe that there is action I can take at the federal level that will have an impact on improving the quality of education."

Democrat pounced quickly on Romney's remarks Tuesday, with the American Bridge super PAC launching a [ClassSizeMatters.com](http://ClassSizeMatters.com), a website attacking them.

And Obama's campaign criticized Romney's remarks as inconsistent with his record as governor of Massachusetts.

"He wants to bring these policies to the national stage, where his drastic spending cuts could gut education funding, leading to as many as 65,000 teacher layoffs and larger class sizes," Obama spokeswoman Lis Smith said in a statement. "Cutting education to pay for tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires might make sense in Mitt Romney's world, but it's not a recipe for growing the economy or strengthening the middle class."

During the question-and-answer portion of the event, Romney dismissed a teacher from the audience who cited a poll that New York City parents support the union.

"In NYC, the parents here support the union to protect our kids 3-to-1 over the mayor and the chancellor, that's a recent poll," the teacher said. "So to say that the union are holding back our kids as a parent, it's the opposite. They believe actually that the unions are fighting for our kids and that a lot of the reform has been holding back our kids."

Romney quickly responded that he didn't believe the poll, citing his own experience with polling.

"I know something about polls and I know you can ask questions to get any answer you want," Romney said. "I do know this, that having looked at schools that the teachers' union have a responsibility to care for the interest of the teachers and the head of the national teachers union said at one point, 'We don't care about kids. We care about the teachers.'"

(Tarini Parti contributed to this report.)

20120925-01 10:25 SteveB BooksOnBoard

If you don't know about this great source of ebooks, you owe it to yourself to check it out!

<http://www.booksonboard.com/index.php?ebooks-audio-books>.

20120925-03 13:44 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Stand with Native Americans Against the Keystone XL Pipeline!

from CREDO Action:

Don't let TransCanada bulldoze over tribal sovereignty.

The updates coming in are heartbreaking: TransCanada and its bulldozers have begun seizing and clearing land to construct the southern portion of the Keystone XL Pipeline in Texas.

It's nearly impossible to fight the use of eminent domain against private landowners. But now TransCanada is trampling on the rights of sovereign native tribes. If we stand with the tribes, we may be able to block the pipeline's construction.

Tell the Bureau of Indian Affairs: Enforce Native American sovereignty and don't let TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline bulldoze sacred burial grounds.

A story last week in the Washington Post highlights TransCanada's assault on tribal sovereignty on lands throughout Oklahoma. The Canadian corporation is blazing ahead with construction despite tribal concerns about the protection of burial grounds and other sacred tribal sites.

TransCanada arrogantly claims "there is no legal obligation to work with the tribes." But that flies in the face of the historic treaties affirming tribal authority over their sovereign lands, and the more recent National Historic Preservation Act and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.

The U.S. government was responsible for genocidal death marches of Native Americans in the 19th century. Today, there are more than 38 tribes in Oklahoma as a result of this forced relocation, and each retains sovereignty over its own land and affairs. The Keystone XL Pipeline will bisect the entire state, starting in Cushing, Oklahoma, on a site that sits within the Sac and Fox Nation.

Tribal leaders fear that digging the route could disturb mass graves or other important sites. As the Sac and Fox official Sandra Massey said, "How many times do we have to move? Our dead are never at rest."

We know the Bureau of Indian Affairs is aware of the issue because it held a listening session in Oklahoma last week to discuss the protection of sacred tribal sites. Now we need to make sure that the agency knows that it is unacceptable to allow a Canadian oil company to trample on tribal sovereignty and sacred sites to build their fuse to the carbon bomb of the Alberta Tar Sands.

TransCanada's attitude toward the rights of Native Americans should come as no surprise — the company has earned a reputation for lying, deceiving and strong-arming landowners into giving property easements to TransCanada.

As construction gets underway, TransCanada's surveyors and crews have also been met with resistance from local activists, who have on two occasions been arrested for boldly chaining themselves to construction equipment. Both efforts successfully stalled construction on the day of the action.

These efforts are vitally important, because the courts have so far sided with TransCanada's dubious claims that it is eligible to seize private land under eminent domain — a questionable premise, since the pipeline primarily benefits a Canadian company.

While the Obama administration has bent over backward to promote TransCanada's efforts to drain Alberta's "game over for the climate" tar sands fields, it remains to be seen if the Bureau of Indian Affairs will stand by as TransCanada also threatens tribal sovereignty and sacred sites.

Tell the Bureau of Indian Affairs: Keep our promises to Native American tribes and stop TransCanada from violating their sovereignty. Urge the Bureau of Indian Affairs to take action. Click below to sign the petition:

[http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/sovereignty\\_kxl/](http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/sovereignty_kxl/).

Thanks for fighting the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. —Elijah Zarin, Campaign Manager

<a href="#">20120925-06</a>	14:51 Ben	Photos: Yesterday's and Today's Lunches at Apple
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I set off for Caffe Macs today anticipating seared striped bass: a very tasty fish. So I was [tentatively] disappointed to see that crab cakes had been substituted. (Revised Tuesday menu is at bottom of this email.) Crab cakes are one of those things that even a pretty good restaurant will usually screw up, in a variety of ways. As I observed to Chef Cory moments ago, crab cakes, to me, are like salmon skin rolls: each chef has a highly individual interpretation, and only once in a while does it hit the bulls-eye with me. (Austinites: Tomo Sushi's salmon skin rolls really ring my bell.)

Chef Bladimir's crab cake take easily rang my bell. In fact, they were every bit as good as, and perhaps better than, the two crab cake events I can recall explicitly. Previous Top of the List were from a bar in Baltimore a few blocks from Johns Hopkins; runner up had been those from the Adolphus Hotel (Dallas) of 20 years ago. Chef Blad had several things going for these that appealed to me. Crab quality excellent: sweet, mild, completely un-fishy. A spare quantity of fresh kernel sweet corn. Beautiful, fresh plump smallish shrimp and shrimp pieces. Bits of onion small enough not to stand out. Seasoning that enhanced all these fine ingredients without being apparent of itself. I have no idea how he made them stick together so well, but they had marvelous integrity and were easily eaten bite by bite with a fork.

The dish was served with sauteed asparagus and yellow squash, garnished with fresh herbs, over white rice with a faintly sweet tomato-mustard sauce I believe to have had a hint of cinnamon. I am skeptical of cooked summer squash, even here, but this was on the dot: still a bit crunchy, with only the thinnest areas soft; the saute must have been in broth or something, as the flavor of this normally bland vegetable was very pleasing.

I didn't see Blad today, but I was sincere when I asked Clark and Cory to relay to Blad that I darned near licked my plate today. I once again dined with Al, enjoying, finally, a really pleasant Texas fall day.

The crab cake plate; as you can see:



And here is a corner of Chef Faith's dessert line ("Faith's Gauntlet") featuring a "double blueberry pie" with an all-butter crust that looked so decadent that I KNEW I couldn't have it, especially as yesterday I succumbed, and went back for one of her mint chocolate cream pies (with the little chocolate whirlies on top). Those of you who have actually visited are well aware that Faith is a true artist, and virtually everything she offers is just about as good as it gets; only once in an age will a person get Faith's quality at a restaurant or bakery. This is in the league of a pastry chef doing a constant private party, which is essentially what this is:



And, although I have no more time to rave about it, lunch yesterday: another fine plate from Blad, seared steelhead with fried red onion crisps and an absolutely sublime creamed corn, supplemented by a taste of Chef Patricia's yummy tuna confit, in the small bowl at back of my tray:



20120925-08 16:46 SteveB "Romney to Teacher "I Didn't Ask You a Question" (w/ video)

"Romney to Teacher "I Didn't Ask You a Question" (w/ video) by ThatPoshGirl, Daily Kos

Sept. 22, 2012, (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/09/22/1135384/-Romney-to-teacher-I-didn-t-ask-you-a-question?detail=email>)

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=GKhcrxIOP0g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=GKhcrxIOP0g).

20120925-09 22:53 SteveB Fw: Hello Dearest One

from Mercy Kipkalya Kones (LOL!):

This letter might come to you as a surprise ,Please I apologies to you to exercise a little patience and read through my letter I feel quite safe dealing with you in this important business having gone through your remarkable profile, I will really like to have a good relationship with you and I have a special reason why I decided to contact you, I decided to contact you due to the urgency of my situation, My name is Mercy Kipkalya Kones, 24 yrs old female and I held from Kenya in East Africa.

My father was the former Kenyan road Minister. He and Assistant Minister of Home Affairs Lorna Laboso had been on board the Cessna 210, which was headed to Kericho and crashed in a remote area called Kajong'a, in western Kenya. You can read more about the crash through the below:

site: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/africa/06/10/kenya.crash/index.html>

After the burial of my father, my stepmother and uncle conspired and sold my father's property which the shared the money among themselves and live nothing for me. One faithful morning, I opened my father's briefcase and found out the documents which he have deposited huge amount of money in one bank in Burkina Faso with my name as the next of kin. I travelled to Burkina Faso to withdraw the money for a better life so that I can take care of myself and start a new life, on my arrival in Burkina Faso since is a nearby country, the Bank Director whom I met in person told me that my father's instruction to the bank is that the money would only be release to me when I am married or present a trustee foreigner who will help me and invest the money overseas. I am in search of an honest and reliable person who will help me and stand as my foreign trustee so that I will present him to the Bank for transfer of the money to his bank account overseas. I have chosen to contact you after my prayers and I believe that you will not betray my trust.

You may wonder why I am so soon revealing myself to you without knowing you, To me I will say that my spirit and mind convinced me that you may be the true person to help me, I will like to disclose much to you if you can help me to relocate to your country because my stepmother have threaten many times to assassinate me due to her wickedness and jealousy's because she has no issue for my father since she was married after the accident that killed my mother years back. The amount is ( \$4.5 Million USD ) Four Million five hundred thousand United State Dollars, and I have confirmed from the bank in Burkina Faso on my arrival.

You will also help me to place the money in a more profitable business venture in your Country. However, you will help by recommending a nice University in your country so that I can complete my studies. As soon as I receive your positive response showing your interest I will inform the bank that am ready to present the foreign trustee who will receive the fund on my behalf. I am a Christian and I believe in God. Please do keep this only to your self for now until the bank will transfer the fund. I beg you not to disclose it till I come over because I am afraid of my stepmother who has threatened to kill me and have the money alone, I thank God Today that am out from my country (KENYA) but now In (Burkina Faso) where my father deposited these money with my name as the next of Kin. Thanks for your patient and understanding hope to hear from you. God Bless.

Yours Sincerely, Miss Mercy Kipkalya Kones.

20120925-10

22:44

Charis

"In Bolivia, Miners Pick Away at Rich Mountain, But It Takes Back Its Own Toll"

"In Bolivia, Miners Pick Away at Rich Mountain, But It Takes Back Its Own Toll" by Juan Forero, *Washington Post*

Sept. 25, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/in-bolivia-miners-pick-away-at-rich-mountain-but-it-takes-back-its-own-toll/2012/09/25/5f6aac74-01d0-11e2-bbf0-e33b4ee2f0e8\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/in-bolivia-miners-pick-away-at-rich-mountain-but-it-takes-back-its-own-toll/2012/09/25/5f6aac74-01d0-11e2-bbf0-e33b4ee2f0e8_story.html))

(POTOSI, Bolivia) The tunnel grew darker and more claustrophobic, the air harder to breathe. But Daniel Cruz trudged deeper into the bowels of a mountain where thousands of miners toil and countless more are entombed, casualties of a centuries-old lust for silver.

Behind him followed five foreign tourists, outfitted in hard hats with headlamps, here to see an anachronism in the 21st century, medieval mining in the Rich Mountain of Potosi. This cone-shaped peak is at any given moment home to as many as 16,000 shirtless miners, straining in dark caverns with picks, shovels, their own brute strength but little else.

"They have to choose money or life," said Cruz, who is 27 and started mining here at 17. "When they choose to mine, they are risking their lives."

This relic from the days of colonial Spain — for Bolivians a painful symbol of the conquest of their country as well as Bolivia's most storied mountain for mining — now brings young tourists such as Charles Newman, who on a recent day watched Indian Quechua miners endure 100-degree heat in shafts hundreds of feet below the surface.

"I thought the working conditions were pretty shocking, coming from Europe," said Newman, a 19-year-old Briton. "It's quite humbling, actually seeing what they do on a daily basis."

Tourists, though, may not be able to travel into the Rich Mountain for long, at least if the engineers who have been studying it are right. They say that after 467 years of mining, the Rich Mountain is like Swiss cheese, pockmarked throughout and in danger of a catastrophic collapse.

The mountain is still as imposing as it was when Spanish soldiers, their armor clanking, first set eyes upon its red, rocky hues rising 15,800 feet into the deep blue skies of Bolivia's southern highlands.

But Nestor Rene Espinoza, a veteran engineer who recently completed the most extensive study of Rich Mountain's stability, said the evidence of volatility is hard to ignore.

There are 600 mines, he said, and 65 miles of tunnels. Gaping, unmarked shafts drop to oblivion. Runoff turns soil to mush. Part of the mountain's iconic cone already collapsed into itself.

"We've taken all manner of riches from the mountain, but we have not given it the love it now needs," Espinoza told representatives from Potosi's mining sector on a recent night. "I've said it before, the mountain is ill, and it requires medical care."

Espinoza's study, which was unveiled in August, showed that five large areas of the mountain's upper levels have a high risk of collapse. The best solution, he said in an interview, is to pump cement into the abandoned shafts, an operation that would cost at least \$300 million and take more than a year.

"The mountain has lost the capacity to support itself, so that means we have to intervene," said Espinoza, noting that in a mountain under the control of the miners, it is they who would likely have to come up with the money.

Such an intervention is not going over well in Potosi, where the Rich Mountain employs one of every nine inhabitants and is a national symbol for its vital, if tragic, role in Bolivian history.



It all began in 1545, when an Indian shepherd, who was forced to spend the night on the mountain, started a fire and "saw a white and shining vein – pure silver," Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano wrote in the most popular account of the mountain's history.

The Spanish created a forced-labor system, the mita, putting to work an estimated 3 million Indians over the next 250 years. And what they produced — up to 40,000 tons of silver — provided a steady stream of riches to Spain.

The mountain was so rich that throughout the colonial period miners could find 50 pounds of silver for every 100 pounds of rock, said Carlos Serrano, a historian and metallurgist here. The miners simply followed the veins, he said, cutting into them and extracting the silver.

"At first, they even worked under open sky," Serrano said. Then they began to go underground — deeper and deeper and at an ever higher cost, totaling hundreds of thousands of lives over the centuries, victims of cave-ins, beatings by their overlords and exhaustion.

But those familiar with how the mines are run today say the environment is little better. With dozens of deaths taking place each year inside the mountain, miners long ago came up with a brutally fitting moniker for their workplace: The mountain that eats men.

"What's happening inside the mine is medieval," Serrano said.

The mines have no lighting, no safety regulations or inspectors, no modern rail cars and no pumped-in oxygen, leaving miners to inhale a fine deadly dust.

"With these lungs, at night I can't even sleep anymore," said Elogio Tola, who started here at 16 and is now 45, old for this mountain. "When you start to cough now, you cannot stand it like when you're young."

Those who work here — including hundreds of boys, some as young as 14 — are under no illusions.

Chewing wads of coca to ward off hunger and exhaustion, some heft huge bags of rocks to the surface on their backs. Smaller, nimbler miners specialize in burrowing into tiny crevices to place dynamite charges. Most spend the workday like their ancestors did: breaking through rock with hammer and a heavy iron chisel.

For their troubles, most earn a paltry \$14 a day, even as a commodities boom is generating far more earnings than in the past.

"For us, there's nothing," said Wilber Marino, 41, sweat covering his bare chest, as he took a break in one dark cavern to talk about his life. "It's for the boss. We work like mules. We work here like slaves."

The paradox is that since the 1980s, when the state-run mine laid off thousands, the mining here has been carried out by cooperatives controlled by the miners themselves.

But the 35 cooperatives that now mine mostly lead and zinc are unregulated, pay no taxes and critics say they exploit those miners who aren't lucky or shrewd enough to have become co-op bigwigs.

"They're called cooperatives, but they're not really cooperatives," said Celestino Condori, head of a local group of activists, the Potosi civic committee, which works to modernize the mines. "They are companies with peons."

On a recent day, tourists from as far away as the United States and Italy got a brief, if exhausting, taste of what it's like.

They lowered themselves through dark, craggy holes and down wobbly ladders. At one point, they were left panting after helping miners load an old iron rail car with rocks.

"It makes me grateful for what I have," said Ciaran McGettigan, 24, a recent university graduate from Australia. "It's just another world down here."

It's also a world that's unlikely to improve soon. But the miners say they'll never abandon Rich Mountain, no matter how unstable.

"We have to continue to work here," said Zenon Guzman, 33, who began here at 12. "Where are so many people going to go?"

[20120925-11](#) 23:01 SteveM Graphic: The Power of Make-Up

# The Power of Make-up



<http://saltlakemormontemple.com/tag/mormon-temples>



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Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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